UNIT 14 NORTH-EAST / KASHMIR

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14.1 INTRODUCTION

Although Gandhian approach to peace and conflict resolution is widely considered as a normative approach and even criticised at times for being too normative to be followed in any concrete, real-life situation. Gandhi himself was of the firm opinion that whatever he wrote was intended to provide practical solutions to practical problems. However, it has to be kept in mind that his approach was by no means a mere problem-solving exercise; it was over and above an exercise in solving problems in accordance with certain moral principles. Gandhi would not mind continuing to suffer the conflicts than trying to solve them by flouting and violating these basic moral principles. Gandhi's approach, to say in simple terms, was essentially a moral approach to peace and conflict resolution.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The normative approach of Gandhi to peace
- The case of Kashmir and overtures to peace
- The case of North-East India and efforts towards peace.

14.2 THE GANDHIAN APPROACH

The Gandhian approach to peace, as we have already pointed out, is essentially a normative approach that seeks to solve problems by way of observing certain moral rules and principles. According to Thomas Weber, "… Gandhi clearly states that living within rules required for successful satyagraha is the type of life that is worth living".

1. Peace is desirable but certainly not at any 'price'. Even conflicts are preferable to peace that is achieved at the expense of rights. Peace - more than a mere cessation of hostilities - must be based on rights, justice and democracy.

2. Gandhi felt that truth and non-violence were more powerful than any instrument of violence including an atom bomb. He observed: "I am not afraid of atom bomb". No amount of violence can conquer our moral commitment to truth and non-violence. For Gandhi, registering moral protest itself is victory. He always asserted superiority of moral force to physical force.

3. The strength of moral power is capable of winning the hearts and minds of enemies. As Gandhi argued: "It is not enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion. The other is mere business". Satyagraha, in this sense, means the discovery of truth and working steadily towards it, thus converting the opponent into a friend.

4. Violence breeds violence and triggers off chain reaction. Besides, we cannot distinguish between justified violence and unjustified violence. For both imply brutalisation of human nature. Gandhi had an abiding faith in human nature. As Gandhi argues, we must hate the sin and not the sinner. While violence is an alluring game that tempts us to apply it, it leads us nowhere. Resolution of conflicts presupposes changing the game altogether. He would believe that eventually good will win over evil.

5. Conflict resolution may require the mediators who help in reaching an agreement between the conflicting parties. But in order that they are accepted as mediators, it is essential that they wield the necessary moral authority and enjoy their trust.

14.3 THE CASE OF KASHMIR

During the colonial rule, Jammu and Kashmir was a princely state, and the British did not establish any direct rule over the state. The Dogra Rajput monarchs used to rule this multiethnic region on behalf of the British Raj. While the rulers were Hindus, a vast majority of the population in Kashmir is Muslims. 'Kashmiriyat' or a separate Kashmiri identity that developed over the centuries was essentially multiethnic and free from many of the orthodoxies. The Dogra rule was highly authoritarian and the discontent against the rulers was simmering particularly in the Muslim-dominated valley during the late-colonial times. The discontent turned into a popular movement for national identity against the 'alien' Dogra rule in 1946. National Conference, the party that led the movement under Sheikh Abdullah, raised the slogan: "Dogra rulers quit Kashmir". The 'Quit Kashmir' movement was in favour of and for attaining the right to self-determination. The Dogra rulers, aided by the British government, used all possible forces to suppress the movement and arrested Sheikh Abdullah.

At the time of Transfer of Power in August 1947, the Dogra ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, opted for maintaining the independent entity of Jammu and Kashmir, without joining either India or Pakistan. In September, the revolt of the Muslim population in Poonch posed a serious threat to the Dogra rule. On 24 October 1947, a large number of tribesmen from North West Frontier Province of Pakistan, emboldened by all accounts, intruded into the valley. The rebels of Poonch soon joined the intruders. The brutal raid of the tribesmen cost thousands of human lives, sparing neither Muslims, nor Sikhs nor Hindus. Maharaja Hari Singh desperately needed India's help to thwart the invaders and ultimately decided to accede to India for saving his kingdom. The Instrument of Accession was finally signed

between the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his Kashmiri counterpart Meher Chand Mahajan on 26 October, 1947. Maharaja Hari Singh conceded authority to the Indian Union only in matters related to defence, external affairs and communication. On 2 November 1947, Nehru declared in a radio broadcast, "As soon as law and order had been restored in Kashmir and its soil cleared of the invaders, the question of the state's accession should be settled by reference to the people". This was and continues to be construed as his pledge for plebiscite. On 1 January 1948, Nehru referred the issue to the Security Council of the UNO (United Nations Organisation). On the basis of Nehru's pledge, the Security Council decided that the future of Kashmir should be settled by a reference to the people of Kashmir. In 1952, India refused to hold any plebiscite in Kashmir on the ground that India 'would never have the conditions which were necessary for a plebiscite'. Moreover, it was argued that the consecutively held elections in Kashmir had more than ratified its incorporation into the Indian Republic. As a result the plebiscite in valley never took place.

A quick review of Kashmir's political history since Independence points to its essentially unstable nature. Sheikh Abdullah, as the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, took certain steps meant primarily for protecting the Kashmiri peasants from time-old oppression of predominantly Hindu landlords. On 9 August 1953, he was removed and arrested on the ground that he had joined hands with 'alien powers'. Abdullah spent almost 20 years in several spells in Indian jails. In the 1970s, Sheikh Abdullah finally compromised with New Delhi and renounced his demand for full self-determination. He reached an agreement with the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi in February 1975. The agreement declared Kashmir as a 'constituent part' of India. The earlier steps for completing the process of Kashmir's incorporation into India were recognised as valid. Sheikh Abdullah remained the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir until his death in 1982. His son Farooq Abdullah took office as the new Chief Minister. In July 1984, the ministry- headed by Farooq - was dismissed by invoking Article 356 of the Constitution. Ghulam Mohammad Shah was installed as the new Chief Minister. In March 1986, Ghulam Mohammad Shah was again removed from power by the Central Government and Jammu and Kashmir came under 'Governor's rule'. In March 1987, Farooq Abdullah became the Chief Minister with the support of the Indian National Congress.

The Governing institutions never took their roots in the state so much so that *India Today* (30 April, 1990) remarked that the state about this time represented a "virtual abdication of governance". The new phase of agitation continued leaderless for a while. Finally a new leadership from the younger generation took charge of the situation. In 1987, five youths in jail, with a view to "liberate" Kashmir from the Indian rule formed an organisation called Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). By the time the new leadership took over, the state was under the grip of violence and there were many organisations that openly advocated the importance of violence in the movement for national self-determination. Some of them were raised and nurtured in Pakistan. The first signs of storm were felt in 1988. On 10 June, spontaneous demonstrations took place in different parts of Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, to protest against a steep rise in power tariffs and erratic supply of electricity. What initially remained a movement against bad governance gradually assumed a violent character and threatened to challenge the Indian state.

Violence continued unabated in the state throughout the 1990s. The use of violence and counter-violence allows the same game to be played around and makes solution impossible. The years between 1990 and 1995 saw the use of the Terrorist and

Disruptive Activities Act, 1985 (TADA) in the valley. On 5 July 1990, two more acts were clamped down in Kashmir, which gave extraordinary power to the Armed forces and the Police. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) empowered the army and paramilitary forces "to arrest without warrant, any person, who has committed a cognizable offence or against whom a reasonable suspicion exists that he had committed or was about to commit a cognizable offence and enter and search any premises to make any such arrest". The Disturbed Area Act (DAA) conferred almost similar power upon the state police force.

The Kashmir case indicates that Gandhi is a forgotten man now. But he has clear message for us in spite of the fact that the case takes a toll on three of Gandhi's cardinal principles of conflict resolution. The more they take a toll, the more we recognise their relevance: One, counter-violence cannot be an answer to violence. It only contributes to the spiraling of violence and makes solution difficult. Two, Gandhi's firm belief that human beings are sovereign insofar as they listen to their inner voice is in jeopardy. Gandhi observed in 1947, "common sense dictates that the will of the Kashmiris should decide the future of Kashmir". But unfortunately we seem to have reached a stage when people are caught in violence, rendered helpless and unable to respond to the call of their inner voice. It is essential that the conditions for a meaningful dialogue with the people that will help reduce their helplessness should be created. But there is no way to underestimate the courage of the people. We have stories of valiant people- particularly women- who have stood against the use of macabre violence, voiced against militarisation of society and negotiated the communal divide. Three, peace can return to the valley only by ensuring rights and not by curtailing and abrogating them. The militant organisations that issue fatwas and diktats (particularly relating to women's dress code etc) and the extraordinary legislations that take away the constitutionally recognised rights cannot provide an enduring solution. The basis of these rights is enshrined in Article 370 of the Constitution of India that recognises the 'special status' of the state and provides for widespread legislative autonomy. Development is the need of the hour in this trouble-torn state.

14.4 THE NORTH-EAST EXPERIENCE

India's North East is a highly heterogeneous region with as many as eight states including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura and with hundreds of indigenous groups and communities living in them. The main sources of conflict are given as follows: First, this region has historically served as the gateway to the countries of South-East Asia and people migrated across the region from both the east and the west. Besides, it also forms part of the Ganga-Meghna-Brahmaputra (GMB) basin with a very long history of peasant migration. Again in 1947 when India became Independent and the subcontinent was partitioned, sharply deteriorating living conditions, climate changes and submergence of land under the sea, systematic persecution of the minorities in the countries adjoining the region have only aggravated the population influx. This is perceived to have strained the availability of land and employment for the locals and autochthones and posed a threat to their language and culture. The Assam Movement (1979-1985) that was directed against the 'foreigners' is illustrative of this fear. Secondly, the backwardness in the fields of economic and human development is believed to have been responsible for the proliferation of militancy in the region. Insurgency is regarded as the only booming 'industry' drawing the vast army of unemployed youth at a time when the overall industrial scenario is very grim. Thirdly, the Partition of 1947 by definition was

expected to bring the otherwise historically thriving cultural and economic continuities to an end with the effect that the region became landlocked sharing more than 98 percent of its land border with foreign countries. This has cut many an ethnic community into pieces and members of the same community are strewn across more than one nation-state and administrative unit. This has only reinforced their desire for consolidation.

14.4.1 The Naga Case

The Nagas consisting of a number of subgroups living in different parts of the region as well as Myanmar have been the first to challenge the Indian State and declare their 'Independence'. The British policy towards the hill tribes in general and the Nagas in particular was inspired by the imperative of exercising 'minimum interference' in the pattern of life of the Naga tribes and keeping the outsiders from entering the tribal areas.

On the eve of Independence, Angami Zapu Phizo, who headed the Naga insurgency through the Naga National Council (NNC), sent a memorandum to the British Government for establishing an interim government for a period of 10 years, at the end of which the Naga people could be left to form government of their choice. When the Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Tribes of the Constituent Assembly visited the Naga Hills in May 1947, the NNC maintained that the Nagas retained the right of deciding their future at the end of this ten-year period. In 1956 and with the completion of ten-year period, NNC informed the formation of the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN). The NNC rejected the provisions of the Sixth Schedule and held a plebiscite on the question of Naga independence. Around 99.9 percent of the Nagas, according to NNC sources, cast their vote in favour of 'independence outside India'.

Thus began an era of conflict and hostility. As hostility intensified, there were attempts at making peace. In the early part of 1957, a meeting consisting of church leaders from Kohima and Impur (of Naga Hills, then a part of undivided Assam) sent out an appeal for peace. Its main objective was to oppose violence and win over the rebels. A breakaway group of NNC- a section of moderates, wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru- the then prime minister of India - to settle the problem within the framework of the Indian Constitution. A Sixteen-Point Agreement, popularly known as Delhi Agreement, was reached in July 1960. The Agreement paved the way to the formation of a separate state of Nagaland within the Indian Union. Like Article 370, the Agreement also provides that no Act and Law passed by Indian Parliament relating to (1) the religious and social practices, (2) Naga customary laws and procedures, (3) civil and criminal justice concerning decisions according to Naga customary law and (4) ownership and transfer of land and its resources would have any legal force in Nagaland unless specifically applied by a majority vote in the Nagaland Legislative Assembly. On 1 August 1960, Nehru announced the proposed formation of Nagaland as a separate state comprising the existing district of Naga Hills and the Tuensang Area although Phizo denounced the pact from London on 30 July 1960. Nagaland however became a state in 1963.

14.4.2 The Role of Peace Mission

The role of Peace Mission deserves a special mention insofar as it involved direct intervention by at least two very well-known Gandhians in the resolution of conflicts. With a spurt in the hostilities between the security forces and the underground forces immediately after the formation of the separate state of Nagaland, the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) held a convention in Wokha from 31 January to 2 February 1964. This convention unanimously resolved to request the Government of India and the

underground Federal Government of Nagaland to negotiate with a Peace Mission that it formed with members comprising B. P. Chaliha (then Chief Minister of Assam), Jaya Prakash Narayan (the noted Sarvodaya leader) and Rev. Michael Scott (a British missionary). A ceasefire (technically 'suspension of operations' by both sides) was arrived between the Naga underground leaders and the Government of India on August 15, 1964.

After at least five rounds and four years of deliberation, the Mission finally came out with a proposal and urged both the warring parties to make flexible their otherwise 'rigid' understandings of 'sovereignty and independence' and called for the 'Union of Nagaland with India with certain distinct characteristics that are absent in the case of other states'. The proposal was intended to reach a middle point. The Naga Federal Government refused to accept the 'Constitutional Status' of the state of Nagaland within the Indian Union while its assertion of the right to self-determination and the demand for a sovereign Nagaland State was not acceptable to the Government of India. To overcome these conflicting positions, the Peace Mission came with the proposal that "the NFG (Nagaland Federal Government) could on their own volition decide to be a participant in the Union of India and mutually settle the terms and conditions for that purpose. On the other hand, the Government of India could consider to what extent the pattern and structure of the relationship between Nagaland and the Government of India should be adapted and recast so as to satisfy the political aspirations of all sections of Naga opinion." The resolution of conflicts, according to the Gandhian approach, can take place only when the conflicting parties meet themselves halfway on their own volition.

The proposal found no acceptance among the parties. The Government of India welcomed the first part of the proposal in which it urged the NFG to participate 'on their own volition' but understood the second part in terms of providing greater autonomy to Nagaland. The NFG wanted to keep it open and asked for holding plebiscite supervised by a neutral body and the Naga people, through the plebiscite, would decide on the future according to 'their own volition'. Thus no agreement could be reached between them. While the Peace Mission was flooded with complaints of violation of ceasefire from both sides, Jaya Prakash Narayan pleaded their helplessness. As he pointed out: "The Peace Mission has no machinery to enable us to go into these complaints; we work merely as a Post Office, however sufficient grounds to conclude that one of the terms of the agreement, namely the personnel of the Naga Army will not move about in villages in uniform and/or with arms, this to a considerable extent is not being implemented". It seems that their moral authority could not prevail over the military power of the armed groups.

The Peace Mission was however keen more on the continuation of talks for it felt that it was easier to break them off than to resume them all over again. Y. V. Gundevia, the then Foreign Secretary of India directly involved as the chief delegate in many of these negotiations, for example in a letter dated 21 January, 1965 to B. P. Chaliha pointed out:

… we welcome the conclusion which the Peace Mission has arrived … that a peaceful solution of the Naga problem can only be found within the Indian Union, by Nagaland continuing to remain within the Indian union.

Jaya Prakash Narayan reacted to this:

The GOI (Government of India) attaches an utterly wrong meaning to the proposals in that, while the PM (Peace Mission), conceding the Nagas' right to self-determination, had

invited them *on their own volition* to become participants in the Indian Union, the Indian chief delegate's letter said that the PM had come to a conclusion that the final solution of the problem of Nagaland can only be found within the Indian Union by Nagaland *continuing to remain within the Indian union*. The phrase 'continuing to remain within the Indian union' destroyed completely the principle of voluntary participation which was the heart of the PM proposals (italics ours).

While Narayan thought that this openness might have given the talks a new lease of life, it would take a little for the Government of India to 'fail' them. As he argued:

If the Nagas decide to participate in the Union, the effect would be not the beginning of balkanisation, but further consolidation and strengthening of the Union. If, on the other hand, they refuse to be participants, there would be no commitment on India's part to accept separation of Nagaland, which the GOI would be free to resist in the manner it chose.

Indeed, the problem also lay squarely with the rebels who found one of his statements unacceptable. Jaya Prakash Narayan was the first to resign from the Peace Mission. It was observed that:

The Nagaland Peace Mission was fortunate to have a person like him. Very unfortunately, he was the first person who resigned and left the Mission, when the underground protested against one of his alleged pronouncements: 'if the government of India desires, she can liquidate the Naga rebels'. Because of this … he immediately withdrew his membership from the Peace Mission just after the first meeting with the Indian Prime Minister on the ground that the federal leaders had no confidence in him. It was in February 1966.

Did Jaya Prakash Narayan's resignation from the Peace Mission help in resolving the conflict? In fact as we will see, the conflict turned worse as the Peace Mission collapsed. Even Narayan knew this. But the basic issue here was the perceived loss of confidence and trust and Narayan seemed to realise that it was immoral on his part to remain in the Mission when he had lost confidence and trust from those for whom the Mission was set up. For a devout Gandhian, nothing is more serious than the loss of trust and credibility. He made a clear moral choice: for him it was better to continue with the conflict than to impose a solution on the unwilling parties.

14.4.3 From Conflict to Ceasefire

The NFG leaders rejected any offer short of 'complete Independence and Sovereign Nagaland'. It was at this point that Naga underground was seriously afflicted by factionalism within its ranks. The Indo-Pak war of 1971 that led to the liberation of Bangladesh dealt a blow to the Naga insurgent movement: "Foreign support to the Naga rebellion from China and Pakistan also dropped substantially after the creation of Bangladesh, and the defeat of the Pakistan army in 1971". The Indian army launched massive counteroffensive against the Naga underground in 1973 and this was also the time when many cadres of Naga Federal Army who went to China for arms training, returned with sophisticated arms.

The Church intervened for the second time, as there was a spurt in violence. They appointed a Liaison Committee to bring all sections of the Naga underground leaders and the Government of India. After months of negotiation, the Peace talks were held on 10-11 November 1975 culminating in what became known as Shillong Accord (1975). The

Accord was signed by them – not as FGN representatives but 'on behalf of the underground organisations'. In spite of being excruciatingly brief, Article 3 clause (iii) held out the promise of arriving at what it had described as the 'final settlement' in the following terms. The rather dismissive phrase of 'other issues' never came for discussion in the first place – let alone reaching a solution. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (now Nagalim) emerged as a political force from the ashes of the aborted Shillong Accord. Describing the Accord as a 'surrender pact', it also referred to the NNC in its manifesto of 1980 as a spent force. It wanted a 'Greater Nagalim'. Accordingly, the 'Government of the People's Republic of Nagaland' (GPRN) was formed. It wanted to create this proposed state by integrating Naga-inhabited areas in Myanmar with those in India.

The ceasefire and Naga peace talks officially announced, during the United Front government led by I. K. Gujral in August 1997, for a peace dialogue on the more than five-decades-old protracted Naga issue. The ongoing peace talks between the New Delhi and NSCN are conditioned by the following terms: (i) talks between the two groups be held without either side stipulating any precondition, (ii) that the talks be held at the highest (prime ministerial) level, and (iii) at a venue anywhere outside India. So far the talks have not yielded any concrete political understanding and documentation.

14.4.4 Insurgency in Assam

As one refers to the insurgency in Assam, one cannot but refer to one of the largest insurgent organisations that have been leading it. Although the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) was born on 7 April 1979, it was not until 1983 that ULFA surfaced in the public arena and people could become aware of its political presence in Assam. It started as a more militant stream of the anti-foreigners' movement (1979-1985) mentioned above and gradually broke away from the moderate forces that were associated with it. But ULFA shot into prominence by organising bank heists, undertaking rural development works and meting out summary justice in remote areas where state's presence is thin and even by carrying out retributive killings. The organisation was declared illegal only as late as on November 27, 1990. The year 1990 marks the watershed as the army moved in and the first ever army operations were launched with the objective of 'liquidating' ULFA. While 'Operation Bajrang' ended up in an anticlimax, another operation codenamed 'Operation Rhino' began in September 1991 with the objective of 'flushing out' the 'terrorists' and isolating them from the people of Assam. Although one faction of ULFA was engaged in talks with the Government of India and reportedly came close to arriving at a negotiated settlement, another faction surrendered to it and became subsequently known as SULFA or Surrendered ULFA. Unlike 'Operation Bajrang', the objective of the second operation was quite different. 'Operation Rhino II', which is operational now, aims at 'bringing the boys to the negotiating table'. A military operation in effect is launched for holding talks with the armed militants.

Although offers of talks have been extended to this organisation, talks - whether directly or through backchannels - could not take place. On November 16, 2004 Indira Goswami – an eminent litterateur from Assam - met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and handed over a memorandum drafted in consultation with the academics. The memorandum urged on the Government to initiate talks with ULFA. On November 18, Arabinda Rajkhowa – the Chairman of ULFA, confirmed that ULFA would enter into a dialogue if the organisation were invited on the Government of India's letterhead with a signature and office seal, and with 'sovereignty' on the agenda. Both Goswami and the Government of

India consulted legal experts for an interpretation of 'sovereignty' and its place in the Indian Constitution. As *The Telegraph* reported it: "Legal opinion seems to be that there could be various kinds of sovereignty, some of which are not against the Constitution. Economic sovereignty is a possibility, for instance."[1] On 19 November 2004, in one of her meetings with the Prime Minister, she was successful in attracting the attention of the Government to the serious problem of insurgency in Assam. She appealed to him to initiate a process of dialogue on the outfit's demand for "sovereignty" for Assam, but the Prime Minister put to rest any such speculation and said in Guwahati on 22 November 2004 that "if they shun violence, then I will invite them for talks but violence and talks cannot go on simultaneously." Both Baruah and Mamoni Goswami however maintained that the latter was talking with the Prime Minister in her own capacity and initiative but Baruah lauds her effort in bringing the issue of 'sovereignty' into the agenda. She maintained that "sovereignty" of Assam was an issue, which had to be discussed, even though it should not be seen as a 'precondition'. On a number of occasions, she said that there was no harm in talking about 'sovereignty' of Assam.

It is in such a context that an 11-member People's Consultative Group (PCG) consisting mainly of civil society activists was set up by ULFA to conduct negotiations with the Government. This is the first time that ULFA induced the civil society persons into the peace process. It too seemed to realise the necessity of involving the larger civil society in the peace process so that the issue gets widely discussed. The Prime Minister met them in late November 2005 and the members of PCG expressed satisfaction over their first meeting with the Prime Minister. Yet there were many hiccups in the way: First, even though talks were going on, there was no letup in the military operations. While according to one estimate at least 13 rounds of talks were held between the Government of India and PCG, no less than 36 ULFA cadres were killed by bullets of the security forces. Moreover, while ULFA stuck to its demand for release of five of its top leaders who were arrested in course of the Bhutan operations in 2003 on the ground that they might take part in peace dialogues, Tarun Gogoi- Assam's Chief Minister - wanted a written response from the organisation assuring the Government of its commitment to talks. It may not be irrelevant to note in this connection that ULFA too insisted on written assurance from the Government on the question. The formalistic stand on both parts is reflective of the persisting mutual distrust and caught both of them in a stalemate. As a result, PCG disengaged from talks and a fresh round of army operation (Operation Rhino II) was launched against it. Recently, some of the top cadre of the ULFA was arrested; the organisation now stands cornered for want of strategy and support. As on date, the region is witnessing a spell of peace and its duration depends on further developments.

14.5 A COMPARISON BETWEEN KASHMIR AND THE NORTH-EAST

Both Kashmir and the North-East represent two regions which have historically developed highly tolerant and syncretic cultures. Both fall within world's two important arterial routes connecting Central Asia and South-East Asia respectively and thereby constantly sending and receiving people across regions. The ever-spiraling violence and militancy have created an atmosphere of mutual distrust and hostility. Violence, as Gandhi would have us believe, exists first of all in people's minds and then finds its material expression.

Yet both represent two rather different situations: On the one hand, while the state has been in dialogue mode with one militant organisation or the other in the North-East, the

talks have been extremely difficult insofar as Kashmir is concerned. The proliferation of militant groups with diverse agenda makes it impossible for the state to conduct peace dialogues and to reconcile the mutual differences. Besides, the direct involvement of foreign country makes it imperative that the dialogues also include it. But dialogues with them, to say the least, have not been sustainable for reasons not unknown to us.

How do we break the vicious circle? It is true that interventions made by such eminent Gandhians like Jaya Prakash Narayan did not of course bear fruit. He withdrew from Peace Mission on the grounds of losing trust of the conflicting parties. Although not explicitly stated, Indira Goswami's unwavering commitment to non-violence brought her to the centre of peace politics. She too dropped out on the same ground of perceived loss of confidence. In other words, individual interventions were called off on moral grounds. But these cases, in no way, undermine the importance of Gandhian approach. For one thing, appropriate social conditions need to be created to break the vicious circle. Truthfulness and local autonomy as suggested by Gandhi and enunciated by the Indian Constitution can still serve as the essential first step to conflict resolution in both cases. The foundations of local autonomy are already laid down in Articles 370 and 371 of the Constitution of India. For another and as a corollary to the above, individual interventions need to be backed up by broader social movements for peace. If individual interventions fail, a vibrant social movement cannot. Gandhi's success lay not in making individual interventions but in taking people along in each of them.

14.6 SUMMARY

Although the Gandhian approach was never truly tested in either case, whatever little was done particularly in the form of Peace Mission in respect of the Naga conflict was saddled with its own contradictions: On one hand, not all in the Peace Mission were inspired and guided by the same Gandhian principles. There were very different kinds of interests playing within it and its internal schisms were too significant to be brushed aside. For another, although initially encouraged by both Naga civil society groups and the Government of India, the members of the Mission gradually discovered that they had lost trust from both sides. Modern statecraft is far too complex than what Gandhi would have thought. That Gandhian approach does not seem to produce quick and instant results does not mean that it has exhausted all its potential. Gandhi after all would have preferred to suffer the problems than to resolve them in ways that violate the normative principles that he held so dearly throughout his life. Sufferance of conflicts per se is not a failure but as Gandhi would have us believe, is a step towards the resolution of conflicts. For it is likely to melt the heart of the enemy. Even that crucial one step was 'enough' for him.

14.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Draw out, in line with the Gandhian approach, an outline for the possible resolution of the Kashmir issue. What do you think are the constraints to such resolution?

2. Discuss, in the light of the Gandhian approach, the role of Peace Mission in the Naga conflict. Do you consider it as only an unsuccessful experiment?

3. Make a comparative assessment of the conflicts in Kashmir and in the Northeast and point out where the Gandhian approach is likely to be more successful in the near future and why.

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