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Mahatma Gandhi: The Principle of Satyagraha, Truth and Non-Violence

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Abstract: The paper focuses on concept of satyagraha Truth and Non-Violence. Gandhi's system of Satyagraha was based on nonviolence, non co-operation, truth and honesty. Gandhi's principle of Satyagraha is an incorporated concept and includes truth, non-violence, non-stealing, chastity or Brahmacharya, poverty and non-possession and the Truth was the charity of his philosophy, and Ahimsa was the guiding law that should be followed by each Satyagrahi. The term Non-violence is almost identical with the name of Mahatma Gandhi. The paper deals the notions of non violence as a philosophy and an ideal way of life.

Key Words: *Satyagraha, Truth, Non-Violence, Ahimsa, tolerate, Non-cooperation and goal*

Introduction: The philosophy of non-violence is hard to understand and difficult to act upon. When passion dominates the mind of man his divine qualities are subordinated to his animal instincts and his un-primitiveness gets the better of his civilized state. The greatest tragedy of human civilization is that the cult of violence is preached and practiced by highly intellectual and intelligent person serving the society in responsible positions. They call themselves the great supporters and lovers of peace. Either at individual level or state level, we lack the patience to tolerate the differences of opinions, dissimilarity of ideology, and clash of economic interests. Non-violence is the only answer to the situation. It is the panacea for evils of the modern society which is torn by caste, communal and religious clashed.

Mahatma Gandhi, the great advocate and follower of non-violence, emphasizing the importance of it said, "Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute," (Mehta, 46) All the great personalities of all ages have preached the doctrine of love and non-violence. Zoroaster Mahavir, Buddha, Nanak primarily emphasized a moral code that have due importance to non-violence. Non-violence is a

philosophy of life, a modus operandi which has been widely accepted and recognized in India as well as abroad. It is evident from this fact the 2nd Oct., the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, has been declared as international non-violence day. This reflects the wide recognition of non-violence throughout the world.

Various philosophers and scholars have different interpretations of non-violence. Generally, the term means 'non-injury' to others. This concept is largely based on the fundamental goodness of man. In the fight for right, justice, freedom, morality and equality, violence is to be avoided at every cost. In other words physical force finds no place in it. One must avoid inflicting pain on others to achieve one's goal however true and justifiable it may be. Evil must be resisted in a cool and calm way. Violence is to be avoided not only in actions but even in thought. The path of non-violence calls for a great deal of fortitude on the part of the person practicing it to achieve the best of goals. A great deal of courage and self-sacrifice is required to follow the path of non-violence always begets violence. Hence, non-violence is the weapon of the bold, courageous and strong and not of cowards.

The philosophy of non-violence is not easy to act upon. Even the wisest of the minds find it difficult to control his passion and he succumbs to the beastly tendency of humanity. History of civilization from Stone Age to computer age is full of such examples. The tragic march towards damage and destruction can be checked only if power-maddened politicians take to the path of non-violence as their guiding force for solving the problems faced by the mankind and take it into account while formulating the national and international policies. "It is the second main tenet of his philosophy of life. Ahimsa is the only means to realize truth and God. To him Truth and Ahimsa are the two sides of the same coin. It is practically impossible to disintegrate and separate them" (Sachdeva, 107)

The philosophy of non-violence is based on love for God's creatures and one very cautious towards doing any application of force, whether physical or mental finds any place in the noble concept of non-violence. Non-violence rules out defensive measures based on violence against a violent onslaught. Preaching non-violence Christ said to his followers, "but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Sachdeva, 109) Lord Buddha too gave to a stricken and crestfallen humanity a similar message of non-violence. Though his teachings fail to altogether abolish war and bloodshed from this earth, it certainly diminished much human misery by changing the hearts of great warriors like Ashoka who denounced violence and bloodshed and took the path of love, peace and non-violence. He realized the folly of all the military conquests and empire expansions and made the love of humanity the goal of his life. Mahatma Gandhi, the great apostle of peace and non-violence of the modern time, considered it a panacea for the woes and worries of mankind. He held the opinion that only the fearless devotee of non-violence could uphold the cause of truth. His non-violence campaign against the British rule in India was a unique experiment in the field of politics which succeeded so well that the colonial power was compelled to quit India. Again his philosophy of non-violence worked wonder in normalizing the strained relations between India and England.

He believed in God unquestionably. God is the all pervasive reality. Like an idealist Gandhi ji believed, “God is that indefinable something which we all feel but which we do not know to me God is truth and Love. God is ethics and Morality. God is fearlessness. God is the source of light and life” (Sachdeva, 108)

The relevance or non-violence is all the more in the strife and hatred torn world of today. Aggression between men and nations as well can be checked by non-violence. But when the aggressor has no regard for the damage and destruction caused by his act, total non-violence becomes difficult to be followed. Even Gandhi, the modern proponent of the philosophy of non-violence, allowed the use of violent weapons in the fight for right cause if the need to do so arises.’ The first formulation of the satyagraha as a political movement and principle occurred in 1920, which he tabled as "Resolution on Non-cooperation in September that year before a session of the Indian Congress. It was the satyagraha formulation and step, states Dennis Dalton, that deeply resonated with beliefs and culture of his people, embedded him into the popular consciousness, transforming him quickly into Mahatma” (Dennis Dalton, 32)

Gandhi advocated that as the source of all the rays of the sun is the absolute and one whole, in the same way though the persons are different, yet the same light pervades in all of them. He experienced and realized unity in diversity. Gandhiji truth is the supreme principle. The realization is Truth and Truth is God. Truth has a divine significance and is manifested in the voice of the conscience. Truth should be the basis of the whole. He loved punctuality and was worried that he had kept the congregation waiting. ‘I am late by ten minutes, he murmured, ‘I should have been here at the stroke of five’. He raised his hands and touched the palms together to greet the crowd that was waiting. Everyone returned the greeting. Many came forward wanting to touch his feet. Gandhi dedicated his life to discovering and pursuing truth, or Satya, and called his movement satyagraha, which means "appeal to, insistence on, or reliance on the Truth"(Gene Sharp, 4)

Violence has solved no problem in the past, nor is it likely to solve any in the future. The policy of peaceful coexistence is the answer material benefits leading to growing conflicts between individuals, groups and nations. The world which lacks patience, perseverance, true courage, dedication and absolutely no regard for moral values, non-violence has a prominent role to play. Emphasizing it, Mahatma Gandhi said, “Peace will never come until the Great Powers courageously disarm themselves. It seems to me that the recent events must force that belief on the Great Power. I have an implicit faith a faith that today burns brighter than ever, after half a century’s experience of unbroken practice of non-violence-that mankind can only be saved through non-violence which is the central teaching of the Bible as I have understood the Bible.”((Mehta, 56)

Even the dependence of modern government on police and army for internal security and external aggression or curbing anti-social activities or lawlessness was a questionable practice. It is, indeed, the climate of peace that ensures the moral and material advancement of human race.

Love is the core of Gandhian philosophy. He advocated that the true religion of man was the religion of love. His love attained the form of universal love. His motto was “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Mehta, 66). He wanted to establish a universal community of free persons without racial discrimination and artificial barrier of caste and creed. He had firm faith in a gospel of brotherhood of man. Satyagraha is the practical application of non-violence. It is a method of securing a right by personal suffering. It is to achieve change of heart by self-suffering by the adherence of truth and non-violence. It is the vindication of truth not by inflicting of suffering on the opponent but on one's self. Service for humanity is the core of his philosophy. His greatest creed was service of God through service of humanity. For Gandhi, God lives in the temple of humanity.

Conclusion: Today, the world is desperately in need of non-violence as a way of life, to ensure peace, prosperity, love and brotherhood. The world needs to be sensitized towards the impact of violence and importance of non-violence. It is the philosophy of non-violence. Which can provide the mankind respite from violence, bloodshed and wars? World harmony and peace rest with non-violence.

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