
Gandhi's Satyagraha: Concept and Methods

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Abstract: Before Gandhi came on the political scene, the world knew only two instruments of change, the bullet and the ballot. Gandhi brought a new methodology of struggle that is Satyagraha, in which there was a human touch. Gandhi combined two Ideas in his Satyagraha Philosophy, one is Truth and second is Ahimsa (non-violence). Ahimsa means love, it means love towards all living creature. Truth means Satya, which is God. He called Satyagraha "surgery of the soul" intended to awaken the opponent's humanity. Gandhi told people to defy the oppressive authority that usurped their freedom. The present world full of hatred, bitterness, cruelty, racial discrimination, communal tensions, inequities and erosion of values, Gandhi is more relevant today than at any other time. There is an imperative need to recapture the spirit and human touch of Gandhi's philosophy. The main objective of this paper is to highlight Gandhian Satyagraha's concept and its different methods.

Keywords: Ahimsa, Humanity, Non-Violence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Satyagraha is not just a concept but a way of life. It is a normal weapon which is used not only by individuals but also by groups and masses to fight against corruption exploitation, imperialism and social, economic and political injustice^[1]. It is based on truth, Non violence, morality and spirituality. Satyagraha is the utter self effacement full of humility, kindness, patience, religious tolerance and deep faith in truthful living^[2]. Satyagraha looks upon the use of physical force as weakness because it believes that the use of violence is the result of fear. It would always exhort people to be strong in spirit because that strength alone can give one the power to overwhelm the opponent by love and self-suffering, 'Resist evil with good is the motto of Satyagraha^[3].

Gandhi's Satyagraha believes that the brotherhood of men and rejects the biological concept of the struggle for existence or the survival of the fittest it rejects Hobbes's theory of human life as:

"The struggle of all against all"^[4].

On the other hand Gandhi believes in love, mutual aid and co-operation as the basis of social interaction and of human progress. Gandhi's firm argument is that evil cannot be cured by evil; hatred cannot be conquered by hatred. Gandhi strongly believes in that:

"With Satya combined with Ahimsa as you can bring the world to your feet."

In fact Satyagraha works on the principles of moral force effect produced by one human being upon the mind and actions of another, not through fear of punishment or hope of reward, but by virtue of the latter's intuitive acknowledgment of intrinsic superiority. Gandhi applied Satyagraha on mass scale for all social needs and conflicts^[5].

2. FORMS AND METHODS OF SATYAGRAHA

According to Gandhi, there can be as many forms of Satyagraha as there are various forms of injustice. Satyagraha starts with meaningful Persuasions and Negotiations while Non-Cooperation and civil disobedience in a way is its radical forms. However fasting and especially fast up to death is the last weapon of Satyagraha.

2.1 Persuasion and Negotiations

A Satyagrahi must always hold himself open to conviction must be ready for discussion, equally eager for peace and should welcome any honorable settlement. Gandhi had admitted that he was essentially a man of compromise; because he did never sure about it that he was right^[6].

2.2 Strike

Gandhi adopted this method for opposing the management in meeting the demands of workers. It is a peaceful resistance against the authority for doing injustice to the workers. Gandhi says that strikes are an inherent right of the working men for the purpose of securing Justice^[7]. Regarding the conditions of labour, Gandhi emphasizes that the hours of labour must have some hours of leisure for the workmen, they must get facilities for their own education, provision should be made for an adequate supply of milk, healthy food, clothing and necessary education for their children, there should be sanitary dwellings for the workmen and they should be in a position to save enough to maintain themselves during their old age. He was keen for a living wage to every labourer. He remarks that living wage to his mind is the most accurate description for an irreducible wage^[8]. Gandhi laid down some conditions for a successful strike- cause of the strike must be real, there should be practical unanimity among the strikers and all the participants, Strikers must fix an unalterable minimum demand and declare it before embarking up their strike. Their demands must be clear, feasible and just. Strikers should never resort to violence in any shape or form against the adversary or others and strikers should be able to maintain themselves during the periods of strike^[9].

2.3 Hartal (Temporary Strike)

Hartal is another form and technique of Gandhi's Satyagraha. It is like a temporary strike of work or stopping of business. It is a method of showing protest against government or the so called adversary. Gandhi says that the object of a hartal is to strike the imagination of the people and government^[10]. The hartal should not be a forced effort but should be voluntary.

2.4 Peace Marches

Peace marches mean a non-violent raid or March. To develop a positive public opinion and for public awareness, peace marches could be made more effective.

2.5 Hijrat (Migration)

Gandhi says that Hijrat means voluntary emigration by the people from the land they have hitherto believed to be theirs, when they are grievously oppressed and terrorized and when they have no other alternative. But in ordinary situations, there is no need for Hijrat^[11].

2.6 Picketing (Dharnas)

Picketing is another form which generally supportive and goes along with the strike. Gandhi allows non-violent Picketing should not be aggressive. Peaceful picketing is a valid and useful form of Satyagraha.

2.7 Boycott

Gandhi includes social, economic, political and educational boycott. In the economic sphere boycott. In the economic sphere boycott implies the boycott of foreign and indigenous products of such industries which are based on exploitation of the masses. In the political sphere boycott takes the form of civil disobedience. In the first stage, boycott of law courts by lawyers and government schools and colleges by parents of scholars. Social boycott implies on government officers, police or anti nationalists.

2.8 Non- Cooperation

Gandhi that non-cooperation is essentially a cleansing process. It is a movement to place the social relations on a pure basis to define them in a manner consistent with our self respect and dignity. Besides non cooperation is nothing but non-violence in its dynamic conditions. Gandhi clarifies that non-violent non-cooperation is the method whereby we cultivate the force public opinion and get bit enforced when there is complete freedom of opinion, that of the majority must prevail^[12]. Gandhi's firm view that all exploitation is based on cooperation. There would be no exploitation if people refuse to obey the exploiter. Gandhi says-

"Non Cooperation is a protest against unwitting and unwilling participation in evil. Non-Cooperation with evil is as much a duty as Cooperation with good"^[13].

2.9 Civil-Disobedience

Civil disobedience was started as a protest against an unjust law. It is a form of non-violent rebellion. Gandhi says that civil disobedience becomes a sacred duty when the state becomes lawless or corrupt. Gandhi believes that civil disobedience mass or individual is an end to constructive effort and is a full substitute for armed revolts. But Gandhi advised civil disobedience can be used with in a restricted field and for specific purpose only. Gandhi strongly believes in that civil disobedience is the purest type of constitutional agitation. Infact it is the storehouse of power.

2.10 Fasting

The next phase of Satyagraha is fasting. Fasting is an old age method for purification of self and others. Gandhi, like Muhammad would begin to fast whenever he would be faced with a moral crisis. It was his firm view that great teachers of the world had derived extraordinary power for the good of humanity and attained clarity of vision through fasting and prayer. In 1924, Gandhi undertook a fast of twenty-one days to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1932, he began a "Fast unto Death" to undo Ramsay MacDonald's 'Communal Award'. In 1933, he undertook a fast of twenty -one days for purification at Agakhan's palace^[14]. He also fasted in 1939, what he called "the ill- Fasted Rajkot fast". In South Africa, he fasted only for the purpose of self -purification. According to Gandhi, fasting un to death is an integrated part of Satyagraha programme and it is the greatest and the most effective weapon in its armoury under given circumstances. There is no prayer without fasting^[15]. Fasting should be offered when one is thoroughly convinced of the correctness of one's stand and when all other methods have failed, and as a resort, and never for personal gain. It should be in the nature of prayer for purity and strength and power from God. Gandhi says:

"To claim that fasting is an infalliable weapon in the armoury of Satyagraha."

2.11 Renunciation of Titles, Honours and Position

Gandhi accepted renunciation as the law of life but it was not the renunciation of the world as the renunciation of selfish desires. Renunciation of Titles, honours and Positions are another affective form of Satyagraha.

2.12 Agitation

After trying all the possible sources of negotiations and failing to obtain satisfaction from arbitration the Satyagrahi takes the next step of non- violent direct action that is Agitation. To achieve the chief objective, a Satyagrahi utilizes the mass media of communication like books, pamphlets, deliver speeches and invent slogans^[16].

3. CONCLUSION

Gandhi gave a serious thought to the theory and made it very dynamic, rationale, scientific positive and universally acceptable under all circumstances to solve all kinds of conflicts. Truth, Non violence faith in the ultimate reality- God, brotherhood of man, supremacy of moral law and purity of means constitute the important postulates of Satyagraha. The beauty of Satyagraha is that it does not depend upon physical or brute force as it is always based on moral force-the force of truth and justice, the force of self purification and self suffering, love and service, courage and discipline. Satyagraha teaches us not only the art of living but dying also. If Satyagraha is adopted, there could be no violence against each other because Gandhi believes in that non-violence is always better and superior to violence. Gandhi strongly believed that change should come first to the individual then it should be introduced in the life of society and its institutions.

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