

## Gandhian Peace and the World: Ground Reality and Relevance

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**Abstract:** *Peace is the prerequisite for development, progress and prosperity. From the ancient period to recent time peace is very precious. Several religious books such as the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Koran, and the Bible mentioned the value of peace. Today's world gives the importance of peace. However, the concept of peace has been changed from time to time. In traditional approach, peace was define just as the absence of violence and an acceptance of unbalanced power relationships, inequalities and lack of access to resources which may be associated with such a condition. In such condition, major concerns are early detection of conflict, prevention of conflict turning into violence, limiting the spread of violence if it does occur or to avoid reoccurrence of violence. Today peace is conceived as an environment where people strive to transform society and communities into fairer and more just places to live. In such environment, concern is not limited to tackle direct experience of violence, but also focused on the structural elements in society i.e. socio-economic and political components which perpetuate potential sources of conflict. Apart from this Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi mentioned another way to restore the peace which is completely different from others. Thus, my article attempt Gandhi's concept of peace. The article also analyzes the techniques which was applied by Gandhi, may follow in recent time or peace restoration. Finally, the paper discusses the relevance of Gandhian concept of peace in the contemporary world.*

**Keywords:** *Conflict, War, Reconstruction, Non-violence, Development.*

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## **Introduction**

Human are living in a very complex and rapidly changing world. Despite the marvelous growth in technology and material wealth in the advanced industrialized countries, many parts of the world are afflicted with poverty, famine, pestilence and natural disaster. Differences based on race, religion language and nationality have contributed too many regional, national and international tensions, conflicts and wars. Family violence and violence in public life have been on the increase.<sup>1</sup> Over many centuries, world civilization has witnessed countless instances of warfare, battles, and conflicts duly capable of employing the power of transmuting the human kind into forms what the emperors and rulers had never thought of. But peace is the prerequisite for development, progress and prosperity. From the ancient period to recent time peace is very precious. Several religious books such as the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Jainism, Buddhism, the Koran, and the Bible mentioned the value of peace. Among those who contributed from 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century to the tradition of peace we cannot ignore the illustrious names of Ram Mohan Roy, Debendranath Tagore, Kesab Chandra Sen, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh and Mahatma Gandhi. In today's world violence and war strategy are the biggest challenge to save people. Many people of the world stand on a line for peace to survive the war. Thus, today's world gives the importance of peace.

Johan Galtung argues that "Creating peace obviously has to do with reducing violence (cure) and avoiding violence (Prevention). And violence means harming and/or hurting."<sup>2</sup> The concept of peace has been changed from time to time. In traditional approach, peace defined just as the absence of violence and an acceptance of unbalanced power relationships, inequalities and lack of access to resources which may be associated with such a condition. In such condition, major concerns are early detection of conflict, prevention of conflict turning into violence, limiting the spread of violence if it does occur or to avoid reoccurrence of violence.<sup>3</sup> Peacemaking process in the traditional approach is participated by the heads of the states or governments and the top brass in the military and bureaucracy. Early warning system and troop deployment are used in this mechanism. Absence of violence does not indicate peace its root causes remaining unchanged. Violence may erupt at any time in this situation, if early warning mechanism or troops fail to fulfill their entrusted responsibility. The UNO and its peace making process is also a traditional approach. According to UN Charter peacekeeping is considered as surveillance mechanism to monitor developments in the violence-torn area or limit the intensity of violence through light military intervention. Unfortunately, state leaders have always been guided by this negative notion of peace. Physical force has been largely deployed to curb communal or ethnic violence at the state level to international level. War between two nation-states is normally ended with the conclusion of peace agreement. However, common people are the victims of wars but they are treated only as the secondary parties to the conflict. They do not have any role in peace process other than accepting provisions laid down in the agreement. Post-cold war period is witness of emergence of civil society groups into international peace initiatives and such developments are enhancing the

scope of peace building and involving more actors in the process which was absolutely absent in the traditional approach. Neo-liberal policies, rolling back of welfare measures and growing number of unemployment, environmental issues followed by health issues and displacement of people are some of the major sources of conflict in contemporary time. These elements compel the policy makers to develop a human-centered approach to resolve conflicts.

The idea of peace has been changed from its earlier concept of 'absence of violence' to a positive one. Today peace is conceived as an environment where people strive to transform society and communities into fairer and more just places to live. In such environment, concern is not limited to tackle direct experience of violence, but also focused on the structural elements in society i.e. socio-economic and political components which perpetuate potential sources of conflict. Thus, peace building means empowering people to become involved in non-violent change process themselves, to build sustainable conditions for peace and justice, humanitarian relief, protecting human rights, ensuring security, establishing non-violent modes of resolving conflicts, fostering reconciliation, providing trauma healing services, repatriating refugees and resettling internally displaced persons, supporting broad-based education and economic reconstruction.

It is clear from the above discussion that Peace building is a participatory approach involving all the parties to conflict except traditional approach. It is much broader approach than that of peace making. Thus, it is necessary to understand the contribution of M. K. Gandhi on peace.

### **Gandhian Peace**

The pioneer of the peace movement in the Indian sub-continent, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who is known worldwide as Mahatma Gandhi, Bapuji is also known as the great father of the Indian nation.<sup>4</sup> Mahatma Gandhi is the greatest ambassador of peace, the world has seen after Buddha and Christ.<sup>5</sup> No other eminent leader in the dominion of the world history is so much associated with peace and non-violence as does Gandhi. In other words, Mahatma Gandhi lived, worked, fought and died for peace, equality and respect for all human beings, tolerance and respect for all religious faiths and ethnic groups and settlement of differences (whether personal, national and international) by dialogue and discussion.<sup>6</sup> Peace was central to Gandhi's political, social and religious philosophy and demonstrated to the world the supreme method of achieving world peace. Gandhian aspect of peace must be clarified at the outset- first, peace is not merely absence of war, rather it is something more positive than this; second, merely acceptance of the ideology of non-violence is not peace; and finally, peace is not a short cut rather it should be understood as a long term process integrated in the ideology and structure of the total system.<sup>7</sup> So, Gandhi linked peace with truth achieved through non-violence. It is not only an external phenomenon, rather it is linked with the soul and spirit of the individual vis-à-vis he saw it in a holistic manner considering social, structural, religious, spiritual, metaphysical, ethical and epistemological aspects.<sup>8</sup> He believed that peace could be achieved in the totality of the system and not in a compartmentalized. His confession 'My life

is my message' was not an undiluted statement.<sup>9</sup> From this statement we knew his life and what he stood for, and on what values and principles he based his actions.

Gandhi considered violence as the root cause of all evils. His method was non-violence, identified invariably with peace and truth. The most fundamental principle of Gandhi's philosophy of peace is 'Ahimsa' or 'Non-violence' which is the law of love, life and creation as opposed to violence or himsa, the cause of hatred, death and destruction.<sup>10</sup> In other words, his notion of peace is centred on nonviolence, individualism, soul force and forgiveness.

Thomas Hobbes is considered as the precursor of traditional realist approach, who set forth a paradigm to resolve conflicts in accordance with his understanding of human nature.<sup>11</sup> According to Hobbes, human beings were motivated by self-interests and often contradictory in nature. Before the emergence of political authority, human beings were in constant conflict with one another. In such a condition life was 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'. In danger of anarchy, rationality and self-interests persuaded human beings to combine in agreement, to surrender sovereignty to a common power, state, as Leviathan argued by Thomas Hobbes.<sup>12</sup> For Hobbes, human nature itself was the source of conflict and it is a condition of all against all. Thus, it is impossible to evolve a mechanism for conflict resolution within society and a political authority was inevitable. He argues that unilateral state action is needed instead of voluntary initiatives for conflict resolution. There was no room for consensus among people, but the application of armed force was the only way to maintain peace.

Gandhi developed a distinct framework to understand conflict and bring sustainable peace. This was integrally related to his conception of human nature because without a change of human nature we cannot change in our society. Gandhi believed in the inherent goodness of human beings. According to him, all human beings had the capacity to develop their full potential of non-violence. He believed that all human beings belonged to God. He believed that truth is God and God is truth. Since God and human beings were interdependent and interrelated, non-violence was the inseparable quality of the latter. For Gandhi, the path to non-violence was none other than the path to God. Apart from physical force deployed by the political authority, Gandhi held that human beings had the potential to resolve conflicts through non-violence means.<sup>13</sup> For According to him, the universal human value of non-violence ought to be cultivated not only at the individual level, but also at village, national and global levels.<sup>14</sup> For Non-violence means absence of violence, or the absence of mental intention of injuring, harming, disturbing and agonising opponent. Non-violence means not harming others either in thought or deed and serve love and compassion to the opponent. This love served as the means to get to the ends of trust. Gandhi argues that absolute Truth as God, and there was no difference between the absolute Truth and God. Since all human beings belonged to God, each and every person had the property of truth. Further, he held that the Truth known to human beings was never absolute but relative and shared among them. However, Non-violence is an ideal that leads to the formation of the human and communist world. Gandhi says that "When I am frustrated, I remember the truth and love have won in the whole history."<sup>15</sup> For him, Non-violence is not a weapon of the weak or coward person, but of the

strong and fearless,<sup>16</sup> at the same time, achieving the desired social or political ends. In other words, Gandhi discovered the potency of collective, nonviolent action as a moral weapon for the physically weak to fight against the strong and powerful. Non-violence as an ideology must be associated with a programme to bring about qualitative change. It does not consist merely of abstention from physical injury; it demands a discipline of not even thinking of hurting others. Human Society would be changed only through strong human will. If we understand Gandhi's definition of truth as power and his method as a tool of non-violent warfare, the Gandhian path becomes a viable alternative.<sup>17</sup> Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence is unique. Non-violence has been successfully used across the world. The mindset of people has to be made more pro-non-violence. Strong peace movements need to be created in all countries. The concept and methods of non-violence should be widely communicated, promoted and distributed. It is also essential to bring about connectivity among different peace movements. Mahatma Gandhi stressed that "Non-violence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart and it must be an inseparable part of our very being."<sup>18</sup> All of us should be willing to engage in nonviolence because violent acts have not only proved to be morally ruined; they also threaten our very existence on this planet.

Truth, non-violence and suffering together constitute the core strategy of Satyagraha. These elements coupled with the Satyagrahi's individual will and power would lead to the cherished goal. Gandhi believed that a Satyagrahi's moral power and conviction could overcome the power of an oppressive and exploitative regime and eventually establish an ideal society free from any kind of fear or domination.<sup>19</sup> Gandhi designed Satyagraha movement as an initiative in search of Truth by purifying self and the opponents. Actually, Satyagraha is a joint search for Truth by conflicting parties. Gandhi believed that change the mind would definitely bring peace in the world. Through the Satyagraha movement he was trying to change the mind of his opponents. Success of Indian independence proved the potential of Satyagraha as a positive peace building strategy on a longer social level. This later imparted an ideological capital to the civil disobedience movements led by Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel and Aung San Suu Kyi come under this Category.<sup>20</sup> In future, this approach may be used by different leaders of the world.

### **Relevance of Gandhian Peace**

Today, humanity is faced with global challenges of unprecedented scale. The world community, in its long recorded history, has never experienced the kind of threats posed by the global terrorism or climate change. Their impact is further compounded by the increasing challenges of hunger, poverty, social conflicts and recurring global energy crises.<sup>21</sup> Further, we live in fear of a nuclear holocaust. Billions of dollars are spent on weapons of mass destruction while millions of people starve, remain homeless and lack of education and health care. Corruption has recently emerged as the most fundamental problem confronting the functioning of society and polity in democratic countries.<sup>22</sup> However, we are so observed with the invisibility of human logic and its technical competence, groomed in dominant

development approaches and paradigms that we consistently fail to acknowledge these limits. In this perspective, Gandhian approach on peace as well as individual, society, social change, modern civilization may provide better insight. Thus, create awareness throughout the world of the importance and relevance of Gandhi's message towards the fulfilment of the fundamental expectation and right of humankind for a peaceful world.

The texture of society is not a finished product that is why it always making. Society is on the loom and it is made up of constantly changing relationships. Nonviolence takes account precisely of this dynamic non-final state of all relationships among human beings, because nonviolence seeks to change relationships that are evil into relationships that are good. The principle of nonviolence has to be applied to the solution of the problems of our times and in achieving peace.

### **Conclusion**

From the above discussion, it could be concluded that Gandhian peace is not a unique but an alternative model for the establishment of peace. Gandhian Peace is not mere absence of war, undoubtedly it is a long drawn process related to the totality of the system. In this process his approach has been holistic integrating individuals, village, state and international system. He wanted to established peace through the reformation of society by transforming the individuals and avoiding the traditional method of war, treaties, international organizations etc. This transformation will be through Satyagraha by using the strategy of non-violence. For Gandhi, violent conflict was not mere a state of the distortion of law and order and he considered it as the reflection of the socio-economic and political factors that existed in that area. Gandhi appealed for a constructive approach by involving the parties to conflict in the peace initiatives to resolve conflicts instead of physical force. He further argues peace could be build from bottom level instead of top level. Gandhian peace was not only establishment of order, but also related to the claims of truth and justice. Hereafter, Gandhi was supports to the establishment of non-violence, non-hierarchical, non-exploitative, non-materialistic, non-imperialist, non-racist world which is based on equality, justice and freedom for all. Through the use of truth and non-violence, Gandhi has revolutionized the revolution. His non-violent revolt was harmless and effective taking totality into consideration. Thus, a durable peace could be visualized by Gandhian idea. India has designated 9 January as the Indian Overseas Day since on this day in 1915 Gandhi came back to India from South Africa. As an Indian ambassador of peace, truth and non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi is already present in Africa, Asia, America and other parts of the world.<sup>23</sup> Observing Gandhi Jayanti as International Day of Non-violence is a real tribute to its mentor. That is why Gandhi is still relevant and world may follows the idea of Gandhian peace if want to establish a true peaceful world.

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