

**MAHATMA GANDHI AND SATYAGRAHA****Ms. Shabnam Bharti**Assistant Professor, P.G. Department of History  
Guru Nanak Girls College, Yamunanagar**Abstract:**

Gandhi's Concept of Satyagraha is the moral weapon of fighting against injustice and exploitation. Gandhi envisioned Satyagraha as not only a tactic to be used in acute political struggle, but as a universal solvent for injustice and harm. He felt that it was equally applicable to large-scale political struggle and to one-on-one interpersonal conflicts and that it should be taught to everyone. Gandhi ji founded the Sabarmati Ashram to teach Satyagraha. Strike, Peace Marches, Hartal, Hijrat, Picketing, Boycott, Fasting, are technique of Satyagraha. Satyagraha is a holistic approach towards life based on the ideals of truth and courage. Gandhi used non-violence in India's freedom struggle as main weapon and India became independent from British rule.

**Keywords:** Satyagraha, Gandhi, weapon, truth

Mohandas Gandhi was born in the western part of British-ruled India on 2, October, 1869. A timid child, he was married at thirteen to a girl of the same age, Kasturba Bai. After the death of his father, Gandhi's family sent him to England in 1888 to study law. There he became interested in the philosophy of nonviolence, as expressed in the Bhagavad-Gita, Hindu sacred scripture and in Jesus Christ's sermon on the Mount in the Christian Bible. He returned to India in 1891, having passed the bar, but found little success in his attempts to practice law. Seeking a change of scenery, he accepted a position in South Africa for a year, where he assisted on a lawsuit.

After the first world war, Gandhi's reputation as a leader grew. He became even more adamant in his personal principles, practicing sexual abstinence, renouncing modern technology and developing satyagraha-literally, "soul-force". Satyagraha was a method of non-violent resistance.

Satyagraha in his real form and in its comprehensive aspect is not only a concept or a creed but a way of life as believed and lived by Mahatma Gandhi himself. Gandhi called it a non-violent weapon to be used not only by individuals but also by groups and masses to fight against corruption, exploitation, imperialism, social, economic and political injustice<sup>1</sup>.

Satyagraha is the moral weapon of fighting against economic, social and political injustice and exploitation and a substitute for the traditional ongoing method of using physical force. In its real sense, Satyagraha is the utter self-effacement full of humility, kindness, patience, religious, tolerance and deep faith in truthful living. Moreover, it is its own reward<sup>2</sup>. A Satyagrahi takes Buddha's injunction very seriously to overcome it by love and follow the principle of Lord Jesus, loving an enemy and seeks to win his opponent by appealing to his reason and conscience through selfless devotion to truth and self-suffering<sup>3</sup>.

## RULES OF SATYAGRAHA

Gandhi proposed a series of rules for Satyagrahis to follow in a resistance campaign<sup>4</sup>:

- ❖ Harbour no anger.
- ❖ Suffer the anger of the opponent.
- ❖ Never retaliate to assaults or punishment; but do submit out of fear of punishment or assault, to an order given in anger
- ❖ Voluntarily submit to arrest or confiscation of your own property.
- ❖ If you are a trustee of property, defend that property (non-violently) from confiscation with your life.
- ❖ Do not curse or swear.
- ❖ Do not insult the opponent.
- ❖ Neither salute nor insult the flag of your opponent or your opponent's leaders.
- ❖ If anyone attempts to insult or assault your opponent, defend your opponent with your life.
- ❖ As a prisoner, behave courteously and obey prison regulation (except any that are contrary to self-respect).
- ❖ As a prisoner, do not ask for special favourable treatment.
- ❖ As a prisoner, do not fast in an attempt to gain conveniences whose deprivation does not involve any injury to your self-respect.
- ❖ Joyfully obey the orders of the leaders of the civil disobedience action.
- ❖ Do not become a cause of communal quarrels.
- ❖ Avoid occasions that may give rise to communal quarrels.
- ❖ Do not take part in processions that wound the religious sensibilities of any community<sup>5</sup>.

## PRINCIPLES FOR SATYAGRAHA

Gandhi envisioned Satyagraha as not only a tactic to be used in acute political struggle, but as a universal solvent for injustice and harm. He felt that it was equally applicable to large-scale political struggle and to one-on-one interpersonal conflicts and that it should be taught to everyone<sup>6</sup>.

He founded the sabarmati Ashram to teach Satyagraha. He asked satyagrahis to follow the following principles<sup>7</sup>:

- ❖ Non violence (Ahimsa)
- ❖ Truth
- ❖ Not stealing
- ❖ Chastity
- ❖ Non-possession
- ❖ Body-labour or bread-labour
- ❖ Control of palate
- ❖ Fearlessness
- ❖ Equal respect for all religions
- ❖ Economic strategy such as boycott of exported goods (Swadeshi)

## FORMS AND METHODS OF SATYAGRAHA

According to Gandhi there can be as many forms of Satyagraha as there are various forms of injustice, and same is the case in respect of their different grades of intensity, different nature of the agents and their relations with others. For instance, Satyagraha starts with meaningful Persuasions and Negotiations while non-cooperation and civil-disobedience in a way are its radical forms. However, fasting and especially fast unto death is the most radical, perhaps, the last weapon in the operational strategy of Satyagraha. Gentle, gentler and gentlemost notion of Satyagraha<sup>8</sup>.

### PERSUASION AND NEGOTIATIONS

The first and the foremost step in the Satyagraha movement is the most sincere efforts to understand the viewpoint of the opponent and to convince him of one's own view-points with fact and reasons. The Satyagrahi must always hold himself open to conviction must be ready for discussion, equally eager for peace and should welcome any honourable settlement. That is why Gandhi had admitted that he was essentially a man of compromise; because he did never sure that he was right<sup>9</sup>.

### 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:

"Strikes are an inherent right of the working for the purpose of securing justice<sup>10</sup>"

Gandhi laid down some conditions for a successful strike, such as:

- ❖ The cause of the strike must be real and just.
- ❖ Strikers must fix an unalterable minimum demand and declare it before embarking up their strike.
- ❖ Strikers should never resort to violence in any shape or form.
- ❖ Strikers should be able to maintain themselves during the period of strike, howsoever prolonged without taking back upon union funds or public charity<sup>11</sup>"

### PEACE MARCHES

To arouse public awareness and to develop a positive public opinion, peace marches could be effectively made use of. It means a non-violent raid or march.

### HARTAL

Hartal is yet another technique of Satyagraha. It is a temporary strike of work or stopping of business, usually for 24 hours. It is a method of showing protest and the devotion is extended according to the best method of making our strong disapproval of the action of the government or the so-called adversary. It is a means more powerful than monster meetings expressing national opinion<sup>12</sup>.

**HIJRAT**

Hijrat is also technique of Satyagraha that can be used against the inhuman oppression of the opponent. Gandhi has advised Hijrat only in extreme cases where there is no other alternative<sup>13</sup>. We find several historical references to such voluntary migration.

**PICKETING (DHARNAS)**

Picketing is another sanction, generally supportive and goes along with the strike. Gandhi allows non-violent picketing during the course of strikes. However, he is of the opinion that picketing should not be aggressive and even should not involve coercion, intimidation, hostile demonstration, obstruction to the public or any offence under the public law. Peaceful picketing is also a valid and useful form of satyagraha<sup>14</sup>.

**BOYCOTT**

Boycott is also a technique of Satyagraha. Gandhi includes economic, social, political and educational 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 and such articles can be manufactured or produced locally by cottage industries. Gandhi justified his stand on the boycott of all foreign cloth because the dumping down of foreign cloth in India had reduced millions of people to pauperism<sup>15</sup>.

**NON-COOPERATION**

Gandhi clarifies that Non-violent non-cooperation is the method whereby we cultivate the free public opinion and get it enforced when there is complete freedom of opinion that of the majority must prevail<sup>16</sup>.

Gandhi Says:

"Non-cooperation is nothing but non-violence in its dynamic conditions<sup>17</sup> and dynamic condition means conscious suffering<sup>18</sup>.

**CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**

Gandhi's civil-disobedience takes inspiration from Thoreau, but transforms it into a non-violent movement. The distinguishing character of Gandhi's civil-disobedience is that whereas Thoreau would have no objection to the use of violence Gandhi did never like the tinge of violence in it. The disobedience is:

"Civil in the sense that it is not criminal<sup>19</sup>.

**FASTING**

According to Gandhi fasting unto death is an integrated part of Satyagraha programme and is the greatest and the most effective weapon in its armoury under given circumstances. Satyagraha fast, primarily, may not be undertaken against an opponent yet this has got some exceptions.<sup>20</sup> Gandhi like Muhammad would begin to fast whenever he would be faced with a moral crisis. Several fasts that Gandhi had undertaken to protest against different abuse were dictated by his inner light or 'the candle of moral reason'. In 1924, Gandhi undertook a fast of twenty-one days to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhi says:

"To claim that fasting is an infallible weapon in the armoury of Satyagrahi."<sup>21</sup>

**RELEVANCE OF SATYAGRAHA IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY \_**

Is Satyagraha relevant to the present day society or the twenty-first century? The answer is not a simple "Yes" or "No".

When we try to decide whether it is relevant to the present day society, the fundamental thing we have to consider is the nature of the present day individual. Gandhi was well aware of the increasing influence of materialistic considerations on the modern society and individual.

According to Gandhi, the main objective of Satyagraha was to eradicate the evil or to reform the opponent. In the present socio-economic political system, there is a dire necessity to wean the individual away from the influence of wealth, luxuries and power.

In all educational institutions, right from the lowest level to the level of university, it would be worthwhile to teach young people the concept of Satyagraha and the principles of truth and nonviolence, as the basic factors contributing to the peace, harmony and welfare of the society. In all industrial establishments and other places of mass employment also, Satyagraha would be a viable alternative to other methods for the peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts. And in all walks of life, wherever there is scope for conflict and disharmony, the practice of the principles of truth and nonviolence in the smallest way possible, would definitely make a great contribution in bringing about peace and harmony

**CONCLUSION**

In present scenario, Satyagraha is more than a political tool of resistance. It is a holistic approach towards life based on the ideals of truth and moral courage. The similarities of the Satyagraha to some of the greatest philosophical and religious tenets of the world have been observed and much written about. Gandhi's system of Satyagraha was based on nonviolence, non-co-operation, truth and honesty. Gandhi used non-violence in India's freedom struggle as main weapon and India became independent from British rule. In present times, there are some live examples which show the success of Non-Violence resistance by using Gandhian strategy.

**REFERENCES**

1. Young India, 12.5.1920, Vol.II, p.3.
2. Ibid, 22.2.1925, VolVII, p.73.
3. Ibid, 12.5.1920, Vol.II, p.3.
4. M.K. Gandhi, "Some Rules of Satyagraha" Young India, The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. 48, p.340.
5. Young India, February 27. 1930, Vol.XII, p.68.
6. M.K. Gandhi, "The Theory and Practice of Satyagraha' Indian Opinion 1914.
7. M.K. Gandhi, 'Non-violent Resistance' (Satyagraha) (1961), p.37.
8. R.R. Diwakar, Satyagraha in Action: A Brief outline of Gandhi's Satyagraha Campaign (Calcutta: Signed Press, 1980), p. 129-34.
9. Gopinath Dhawan, 'The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi', 1990 Edition, p. 134.
10. Young India, 28.4.1920, Vol.II, p.2-3.
11. Young India, 16.02.1921, Vol.III, p.92.
12. D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma, Vol.I. p.312.
13. M.K. Gandhi "Crushed against Non-cooperation" in Young India, August 4, 1920 Vol.II. p.4.
14. M.K. Gandhi, "Scorched Earth", in Harijan, April 19, 1940. Vol. VIII, p.26.
15. Young India, 15.5.1924, Vol.VI, p.6
16. Ibid, Vol.II, p.4.
17. Ibid, April 20, 1921, Vol.III, p.126.
18. Ibid; August 11, 1920, Vol. II, p.3.
19. Ibid, January 14, 1920, Vol. II p 55.
20. Dr.Suman Kwatra, "Satyagraha and Social Change", p 59.
21. Harijan, Vol. X. p 93.