

CHAPTER-VI

CONCLUSION

In the world, tormented by terror, violence and exploitation, Gandhi's message of peace, non-violence and altruism is a ray of hope to live a peaceful life. The evolution of species has made man the highest creature in the cycle of creation. Gandhi, therefore, argued that man is superior to selfishness and violence, which belongs to the beast nature, not to the nature of man.

This research is not about trying to explore the understanding of Gandhi regarding non-violence and *satyāgraha* since a good number of quality researches have already been carried out in the universities across the world. The intention was to see and record the changes in formulating the theory in the post Gandhian era and also the changes in the practice and the methodologies related to *ahimsā* and *satyāgraha*.

The other objective was to see the socio-political transformative movements which are influenced by Gandhian philosophy, based on *satyāgraha* model with *ahimsā* as the fighting tool. There is no necessity to emphasize the fact that Gandhi's thinking had influenced the life-world around us. Therefore, my research did not focus on *ahimsā* and *satyāgraha* as they are presented by Gandhi (I have included a chapter on Gandhi's Understanding of Non-violence and *Satyāgraha* as the starting point of my research) but the focus shifted on to the subtle changes that were accommodated in the socio-political movements of the last few decades.

Though there are enumerable personalities who came under the direct influence of Gandhi's ideas, this particular research looked closely at the socio-political transformative movements led by Martin Luther King Jr., Aung San Suu Kyi and the Dalai Lama. Initially we considered including Nelson Mandela

in this study, however, we had to omit his experiments in *satyāgraha* due to constraints of time and space.

The matrix of multidimensional variations in the principle of non-violence and *satyāgraha* while negotiating socio-political transformative movements has been the core objective of this research work.

Violence and non-violence are two natural impulses of all rational beings. These two distinct instincts have been inherited from the nature. When compared to human species, the violent impulse is dominant and pervasive in creatures than in man. Thus, on the one hand man has the animal nature and on the other he has his power of reason and judgment. In the course of evolution, man has made continuous progress in the cultivation of non-violent tendencies in him and the violent aspect of him has been gradually suppressed. Violence is counterproductive resulting in anger, hatred, jealousy, revenge and bloodshed. Therefore the non-violent measure is the only alternative to eradicate the anti-social tendencies from the human mind to elevate human society to a superior plane wherein all humanity can live in peace and harmony.

Gandhian ideas of localization and grassroots empowerment may be the support structures we need to restore the lost individual, to hold our identities together and work for common good. Gandhi belongs to every realm of human affairs from public service to personal transformation. Gandhi's belief in the power and relevance of non-violent resistance was enormous and unshakeable.

As anger cannot destroy anger from opponent's mind, likewise hatred cannot reduce hatred. So, violence also cannot be restrained by greater violence. On the contrary violence raises greater violence. Only non-violence can win

over violence. Thus said Buddha, Jesus Christ, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and in the 21st century thinkers Aung San Suu Kyi, Dalai Lama and Nelson Mandela remind us of the same thing.

The link between ideas and action was a theme which featured large in the life of Mahatma Gandhi. It is not easy to decide to what extent, if at all concepts of the West influenced him in his youth. He hailed from a traditional family. Gandhi had possessed a practical mind that looked for ideas to suit the needs of situations. In spite of his deeply ingrained Hinduism, Gandhi's intellectual flexibility made him accept those elements of western thought which fitted into the ethical and social scheme he considered desirable.

Gandhi approached life from the position of an eternal optimist. Judith Brown titled her famous biography of Gandhi *Prisoner of Hope* to make a point that for all the sin and evil he had witnessed, Gandhi never wavered from his belief that all people had goodness in them, that all people were redeemable and that all people could accomplish what he had.

In his own way, Martin Luther added new dimensions to Gandhian non-violence to make an effective tool of his fight against evil. Racial discrimination occur in the land of Thoreau, Emerson, Martin Luther King several decades after the eradication of the demon of racial discrimination. Martin Luther adopted Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence as the most effective weapon at his command to fight against racial segregation. From his background he gained Christian ideals, but from Gandhi he had learned his operational technique. The Montgomery bus boycott was a protest of passive resistance depending upon

moral and spiritual forces. He realised that Christ had showed the way and Gandhi showed that how it could work.

6.1. Spiritual, Theological or Metaphysical Orientation

Gandhi's philosophy could be broadly categorized as 'transformative metaphysics'. It is a model for this type of metaphysics as Gandhi closely followed the Advaita model. Richard Rorty classifies metaphysics into a. Descriptive and b. Revisionary metaphysics. Gandhi's metaphysical standpoint falls into neither of the two categories. Therefore, the term 'transformative metaphysics', it is a combination of both these models and is much more than these.

The basic operation of transformative metaphysics is to bring in new dimensions to experience, define and change the individual's relation with society and influence the content and structure of inner consciousness. Transformative metaphysics takes care of descriptive and revisionary metaphysics, yet it transcends both of them.

Gandhi's philosophy could be categorized under the model of transformative metaphysics since his philosophy has been redefining an individual's relation with society, brings true religion into politics and has a set of metaphysical presuppositions such as a. God alone is real b. human beings are by nature non-violent c. the perfectibility of human nature etc. The search for the evolved states of consciousness as found in Gandhi's philosophy is significantly absent in his followers accept the lives of Vinoba Bhave.

Strawson is of the opinion that descriptive metaphysics describes the true structure of our thought about the world. Revisionary metaphysics tries to bring a better structure. New concepts are formulated in discussing the reality. Descriptive metaphysics mixed a critique of revisionary model and believes that their proper thinking structure is already existent in ordinary language. Kant, Aristotle, Hegel and Descartes belong to this category. In descriptive metaphysics all truths are to be rediscovered.

Gandhian metaphysics does not fall under any of these two models. Though his ideas and metaphysical presuppositions belong to both these categories, it is better to categorize his thought as transformative metaphysics. It is revisionary because it affirms that Brahman is beyond linguistic expression beyond reason and beyond sense perception. The Absolute is beyond categories of intellect. It is also descriptive since Gandhi's philosophy depended mostly on texts like the *Bhagvad Gītā* and the *Upaniṣads*. The scriptural statements were analyzed to grasp their meaning. It is better to classify Gandhi's philosophy under transformative metaphysics following the 'Advaita model'. Gandhi was a practical idealist he believed in idealism but was rooted to practice the principles in everyday life.

Gandhi considered philosophy to help individuals attain higher states of consciousness by redefining individual relation with the society and also by reorienting ones attitude to work. Truth and *Ahimsā* were two such principles which could bring the necessary transformation in political field.

Non-violence is the law of our species, the whole creed of *satyāgraha*, non-cooperation, Swadesi and Sarvodaya are necessary deductions. Human

beings are potentially divine is a metaphysical presupposition on which his faith of human perfectibility is based.

Gandhi is aware, that in certain cases *himsā* is also necessary. The processes of our daily life such as eating, drinking, walking, breathing etc., unavoidably involve *himsā*. But this kind of *himsā* or the unavoidable destruction can't be regarded as *himsā*. Killing or injury to life can be regarded an act of violence only under certain consideration, bad intention and similar other considerations. Any injury to life, done under these motives is *himsā*. Dalai Lama points out that from a strictly practical standpoint, violence can sometimes be useful. A problem is resolved more quickly by force. But such a success is often obtained at the expense of the rights and well being of others. Any problem resolved that way engenders yet another problem.¹ Chinese Chairman Mao said that political power comes from the barrel of a gun. At this Dalai Lama supposed that he was only partly right: power that comes from the barrel of a gun can be effective only for a short time. In the end, people's love for truth, justice, freedom and democracy will triumph.²

Though Gandhi was passionate in his philosophical commitment to *ahimsā*, there were times when it seemed that he contradicted his own views. For example Gandhi's enrolment of Indians in World War-I seemed to contradict his views of *ahimsā*. This confused his supporters and stimulated his critics' charges against him. To be sure, a devotee of *ahimsā* must not stand for war. However, Gandhi asserted that sometimes the discriminating moral problems posed by human existence means that violence, on occasion, can be part of *ahimsā*.

Non-violence is a social instrument in the struggle for justice and freedom. The faith in non-violence stems from the feeling of unity of the whole mankind against conflict and injustice. Non-violence is dynamic and admits of diverse changes in accordance with changing conditions. As Gandhi exposed *himsā* proceeds from fear and the casting out of fear is no intellectual feat but a feat of the heart, requiring faith. Both Martin Luther King Jr. and Aung San Suu Kyi admitted that fear is one of the reason of corruption. In his book *Stride Toward Freedom :The Montgomery Story* he wrote “Men often hate each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because they do not know each other; they do not know each other because they can’t communicate; they can’t communicate because they are separated.”³ Such one of Aung San Suu Kyi’s most famous speeches are *Freedom from Fear* and she also mention that fear is one of the reasons of corruption. It is not power that corrupts, but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it.⁴

It must be emphasized that King’s concern for social justice and the employment of non-violent direct actions were rooted in his theology and ethics. His theology in turn was largely shaped prior to his encounter with Gandhi’s teaching. Thus, when considering the influence of Mahatma Gandhi upon King’s thought and action, one cannot ignore the distinct Christian roots of King’s theology and ethics.

6.2. *Ahimsā* as a Creed and Policy

Physical force and moral power cannot go together. Physical force is a sign of weakness and moral power proceeds from inward strength. As Raghavan

N. Iyer has written in his book *The Moral and Political thought of Mahatma Gandhi* that Gandhi has clearly and continually distinguished between non-violence as a creed and as a policy. It is possible for people to advocate non-violence as a policy in particular circumstances, while remaining unwilling to accept it as an absolute creed. Reason could be employed to enjoin *ahimsā* in certain situations and contexts, but to believe in *ahimsā* as a creed demands an act of faith. Gandhi's own dilemma lay in the fact that he wished to propagate *ahimsā* as a creed, yet as a politician, he also tried to justify it as a policy. To Gandhi *ahimsā* was definitely a creed, but he sometimes spoke of it as a policy to be adopted on prudential grounds and he called himself an essentially practical man dealing with practical political questions. This has naturally made him open to the charge of elevating an expedient policy to an absolute creed. He pointed out that a policy takes the shape of a creed while it lasts and no longer, but a creed cannot admit of any change. He had argued that a creed has to be all-pervasive and cannot pertain only to certain activities and ignore others, while a policy cannot have the strength of a life force. *Ahimsā* as a creed represented for Gandhi an ideal to be reached, a fact of life as well as an act of faith.

The creed of *ahimsā* presupposes the existence of an immortal essence in human personality and the readiness to die while unwilling to kill. *Ahimsā* as a creed, as Gandhi expounded it, is an ethical absolute based upon metaphysical beliefs and issuing in a religious conviction requiring an act of faith.

The basic assumption of majority of humans is that protection of life depends upon on physical force though theoretically majority of individuals believe in non-violent behaviour. However, they believe in *ahimsā* is not

absolute but it is a 'policy' for most of them. But for M.K. Gandhi *ahimsā* was a 'creed' born out of his indomitable faith in the metaphysical presuppositions such as the existence of God, the brotherhood of humans and the potential divinity of individuals.

Aung San Suu Kyi has practiced non-violence in politics only as a policy. She has chosen the way of non-violence simply because she thought it is politically better for the country in the long run to establish that can bring about change without the use of arms. Here she is not thinking about spiritual matters at all. She says that perhaps in that sense, she is not the same as Mahatma Gandhi, who would have probably condemned all movements that were violent. But he did say at one time that if he had to choose between violence and cowardice, he would choose violence. So, even Gandhi, who was supposed to be the great exponent of non-violence, was not somebody who did not make any exceptions. She has chosen non-violence because it is the best way to protect the people and in the long term assure the future stability of democracy.⁵

Non-violent means in search of political objectives i.e., to bring in religion into politics. Gandhi could not imagine a space where religion could not enter. It was a unique feature of his thought that *ahimsā* was used as an absolute value (a creed) in attaining political objectives like Swaraj, Sarvodaya etc. Aung San Suu Kyi has pointed out that the use of non-violence in achieving a political solution is very practical. She does not hold to non-violence for moral reasons, but for political and practical reasons.⁶ In her words, to establish a strong tradition of democracy in this country one of the basic principles of achieving it is that to bring about political change peacefully through consulting the will of the people via the ballot box and not through force of arms. To establish

democracy one must demonstrate its principles and need to be consistent in politics.⁷

In Dalai Lama's three commitments in life, one is that in democracy we admit the necessity of pluralism in political life. But we hesitate when it's a matter of the diversity of beliefs and religions. Despite their different concepts and philosophies, all the chief religious traditions bring us the same message of love, compassion, tolerance, temperance and self-discipline. They also have in common their potential to help us lead a happier life.⁸

As Bhikhu Parekh has written in his article 'Gandhi' that the use of violence denied the ontological facts that all human beings had souls, that they were capable of appreciating and pursuing good and that no one was so degenerate that he could not be won over by appealing to his fellow feeling and humanity. Morality consisted in doing what was right because one believed it to be right and required unity of belief and conduct. Since the use of violence did not change the opponent's perception of truth, it compelled him to behave in a manner contrary to his *swabhava* and sincerely held beliefs and violated his moral integrity.

6.3. *Satyāgraha* and the Method

Gandhi tried to apply his basic concepts of *satyā* and *ahimsā* to a variety of practical matters the relations between capital and labor, the decentralization of political and economic power, social inequalities and different types of exploitation, the connection between individual liberty and national independence, the promotion of collective welfare and village self government , attitudes toward work and the problem of full employment, the alienation of the

intelligentsia and the universal obligation of manual labor, the problems of educational and social reconstruction.

Gandhi advocated non-violence as a philosophy of life and not just a method, but also he felt that those who adopt non-violence only for pragmatic reasons still have violence in spirit. For example, if a person using non-violent resistance only to achieve victory over their opponent then it is not a true *satyāgraha*. Suu Kyi chose non-violence as an expedient political tactic. Her aim in politics is to work for democratization of Burmese political system. She believes that democratic institutions and practices are necessary for the guarantee of human rights and for a free, secure and just society where Burmese people are able to realize their full potential.

Non-violence as active resistance is opposed to passive resistance. Martin Luther King Jr., Aung San Suu Kyi and Dalai Lama all of them were believers in the practice of active non-violent resistance. According to Martin Luther, passive resistance often gives the false impression that this is a sort of do nothing method in which the resister quietly and passively accepts evil. But nothing is farther from the truth. The non-violent resister is passive in the sense that he is not physically aggressive toward his opponent. But his mind and emotions are always active, constantly seeking to convince his opponent that he is wrong. The method is passive physically, but strongly active spiritually. It is not passive non-resistance to evil, but active non-violent resistance to evil. According to Aung San Suu Kyi, non-violence means positive action. You have to work for whatever you desire.⁹

If people believe in and practice *satyāgraha* they must always be open to find the truth. People cannot discern the ultimate absolute truth that is

something only God can do. While Gandhi believed that there is the truth, he could not be certain he was right. Therefore, Gandhi insisted, if a person cannot know the absolute truth, then he is unqualified to inflict punishment on others and so must remain non-violent in the conflict. Aung San Suu Kyi has also talked about the absolute truth. Pure truth or absolute truth is beyond ordinary beings like us because we can't see things absolutely and as a whole. The search for truth has to be accompanied by awareness.¹⁰

The doctrine of *Satyāgraha* was an attempt to raise the deliberate suffering of a man of outraged conscience to a moral sanction that compels respect and secures results. Gandhi's chief purpose in distinguishing between passive resistance and *Satyāgraha* was to protect the latter from the taint of weakness implicit in the adjective passive. *Satyāgraha* is a much broader concept than civil disobedience or non-cooperation. Non-cooperation to Gandhi chiefly implies the withdrawal of cooperation from a State that, in the non-cooperator's view, has become corrupt. Non-cooperation is a branch of *Satyāgraha* but it excludes civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is more difficult than non-cooperation because it presupposes the habit of willing obedience to laws without fear of their sanctions. The objective according to Gandhi was not to search for a successful victory over the opponent, but rather to use *ahimsā* to overcome the oppressor's inner evil spirit. Martin Luther King has pointed out that non-violence is not a miracle that works overnight, but it went off very well in Montgomery. In Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott King called upon all participants to act with a spirit of kindness and an ethic of non-violence.

Martin Luther was particularly moved by the ‘Salt March’ to the sea and the numerous fasts. The whole concept of *satyāgraha* was profoundly significant to him. King was impressed by the amazing results of Gandhi’s campaign to find and live truth and he called it a victory of love. Gandhi strengthened King’s belief that there is a moral obligation to resist evil. King clearly declared that his non-violent protests were directed against the forces of evil at work in the unjust systems. To him the Montgomery bus boycott, the struggle in Birmingham, the march on Washington and the march from Selma to Montgomery were not struggle of racial discrimination but the conflicts between justice and injustice. Victory was never his aim but freedom and justice. King arrived at a system of definite philosophical and theological convictions about the nature of God, human nature, the direction of history, the mission of the Christian Church and the role of the state in social reform.

6.4. Neo Socio-political Liberalism

As more and more groups in a multitude of societies are able to know the successful use of non-violent tools to achieve political goals, it is possible that universal recognition of the value and practicality of settling conflict without violent subjugation will evolve.

The crux of the neo-liberalism is modern economic policy which refers ‘the priority of the price mechanism, the free enterprise, the system of competition and a strong and impartial state’. It is associated with *laissez-faire* economic liberalism beginning in the 1970s and 1980s after the social liberalism movement in Britain for economic reformation. The question arising here that why am I talking about neo-liberalism? The neo-liberalism is the economic

reformation of the theory of liberalism where in the main objective is to reform the economic system in modern society. Hence, the ideas of non-violence and *satyāgrah* are also bringing a new transformative movement in modern society which I indicate here as neo socio-political liberalism. As we know that non-violence is a metaphysical discourse which Gandhi has used as a weapon in socio-political reforms and also in freedom struggle movement in India. Therefore, I argue here that Martin Luther King Jr. has used the same principles against racial discrimination in bringing equality as a fundamental human right for his people. Dalai Lama has been peacefully fighting for political freedom in Tibet and Aung San Suu Kyi is fighting to bring political reformation and human rights in Myanmar. Thus, I conclude that these thinkers' new transformative ideas of non-violence and *satyāgrah* have brought a new transformation from metaphysical to socio-political liberalism in our society.

Gandhi regarded *ahimsā* as the necessary means to the pursuit of *satyā* in personal and social life. He also pointed out that we cannot make hard and fast distinction between the means and the end. We must not merely reject the doctrine that the end justifies the means, but also come to regard the purity of the means we employ as all important.

For democracies non-violent methods are productive. Non-violent resistance can function not only in Hindu or Christian contexts, but also in Buddhist, Islamic and other cultures. Non-violent resistance has been revitalized as an effective method for changing the energy of the human race toward achieving humanitarian goals. Non-violence is increasingly used to solve problems within systems of government. The aim of non-violent strategies is the search for social equity.

The wide availability of tools for non-violent resistance means that societies and groups need not remain passive when faced with persecution. Assured that non-violent sanctions are within their reach to counter repression, people can learn democratic decision making, distinguish in practice the powers of citizenship and discover how to work with others in order to impede despotism or surmount tyranny.

Even today, in our modern world, Gandhi's principles of non-violence and reconciliation are relevant on a personal and political level. It may result in gaining something through violence, but such achievements tend to be only temporary. We may solve the immediate problem temporarily, but in the long run, we create another one. In this regard the best ways would be to choose non-violence. It may take time, but it will generate no negative side effects.

We the human beings all expect peace. Non-violence is an essential element to establish a peaceful mind, peaceful society and peaceful world. Though Martin Luther, Aung San Suu Kyi and the Dalai Lama employed non-violent methods in a different way but the relative truth is that the aim of all of them is to formulate a peaceful society, a peaceful life in the end.

Thus, we can conclude by quoting one of the Martin Luther's statements in *Stride Towards Freedom* "Through violence, you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish truth.... Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that. The beauty of nonviolence is that, in its own way and in its own time, it seeks to break the chain reaction of evil".

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