CHAPTER VI

GANDHIAN APPROACH TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The Gandhian approach has its basis in the philosophical tradition of India: Gandhi interprets the ancient principles making them suitable to the prevalent conditions. The major feature of Gandhian approach to peace is that peace cannot be achieved unless use of violence is eschewed in settling human conflict and is replaced with non-violence (ahimsa). The term non-violence should be understood not just simply as absence of physical injury, but as an active force of love towards all creatures including humans, animals and plants: he takes an extensive view (world view).

Conflict has been a constant phenomenon in the development history of human race. Human social interaction often encounters many situations of conflicts and tensions. He accepted that societal systems all over the world are imperfect and many forms of social injustice, discrimination and inequality prevail.

The technique of social living has always been predominantly non-violent. otherwise human life would not have sustained all along. From the fact that life persists in the midst of death, it is evident that man does not live by destruction, and that although there be repulsion enough in Nature yet one lives by attraction and love which is the basis of non-violence, and makes co-operative living possible. Hence
non-violence is as old as hills, and its importance as a social technique is as old as the existence of human society itself.

Although Gandhi has not given a conceptual definition of conflict yet one can derive the understanding of what he meant by conflict, by analyzing the fundamental principles of his thought.

Gandhi believed that "Truth is God."1 It is the creation and the Law. Since we are all the creation of God, the ultimate purpose of life is the realization of God i.e. Truth. And the realization of Truth is possible through the service of human beings, because the only way to find the invisible God is to see Him in His visible creation and be one with it.

Gandhi had a definite vision of the means of God's realization. He said, service to human being is possible only through non-violence because it is the law of life. Though there are repulsions enough in nature, one lives by attraction. Mutual love enables Nature to persist. Had it been otherwise the human species should have been extinct by now. That is why the prophets and 'avatars' have taught the lessons of truth, harmony, brotherhood, justice etc.3

For Gandhi, "Truth and Ahimsa are convertible terms." He said, "They are two sides of a coin or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Nevertheless ahimsa is the means and Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within reach. So ahimsa is our supreme duty."4 In

2 Young India, 05-03-1925, pp. 70-84.
3 Ibid., 15-10-1938, p. 287.
4 Young India, 13-10-1921, pp. 321-328
another place, he said. "I have found that life persists in the midst of
destruction and therefore there must be a higher law than that of
destruction. Only under that law would a well ordered society be
intelligible and life worth living."

As the realization of Truth is the purpose of life, it becomes
necessary for every one to cling to it. As the realization of Truth is the
aim of life, anything towards it is considered as good, and anything
against it as bad or evil. Truth is existence. So, anything in favour of
existence is considered as good and anything against existence as bad or
evil. Anything towards Truth and anything in favour of existence are
nothing but the realisation of Truth. Conversely, anything of existence is
nothing but the pursuit of untruth.

For a votary of Truth, Truth and ahimsa are compatible. And
untruth and himsa are incompatible. So, a votary of Truth is in conflict
when untruth and himsa creep into his own life, in his act or thought. In
other words, a situation of untruth and himsa is perceived by a votary of
Truth as a conflict situation.

When a person behaves so as to harm fellow beings or to prevent
them from the pursuit of Truth, it is perceived as a conflict behaviour.
An official who impedes a person from the pursuit of truth or drives him
to act violently against his fellows is inconsistent and incompatible with
truth. Such attitudes are, therefore, called conflict attitudes. In society,
truth manifests in the form of justice, equality, harmony and peace.
These are but the attributes of Truth.

Ibid.

6 Harijan. 13-10-1940. p. 324.
progressing towards the realization of these manifestations, in other words, towards Truth. Any action or thought that aims at promoting these attributes is non-violence (Ahimsa). Ahimsa strides towards Truth and himsa away from it.

A votary of truth visualizes inconsistency in untruth and violence. A person, not only committing violence but supporting violence also, is inconsistent with Truth. This support can be direct or indirect. Direct support to violence by virtue of being an accomplice to violent person and indirect support by remaining indifferent to the act of violence. However, all these are matters that support violence. So, ignorance, indifference to and active co-operation with evildoer and of course committing violence are all inconsistent with Truth. The presence of such characters in a society puts a votary of Truth in a situation of conflict.

So, Gandhi’s conflict refers to a state of inconsistency. Non-violence and Truth are the values sustaining life. Truth is accepted as goal and non-violence as the means. They are the cardinal values. When a member of a group in a society commits violence or untruth, the group enacts conflict action. For example, an act of exploitation is conflict action. The exploitation behaviour is conflict behaviour and the attitude which drove them to behave so, is conflict attitude. The presence of conflict attitude, conflict behaviour and conflict action, either alone or together creates conflict attitude.

Gandhi’s conception of human life is related to his conception of God. God is a living force from whom comes life; so all life partakes of the divine character. Besides Truth, God has many other attributes also
and this is the reason why it is more accurate to say that Truth is God than to say that God is Truth. The presence of divine element in every being implies that nature is one and that everyone is capable of attaining the highest possible development. It also commands respect for all. Faith in one's own self and in others comes out of the living faith in God.

Gandhi holds that human nature consists of the elements of both good and evil. Each man is good in so far as he has in him the element of the divine; and every one carries evil along with his body and is thus imperfect. So, the belief in the inherent goodness of human nature controls and overcomes evil. The natural phenomena which show that life exists amidst destruction also prove that it is more natural for man to be good than to be bad, and that mankind is progressing in non-violence and love.

Thus, human nature is not unchangeable, man can mould it to achieve the best that is in him and to realise his real self. The spiritual element may be awakened by the pursuit of Truth and the readiness to suffer for it and by holding out to relative truths. Gandhi thought that although man cannot attain the absolute truth so long as he is bound by flesh, yet it ought to be his ideal towards which he should strive. Truth is the end of which non-violence is the means; truth and non-violence bind us to each other and these are two sides of a coin. Non-violence is a flame of life and is therefore, limited to physical life and actions and deeds but it also takes into account thoughts and words.

Gandhi regards suffering essential for the life and the criterion of progress. The purer the suffering and sacrifice, the greater is the progress. Thus, the Gandhian way is the ideal of a moral life. So, with a
view to fully understand the Gandhian path to peace, the essential principles of satyagraha should be studied and examined.

**Meaning of Satyagraha**

As truth and non-violence are the main planks of Satyagraha, the meaning of them, their relationship with each other, functions and practice are required to be elaborated and understood exactly as Gandhi understood and applied them in all situations successfully.

The literal meaning of Satyagraha is ‘adherence to Truth’, ‘insistence on Truth’, ‘endeavour to keep the vow of truth’ or ‘strive to follow Truth’.\(^7\) It means obedience to truth and dis-obedience to untruth. This dis-obedience is ‘civil’ when it is truthful. The word ‘civil’ means ‘passive’ and ‘opposite of criminal’.

A person who resolves to adhere to truth cannot remain silent at the sight of violence which is negation of truth. It is incumbent upon every such person to oppose it. Truth functions in the form of non-violence or love. The lover of truth ought to oppose violence. Such an opposition would mean ‘fight the evil (wrong-untruth) while love the evil lover’. Such a fight is called Satyagraha.

The term ‘Satyagraha’ referring to a massive non-violent fighting force, was first introduced in 1907. Indians who were settled in South Africa staged their protest against the unjust laws of the ruling White Government which supported racial domination (domination of Whites) and discrimination (The blacks and non-Whites were savages). At the

beginning, in 1894, the protest being non-violent was called as Passive Resistance. The force that Gandhi wanted agitating people (Satyagrahis) to apply was ‘inner force’ or ‘soul force’.

In the course of protestation, Gandhi came to know that the inner force, as he visualized, was much more powerful and non-violent than Passive Resistance, which the Irish ‘Sinn Fein’ resisters practised. He learnt that Sinn Fein’s Passive Resistance was a policy affair, adopted expediently. While they did fight without physical weapons and not resorted to open violence, they entertained an enmity and hatred towards their enemy. The force of truth and love and the ‘spirit of oneness of being’ were missing in their struggle. Without the truth and love there could be no moral resistance, according to Gandhi. Therefore, calling their own protestation (in South Africa) by the term Passive Resistance, he feared, would be misnomer leading to the misunderstanding of the motive, purpose and method of their protest. Their protestation was powered by the spirit of truth and non-violence and backed up by their implicit faith in goodness of all humans. Indeed, they were waging satyagraha. Satyagraha appeared in this manner even before it was called so.\(^8\)

Gandhiji says, Satyagraha has been practiced as a method of protest since time immemorial at various levels with small groups. The power that governs a family is truth and non-violence. This is the force individuals apply against their family members on occasions of incongruity. It is a practice followed since ages. However, humanity

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seldom realized the superiority of this force against physical might, that it could be used even against outsiders and enemies. It can be used by individuals as well as communities. It is also a law of universal application. It is not based on the force of arms, but on the force of truth and love. We are usually aware of two kinds of forces—physical force and spiritual force. Man is more acquainted with the physical force, which Gandhi was opposed to. The spiritual force is an invisible one. So, he described it as truth force. Therefore, Satyagraha pre-supposes self-defence, self-control and self-purification.\(^9\)

According to Gandhi, Satyagrahi is a fearless person. He will never submit to any arbitrary action. He who has attained the Satyagrahi’s state of mind would remain victorious under all conditions. So, it is the belief in the power of spirit, the power of truth, the power of love by which a man can overcome evil through self-suffering and self-sacrifice.

According to Gandhi, Satyagraha is a philosophy of life. It is also the religion whereby he wanted all men to live by it. The philosophy of Satyagraha is based on certain assumptions for “no search is possible without some workable assumptions.”\(^10\)

**Assumptions of Satyagraha**

1. Truth is God and the “real existence.”
2. The realization of Truth i.e., the spiritual unity with it is the purpose of life.

\(^10\) CWMG, September 21, 1934, Vol. XIX, p. 43.
3. Spiritual unity with the truth (God) means unity among the beings. As truth is abstract, unity can be gained only with its tangible manifestation - the living beings especially human beings. It is possible only through non-violence.

4. Violence, which has its roots in non-divine propensities like hatred, anger and enmity, cannot bring about spiritual unity.

5. Love is the binding force of life hence it alone can lead to spiritual unity.

These assumptions draw support from the message contained in the writings of the scriptures. This, however, does not mean that the validity of these assumptions is indisputable and beyond verification. He believed that every thing in Satyagraha is reasonable but some of them are above human capacity to comprehend. While we can try to reason out the function of Satyagraha and the philosophy behind it, we ought to recognize its superiority over human intellect and follow it with implicit faith. Because, beyond a point, Truth and Non-Violence are not matters of reason and transcend reason.11

**Features of Satyagraha**

1. It is a moral power (weapon) based on the superiority of soul force (the power of love) over physical force. Satyagraha is scrupulous about the purity of means and the moral character of persons employing it. There is definite proportional relationship between ‘the moral character and inner reform of Satyagrahis’ and ‘the power of their Satyagraha’12

11 CWMG, October 11, 1928, Vol. XXXVII, p. 43.
12 Young India, 12-11-1927, p. 382
2. The approach of Satyagraha is love and patient self-suffering. There is no love (or place) for ill-will or hatred in Satyagraha. Satyagrahi believes that the whole humanity is one family and all are originally and spiritually related to one another. There can be only one governing principle in a family, if it is to remain united, and that is love or non-violence. Love never punishes. It always suffers for others. Such a suffering weans the wrong doer away from the ills.

3. Satyagraha does not permit violence in any form even under the most unfavourable circumstances. For violence is evil and evil divides.

4. As moral character and purity of heart are individual affairs, the power of Satyagraha is vested with every individual. So, it can be waged by all, viz., children, sick persons, women, youth, the aged, and groups and communities all alike.\footnote{\textit{Harijan}, 16-12-1939, p. 376.}

5. Satyagraha can be applied in daily life in relation to near and dear ones, as well as the most dreaded evildoer and mighty powers.

6. Satyagraha is dynamic and positive. It converts the evil-doer and brings about an atmosphere of friendship and peace.

7. As love and self-suffering of teacher or a truth seeker transforms opponents, Satyagraha is ever victorious. In fact, there is no such thing as victory or defeat in Satyagraha. The end of Satyagraha is the realization of better truth and friendship between the erstwhile opponents. Satyagraha is a solution that does not leave
any behind. The end of Satyagraha is good for all irrespective of caste, colour or creed.

Satyagraha is a soul force that draws strength from one’s adherence to truth and practice of Non-Violence. The application of these features to every walk of life and all human affairs and to fight evil and injustice to establish truth and justice is also one of the new features. By the application of these features to all fields of life, we find solution to all conflicts - socio-economic, political, etc.

Satyagraha, as a weapon of social control, is eternal and creative. Its creativity is inherent in its basis of ahimsa and moral persuasion. The Satyagrahi would adopt Satyagraha as a weapon and insist on truth being established. He resists all unjust authority and the source of evil. A Satyagrahi does not crave or indulge in it for personal gain or glorification, or to humiliate anyone. The entire social life is impossible without Satyagraha that is a true religion. It is not only employed against rulers and ruled but also society and government. It is a practical philosophy. It is a weapon with a spiritual and ascetic temper. In fact, it is the soul force attainable by self-purification.

Basic Principles of Satyagraha

The philosophy of Satyagraha is related to other ethical and basic principles. The principles involved in Satyagraha are called Satya (truth) and ahimsa (non-violence). Understanding these principles, combined with skill in application, determines the effective functioning of Satyagraha. In order to understand the weapon of Satyagraha, one must
know the concept of Truth and Non-Violence. They were understood and employed by Gandhi in Satyagraha.

1. Satya (truth):

Satyagraha is relentless search for Satya or truth. Gandhi considers Satya as the most important ethical principle of all principles, as it owes its very existence to the pursuit and the attempted practice of truth. His philosophical ideas are organically mingled with his religious ideas. Gandhi, who was a staunch follower of truth, experimented with truth for a long time. The knowledge he gained out of his experiences together with his understanding of scriptures convinced him that truth was the closest meaning of God. He believed that “God is Truth.”

As the experiments continued over the years, his knowledge on the potentiality of truth increased. He was growing from ‘truth to truth’ as newer dimensions of truth were added to his knowledge. There was nothing above truth and beyond it. In the absolute sense, he identified truth with God.

Truth → God → Creation → Life → Law

He believed that the truth or satya, which means ‘real existence’, is the “only correct and significant meaning of God,” and declared “Truth is God.” It is “the creation” “the life” and “the Law.”14

The word ‘satya’ is derived from Sanskrit word ‘Sat’. In Sanskrit ‘Sat’ means bieng to exist ‘eternally’. Nothing really exists except the

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14 Ibid., 23-03-1940, p. 55
truth.\textsuperscript{15} That’s why ‘Sat’ or truth is perhaps the most appropriate name of God. It is more correct to say that truth is God than to say ‘God is Truth.’ Truth is also absolute which means God. Therefore, in the ontological sense the word ‘Truth’ can be replaced by the concept of ‘reality.’\textsuperscript{16}

Wherever there is truth, there is also knowledge that knowledge is true. That is why the word ‘chit’ or knowledge is associated with the name of God. Whenever there is true knowledge, there is always bliss (Ananda). Sorrow has no place in it. The bliss is derived from it. Hence God is ‘Sat’, ‘Chit’, and ‘Ananda’. In other words, God is within oneself.

Truth is referred to in humanity’s every aspect of life, viz., attitude, behaviour, character, action etc. Truthfulness of behaviour connotes loyalty. A person is considered truthful if one is loyal to the ruler, superior, governing body or the society. A person adhering to the principles of life, value is called truthful. Here ‘truth’ means consistency between behaviour or action and norms or principles; adherence to what is agreed upon.

Truthfulness also means good qualities and character. A person who is honest, honouring promises is praised as truthful. Persons sincere and devoted to duty are called truthful. A conduct of ‘just’ is termed truthful conduct.

\textsuperscript{15} Sharma, Bishan Sarup. Gandhi as a Political Thinker (Allahabad: India Press), 1956, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{16} Harijan, 29-08-1936, p. 236.
In this way, the literal meaning of truth transcends from its common understanding or meaning – fact, real to realm of values and accrues wide meaning and great quality. It can be understood from the Roger’s International Thesaurus which gives a long list of synonyms, representing a wide variety of characters and values. Some of them are: Tent res. right, reality, validity, legitimacy, authority, neutrality, perfection, positiveness, honesty, sincerity, integrity, principles, moral strength, veracity that which exists etc. Thus the term ‘Truth’ is associated with all good qualities and virtues.

Scriptures value 'truth' highly and attribute it to God, saying 'God is Truth'. Invariably, all religions place truth close to God and regard it as a great virtue in which God is pleased. This can be understood by taking a glance at the prominent religions of the world.

Islam, which stands for peace and brotherhood, says that Allah, the merciful God is pleased with ‘Truth’. He wants His children speak truth and think of truth. He dislikes exaggeration and abhors lies. Surah (vi) An-Niza of the Glorious Quran says, "O people of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion, not utter thought concerning Allah, save the truth.” “Allah guideth not him who is a liar.” The path, the Lord shows to his creation, is the path of Truth. The worship of "Allah leadeth to the Truth.” And believers of Truth shall have what they will of their Lord's bounty. 

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19 Ibid., Surah – XXXIX, Az-Zumar, Verse – 33-34.

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In this way, Islam reserves truth as an essential virtue, the practice of which pleaseth God and endeareth one to Him. The teachings of Jesus Christ are a religion of Truth and love. In it, truth is regarded as a quality of God. The Holy Bible says, “His word is full of grace and truth.”20 The Bible recognizes the potential meaning of ‘truth’ and considers that truth, in its full meaning can be a quality of God alone. Humans can but follow only a glimpse of it. Apostle Paul writes to the Romans thus: "Let God be true but every man a liar.21

Jesus, attributes truth to God and proclaims highest value the form of God” and that which is to be followed. He says, "I am the way, the Truth, and the Life.”22 It can be construed that, God and Truth are one and the same. Therefore, following Truth is as good as following God. And the path of Truth is the path of God.

In the Indian Vedic language, Sanskrit, Truth is called Satya. The word ‘Satya’ is derived from ‘Sat’, which means ‘to be’ or ‘to exist’. It is divine prerogative to claim existence. Scriptures say, 'God is existence'. Attributing that status to truth is “to equate it with God”. Hindu Scriptures do it. Gandhi, whose life was one whole experiment on truth, extensively quoted it. The Mundaka Upanishad lays that, "Truth alone prevails." The Ramayana declares, "Truth is the Lord of the world. …nothing is higher than it.”23 The Mahanarayana Upanishad observes that, “everything rests on Truth and therefore they call it the Highest.”24 The Mahabharata proclaims that there is no duty higher than Truth

20 The Bible, Book John, Ch: 1, Verse- 14.
21 Ibid., Book Romans, Ch: 3, Verse – 4.
22 Ibid., Book John, Ch: 14, Verse – 6.
23 Ramayana, Max Muller’s Translation
24 Mahanarayana Upanishad, XXVII, 1.
In the light of religious rendering, Truth is understood as the closest meaning of God Who is the Creator, the Creation, the Life and the Law. The law that governs life or ‘existence’ cannot be one of destruction or division. It ought to be a unifying force, a protective, preservative and promotive quality and a positive value. Such a law harmonizes life. Therefore, truth is called righteousness or right conduct.

Life or existence is possible if only there is peace or at least the hope for peace in the society. The hope for peace lies in the goodness and benevolent conduct of individuals, which are called Virtues. "Virtues always rest on Truth" and "virtues are forms of truth" says The Mahabharata.

Virtues are that which bring about unity and harmony, secure peace and calm and enable humanity to fulfill the destiny. Shri Krishna describes them as:

“Fearlessness, Sattvic purity, steadfastness, pursuit of wisdom, charity, control of the senses, sacrifice, study, austerity, uprightness; Harrleslessness, truthfulness, absence of anger, resignation, peace of mind, avoidance of calumny, pity for all beings, absence of greed.

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25 Mahabharata.
26 Mahabharata, Shanti Parva, C1, XII, 5.
27 Mahabharata, op. cit.
gentleness, modesty, absence of restlessness; Energy, forgiveness, endurance, purity, freedom from hatred and pride."\textsuperscript{28}

Bhishma in the Mahabharata enunciates the different forms of truth saying: "Truthfulness, equality, self-control, absence of self-display, forgiveness, modesty, endurance, absence of envy, charity, a noble well-wishing towards others, self-possession, compassion, and harmlessness are the thirteen forms of truth."\textsuperscript{29} Thus truth is revered as the principal virtue of which all other virtues are derivatives.

Life or existence is a dynamic process of life activities. The biological activities of all living beings, intellectual and spiritual functioning of human beings, interaction among different non-living beings together constitute life activities. The activities aimed at physical needs fulfilment such as food, habitation, housing, clothing, sex, external security and other material needs, are termed as biological/physical activities. Social activities are varied social relationships, emotional sharing and intellectual exchanges etc. Both biological and social activities are but functions of human life. Smooth conduct of life necessitates an orderly function of bio-social activities which, in turn, are possible if only we accept certain values and follow their norms. Equality, justice, freedom, reverence for life, mutual help, co-operation etc., are values that bring forth orderliness in life. They are the guiding principles of life.

As truth is the existence which, in the life sphere, manifests in forms of life activities, the values that of humanity, manifest in forms of

\textsuperscript{28} Bhagavad Gita. XVI, 1-3.
\textsuperscript{29} Mahabharata. op. cit., Cl, XII, 8,9.
life activities; those values that facilitate smooth and orderly activities are to be considered as the attributes of truth. What the scriptures say only strengthens this inference. These values are everybody's rights, that all are entitled to enjoy the fruits of these values, as well as every body's duty that individuals are expected to honour other individuals' right to enjoy them and extend help to the latter in enjoining that right. Both enjoyment (rights) and help (duty) together bring orderliness in life and thereby make existence possible. Life without the fulfillment of these values is meaningless and it is in fact no life. So, Truth which ensures life, we can say, functions in the form of these values.

GOD

Life + Bio-social + Function + Co-existence

TRUTH

Harmony + Liberty + Reverence + Co-operation

LIFE

Equality + Human Rights + Justice + Mutual aid

The functional meaning of truth, in the view of Gandhi, is non-violence. He said, "Truth is God" but "truth cannot exist without non-violence." Realization of truth is impossible without non-violence," and "Truth is the end and non-violence is the means." To him 'Truth is the highest law, but ahimsa the highest duty'.

30 Harijan, 28-03-1936, p. 49.
The reasons for Gandhi's belief in non-violence as the only means to realize truth are many. His faith on truth and non-violence was based on his understanding of scriptures. Referring to the Vedas, he said, "one of the axioms of religion is: ‘there is no religion other than Truth. Another ‘religion is love.’ And as there can be only one religion, it follows that truth is love and love is truth. We shall find, too, on further reflection, that conduct based on truth is impossible without love. Truth force then is love force."31

In thousands of our acts, the propelling power is truth or love. The relations between father and son, husband and wife, indeed our entire family relations, are largely guided by truth or love.

We cannot remedy evil by harbouring ill-will against the evil-doer. Truth as God is Absolute. Where-as truth as known to humans is relative and never absolute. Different people look at a thing from different angles and therefore they differ. Conscience is not the same for all. Hence no human can claim to be absolutely on the right path. As we do not know what is the Truth, we cannot judge anybody. Pursuit of Truth, therefore, does not admit violence.32

‘Truth is existence’ or 'the Creation': pursuit of the Truth means the realization of spiritual unity with it, which means unity within the creation, especially living beings.33 Use of violence, which has its roots in divisive propensities like anger, selfishness, hatred and enmity.

cannot do good to the living being to realize the union. Besides, "Violence attacks not only the sin and evil but also the sinner and evildoer. This prevents the realization of unity with him/her and, therefore, is an offence against the great truth, the unity and sacredness of all beings." Gandhi held that the universe is governed by ahimsa or love. For life persists in the midst of destruction. "Though there is repulsion enough in nature, one lives by attraction; mutual love enables nature to persist."

According to Gandhi, World of phenomena is changing all the time and to that extent it is unreal. It has no permanent existence. But there is something which remains unchanged and thus unchanging is real. It is an undefinable, mysterious power which pervades everything. He says that he feels it, although he cannot see it with his senses. This power unites all that exists. It creates, destroys and renews. Therefore, this philosophy is spiritual.

Humans do not live by destruction. We are all bound by the tie of love. There is in every thing a centripetal force without which nothing could have existed. Where there is love there is life. Hatred leads to destruction. Ahimsa, therefore, is the means and also the practical application of Truth. Gandhi believed and practised it. Satyagraha is concerned with Ahimsa or love. The Satyagraha also must have a sound basis for his love or hatred. Gandhi hated British system in India because of several demerits in it. But he did not hate the British in India. A sense of universal brotherhood prevented him from hating them as

35 Young India, 12-09-1921, p. 284.
human beings. In fact, a Satyagrahi makes a distinction between the evil and evil-doer. The main aim of Satyagrahi is to secure progress and social justice. The word ‘satyagraha’ implies the method of action which must be non-violent. Gandhi observes. “The wrong doer wearies of wrong in the absence of resistance. Or pressure is lost when the victim betrays no resistance.”

2. Non-Violence

Non-violence is a weapon, a technique and a method which man can adopt to fight the battles of the world. It is the principle of human existence. It is a force which knows no defeat in being a force of truth. as truth is the most powerful force in the world. He wrote. “Non-violence is the greater force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.”

In the common parlance, Ahimsa is understood as a negative term referring to ‘avoidance of violence’, which means refraining from causing pain to any life or killing it out with anger for selfish purpose. It also means to avoid bearing ill-will and so causing others no mental sufferings. From the above discussion of non-violence, it is understandable that non-violence is divided into two aspects: positive and negative.

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36 Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, p. 639.
37 Harijan, 05-09-1936, p. 734.
38 Dhawan, Gopinath, Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, op. cit., p. 70.
Table 6.1

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Negative nonviolence connotes non-killing and non-injury, together called 'avoidance of violence'. Positive nonviolence comprises set of positive qualities, virtues, value, valour, and healthy actions.

Negative Nonviolence: As stated above, negative nonviolence connotes avoidance of all sorts of violence. A clear understanding of negative nonviolence requires a thorough study of violence.

Table 6.2

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<td>Non-Killing</td>
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Avoidance of Violence

Violence: Based on the actor, violence is classified into personal/direct violence, 'impersonal/indirect violence' and 'structural violence.' Personal violence is the performance of violence by an actor (individual or group) personally and directly. For example, scolding, abusing, raising inflammatory slogans, whipping, exploitation, hunting, felling trees etc. Possession of lethal weapon, although not directly a violence yet creates an atmosphere of fear, terror and insecurity. Therefore, it is impersonal/indirect violence. Violence in mass media is an impersonal violence. Excessive violence, sex and vulgarity shown in films is not violence directly. Nevertheless, exposure to such scenes corrupt
innocent minds and the propensity to violence in them is aroused and augmented. Films of that kind ought to be held responsible for that. Such violence is called impersonal and indirect violence.

Structural violence may be defined as the damage done to somebody due to differential access to social resources which is on account of the normal operation of the social system. Behind structural violence, there are definite actors and victims. But the actors cannot be held directly responsible for the violence because their act is in accordance with the accepted practices of the system. Poverty within plenty is an example for this type of violence.

Figure 6.1
Negative Nonviolence

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The major causes of violence, from the actors’ point of view, are actors’ attitude, behaviour and action. All the three are mostly inter-connected. Attitude determines behaviour and the result is action. Intentional and purposefully violent act has its root in violent attitude. There are few exceptions. A mad person indulging in violence cannot be purposeful. His act need not necessarily emanate from his attitude because his action is not propelled by purposeful attitude since he is unable to apply his mind to determine behaviour and anticipate consequences: madness has deprived him of his mental faculties.

On the basis of its nature, violence is divided into Physical, Verbal and Psychic violence. Of the three, Physical and Verbal violence is distinguishable from each other. But psychic violence is not distinguishable from the rest. Any violence on humans is bound to leave its impression on the psyche of the victim. However, there are certain kinds of violence that particularly target the psyche. Such violence is classified under psychic violence. So, negative non-violence is ‘avoidance of all forms of violence’ including psychic one as depicted above.

**Table 6.3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Psychic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Hurting</td>
<td>- Abuse.</td>
<td>- Both Physical and verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Promoting disease thro’ denial of sanitation, Hygiene</td>
<td>- Misinterpretation.</td>
<td>- Curtailing liberty,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Distortion of facts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Prevention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Prevarication.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Perjury.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Positive Nonviolence: Positive nonviolence is a combination of good qualities, values, virtues, morality, positive action. The attributes of Truth are Justice, Harmony, Equality, Freedom, Respect, Fulfilment, etc. As Gandhi says, truth and nonviolence are the two sides of the same coin. Hence, the attributes of Truth are the attributes of nonviolence.

Table 6.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Nonviolence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attributes (forms of Nonviolence)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Truth functions through nonviolence, so the attributes of truth too get expression through nonviolence.
Table 6.5 (a)

Attributes (forms) of Positive Nonviolence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justice</th>
<th>Harmony</th>
<th>Equality</th>
<th>Freedom</th>
<th>Fulfillment</th>
<th>Respect (Reverence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

So, the attitude which promotes positive behaviour and action aiming at the realization of these attributes on personal and social level, is called positive nonviolence.

Table 6.5 (b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral Values</th>
<th>Valour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Virtues</td>
<td>Anticipatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morals</td>
<td>Fearlessness,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Courage, Honesty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty, Faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love, Compassion</td>
<td>Tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>Hope, Trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverence</td>
<td>Forbearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austerity</td>
<td>Scrupulousness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Righteousness</td>
<td>Endurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentleness</td>
<td>Readiness for self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suffering and Sacrifice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cultivation of the above said nonviolence requires stringent practice. It includes practice of the control of senses. It is the instinct of humans that drives one to commit violence. Control over the senses, therefore, is tantamount to having control over violence. This again needs incessant
As our senses have direct bearing over violence, control of the senses and penance are also included as parts of nonviolence.

Table 6.6
Positive Nonviolence – Observance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control of the senses</th>
<th>Energy</th>
<th>Meditation/Introspection</th>
<th>Steadfast pursuit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control over the mind and order to take care of opposite in the same vein</td>
<td>Increase of moral strength through strict behaviour and keeping the physique healthy and energetic thro’ regular physical labour</td>
<td>Constant contemplation to understand the depth of Truth and Nonviolence in order to avoid ignorant commission and omission</td>
<td>Total dedication and devotion in practice of truth and non-violence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the entire life on earth is part of God or Truth, injury to any of them in any form is a violence. Thus, ahimsa means avoiding injury to anything on earth in thought, word and deed. Such an ahimsa, Gandhi believed, would mean avoidance of even the subtlest of himsa like harsh words, biased judgement, ill-will, anger, spite, starvation, oppression of the weak, killing of their self-respect etc. According to Gandhi, exploitation is the essence of violence which ought to be avoided at all cost.⁴⁰

Active ahimsa embraces sub-human beings also, not excluding plants, noxious insects or beasts. Non-violence of that kind is ‘goodwill

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⁴⁰ Harijan, 04-11-1939, p. 331.
towards all life and that pervades the whole being and not be applied only to isolated acts.

This means to say that non-violence, as a means towards the truth, has to be followed in all walks of one’s life and towards the good of all beings in every respect.

The fullest expression of non-violence, as depicted above, attains the state of perfection and is reached only when mind, body, speech are in perfect co-ordination. Human beings are imperfect, practise it imperfectly for they cannot grasp absolute truth. The practice of non-violence, understood as above, is multifold:

1. It forbids one from committing violence in any form to any being i.e. avoidance of violence.
2. The pre-requisites for avoiding violence in one’s personal and social life are: removal of ill-will, violent attitudes and behaviours.
3. Non-violence calls for love towards all beings, in the form of helping others to realize truth and its attributes.
4. A helpful life, i.e. a life of charity is possible only if individual cultivates good qualities and positive attitudes.
5. Practice of non-violence necessitates one not only to follow non-violence in not only personal and public life but also to see that violence is not committed in environment, and non-violence is established. Thus, ahimsa means ‘not committing violence’. It is non-injury and ‘not allowing anybody to commit violence.’ It is non-suppression as well as not

41 Young India, op. cit., p. 286.
allowing suppression. This means to say that a person of ahimsa can neither be violent in any sense nor remain silent at the sight of violence.

Thus non-violence in the comprehensive form, connotes avoidance of killing and injury in any form to any life by word, thought and deed and cultivation of positive values towards one another, and biological environment.

It is the largest love and greatest charity that avoids destruction and devise activities, help one another to avoid violence and grow up in the realization of the Truth.

Life is bound in a chain of destruction and no one, while in the flesh, can be free from himsa. The very existence and life activities such as eating, breathing, drinking and moving involve some destruction of life. Such violence is unavoidable and regarded as inherent necessity for life in the body. Life lives upon life. It is in the scheme of nature: one organism feeds upon other organism, eats it or gets eaten and the cycle goes on. There are organisms or species that are not eaten by others which, upon death, get into decomposition process and release liquid, gas and solid – solid fertilizes soil and soil gives birth to organisms, plants etc. – the cycle goes on – in balance – biological truth.

Nevertheless, ahimsa requires one to take conscious and sincere efforts to abandon violence that is not inevitable in life. The reality of social life is that we share the responsibility for violence committed in society. Because, as Gandhi says, “ahimsa is the unity of all life, the
error of one cannot but affect all, and hence humans cannot be fully free from himsa.\(^{42}\)

Gandhi never preached anything without he himself having practised it. He experimented and evolved his philosophy (or views) as a result of experimentation. His philosophy of action is being out of action. He discovered the weapon of non-violence as the only weapon that could deal with such a world. It is a weapon of the strong, not of the weak. He says, “Non-violence is no wooden or lifeless dogma, but a living and a life-giving force. It is the social attribute of the soul.”\(^{43}\) This soul is a religious concept and arises out of faith in God.

Satyagraha being ‘soul force’ relies completely on the nonviolence of satyagrahi. The more the satyagrahis adhere to nonviolence and be consistent with it, the greater will be the power of his/her satyagraha. Gandhi held that for a nonviolent direct action to be effective, the actors (satyagrahis) ought to build their moral power by practising nonviolence in all aspects of their life. “I cannot be nonviolent about one activity of mine and violent about others” he maintained. The life must integrate with nonviolence. It ought to colour all our behaviour and be so in our thought, word and deed. Then it becomes the creed of one's life.\(^{44}\)

Satyagraha, the active form of nonviolence, appreciates all that are good and co-operate with them, and oppose anything evil and non-co-operate with it. Non-co-operation of a Satyagrahi is not a silent


\(^{43}\) Young India, 06-09-1928, pp. 189-190.

withdrawal alone. It is an active non-co-operation that includes positive protest. As non-violence is the creed of Satyagraha, non-co-operation with evil in protestation becomes moral for him/her.

Gandhi, being a satyagrahi himself, never refrained from this moral duty. His life is replete with examples for the fervour with which he fought against evil. The active part he played in the public, as he attributed it to, was in obedience to his non-violence. The whole span of his public life was a continuous opposition to evil. He seldom abstained from opposing evil, however remote and dangerous it might seem to be. A cursory glance of various satyagrahas undertaken by him would sufficiently illustrate this fact.

1. His first satyagraha was against the unjust and discriminatory laws of the South African government against the Indians settled there. The nature of the problem was political and civil rights. The end of the satyagraha was an amicable settlement.

2. Champaran satyagraha was against the unjust demand of the land owners from the tenants. The issue was exploitation (economic) that was successfully settled through Arbitration.

3. Ahmedabad satyagraha was against the unjust stand taken by the Textile Mill Owners against their workers. The issue was ‘salary hike’ and bonus, economic in nature, which was settled through compromise and arbitration.

4. Farmers’ satyagrahas in Kheda and Bardoli were against the unfair tax system of the government. The issue was economic. The satyagrahas ended in success.
5. Vaikom Satyagraha was a direct action against untouchability and caste discrimination. The issue was social. The result was abolition of discriminatory practice in the disputed area. (In this Satyagraha, Gandhi did not directly participate).

6. His 1932 epic fast was a Satyagraha against the government's move towards 'separate electorate system' which, Gandhi feared, would 'vivisect India". The issue was socio-political. The result was a compromise between Gandhi and Ambedkar and ended in the desired amendment of the Bill (Communal Award).

7. His Rajkot fast was against the Maharaja's refusal to keep up the commitment he owed to the public. It was a moral issue. The Satyagraha ended with the Maharaja agreeing to honour his commitment.

8. The 1940 individual satyagraha was against the government's war preparation, involving India in the World War without consulting her people. It was a political issue.

9. Salt Satyagraha of 1932 and Quit India Movement of 1942 were political struggles against foreign rule aimed at 'Purna Swaraj'. Of these two, the first one was a resounding success as it emphatically registered with the government the resentment of the public and its expectation. It ended in a historical pact between Gandhi and the Viceroy. Quit India movement was launched against suppression unleashed by the
government through reckless police excesses and unwarranted and indiscriminate arrests.\textsuperscript{45}

10. His 1947 and 1948 fasts in Kolkata and Delhi, respectively, were against communal riots (Hindu-Muslim riots). The issue was social (religious). The fasts evoked desirable result. In both the cases, leaders from both communities came together and made an agreement for peace.

Thus Gandhi applied satyagraha in his life time against various socio, political, economic, religious and moral issues. His nonviolence directed him to oppose evil irrespective of the field of its occurrence. It was his moral duty and he scrupulously performed it.

This fight against violence and untruth was only a part of his pursuit of Truth and non-violence. The other side was his incessant effort to realize truth and non-violence by means of realizing their attributes viz., justice, equality, freedom, respect, harmony, fulfillment etc. He initiated various constructive programmes with a view to build up a society that guarantees these values.

**Forms and Methods of Satyagraha**

Gandhi’s view of Satyagraha is a dynamic soul-force based on the acceptance of the concept of suffering not only for the realization of justice but also for truth. It signifies a genuine, intense and sincere quest for the vindication of truth, which is synonymous with God. It is, hence, based on an invincible belief in the ultimate triumph of divine justice.

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. Furthermore, we must keep in mind that the science of satyagraha is still in the process of development and growth. Vinoba Bhave, the first disciple-Satyagrahi of Gandhi even added new dimensions to Satyagraha by introducing the concept of ‘Sukshm Pravesh’, i.e. gentle, gentler and gentleman notion of Satyagraha.

The important weapons of Satyagraha are non-co-operation, civil disobedience, fasting, hijrat, hartal, picketing, boycott (economic and social), renunciation of titles, honours and positions.

Non-Co-operation: Co-operation provides strength, force and that ultimately paves the way for success. It is Gandhi’s firm view that even the mightiest tyrannical government can no longer function if co-operation is not extended to it. Accordingly, any established system can collapse if people start non-cooperation. Non-cooperation should be a movement of a purification which should bring out all our weaknesses and excesses of even our strong points on the surface. Beside, non-cooperation is nothing but non-violence in its dynamic conditions, and ‘dynamic’ means conscious suffering.46

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.47

46 Young India, 18-8-1920, p. 3.
47 Ibid., p. 4.
Thus, non-cooperation is the expression of the public opinion against an unjust social and political set-up.

Civil Disobedience: Civil disobedience is a synthesis of civility and disobedience, i.e., non-violence and resistance. Resistance to bad laws is essential for man’s moral growth, while civility is the demand of a stable social order without which man’s life and growth are not possible.

It is called ‘civil’ because it is non-violent resistance by the people who are otherwise law-abiding. They disobey the laws on the ground that they are not moral. At the same time, the right of civil disobedience, insisted upon its use, must be guarded by all conceivable restrictions. Every possible provision should be made against an outbreak of violence or general lawlessness. Its areas as well as its scope should also be limited to the barest necessity of the case.48

Gandhi believes that civil disobedience, mass or individual, is an end to constructive effort and is a full substitute for armed revolt. Civil disobedience as advised by Gandhi can be used within a restricted field and for certain specific purpose only. The objective before the participants in this non-violent direct action campaign should be distinct, concrete and limited.

Fasting: Gandhi says that fasting for purification of self and others is an age old institution and it will subsist so long as man believes in God. For self-purification from aggressive feelings towards the opponent, he stressed fasting and prayers more than any other means. He

48 Ibid., 9-2-1922, p. 89.
used to say that he was not a man of loving but claimed to be a man of prayers. By employing this technique of purification, the satyagrahi seeks to weaken the opponent by dissociating with him and his institution.

According to Gandhi fasting is an integrated part of satyagraha programme. 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 last resort, and never for personal gains. It should be in the nature of prayer for purity and strength, and power from God.  

Fasting unto death is the greatest and the most effective weapon. 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 South Africa, he fasted only for the purpose of self-purification.

Hijrat (Migration): It means voluntary exile. It is another form of collective as well as individual satyagraha. Gandhiji recommends hijrat to those who feel oppressed, cannot live without loss of self-respect in particular place and lack the strength that comes from true non-violence or the capacity to defend themselves non-violently. He recommends Hijrat only in extreme cases where there is no other alternative. As mentioned earlier, Hijrat is not only voluntary exile from public life but also from permanent place of living and it is meant

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49 Harijan, 21-4-1946, p. 93.
50 Ibid., 3-2-1940, p. 435; May 25, 1941, p. 162.
51 Young India, 04-08-1920, p. 4.
only for non-violent and non-coercive people who know the meaning of satyagraha.

Hartal (Temporary Strike): It means voluntary suspension of business in protest against some evil authority. It is a temporary strike of work or stopping of business, usually for 24 hours. “The object of a hartal is to strike the imagination of the people and the Government.” But hartals should not be frequent, otherwise they would cease to be effective. It is a method of showing protest and the duration 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.

Picketing (Dharnas): Gandhi allows non-violent Picketing during the course of strikes. According to Gandhiji, 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. It is a persuasive measure and as such lends support and effectiveness to strike. Peaceful picketing is also a valid and useful means to satyagraha. It was successfully resorted to during the Indian Freedom Struggle. Its legitimacy was accepted even by the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March 4, 1931.

Boycott: The boycott of public institutions (government schools and colleges and law courts) is intended to protest against or even penalize an unjust or iniquitous political systems. It may also be employed against a particular institution indulging in corrupt or unfair

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employed against a particular institution indulging in corrupt or unfair discriminatory practices. Boycott may be economic, intended to keep out foreign goods where their importation results in unemployment or causes some moral principle to be violated. Gandhiji held that a non-violent boycott is legitimate when we are required to compromise with what we believe to be an untruth. Social boycott should be adopted when there are differences of opinion.

Renunciation of Titles, Honours and Positions: Gandhi, no doubt accepted renunciation as ‘the law of life’ but it was not the renunciation of the world but the renunciation of selfish desires that he had in view “all of us are bound to place our resources at the disposal of humanity.” It is such a kind of renunciation which, according to him, “Differentiates mankind from the beast.”

Agitation: After trying out all the possible methods of negotiations, the Satyagrahi takes the second step of non-violent direct action. that is agitation.

Agitation consists in public opinions. The satyagrahi aims at propagating the cause amongst those members of the group where interests had been ruffled and feelings stirred by the dispute-stimulating consciousness of cause in his chief objective. To achieve it, he utilizes the mass media of communication, viz., books, pamphlets, radio, organized mass meetings, increases personal contact with people and invents slogans. Gandhiji adopted all these measures to educate the people and mobilize public opinion and awaken consciousness among

54 Harijan, 15-9-1946, p. 309.
the sleeping masses of India. For instance, in 1942, he announced the “Do or Die” formula.

Gandhi’s entire philosophy forms a coherent whole and is based on a single value system comprising of truth and non-violence. Gandhi views conflict as actually an invitation to mutual elimination. It calls for an increase in the personal contact with the opposite party.

According to Gandhi, conformation is not simply of two parties, but between two sets of relative truths in which no party has a right to use violence to achieve its goal, a relative truth and not absolute truth. Conflict resolution means realization of higher truth which can only be attained by the synthesis of the two relative truths, i.e., through peaceful negotiations.

Gandhi rejects violence once again because it is not conducive to the solution of conflict as, instead of securing peace, it increases conflict and violence in an endless circle. The whole of the argument can be summed up in the following points:

1. As the norms of human species is ‘to live together’ we can not fall into the path of violence which is divisive in character.
2. While there is violence in our society, we have strong binding values too (truth & Non-violence with their entire range of attributes) the force of which is sufficient to balance the force of violence and to establish togetherness (unity).
3. Conflict, which is understood as a clash between truth and untruth, the purpose of which is to establish truth as the
satyagraha of Gandhi aimed at, can not be violent, for truth and violence go ill together.

4. As the force of non-violence is in tune with the truth, conflict conducted by means of non-violence is bound to be fruitful and without ill effects.

Satyagraha is a ‘soul force’ for which truth and non-violence are the power houses. Truth or Satya which means ‘the real existence’ is the closest meaning of God. Gandhi went a step further and said ‘Truth is God’.

The pre-requisite for the strict adherence to Truth is complete obedience to non-violence. The relationship between non-violence and truth is a priori. Truth is the end and non-violence is the means.