

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: AN ANALYSIS OF GANDHIAN APPROACH

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Abstract

Conflict resolution can be conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution. Conflict resolution otherwise known as reconciliation may also be used interchangeably with dispute resolution. A model that has been incompetently emphasized but holds out considerable potential is the Gandhian model of conflict resolution, where non-violence plays a catalytic role. Gandhi devoted his life to the perfection of non-violent technique of conflict resolution and everything he said and did was always conversant of non-violence. He firmly believed that lasting peace in the world was possible only through non-violence. According to Gandhi in a conflict situation, there is no other plan than the adherence to non-violence in thought, word and deed. There is no other goal than to reach the truth. Gandhi argues that rational discussion and persuasion were the best way to resolve conflict. Gandhi suggested the methods of Satyagraha to resolve the conflict. He used this method both in India as well as in South Africa to resolve different kinds of conflicts. Not only Satyagraha, constructive programme of Gandhi is also an active method of attacking and removing social evils. In contemporary world there is need of Gandhi's Satyagraha in terms of resolving conflict. This paper will focus on Gandhi's methods and techniques in resolving conflicts.

Keywords: conflict, non-violence, Satyagraha, constructive programme, peace.

Introduction

The conflict in the society is as old as the society itself. In any society or nation-state, the resolutions of conflict, and restoration of normalcy is a cyclic process, which can be controlled by instructing the values of existence among the citizens (Jaspreet 2012). Conflict is a natural fact of life, whether we pay attention towards interactions among individual, groups, organizations or nations. Conflicts are present everywhere. Phenomena like discord, dispute or fighting are associated with conflict. Conflict may be defined as a social situation in which two individuals strive to acquire a set of resources at the same period (Devi 2012). In the dynamic society we live in today, conflict can prove fruitful by bringing about a positive social change. Conflict is actual or supposed disagreement over some issue. It has the potential to assume bigger proportions. Conflict could be social, religious, regional, national or international. Conflicts could be resolved in many ways (Pithode 2012).

Definition and Classification of Conflicts

Conflict resolution may be defined as the situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solve their incompatibilities, disputes, problems and cease all violent actions against each other. A conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur. An activity that prevents blocks or interferes with the occurrence or effectiveness of the second activity. A conflict can be small as disagreement or as large as a war. It can be originated in one person, between two or more people or between two or more groups (Devi 2012). The classifications of conflicts are

1. **Controversy conflict:** The conflict which occurs when one person's ideas, information, conclusion, theories and opinions are incompatible with another. This type of conflict is known as controversy conflict. Such types of conflicts can occur in class rooms mostly.
2. **Conceptual conflicts:** Such type of conflict occurs when incompatible ideas exist simultaneously in his or her mind or when information did not seem fit with what one already knows.
3. **Inter-personal conflicts:** The conflict can occur when the actions of one person attempting to maximize his or her goals to prevent, block or interfere with another person attempting to maximize personal goals.
4. **Developmental Conflict:** Developmental conflict exists when dissenting activities between adult and child based on the opposing forces of firmness and change within the child cycles in and out of peak intensity as the child develops cognitively and socially (Devi 2012 p.07).

The value of Non violence

The tradition of ahimsa in India inspired Gandhi and he spent a life time of elaborating a rational structure for his faith. He says that self-sacrifice is superior to the sacrifice of others. The life of Gandhi was an experiment with truth and means to truth, as non-violence lives and grows also by experimentation (Nelson). Gandhi says that non-violence is the law of ones-being, because non-violent is not a single virtue or single quality of life. It is a large group of virtues, qualities. It is a spirit, a way of life and a religion. In Gandhi's structure there are two basic pillars of life that is truth and ahimsa or non-violence. Gandhi always says that truth is the end and non-violence is the means (ibid).

At the disposal of mankind, non-violence is the greatest force. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man. Gandhi said that I have applied non-violence in every walk of my life, domestic, institutional, economic and political and this method had never failed. We are surrounded in life by strife and bloodshed. By non-violence a man can fulfill his destiny and his duty. Non-violence is a force which is more positive than electricity and more powerful than even ether. At the center of non-violence is a force which is self-acting. Non-violence is a weapon of strong. Gandhi said for me truth and non-violence is the faces of the same coin (Gandhi 1968). Gandhi emphasized that violence cannot be used to overcome violence and achieve non-violence. He also emphasized that using violence; we can achieve short term benefits. Gandhi had a common view that the example of non-violence is peace, whereas war is simply example of violence (Allen 2007).

Spread of non-violence was no novel or unparalleled act of the Gandhi. As he said that "I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. Gandhi was innovator in the field of applying the talisman of ahimsa or non-violence, which was accepted by saints as a means to attain individual Moksha or salvation from this material world, for the solution of day to day problems of the common man (Gandhi).

To understand Gandhi and his non-violence we should not suppress one important aspect of the truth. Gandhi was not philosopher, besides that he adjusts himself in daily problems and struggles of the mankind and formulated his philosophy of non-violence.

Satya Graha

On September 11, 1906, a meeting was held by Indian immigrants under the leadership of Gandhi in the imperial theater of the South African town, Johannesburg. In this meeting a resolution was adopted to carry on a non-violent agitation for the withdrawal of the discriminatory and humiliating registration ordinances against the Indians. This non-violent agitation was commonly known as passive resistance and after that it was known as Satya graha which is a mixture of two nouns "Satya" means truth and "Agraha" means firm grasping. This movement was carried out in India against British rule by Gandhi under his leadership through Indian national congress. This movement helped in making India free (Pradhan 2007).

Satya graha means firmness for the cause of truth as it is old as human culture. Gandhi used this technique for mass mobilization, for political movements against the injustice of a government. The goal of Satya graha lay not in application of physical force or brute force, however in the application of soul force or moral power (ibid 2007).

In Harijan October 13, 1940 Gandhi said that a satyagrahi will have no shine, no inner strength to stand unarmed against the world without adopting brahmacharya. His strength will fail him at the right moment. Gandhi's Satya graha is truth in its dynamic form of unattended with violence. However there are some differences between passive resistance and Satya graha.

- Love has no place in passive resistance as well as in Satya graha
- Passive resistance is frequently a pioneer of armed resistance, while as Satya graha prohibits armed resistance.
- Passive resistance cannot be offered against one's own kith and kin, while as Satya graha can be offered even against those one loves (ibid 2007).

Satya graha means a moral weapon to fight untruth with truth and violence with non-violence. The beauty of Satya graha is that it does not touch the body of the opponent.

Satya graha is the Gandhian technique of non-violent activism. The term has many other names like passive resistance, non-violent resistance, non-violent direct action and even militant non-violence (Weber 2001).

For Gandhi Satya graha is not only a method of conducting, it is also a way of life living in truth. Galtung summarizes Gandhi's conflict norms in three ways. First in conflict region, it is necessary to understand opponents goals and try to meet is an opportunity to transform society and as opportunity to transform the self. Second in conflict struggle, one should to act non-violently like do not harm or hurt with the words, deeds or thought, do not damage property, do good even to the evil-doer, not to cooperate with the evil, by not humiliating or allowing oneself to be humiliated and using the mildest forms of conflict behavior. The third and final norm is that conflicts should be solved, always seek negotiation and seek transformation of both the self and opponent.

Gandhi's own statement is that a satyagrahi must never forget the distinction between evil and evil doer. In conflict situation, there is no other plan than the adherence to non-violence in thought, word and deed and no other goal to reach to truth (ibid 2007).

Cooperation and harmony constitute the fundamental law of universe rather than conflict and struggle. Conflicts can occur day to day due to the irregularities in the flow of life. To Gandhi conflict can be resolved only when peace is taken to be a positive concept rather than a negative one. Johan Galtung argues that negative concept of peace is standard western formulation. He defines resolution of conflict as absence of conflict. However in Gandhian way conflict resolution is not only the elimination, but a progressing towards a better environment. Gandhi does not regard a conflict as an antagonism between two. He takes it as a product of faulty system. He is of the view that we must develop to change the system, so that there should be no possibility of conflict in future (Nayak 2008).

Conclusion

The present century is a century of variations. Our life is full of materialistic ambitions and competitions, promotes the motion of conflict which further provokes violence. Conflicts have been a constant phenomenon in the history of human race. With conflicts, there is disturbances, disorders and violence's among each other. In this regard Gandhi suggested Satya graha. With this the opponent should be considered as an enemy to be destroyed or defeated. A satyagrahi should help him to become a better man. Competitions and conflicts should take the form of cooperation. For Gandhi non-violence is the most authentic, complete and simplified pattern for social, economic and political activities of society. Non-violence has the power to integrate societies and providing opportunities to people for their growth and prosperity. Teachings of Gandhi provides us a way of developing the sentiments, motives, mutual trust and moral power, so that we must build a much stronger foundation for society than we now have.

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