



Gandhian Concept of Satyagraha & its Universality

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Abstract

This paper examines the Gandhian concept of Satyagraha; its correlation with the philosophy of Socrates & Plato. Mahatma Gandhi could inspire countless number of people into fight passive resistance during the period when war was the stronghold. Gandhian philosophy of Satyagraha was not only spiritual but also shattered the very existence of imperialistic attitudes of the Mighty British. According to Mahatma Gandhi truth was a soul force. It was followed by Martin Luther King who fought for civilian rights in America & Nelson Mandela who fought for the cause of apartheid in South Africa.

Key Words: British Rule, peaceful resistance, Satyagraha,

"Truth (Satya) implies love, and firmness (Agraha) engenders and therefore serve as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement "Satyagraha", that is to say, the Force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence, and gave up the use of the phrase "passive resistance" - M.K.Gandhi

Introduction

Satyagraha is a term meaning insistence for truth. It means non violent resistance passive or civil. It was a form of unique protest against the British. According to Mahatma Gandhi truth was a soul force. It was followed by Martin Luther King who fought for civilian rights in America & Nelson Mandela fought for the cause of apartheid.

The term originated through a competition in the news letter Indian opinion in South Africa. The most potent legacy about it was an instrument of

action & a power to effect change. Mahatma Gandhi coined the term to describe his philosophy of non violence resistance in developing Gandhi was influenced by the concept of ahimsa in the Hindu Upanishad & the tenets of Jainism. John Ruskin, Leo Tolstoy & Henry salt influenced his thinking towards Satyagraha. He became deeply influenced by Tolstoy's book "The kingdom of god is within you". Gandhi was introduced to a deeply divided & inequitable South Africa which was alienated into separate colonies ruled by British expatriates & Dutch Africans. It was populated by Native Africans &



Indian Indentured laborers & other professionals.

In this strange scenario Gandhi was able to breathe fresh & innovative modules of protest. This struggle in South Africa molded him to four different roles

1. Freedom fighter
2. Social reformer
3. Religious pluralist
4. Prophet of secularism

Towards Satyagraha at Initial

Mahatma Gandhi was determined to protest against racial laws of South Africa which was prejudiced & racial. There were no governmental supports to Indians. There were stringent rules & regulations connected to the very living of Indians. (Dalton, Dennis, ed. (1996) Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Hackett Publishing). Mahatma Gandhi refused to comply with racial segregation rules on a South African train & was forcibly thrown out at Pietermaritzburg. (Gandhi, M.K. (1928, Satyagraha in South Africa). Subsequently he decided to fight injustice & defend his rights as an Indian & as a person. (Dalton, Dennis, ed. (1996) Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Hackett Publishing).

Mahatma Gandhi travelled to South Africa in 1893 to practice law under one year contract. After settling in Natal he came to countenance several instances of racism. Mahatma Gandhi understood South African laws that brutally cut short the rights of laborers specially

Indians. After the contract expired to Mahatma Gandhi decided to launch a campaign against legislations in South Africa. (Gandhi, M .K. (1928). Satyagraha in South Africa p 22-56)

Mahatma Gandhi fought against the legislation which denied voting power to Indians. He formed the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) & drew international attention to the plight of Indians in South Africa. This was the beginning of long struggle of passive resistance. In 1905 the Transvaal Government sought to further restrict the rights of Indians. (Dalton, Dennis, ed. (1996) Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Hackett Publishing).

Mahatma Gandhi organized his first campaign of Satyagraha or mass civil disobedience with South African government. In 1914 Mahatma Gandhi returned to India & started political involvement He launched the Satyagraha movement. He launched this against the British policy against mandatory inclusion of Indian for the First World War.

Code of Satyagraha

1. Harboring no anger but suffer the anger of the opponent silently
2. Refuse to return the assault of the opponent
3. Do not submit to any order given in anger even though severe punishment is threatened for disobeying
4. Refrain from insults



5. Protect opponents from insult & attack a even at the risk of life
6. Do not resist arrest nor attachment of property
7. Refuse to surrender any property held in trust at the risk of life
8. If taken as a prisoner behave in a good manner
9. Obey the orders of Satygraha
10. Ready to resign from the unit if disagreement
11. Do not expect anything this is a free service

Steps in Satygraha

The following were the major steps in Satygraha of Mahatma Gandhi (as listed by KrishnlalShridharani.- Classic work War without violence New York Harcourt Brace 1939 pp 5-42).

1. Negotiation
2. Arbitration\
3. agitation
4. Issuing an ultimatum
5. Economic boycott
6. Non cooperation
7. Civil disobedience
8. Usurping the function of the government
9. Setting up a parallel government

According to Mahatma Gandhi a Satygraha follower must always provide a face saving way out for the opponents .(KrishnlalShridharani.- Classic work War

without violence New York Harcourt Brace 1939 pp 5-42).The goal is to discover a wider vista of truth & justice not to achieve victory over the opponent . He should be willing to shoulder any responsibility ready for any sacrifice (Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand (1928). Satygraha in South Africa (In Gujarati) (1 Ed.). Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House. "Translated By Valji G. Desai)

Similarities

There are similarities between Mahatma Gandhi & Socrates in the explicit expression of willingness to seek & stand for the truth even at the cost of the one's life it is this point which Gandhi emphasizes in his story of a soldier of truth his translation into Gujarati of Plato's apology. Gandhi believed impersonal experiment with truth which resembles Socrates questioning He built a movement to combat British rule .Plato & Mahatma Gandhi believed that moral character was needed for every person. Because this individuality assisted them in good personality building. Virtuousness was stressed upon by these two philosophers. Both projected the significance of virtuosity as this would lead to harmonious society.

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi could influence a huge mass of people of not only India but across the world. Persuading the people to sacrifice everything for the sake of the country is a no small achievement when in a time when the whole world was engrossed in imperialistic dreams. His



ideals were simple to practice needing patience & tolerance .His dream of Ramrajya where Sarvodaya meaning everybody living harmoniously would embody all these. These days the society has been divided on communal basis. The wide spread intolerance of each other's religion, faith, belief, has made the world an agonizing place to live in. If today our people can comprehend the true values of Satyagraha they may pay great tribute to its propagator Mahatma Gandhi.

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