

## Post Gandhian concept of Satyagraha

Dhiraj Gurung\*

### Abstract

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi was an Indian lawyer, anti-colonial nationalist, and political activist who employed non-violent resistance to lead a successful campaign of Indian independence from the British rule. Gandhi was a saint and a moral revolutionary<sup>1</sup>. He called his overall method of nonviolent action 'Satyagraha'. 'Satyagraha', usually is a Sanskrit word meaning, 'holding onto truth'. Gandhi's Satyagraha became a major tool in the 20th century in the Indian struggle against British imperialism and has since been adopted by protest groups in other countries as well. He sincerely believed that nonviolence would spell the doom of mankind. He thought a peaceful solution to our problems was not only possible but was the only way to have a real solution. The idea of Satyagraha was derived by Gandhi from Jainism, which upholds the concept of ahimsa, meaning 'no injury'. He also drew inspiration from the writings of Leo Tolstoy and Henry David Thoreau, from the Bible, and Bhagavad Gita. The first use of Satyagraha by Gandhi can be traced back to 1906, in response to a law discrimination against Asians that was passed by the British colonial government in the Transvaal in South Africa. In India, the first use of Satyagraha by Gandhi can be seen in 1917, when the Satyagraha campaign in India was mounted in the indigo-growing district of Champaran. Gandhi's Satyagraha as a nonviolent campaign became very successful in achieving India's independence. The theory of Satyagraha by Gandhi influenced many, such as Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Dalai Lama, and many more. Therefore, the study mainly focuses on the idea of Mahatma Gandhi for India's independence.

Keyword: Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Mahatma, Non-violence, Truth, Resistance.

### Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) was not only a systematic academic thinker in the field of metaphysics and political philosophy but was also an inspired teacher and a prophet. Gandhi was very much influenced by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, John Ruskin, and Leo Tolstoy. The Concept of Satyagraha was developed by Gandhi in the century. The term Satyagraha comes from the Sanskrit word meaning 'holding unto truth' (Satya meaning truth and Agraha meaning insistence). Though Gandhi himself was a born Hindu, he was very much attached to Jainism. The five principles of Jainism hit him the most. They were Ahimsa (nonviolence), Satya (Truth), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (celibacy), and Aparigraha (non-possession) as a means to attain Moksha. Gandhi's Jain mentor Shrimad Ramachandra, had already inspired in the value of each of these moral tenets. Gandhi also found supporting examples and reasoning in the teachings of all religions<sup>2</sup>.

Besides, he derived the idea of Satyagraha from the Bhagavad Gita, Tolstoy's 'Kingdom of God is within you', and John Ruskin's book 'Unto This Last'. In 1906, he took the vow of Brahmacharya. For Gandhi, in the context of Satyagraha, truth included 1) truth in speech, as opposed to falsehood 2) what is real, as opposed to nonexistence or (asatya) 3) good as to evil. He believed Ahimsa and Truth as two sides of a coin, ahimsa as a means and as an end<sup>3</sup>.

So therefore, if we are to understand Satyagraha in simple words means the use of nonviolence to achieve the desired goals, Gandhi was strictly against the principle of violence. He believed that resistance to violence by counterviolence is wrong as wrong cannot be righted by another wrong. Here critics very often fail to understand that non-violent resistance of the Gandhian type is also a 'force' which is different from violence<sup>4</sup>. The two words 'violence' and 'force' are often used interchangeably so we often fail to understand that force need not always be violent. Gandhi's non-violent resistance is a force that counters the violent force. This force of the Gandhian type is recognized as a 'soul force' (true force, love force). Some techniques of Satyagraha that Gandhi used during the movement for Indian independence were civil disobedience, fasting, strike, and hijrah<sup>5</sup>.

The Gandhian philosophy of Satyagraha has influenced many others, not only within the nation but outside as well. The technique of Satyagraha strongly holds Satya and Ahimsa at the center position. Far from passivity, nonviolence requires active commitment and courage. Through this technique, Gandhi assured to

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\* Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Kumaun University, Nainital, Uttarakhand

bring human peace and social equity<sup>6</sup>. Martin Luther King Jr. highly influenced by Gandhian Satyagraha and the Christian faith implemented it against racial discrimination during the late 1950s and 60s to achieve legal equality for African-Americans in the United States. At the age of thirty-five, he was the youngest man to have received the Nobel Peace Prize<sup>7</sup>. Nelson Mandela was also highly influenced by Satyagraha who devoted his life to the service of humanity, as a human rights lawyer, a prisoner of conscience, and a peacemaker. Mandela is often cited as one of his greatest teachers<sup>8</sup>. Another great advocate of peace in this 21st is the Dalai Lama following the footprints of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. The Inna has continuously been implementing and being a strong advocate of peace and nonviolence. It was in the year 1959 that Tibet was fully occupied by the Chinese invasion and he was compelled to flee and leave his homeland. But even though for so many many years he has been solely relying on compassion and non-violence for Tibetan independence. He received the Nobel Prize in the year 1989<sup>9</sup>.

### Contemporary Relevance of Gandhian Satyagraha

No doubt, Gandhi was a true champion of Satyagraha a movement free from violence and fear, a movement of truth to self thereby, advocating peace and universality. Though his immediate goal was to accomplish Indian independence but visualized the survival and significance of his Satyagraha in the long run. Gandhi was assassinated right after Indian independence (i.e., 1948) but his Satyagraha seems to be holding a significant role in recent times<sup>10</sup>. With the development of arms race various weapons developed like atomic. Chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons so the world is under a continuous threat of terrorism, not only the third-world countries but also the so-called developed countries<sup>11</sup>.

Terrorism today has become a serious issue without boundaries to the entire human civilization. The development of human civilization has both negative as well as positive connotations. Science and technology have created a competition among nations competition of ideology, belief, nationalism, and most importantly the competition of arms race to execute their national security<sup>12</sup>. Advancement in science and technology has led to the invention of various types of weapons of mass destruction. This advancement has created an environment of fear and terror for human civilization, no nation is free from this fear, and even the so-called developed nation<sup>13</sup>. Nations are striving to increase their national security thereby increasing their arms and ammunition Mahatma Gandhi himself was very critical about the advancement of science and technology and called it 'evil'. He was never in support of these lethal weapons as it only led to violence and suppression. In the 20th century, he was the greatest advocate of peace and nonviolence. Human values and morality have degenerated now than ever before. Today the world has been divided based on borders. Ideologies, region, and notably religious basis<sup>14</sup>. The realist version of viewing the world has dominated mankind. Along with the power struggle, nation states securing their national interest has given birth to weapons of mass destruction and its possession has become a serious threat to one another<sup>15</sup>. United Nations came into being right after World War second came as an international organization advocating universal peace and security. The United Nations has been tirelessly working on issues like environment, human rights international cooperation, and disarmament. Several treaties like the Partial Test Ban Treaty, Nuclear Test, United Nations Framework Convention on climate change, CESR, CERD, CEDAW, and CAT have been signed for sustainability, cooperation, and universality<sup>16</sup>. But somewhere the idea of universal peace and security still lacks the Russia-Ukraine war is going on and the United Nations seems to be failing to establish peace between the two nations. It has become one of the paradoxes of the 21st century that, on the one hand, the establishment of peace has become a matter of great importance for the survival of human civilization, while on the other preserving peace has become less effective<sup>17</sup>. Alongside there exists so many organizations that advocated universal peace but have failed to execute successfully. On 24th February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine and the Ukrainians have been fighting for their freedom continuously. The world today is witnessing mass violence in Ukraine. Several peace talks have been attempted but have failed to come to a successful conclusion<sup>18</sup>. As such there are various other disputes and situations of tension such as the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. takeover of Myanmar by military coup. Israel-Palestine issue. Indo-Pacific geopolitics and many more. The human desire to want more has made the world chaotic with full of fear, violence, and suspicion<sup>19</sup>. One thing that everyone has to be clear about is that violence, tyranny, fear, suppression, and terror never lead to human progress and human emancipation. No nation can develop and prosper remaining aloof from the rest. So therefore, universal

cooperation and universal peace are more than a necessity rather than a sheer concept that every nation has to promote and execute<sup>20</sup>. No nation is free from terrorism. In such a situation the idea of Satyagraha has to come forth and be the torchbearer to promote peace and universal good. By implementing the technique of Satyagraha, universal peace can be established<sup>21</sup>.

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