
UNIT 5 UNDERSTANDING SOURCES OF CONFLICT

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5.1 INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a relationship between two or more individuals and groups who have or think that they have incompatible goals and needs. The incompatibility may thus be real or perceived and may be over material and/or symbolic resources. Most people perceive conflict as a negative term and ascribe negative connotations to it. However, inherently conflict is neither negative nor positive. Some of its aspects may be either positive or negative.

Conflict has positive aspects when it directs attention to the injustices that need to be addressed, when it promotes much needed change in organisations and systems, and especially when it leads to creative problem solving. The negative aspects of conflict are the destructive behaviour (violence leading to loss of life and property), the pain and trauma that is a result of the violence, and the wastage of resources that would have been

better spent on creative activities. Therefore it is the negative aspect of conflict that can and should be avoided but conflict *per se* is a fact of life, inevitable, natural, unavoidable and often creative. Gandhi too saw conflict as both positive and desirable. Therefore, it is better to work on the resolution of conflict rather than avoid it or keep suffering as a result of it. To facilitate conflict resolution, the first and foremost important step is to understand and analyse the causes and sources of conflict.

Aims and Objectives

After going through this Unit, you will understand:

- The causes of conflict;
- Appreciate the debate on whether conflict is intrinsic to human beings or it is a product of socio-cultural conditions; and
- And identify the specific sources of conflict.

5.2 CAUSES OF CONFLICT

There are different ways of examining the nature of a conflict and identifying the factors that give rise to it. Even though one precipitating event may lead to an open confrontation, most conflicts arise from a complex and multiple set of factors that may include the history shared by people across the divide, the social, political, economic and cultural dynamics, the nature of the issues at stake etc. Thus a distinction needs to be made between

1. The proximate or immediate causes
2. The underlying causes

5.2.1 Proximate Causes

Proximate causes are those events, which may trigger violence for example, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in June 1914, which was the immediate cause of the beginning of the First World War.

5.2.2 Underlying Causes

Underlying causes are the fundamental and long-term causes, which create conditions in which immediate triggers of conflict occur. The immediate and underlying causes are interconnected but in conflict resolution more attention needs to be paid to identifying the underlying and root causes if we want to work towards sustainable peace. Theoretical explanations of the underlying causes of conflict focus on either the human agency or the social structural conditions. Theories under each of these categories are a reflection of the 'nature versus nurture' debate: whether human beings are primarily affected by genes or by social interactions.

5.3.2.1 Human Nature and Conflict

Theories focusing on the agency-based explanation seek to answer questions such as is conflict inherent in human beings? Are human beings genetically programmed for violence? These theories locate the causes of conflict at the level of the individual or collective agency, based on human behaviour.

- i. One set of theories argues that aggressive behaviour is innate and biologically programmed in the human species. Thomas Hobbes believed that human beings are selfish by nature and “that humanity is characterized by careless, and indeed relentless, thirst for power.” Edmund Burke “saw humanity as inherently conflictual.” Sigmund Freud contends that aggression “is carried out in the name of self-preservation, and is inherent to humans.” Aggression helps human beings to protect and enhance their existence. However, Gandhi was in a different league altogether as he believed in the essential goodness of human beings. He had a very positive view of human nature and believed that humans could respond to “the call of the spirit” and rise above selfishness and violence.
- ii. Another explanation of the agency-based theory is psychoanalytical. This theory argues that early differentiation among human beings between ‘self’ and ‘other’ manifests itself in a deep psychological need for enemies.
- iii. The socio-psychological perspective focuses on processes of group formation and differentiation, mainly the role that images, (mis) perceptions, stereotyping, and dehumanisation play in the decision-making, which leads to violent conflict.
- iv. The psycho-cultural viewpoint provides accounts of conflict behaviour in terms of culturally shared images and perceptions of the external world.

5.3.2.2 Society and Conflict

Conflict occurs in human interactions that take place within the context of the family, the community and the society. When individuals or groups believe that the family/society does not meet their interests, they try to change the social and familial norms and structures by force, which often leads to situations of violent conflict. Thus socio-structural theories argue that aggression is not innate but its expression depends on factors external to the individual.

Structural theories lay emphasis on the organisation of society that creates the causes and conditions for conflict. Unjust social structures and institutions play a significant role in creating and perpetuating social conflicts. Social structures and institutions often favour some groups of people / communities and by extension disfavour others. This emerges as an important source of violent conflict.

- i. Albert Bandura argued that there are three primary sources of human aggression: familial settings, sub-cultural context and symbolic modeling.
 - a) Social learning takes place first and foremost in the family and human beings learn appropriate behaviour within family settings. Bandura argues that families that have conflicts all the time are most likely to have conflictual children. Thus violent families produce violent offspring. Additionally, American psychiatrist, James Gilligan, known for his work with some of the most “violent criminals” living in America’s prisons, put forth the theory that childhood abuse creates violent personalities. Gilligan pointed out that most of the “criminals” living in American prisons had had a brutal childhood- many had been beaten, sexually assaulted, prostituted or neglected to a life-threatening degree by their parents. He thus concluded that childhood abuse and neglect can create violent personalities that will then manifest violent behaviour in social institutions.

- b) Subcultures are another source of social learning leading to aggression. Bandura argues: “The highest rates of aggressive behaviour are found in environments where aggressive models abound and where aggressiveness is regarded as a highly valued attribute.” However, all people raised in violent environments may not be violent because “many people may simply aspire not to be violent.” Bandura does suggest, though, that there is a strong capacity to instruct a group in the ways of violence. He makes his point in suggesting that the military is an excellent example of making otherwise relatively non-violent persons violent.
 - c) Another major source of social learning is symbolic sources such as television. “Television transmits pictures of violence, impressions of violence and even the symbolic culture of violence. We learn how to cope with ‘reality’ through television, and are susceptible to its messages. This is especially true among the young of society.”
- ii. The non-fulfillment of basic human needs is another cause of conflict. John Burton propounded the basic human needs theory. Needs refer to basic human requirements for the continuation and propagation of life: material (food, shelter, health care, employment- freedom from want), cultural (right to religion, language) and social needs (respect, dignity and freedom from fear). The need for life to be perceived as being predictable and safe is extremely important. These needs are non-negotiable and universal and their satisfaction is essential for human development and social stability. These universal needs must be satisfied if protracted social conflicts are to be resolved. Thus the primary source of human behaviour is the satisfaction of human needs; however, these needs have to be satisfied within the social context. If the universal needs are not met in socially accepted ways, individuals/communities resort to violence in order to meet these needs.
- iii. Gandhi had a need-based conception of society and conflict. In his view, conflict is the result of structural denial of human needs. The creation of new structures is necessary for the satisfaction of human needs. This would require a method of struggle that satisfies three conditions: destruction of need-denying structures, creation of need-satisfying structures and respecting the needs of the conflicting parties during the struggle. The Gandhian approach to conflict resolution, i.e., Satyagraha was an attempt to satisfy all three conditions. Thus satisfaction of needs was central to conflict resolution.
- iv. An additional set of theories draw on critical social theory particularly the feminist and post-structuralist perspectives. These emphasise the central importance of social discourse- the language we use, the social practices we engage in- these generate exclusionist identities (us/them, insider/outsider).
- v. Karl Marx located conflict in the economic structure. Marx’s theory of class conflict argues that social institutions and structures reflect the material reality of society. The economic structure (economic determinism) has dominated over politics in the development of human history (historical materialism). As long as capitalists control the means of production, they would also wield power over social structures, making them inherently unjust towards the working class giving rise to conflicts between the capitalists and the proletariat (working class).
- vi. However, Antonio Gramsci, a neo-Marxist, rejected the excessive emphasis on economic determinism. He introduced the theory of “ideological hegemony”. This

theory takes into account not only the control of means of production by the ruling capitalist class, but it also encompasses a whole range of values, attitudes, beliefs, cultural norms and legal precepts which serve to justify the interests of the dominant class. Thus, it is the ideological hegemony of the ruling class that when challenged by the masses, gives rise to conflict.

- vii. Johan Galtung, in his theory of structural violence, asserts that violence is built into unequal, unjust and unrepresentative social structures. Social structures, systems and institutions deprive some people of their rights and the ability to satisfy their basic human needs; they discriminate between groups, communities and nations to the point of threatening lives and livelihoods and prevent human beings from realising their full potential.

5.3 SOURCES OF CONFLICT

From the underlying causes, we now move to the specific sources of conflicts, sometimes also referred to as issues involved in a conflict or issues at stake in a conflict.

5.3.1 Information

Lack of information, misinformation and different interpretations of information can lead to conflict. Disputants may not have sufficient information or even the same information about a given situation. In other instances, groups and individuals may interpret the same data or information in differing ways or they may assign different levels of importance to the same data. Control and manipulation of information is a major weapon in conflict situations.

5.3.2 Miscommunication

Ineffective communication is another source of conflict. Even if there are no basic incompatibilities between groups and individuals, miscommunication and misunderstanding can lead to conflict. Moreover, stakeholders may have different perceptions about the facts in a situation and until they are clarified, there can be no resolution. Self-centredness, selective perception, emotional bias and prejudices lead to differing perceptions between the stakeholders of a conflict. Lack of skill in communicating one's viewpoint in a clear and respectful manner often results in confusion, hurt and anger, all of which fuel the conflict further. Whether the conflict has objective sources or has arisen due to perceptual or communication problems, the people involved experience it as very real.

5.3.3 Resources

This relates to conflict over material resources such as land, money or objects, which are evidently identifiable and can be negotiated. Historically, disputes over access to and control of territory, material, economic and scarce natural resources have been one of the dominant sources of conflict. One major element in the colonial empire building of the 19th and 20th century was the competition for resources and defence of national economic interests which were defined in territorial terms. Here each faction wanted to grab as much as it could; its behaviour and emotions were directed towards maximising gain. In extreme cases, disputants may resort to military action or the threat of it to gain or defend access to resources perceived as vital for survival, for example, the developed Western countries attach a great deal of importance to maintaining their access to oil supplies in the West Asian region and are prepared to undertake extreme measures to do so.

In the twenty-first century, demands for land, fresh water and other natural resources are growing rapidly due to increase in population as well as consumption. But these resources are limited and Gandhi had very aptly said, “Earth provides enough to satisfy every [person’s] need but not for every [person’s] greed.” Besides, environmental degradation has further complicated the situation and the consequences are being felt the world over. In India, the shortage of water has given rise to several conflicts at the local and regional level.

5.3.4 Relationships

Relationships are an important facet of human life. Gandhi was in fact always keen to cooperate with the opponent to build relationships, which would form the basis for a sound post-conflict life. As human beings, we have personal (family) and social (community) and/or organisational (business) relationships. In these relationships, people have disagreements over a variety of issues, which is very normal. However, sometimes the interdependence created by these relationships introduces a destructive dimension to these differences, for example, a wife is repeatedly subjected to abuse and domestic violence but is unable to walk out of the relationship because (apart from other social and cultural pressures) she may be economically dependent on her husband, who is aware of this interdependence and uses it to his advantage.

5.3.5 Interests and Needs

Non-fulfillment of interests and needs are a major source of conflict. The non-fulfillment of these needs may be either a reality or just a perception. In fact, important needs for identity, respect or participation are often at the heart of conflicts that ostensibly seem to be a contest for material things. Conflicts usually arise because of the denial of following needs:

- Unfulfilled needs for economic resources or the perception that economic resources are not distributed fairly;
- Unfulfilled needs for safety, respect and participation in social life or a perception of unjust relationships and humiliation; and
- Unfulfilled needs for identity, culture, religious values or a perception that these are threatened.

When the needs of individuals, communities and nations are denied in the above-mentioned areas, it leads to structural violence. Vertical structural violence can operate in the following arenas insulting the respective needs:

- Repression – political – the insulted need is freedom;
- Exploitation – economic – the insulted need is well-being; and
- Alienation – cultural – the insulted need is identity.

For Gandhi, exploitation was the essence of violence. He saw violence as anything that impeded individual self-realisation and that violence could be either direct or structural in nature. Dehumanisation is a case in point.

5.3.6 Structures

Structures- both social and organisational- determine who has access to power and

resources, who has the authority to make decisions and who is afforded respect. Conflicts about or within structures often involve issues of justice and competing goals.

5.3.7 Power

Power can mean different things – legitimacy, authority, force, or the ability to coerce. It is a vital ingredient in conflict situations; conflicts either centre on the search for more power or a fear of losing the same. However, power is intangible; it cannot be counted. But power does not exist in a vacuum; it is present in, and based on, relationships. Besides, one should look at resources as a key area that determines the actual location of power or the need for power.

Power conflicts can occur between individuals, groups or nations, when one or both sides choose to take a power approach to the relationship and wish to maintain or maximise the amount of influence that they exert in the relationship and the social setting. It is impossible for one side to be stronger without the other being weaker, at least in terms of direct influence over each other. Thus, a power struggle ensues which usually ends in victory for one side and defeat for the other, or in a ‘stand-off’ with a continuing state of tension.

Power can be either hard (coercive) or soft (persuasive). Hard power consists of the ability to command and enforce while soft power comprises of the ability to bring about cooperation, provide legitimacy and inspire. In violent conflict situations, hard power dominates, as armies and militias grapple for victory. On the other hand, soft power is essential for peacemaking and peace-building. Power should necessarily be accompanied by accountability; otherwise it tends to give rise to more conflicts. Being accountable would mean finding ways to report to others and being open to be questioned by others.

Gandhi had a very different notion of power- one that is humane and constructive- and “that can transform and not destroy.” He was keenly aware of the difference between *power-over* and *power-with*, and his own conceptions of society and conflict were firmly rooted in the latter.

5.3.8 Governance

Governance relates to decisions that define expectations, grant power or verify performance. It is concerned with the way in which society is governed, the distribution of authority and resources within it, and the legitimacy of these in the eyes of the members of society. Governance, basically, is a process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or (not implemented). In simple terms, ‘governance’ is what a ‘government’ does. Politics provides the means by which the governance process operates.

‘Good governance’ is an indeterminate term used in development literature to describe how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources in order to guarantee the realisation of human rights. According to the United Nations, good governance has eight characteristics: consensus-oriented, participatory, following Rule of Law, effective and efficient, accountable, transparent, responsive, equitable and inclusive.

Good governance is considered to be integral to economic growth, the eradication of poverty and hunger, and sustainable development. It makes violent conflict less likely. If governments reflect the values and satisfy the needs of those over whom they exercise authority, they will be legitimised. When the legitimacy is lacking or there is a doubt about

its existence, the demands for social change can result in political turmoil and social unrest. If these demands are suppressed or ignored, violent conflict may arise. In contemporary times, the major governance issues relate to greater autonomy (political, economic and/or cultural), representative forms of government and equitable distribution of resources.

5.3.9 Rights

Denial or violation of rights and the struggle for elimination of these violations are at the heart of many conflicts. Civil and political rights are often called ‘first generation rights’ and include rights of the individual in society to life, liberty and freedom of opinion and expression. Gandhi had always stressed on the centrality of the individual and felt that society could not be built on a denial of individual freedom. Economic, social and cultural rights are known as ‘second generation rights’ that comprise of rights to basic necessities such as food, shelter, health and education. The ‘third generation rights’ refers to collective rights like those of minorities and marginalised groups. Human rights are thus necessary for individuals to lead a dignified life.

Some of the major Human Rights Conventions are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966; Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966; Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979; Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984; Convention on Rights of the Child, 1989.

Rights may theoretically be guaranteed by the constitution of a state but in practice may not be accessible to the marginalised or they may be intimidated by powerful people from claiming their rights. Ultimately, the repeated denial of rights may lead to violent conflict. Thus while analysing conflicts, it is necessary to look at structural violence and explore the position and perception of stakeholders with regard to rights and freedoms.

5.3.10 Culture

Culture is an important factor in social conflict. It is learnt from the family, community, school, and media; it is not something human beings are born with. Culture determines the way individuals and groups act, the manner in which they relate to others and the way they think about and perceive events happening around them. Thus it is necessary to understand the cultural contexts of the individuals and groups involved in a conflict especially in situations where the contending sides are from different cultures. In fact, Marc Ross argues that there is a ‘culture of conflict’, which he defines as “a society’s configuration of norms, practices and institutions that affect what people enter into disputes about, with whom they fight, how disputes evolve, and how they are likely to end.”

5.3.11 Ideology

Ideology is mostly used in reference to the public world of politics. Political ideologies such as Fascism, Nazism, and Marxism involve a set of fundamental beliefs about economic organisation or governance of society. One of the most famous ideological conflicts of the 20th century was the one between the Capitalist Bloc and the Communist Bloc popularly termed as the Cold War, which manifested in ways such as the formation of economic and military blocs, and proxy wars between client-states at the regional and local level. The Cold War ended with the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and withering away of the Communist Bloc.

5.3.12 Religion

Religion refers generally to the private world of spirituality. It is particularly relevant to conflict because it may contain strong claims to exclusivity; the faithful are considered to constitute distinct, exclusive communities. Besides, religious belief can become a motivation in political action, and can be used by leaders for selfish political ends or as means towards those ends. Moreover, scriptures have at various points in history been interpreted and misinterpreted to justify slavery, racism and women's subordination.

Conflict between religions has occurred throughout history but in the contemporary period some of the major religions of the world are witness to a surge in fundamentalist elements. Fundamentalists have attempted to extend their sphere of influence from places of worship to the state and the society as a whole leading to escalation of conflicts not only between religions but also within the moderate and extremist sections within religions as well as with the state and society at large.

However, religion need not always be a source of conflict; it can also be a resource for peace.

5.3.13 Identity

The oft-asked question of the Cold War era, 'what is your ideology' has been replaced in the post-Cold War era by the question 'who are you'. People are increasingly conscious of 'who they are' and asserting their cultural and social identity. They are realigning themselves on the basis of ancestry, religion, language, values and institutions, and are rejecting distant and alien rule. This is an indication of the growing importance of identity consciousness in the post-Cold War era.

Identity is used to describe a person's sense of self and the relation of the self to the world. It is a basic human need that provides meaning and a sense of security as well as predictability for the individual and the group within a given social context. Without a strong sense of "who we are" and how we can "be" and continue to exist and feel safe in our surroundings, our relationship of the self or group to the world is threatened.

Personal identity and dignity were very important to Gandhi. He argued that the loss of self-respect had to be avoided because without self-respect and inner security one cannot reach the road leading to self-realisation or start on the road to nonviolence.

There are multiple identities- as broad as 'woman' or 'man' or a member of collectives such as ethnic, religious, or racial groups or as narrow as a member of one particular family. Identities concern people's existential needs and values. They can be inclusive as well as exclusive; they can endure for generations or change with shifting situations (in response to threats, which may be either real or perceived, forcing people to adopt labels because identity markers such as ethnicity and religion may be exploited for selfish ends). Some identities are more important than others depending on how one perceives one's identity but also depending on place, times and circumstances. Some identities are nested within each other, usually compatibly, for example, an individual can identify with both Rajasthan (one's state) and India (one's country).

However, some identities may compete with each other, as in the case of former Yugoslavia. In the 1950s and 1960s of the former Yugoslavia, many people felt pride in having stood up to the Soviet Union in 1948 and creating a new economic system. But the scenario changed in the 1990s, when most people in the former Yugoslavia started

feeling that their identities as Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Muslims, or Bosnians were much more important than their Yugoslav identity. The process of disintegration of the former Yugoslavia into several small states (such as Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina) was precipitated apart from other reasons due to large-scale ethnic killings and ‘ethnic cleansing’.

With the rise in identity consciousness, religion, language and ethnicity are increasingly serving as faultlines for conflict. In contemporary times, ethnicity is seen as one of the most important elements of identity and the underlying cause of most ongoing conflicts. However, it must be clarified that many conflicts that are labeled as ‘ethnic’, suggesting that ethnicity is the cause. In reality ethnicity has been used there as a ‘method’ by which people have been mobilised in support of a particular leader or movement. This happens when a group or community first feels insecure or afraid and is then persuaded that a particular group or leader can offer them safety.

5.3.14 Values

Values are dear to individuals and groups – these are the beliefs that shape their identity and faith perspectives that give meaning to their lives. Incompatibility in ways of life and ideologies such as preferences, principles and practices that people believe in can lead to value conflicts. When states, groups and individuals assert the rightness and superiority of their way of life and their political-economic system vis-à-vis other states, groups and individuals, values can then become a major component in such conflicts. Values are often seen as a part of one’s identity; and thus, challenge to values is often seen as a threat to identity, resulting in defensive reactions by individuals and groups since they assume that resolution of the conflict will require a change in values.

5.4 SUMMARY

In conclusion, it can be said that violent conflict is not caused by biological factors alone but rather is a result of the interaction between biological, psychological and social determinants. Gandhi too saw conflict as built into social structures and not into people. There are several specific sources of conflict that appear in the polity, the society, the economy and the cultural life of modern human beings. Most modern conflicts do not involve just one source but a combination of sources and this is what makes them complex. Complex conflicts can be broken down into manageable parts by identifying and analysing the specific sources of conflict. Moreover, there can be overlap between the different issues involved in a conflict. Additionally, a conflict may involve several issues in differing degrees, which may change over time. The issues, which led to the origin of the conflict and its violent expression, may not necessarily be those that make a conflict an intractable one.

5.5 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between proximate and underlying causes of conflict?
2. What is the ‘nature versus nurture’ debate? Elaborate.
3. Discuss some of the major theoretical expositions with regard to conflict being inherent in human beings.

4. 'Conflict is not intrinsic to human beings; its expression depends on factors external to the individual'. Elucidate.
5. What are some of the major sources of conflict in the contemporary world? Discuss one source in detail and give examples for the same.
6. What is governance? How does it become a source of conflict?
7. Define identity. How and why is it related to most contemporary conflicts?

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 6 APPROACHES TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Structure

6.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

6.2 Western Approaches to Conflict Resolution

6.2.1 Dialogue and Facilitation

6.2.2 Approaches to Negotiation and Mediation

6.2.3 Process of Negotiation

6.2.4 Process of Mediation

6.2.5 Arbitration and Adjudication

6.2.6 Essential Skills for Facilitation, Negotiation and Mediation

6.3 Non-Western Approaches to Conflict Resolution

6.3.1 Satyagraha

6.4 Summary

6.5 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Conflict resolution aims at the satisfaction of basic human needs, as it believes that the non-fulfillment of basic human needs is at the root of violent conflicts. This opens up space for 'facilitative' and non-violent solutions. Conflict is essentially a subjective phenomenon, and therefore its resolution must involve analysis and reconstruction of perceptions of beliefs (about) and attitudes towards, the other side, improving communication and facilitating the development of trust and cooperation between the hostile groups and individuals.

Gandhi too believed that conflict was the result of structural denial of human needs. Satisfaction of needs was thus imperative for conflict resolution. For Gandhi, conflict resolution entails a facilitated problem-solving process that is interactive, analytical and actively involves all the individuals and identity groups directly concerned.

Between the two extremes of avoiding conflict and responding to it with violence, societies and cultures all over the world have developed structured and active conflict resolution approaches to address actual and potential conflicts between individuals, groups and communities.

Aims and Objectives

After going through this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- The major western and some non-western approaches to conflict resolution;
- The process of applying these approaches; and
- The skills required for applying these approaches.

6.2 WESTERN APPROACHES TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Most western approaches to conflict resolution require the usage of a go-between or an intermediary. Heidi Burgess defines intermediaries (or “third parties”) as people, organizations, or nations who enter a conflict with the aim of trying to help the disputants de-escalate or resolve it. Intermediaries can play various roles depending on the circumstance and the kind of help the disputants require from them (active or passive role). Sometimes the hostile individuals and groups may decide to resolve the conflict of their own initiative- by discussing the issues between themselves- without involving any intermediary. If the discussion does not work, one could move to the process of one to one *negotiation*. If the stakeholders are not able to work out a solution on their own, then they may take assistance from an intermediary. The intermediary may initially focus on the process of *conciliation*, where she/he has the limited role of focusing on reducing hostilities. Beyond this, one could move to the process of *mediation* and seek active assistance from the intermediary in exploring options and negotiating a settlement but the responsibility to decide on acceptable solutions is ultimately in the hands of the contending parties. One could next move to the process of *arbitration* where the arbitrator would behave like a judge, decide on the right and wrong and impose a decision. Adjudication is also a form of arbitration, wherein the *adjudicator* is the judge. Lastly, disputants have the choice of going in for litigation.

The facilitator is a person who leads a collaborative process in which individuals and groups with divergent views meet to reach consensus on a goal or to solve a problem. The role of a *facilitator* is less active than that of an arbitrator or mediator as a pure facilitator is responsible only for the process and not for the content.

Mediation and arbitration may seem to be a similar process but they are different. Although both arbitration and mediation involve a third party, mediation places the responsibility of deciding on acceptable solutions in the hands of the disputants, while arbitration places it on the arbitrator. Negotiation, mediation and facilitation involve more of individual and community decision-making, which ultimately aim at the possibility of enhancing relationships between the contending groups and individuals while arbitration, adjudication and litigation involve more of legally-enforced decision-making. So, in the latter case, the law takes over and the role of the individual and the community in decision-making becomes negligible. Thus, in arbitration, adjudication and litigation the power of the conflicting groups and individuals to manage their own conflict decreases and they have less control over the solutions in comparison to the processes of negotiation, facilitation and mediation. (see Figure 1)

APPROACHES TO HANDLING CONFLICT

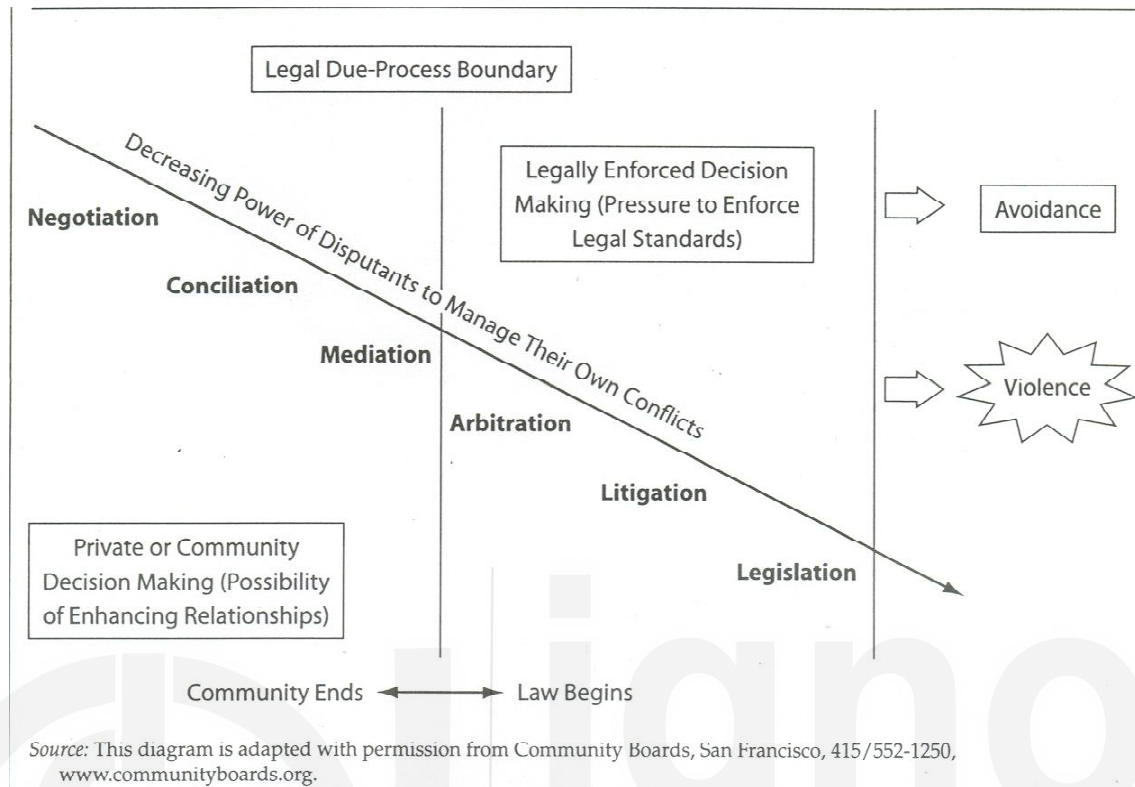


Figure 1

Source: Simon Fisher *et al.*: *Working with Conflict - Skills and Strategies for Action*, New York: Zed Books & Responding to Conflict, 2000, p.18

6.2.1 Dialogue and Facilitation

Relationships are key to human existence. In relationships we experience differences – of views, beliefs, attitudes, values etc. Differences can be used as dividers to foster hatred, ill-will and animosity or they can be used as a connector to discover the underlying human unity, to create new partnerships, and to build peace. Gandhi also believed in the human unity structure at the level of social relationships, the structure to which all human beings belong and which must be preserved. If we choose to view differences as a way to build peace, the medium through which this can be done is that of *dialogue*. Simply speaking, dialogue means to sit and talk with each other especially with those we have differences. Talking together can however involve debating, discussing with a view to convincing the other, arguing for our point of view, examining pros and cons. But in dialogue, the intention is not to advocate but to inquire; not to argue but to explore; not to convince but to discover.

Creation of a safe space is intrinsic to dialogue- psychologically as well as physically- only when people feel safe will they be able to express their opinions freely. Secondly, the purpose of a dialogue is to learn from each other and to discover each other. Besides, usage of appropriate communication skills is essential in a dialogue. This would involve putting aside one's judgments and listening carefully and respectfully to the experiences of other people. Moreover, dialogue participants must be prepared, for sometimes hidden things surface—conscious or unconscious beliefs, perceptions, assumptions, fears—these hidden aspects increase the level of understanding of the participants. Additionally, there can be several ups and downs in a dialogue. It is important to stay through the hard

places—anger, frustration, emotional outbursts—and use them as learning opportunities. But most of all, dialogue should not be approached as a means to change others; rather dialogue participants must be willing to be changed by the whole experience.

If dialogue is a process or the *end*, the *means* through which this process is conducted is known as facilitation. Facilitation is a process of helping a group complete a task, solve a problem or come to an agreement to the mutual satisfaction of the people participating in the dialogue or discussion. A facilitator is responsible for conducting the process smoothly but she/he is not responsible for the content or the final product. Gandhi believed in the unity of means and ends, which is necessary for a just and peaceful society and dialogue and facilitation combine together to do just that.

In most organisations, people get into conflicts with others not because what decision was made but how the decision was made – who made the decision, by what method and by what level of majority. Decision-making, thus, lies at the core of building peace in group, community or organisational settings and facilitators can help a group make a decision.

In most democratic settings, decisions are made by voting. But voting means different things to different people, so it is important to clarify and agree well in advance on what percentage is required to pass a vote. This can range from 50 per cent to 60 per cent to sometimes 100 per cent or simple majority, two-third majority, by consensus or unanimously. The facilitator makes sure that the group agrees in advance on the percentage of vote. She/he also clarifies the term ‘consensus’ as people have different understandings of it (a decision in which all involved agree to support; even if it may not be the decision which all prefer is a consensus decision). A decision made by consensus is useful in any group situation, but in situations of conflict, it plays a crucial role, for people are often unwilling to be bound by a single vote or a single decision.

6.2.2 Approaches to Negotiation and Mediation

Negotiation and mediation as instruments of peaceful conflict resolution have existed since early history in Western societies but they were institutionalised as means of peaceful resolution of inter-state conflicts only in the 20th century.

The Western approaches to negotiation and mediation make a distinction between formal actors on the state level (governments and international or regional organisations) and informal actors on the civil society level (international or local non-governmental actors viz, religious institutions, research institutes, academics, former government officers, think tanks, or individuals). State level mediators or Track I use traditional diplomacy whereas civil society mediators or Track II use a variety of approaches.

States mediate with the outcome-oriented approach (traditional diplomacy), which identifies the representative leaders of the conflicting parties and brings them together to negotiate or mediate a ceasefire and a peace accord. This approach has been used as a major instrument in ending a large number of wars but is the focus of criticism, as it tends to concentrate solely on the top leadership and overlooks the root causes of conflicts. A variant of the outcome-oriented approach is Power Mediation. Power mediation has all the criteria of the outcome-oriented approach plus the possibility of use of power, including force.

At the Track II level of non-official mediation, the third parties are non-directive and they try to empower the conflicting parties to find their own solutions. These approaches are

long-term and they aim at rebuilding destroyed relationships between the conflicting parties. One of the most popular approaches at the Track II level is the problem-solving workshop. The aim of these workshops is to improve the relationship between the conflicting parties and to get at the root causes of conflicts. This is done by having a series of such workshops with the same target groups and mediators. The target groups are representatives of the conflicting parties who have access to the top leadership. The mediators here are usually a team of academic professionals with conflict resolution expertise or regional or technical expertise. States are critical of this approach on the ground that they are too long-term oriented and thus unable to stop wars.

The complementary approach aims to integrate Track I and Track II approaches as both of them make important contributions to conflict resolution. Here it is necessary to identify the appropriate actor and approach at a certain time in the conflict. Complementary approach tries to identify the most efficient mediators at different phases of escalation of the conflict.

6.2.3 Negotiation

As human beings we negotiate all the time: what to buy or not buy; how much to pay for the things bought; what to eat or not eat, what to do or not do etc. It is this simple and widely prevalent skill of negotiation that is used in conflict resolution as a strategy.

Negotiation is a process where individuals with shared and opposed interests, work out a settlement in order to come to an agreement. One has two choices while negotiating—go for a win-lose situation (adversarial or distributive approach) wherein one person will win while the other will lose—or go for mutual problem-solving wherein both the individuals or groups will try to maximise a joint outcome (integrative approach) which will result in a win-win situation (gains for both the disputing individuals or groups). The latter approach is preferable if the disputing individuals or groups have a stake in maintaining ongoing positive relationships with each other. Gandhi was also of the view that an approach to conflict that seeks defeat for one party is inconsistent with conflict resolution.

Negotiation normally works in the following way:

1. Disputing individuals and groups share information about the situation they are in (one at a time without any intervention by the other);
2. They express their feelings (grievances) about the problem at hand or the situation they are in;
3. Disputants state their positions (what they want) and give reasons that underlie their positions and feelings;
4. They listen and communicate their understanding of the other individual's or group's positions, feelings and reasons (leading to collective analysis of the conflict);
5. Disputants invent three or more possible solutions or options for resolution;
6. They try to find a common ground that will be acceptable to all and can be sustained (they work on the details of the solution – *what* will be done, *who* will do it, *when* will it be done, *where* will it be done and finally *how* will it be done); and
7. Agree and shake hands on the solution that maximise mutual benefits and also agree to observe and monitor commitments and arrangements (the agreement can be a formally signed document).

In the initial phase of negotiation, parties maintain their stated *positions* (what we say we want). But an expert negotiator will shift the disputing individuals or groups from *positions* to *interests* (what we really want) and finally to *needs* (what we must have). The negotiator will do so by asking the *why* question to the disputants. In most cases, disputants have not thought through as to ‘why’ they want to do a particular thing or not do it at all. The *why* question thus forces them to think about their interests and needs.

Certain principles should be followed in the process of negotiation. We must separate the people from the problem. Mostly, relationships get entangled with problems. One should thus pay attention to maintaining a long-term positive relationship between the disputants and try to affirm the same symbolically and otherwise. Also, it is advisable that one is hard on the problem but soft on the people (Principled Negotiation). This means that we should attack the problem at hand but treat the other side as human, having emotions and values. Gandhi did exactly that when he refused to see the British as evil; however, he viewed the British policies and agendas as such.

Communicating effectively during the course of negotiation is a must and that involves listening actively and respectfully and speaking for oneself and not about others. Focusing on interests and not positions is necessary as positions are more conflicted than interests. Additionally, one should generate multiple options for resolving a problem. However, the process of generating options should be separated from the process of evaluating each option, which will be the next step. The idea is to look for an option that meets the interests and needs of the disputants. The final solution must be legitimate (it must be based on some objective criteria or principles). We should try to look for alternatives as well – what is the Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA). And last but not the least, the commitments made during the process of negotiation should be realistic.

6.2.4 Mediation

Sometimes people in conflict find it difficult to negotiate one-on-one, especially if issues are complex, emotions are intense, or stakes are high. In such cases, mediation becomes an option for managing conflicts constructively. Mediation is a process through which a neutral third person facilitates integrative negotiation between disputing individuals and groups. Although mediation is facilitated by a third person, it is a voluntary process where the disputing individuals or groups work out their own solutions, and make informed decisions to resolve their own disputes; the mediator does not make decisions for them. Most mediators, however, are professionals who are unknown to the parties. Sometimes, it is difficult to find any one person who is trusted as impartial and is acceptable to both the sides. In such cases, a team of two or more co-mediators can work well so long as each of the sides feels that the team is balanced in its totality. In case of a co-mediator, it is necessary to check with him/her – who will take the lead role; how the task will be divided.

Proper groundwork is a must for successful mediation: selection of a mediator/s; ensuring the participation of disputing individuals and groups; and preparation by the mediator/s. Mediators need to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses as well as that of their co-mediator, in case there is one. Additionally, mediators need to remember that the long-term goal of building relationships and empowering people to address systemic injustices are sometimes more important than reaching a specific agreement.

Mediation approaches differ from one setting to another as each culture and community is different. However, mediation generally is a four-stage process, which begins after

advance preparation and getting the parties to the table. The first step is the introduction stage wherein the mediator provides a safe place for the conflicting individuals and groups to begin a face-to-face discussion. The mediator introduces himself/herself to the conflicting individuals and groups. She/he emphasises the goal of the meeting as well – it is a voluntary process for them to reach a mutual agreement. He/she then describes his/her role in the process – to help them talk to each other and not to judge or give answers. The mediator makes sure to describe the process – each side will take turns to speak; both will agree on the basic issues and will work with these one at a time with their suggestions for resolution. Gaining commitment to the ground rules like not interrupting, confidentiality and speaking respectfully is also very important at this stage. The mediator should ask the conflicting groups and individuals to come up with the ground rules (if the rules come from them, they will also feel morally responsible to be bound by them) and not make suggestions initially; in case they are unable to do so, the mediator can then suggest some of the ground rules and gain commitment from the participants for them.

The second stage is of storytelling, which allows the disputing individuals and groups to express their concerns, explain the situation as they understand it, and gain a sense of the other side's view. It is the duty of the mediator to ensure that the participants speak directly to each other and not via or through him/her (coaching direct dialogue is a must). The mediator will get the perspective of each side one at a time and offer his/her paraphrase identifying each side's hopes and concerns. The mediator in his/her paraphrase should also acknowledge the hurt, anger and frustration of the people in conflict. He/she will then summarise the main issues of the conflict and the common grounds and positive intentions, if any (identifying the common ground is essential as people in conflict do not think that they have anything in common between them).

Problem solving is the third stage of the mediation process. The key here is to build a sense of joint ownership of the problems (they are in this together – they got into the conflict together and now they have to make an effort to get out of it together) by helping identify the issues that separate them and generate, evaluate, and negotiate options for resolution. In this context, Gandhi had also opined that instead of separating the two sides, a conflict should actually unite them because their incompatibility is common. The mediator will now pick up one issue at a time and get the conflicting groups and individuals to work on it (usually start with the easiest to resolve, so that the disputing individuals and groups get the feeling that it is possible to resolve issues between them). Here the focus of the mediator should be on trying to move the conflicting individuals and groups from their *demands* (positions) to their underlying *interests*. She/he should then encourage them to generate options for resolution. The options for resolution will then have to be evaluated one by one. Once all the options have been evaluated, the disputing individuals and groups then need to select the best option. Each time there is a ray of hope—any constructive move is made or progress takes place—the mediator must acknowledge and affirm them.

The last stage of mediation is that of agreement where the key is to ensure or seek a sustainable agreement. The mediator should work out the terms of a fair and sustainable agreement, including ways to deal with the problems or issues that may arise later during the course of implementation. In order to do this, she/he needs to address the specifics of the agreement – *what* will be done, *who* will do it, *when* will it be done, *where* will it be done and finally *how* will it be done. We need to be realistic, clear and simple in this stage while maintaining a balance between the responsibilities given to the disputants. The agreement should be just and should contribute to the dignity of the disputants. It

should also leave an opening to tackle the issues that may arise in the future. Last but not the least, the mediator must ask the individuals and groups to state their intent to support the agreement. The agreement can be put in black and white (is mostly the case in the western setting) and the participants can sign it formally or it can be an oral agreement (non-western settings) as well. In case no agreement is reached, the mediator should affirm the level of understanding reached; remind the participants of the confidentiality agreement and offer to meet again.

6.2.5 Arbitration and Adjudication

In arbitration, the disputants take their dispute to an impartial third party, who provides them with a decision to end their conflict. It may take varied forms (depending on whether or not arbitration is freely chosen by the parties; whether or not parties have agreed to be bound by the arbitrator's decision etc.) and can be applied to different kinds of circumstances (public or private arbitration). Arbitration has some of the advantages of mediation such as privacy and flexibility while on the other there is a prospect of an authoritative decision. Arbitration hearings can be formal or informal depending on the nature and seriousness of the dispute.

Adjudication refers to a settlement by a court. In civil cases, one party (petitioner) goes to court to demand something from another (defendant). The court then makes a decision on the issues in dispute, unless a negotiated settlement occurs first. Here the framework for considering cases is adversarial, court procedures are highly formal and lawyers are an essential part of this process. Moreover, this is an expensive way of resolving disputes.

6.2.6 Essential Skills for Facilitation, Negotiation and Mediation

Certain skills are critical to the processes of negotiation, mediation and facilitation. The first and foremost important quality that mediators, negotiators and facilitators need to possess is to communicate effectively. It is said that mediators are only as effective as their listening skills. That is why good listening is at the top of the list of skills needed for mastery in learning mediation. Good listening helps in building rapport and trust between the mediators and the disputants. A negotiator too needs to listen effectively and check for meaning constantly. A facilitator can show respect and compassion only by being a good listener.

Paraphrasing is another important skill. Through a good paraphrase the mediator communicates understanding to each of the disputants. It also helps in bringing forth more reflective responses from the contenders. Besides, it slows down the conversation between the individuals and groups and serves as a buffer between their statements. The ability or quality to summarise well is essential. A mediator uses summary to review the key points that have been made by the disputants. This helps in communicating the sense that they understand the entire situation being presented. Summarising can also be used by the facilitator to summarise the content of a discussion every few minutes as a way of keeping the discussion focused.

Monitoring body language is also a skill. Paying attention to the verbal and non-verbal behaviour makes it possible to watch for contradictions and to discuss them with the contenders. Moreover, by learning to observe and understand the body language of others, mediators can gather useful information about how the participating individuals and groups are responding. Every culture has its own body language and mediators, negotiators and facilitators need to be aware of the same. Additionally, intermediaries need to be good at problem solving. Mediators and negotiators should possess the quality of

generating a variety of possibilities/options/alternatives, picking the best course of action and developing an implementation. A facilitator should be able to help the group define a problem, analyse it and generate options for resolution. They should also know the art of narrowing down options, for example by clubbing together more than one option or removing the impractical ones.

Lastly, third party interveners need to be flexible. They should have the capacity to shift from problem-oriented activities to people-oriented activities to process-oriented activities and vice-versa, when progress is blocked in one of these areas. This means that if disputing individuals and groups are stuck on the problem or the conflict, then the third party should shift the discussion to the people, that is, the relationship aspect. If the discussion gets stuck on the relationship aspect, then the intervener should shift it to the process, such as what should be discussed first, what should be taken up later and so on. Thus, one should be flexible enough to go back and forth between the three aspects of problem, people and process. While undertaking this course of action, one should be prepared to deal with emotional outbursts and difficult behaviour. To conclude, intermediaries must possess a positive outlook and be fair, impartial and objective in their dealings with the disputants.

6.3 NON-WESTERN APPROACHES TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A variety of non-western approaches to conflict resolution are used in different parts of Asia and Africa. In the African country of Rwanda, the *Gacaca* is chaired by elders, generally wise old men, who lead group discussions that result in an arrangement that is acceptable to all the participants. In Burundi, the *bushingantahe* or the Council of Notables plays an important role in adjudicating local disputes and reconciling individual persons or families. Parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan follow the *Jirga* system, which is an assembly of elders that takes decisions by consensus on matters dealing with individual and community disputes.

In India, the mediative approach has been the primary means of dispute resolution at the community level. The *Panchayat* system in which a respected village elder(s) assists in resolving community disputes has long been an accepted method of conflict resolution. The traditional panchayat system comprised of intervention by third parties unconnected with the conflict, with a view to overcome the antagonism of the disputants. The aim here was to re-establish communication between them and the conflicting parties were persuaded to talk to each other; the mediator was only a medium. However, in contrast to the western approach, the mediator here is a known and respected third person who is trusted by the disputants to assist in the resolution of their conflict. Sometimes, however, mediations would actually turn into adjudication – decisions would just be imposed on the disputants.

6.3.1 Satyagraha

The Gandhian method of conflict resolution is known as “satyagraha,” which basically means “a relentless search for truth and a determination to reach truth”. Satyagraha, as conceived by Gandhi, is a dialectical process that is creative, constructive and centrally concerned with human needs.

To resolve conflict, Gandhi employed a combination of three basic approaches. First of

all, Satyagraha implied cooperation with the opponent *as a person* but noncooperation with the opponent's *role* in the context of the social structure (Johan Galtung called this process as “decoupling”). Gandhi saw conflict as built into social structures and not into people. Hence, he made a clear distinction between the actor and the deed: “Hate the sin and not the sinner.” Thus the essence of Gandhi's approach was to preserve the people while systematically demolishing the evil structure.

Second, Gandhi was willing to compromise when basic principles had not been challenged. He was thus ready to cooperate with the opponents, whenever possible throughout the struggle, in order to build relationships and to create the basis for a sound post-conflict life. Third, Gandhi sought synthesis or transcendence that was mutually agreeable and satisfactory to all the parties and superior to any one of the original positions with the aim of creating new choices and restructuring the opposing elements of a conflict. This would include correction in the attitudes, reversal of behavioural polarisation patterns and removal of the goal incompatibility.

The aim of Gandhian Satyagraha is neither to harm the opponent nor to impose on them a solution against their will; rather, it seeks to help the parties achieve a more secure, creative and truthful relationship. Besides, Satyagraha is not used against someone; it is done *with* someone. The central idea being that moral appeal to the heart and conscience are much more effective than violence or pain. In Gandhi's view, conflict is the result of structural denial of human needs and conflict resolution thus requires a method of struggle that satisfies three conditions: it must destroy need-denying structures, create need-satisfying structures and respect the needs of the conflicting parties during the struggle itself. Satyagraha was Gandhi's attempt to devise a method of struggle that satisfied all the three conditions.

6.4 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have primarily looked at the major western and some non-western approaches to conflict resolution. It can be concluded from the above discussion that both western and the Gandhian approach to conflict resolution believe that the denial of human needs causes conflict and damages relationships. Both agree that restoring relationships through facilitated methods of problem-solving is thus the main aim of conflict resolution. The conflict resolution process must target a change in the attitude, behaviour and the structure (context).

6.5 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the essential features of dialogue? What is the role of the facilitator in a dialogue?
2. Describe the western approaches to negotiation and mediation.
3. What is negotiation? What are the principles of negotiation?
4. Discuss the process or stages of Mediation.
5. Distinguish between arbitration and adjudication.
6. Who is an intermediary? What skills are essential for intermediaries?

7. Briefly discuss some of the non-western approaches to conflict resolution.
8. What is the Gandhian approach to conflict resolution? What are the similarities and differences between the major western approaches to conflict resolution and the Gandhian approach to conflict resolution?

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UNIT 7 GANDHIAN APPROACH TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Structure

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Suggested Readings

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a norm in human life; however, man has attempted conflict resolution since time immemorial as well. There are two ways of resolving conflict – through violence or through nonviolent means. As human beings, we constantly make the *choice* of resolving conflict either through violence or nonviolent means. Gandhi is eulogised for making a *choice* of resolving conflicts in nonviolent ways, which he termed as Satyagraha. Pre and post-Gandhi, several scholars and individuals have outlined the nonviolent way of resolving conflicts but Gandhi was one person who not only spoke and wrote a lot about it but also demonstrated it in his thought, words and deeds.

Aims and Objectives

After going through this unit you will understand

- The fundamental concepts in Gandhian thought and practice;
- The Gandhian conception of the individual, conflict and violence;
- The ingredients and theoretical inputs of Gandhian approach to conflict resolution;
- The application of the Gandhian approach to conflict resolution to various levels of conflict.

7.2 FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS IN GANDHIAN THOUGHT AND PRACTICE

Before we outline the Gandhian approach to conflict and conflict resolution, it is mandatory to understand the elements or concepts fundamental to the understanding of the Gandhian approach. These elements acquire a particular meaning or worldview in the Gandhian perspective.

7.2.1 Faith in Human Goodness

Gandhi believed that “Every one of us is a mixture of good and evil...The difference that there is between human beings is a difference of degree.” Gandhi considers it violent to classify human beings as inferior or dehumanise them. He wrote in *Harijan* in May 1936:

“Not to believe in the possibility of permanent peace is to disbelieve in the godliness of human nature. Methods hitherto have failed because rock-bottom sincerity on the part of those who have striven has been lacking.”

Gandhi also believed in human rationality and considered it important to Satyagraha. Thus the twin beliefs in human goodness and human rationality or reason lead to a belief in the possibility of conversion. Opponents can therefore be influenced to change their nature and their worldviews as well.

7.2.2 Truth

Truth or *Satya* “is that which you believe to be true at this moment. And that is your God.” *Ahimsa* or non-violence is the only means of realising the truth. Gandhi classified truth into Absolute Truth and relative truth. He believed that “God was an impersonal, all pervading reality” – this is Absolute Truth; “discoveries on the way to the realization of Truth” is referred to as relative truth. A satyagrahi who lives a life of truth will be harmonious in his thoughts, words and actions.

7.2.3 Non-violence

For Gandhi, the word *Ahimsa* or non-violence has a wide meaning. It is a positive concept that requires doing, not just refraining from injury. Gandhi had a strong belief in the unity of all life and thus non-injury to all living things. However, when one eats, some injury does take place, but that is a necessary evil. Nonetheless, non-violence had to become a creed to be lived day-by-day and not just a policy “...like a garment to be put on and off at will.”

7.2.4 Creative Self-suffering

Self-suffering is a necessary part of Satyagraha. It has several benefits. First of all, it appeals to the reason of an opponent. Secondly, it transforms both the sufferer and the opponent – the sufferer is morally enriched as s/he is not compromising fundamental principles and the opponent is forced to confront his/her views on the nature of the truth of the given situation, which may possibly end in converting him/her. Besides, even if self-suffering does not touch the conscience of the opponent, it may still have objective benefits in conflict situations – self-suffering may move public opinion to the side of the satyagrahi, which may indirectly force the opponent to convert. Gandhi mentioned both practical and existential benefits of self-suffering. He said:

“Suffering injury in one’s own person isof the essence of nonviolence and it is the chosen substitute of violence to others. It is not because I value life low that I can countenance with joy thousands voluntarily losing their lives for satyagraha, but because I know that it results in the long run in the least loss of life, and what is more, it ennoble those who lose their lives and morally enriches the world for their sacrifice.”

Besides, there are other benefits. In the words of Robert J Burrowes, “The willingness to suffer for the sake of others is also the ultimate test of love in action, as well as a method of dramatizing the injustice to be remedied. It is demonstration, too, of sincerity and of the commitment to satisfying the needs of the opponent.....And, finally, it is the means for ensuring that others do not suffer because of the satyagrahi’s mistakes.”

7.2.5 Means and Ends

The relationship of means to ends is an essential principle of Gandhi’s thought. It was a reflection of the Hindu belief in *karma*. However, for Gandhi the *law of karma* not only applied to future lives but to the present life as well. He explained the means and ends relationship in *Hind Swaraj*:

“The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree: and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and end as there is between the seeds and the tree.”

He further elaborated upon it in July 1924 in *Young India*:

“They say ‘Means are after all means.’ I would say, ‘means are after all everything.’ As the means, so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and ends.”

Gandhi therefore always devoted his energies to looking after the purity of the means. For him, truth is the end and non-violence is the means to that end.

7.2.6 Rejection of Coercion

Thomas Weber defines coercion “as the use of force, including moral force, to compel an opponent to act in a way that is contrary to either their will or judgement.” Gandhi insisted on a principle of non-coercion and cautioned against the use of coercion because perceptions vary from person to person and one can never be certain that their perception is correct. However, Gandhi has been criticised for not sticking to this principle as some scholars claim that his method of Satyagraha contains an element of coercion. His supporters though contend that Satyagraha does involve elements of compulsion but it is a positive element of coercion.

Gandhi's usage of fast has been seen by some as a method of coercion. Thomas Weber, however, clarifies:

"A fast amounts to coercion or undue influence if an opponent in a conflict gives in because they did not want the person fasting to die rather than because they had been converted. Gandhi unhesitatingly advocates resistance to such undue influence."

Gandhi opined that the chance of coercion leading to conversion was very rare. He "observed that things done under the pressure of a fast have been undone after the fast is over. If such a thing happens it would be a tragedy of the highest degree."

Gandhi thus believed that coercion was against the spirit of Satyagraha but if it had to be used, then moral coercion was preferable to physical coercion because it would have the support of the general public, which could eventually lead to conversion of the opponent.

7.2.7 Fearlessness

Satyagraha entails self-suffering, which in turn requires some courage on the part of the satyagrahi as it is not easy to endure self-suffering. Fearlessness is a great quality for it leads to the growth of other noble qualities—"how can one seek Truth or cherish love, without fearlessness", Gandhi questioned. Satyagraha however, does not require courage that is based on physical strength; it requires courage that comes from "determined and constant endeavor, ..by cultivating self-confidence" and "from an indomitable will".

7.3 GANDHIAN CONCEPTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL, CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Gandhi gives prime importance to the individual because according to him the individual has a soul while society does not. He had a very positive view of human nature as it has the ability to rise above selfishness and violence. The individual was central and thus a nonviolent society had to be created that could satisfy human needs. Self-realisation is the "highest" need but that depends on the satisfaction of other needs. Only a nonviolent individual could be the foundation of a nonviolent society and the creation of a nonviolent society required nonviolent transformation of the individual.

Gandhi rejected the conception of conflict in terms of class war as elucidated by socialism. He viewed conflict as a positive and desirable thing. It is in fact an opportunity to transform the self and the society. Moreover, conflict "is an important means to greater human unity", for it reminds human beings of the bonds that relate them to each other.

Conflict, according to Gandhi, was built into social structures and not into people. Therefore his approach to conflict resolution aimed to preserve the individual while systematically targeting the structure. Gandhi "saw conflict as a perennial condition" and was thus more concerned about managing conflict and creating new social arrangements free of structural violence. Robert J Burrowes says, "In Gandhi's view, conflict is the result of the structural denial of human needs. If these needs are to be satisfied, new structures are necessary. This requires a method of struggle that satisfies three conditions: It must destroy need-denying structures, create need-satisfying structures, and respect the needs of the conflicting parties during the struggle itself."

In 1992, Johan Galtung, agreeing with Arne Naess (1974), summarised Gandhi's conflict norms. Firstly, one should act in conflicts, not out of necessity but out of conviction;

define the conflict well, which would include stating one's goals clearly and trying to understand the opponent's goals; and have a positive approach to conflict, seeing it as an opportunity to meet the opponent, as an opportunity to transform the society and the self. Secondly, one should act nonviolently in conflicts, not harming or hurting with either words, thoughts or deeds and act in a goal-consistent manner by including constructive elements and acting openly, not secretly. Further one should not cooperate with evil or with those who cooperate with evil; be ever ready to sacrifice; neither polarise the situation nor escalate the conflict. Lastly, conflicts should be solved by insisting on essentials and willing to sacrifice on non-essentials; seeing oneself as fallible and admitting mistakes; being generous with opponents by not judging them harder than oneself and not exploiting their weaknesses; and most of all, aim for conversion rather than coercion, not only of the opponent but conversion of the self as well, by seeking solutions that can be acceptable to both the parties.

Concentrating on the Gandhian conception of conflict, Robert J Burrowes said, "Three principles underpin the Gandhian approach to conflict: the unity of means and end, recognition of the unity of all life, and a willingness on the part of the satyagrahi to undergo suffering." The first and the last one have already been discussed in the earlier section, so here we will touch upon only the second principle.

"The Gandhian approach to conflict presupposes the unity of all life." The idea of unity of all life runs through Indian thought, Hinduism and Jainism, all of which were a major influence on Gandhi. According to Hajime Nakamura, the core of Indian thought, "is the idea of the unity of all things." He elaborates further that this idea is also characteristic of Hinduism, which emphasises "Universal Being, to which all individuals and particulars are subordinated." Besides, this notion is a central tenet in Jainism as well. Gandhi said in December 1924 in *Young India*: "I believe in the essential unity of [humanity] and for that matter of all that lives."

Gandhi believed that conflict is a part of human nature but violence is not. He therefore looked for human ways to settle disputes rather than "return to our animal past and use brute force." He evolved the method of Satyagraha, which aims at the resolution of conflicts without resorting to violence. Gandhi excluded violence "because man is not capable of knowing absolute truth and, therefore, is not competent to punish." He defined violence as "anything that impedes individual self-realization." This violence could be of two kinds- direct or structural. Gandhi held that "exploitation is the essence of violence."

On the question of whether aggression is a basic human instinct or an innate quality, Gandhi had observed, "Fortunately for humanity, nonviolence pervades human life and is observed by men without special effort." In fact he believed that if human beings were not essentially nonviolent in nature, it "would have been self-destroyed ages ago." To quote Gandhi: "Man's nature is not essentially evil; brute nature has been known to yield to the influence of love. You must never despair of human nature." The cases and issues of conflict and violence that have been recorded by history are in essence recordings of happenings outside of the ordinary. Non-violence is the norm and widely prevalent in day to day interactions and therefore, "History does not and cannot take note of this fact."

Thus it can be concluded in the words of Thomas Weber, "In the Gandhian model the individual comes to a conflict situation as one who is not innately aggressive and has the freedom of will to resolve conflicts in a nonviolent way freely chosen."

7.4 GANDHIAN APPROACH TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The Gandhian approach to conflict resolution is popularly known as Satyagraha, which is essentially a nonviolent method. It is based on the premise that a committed individual is capable of resolving conflicts in a creative and fruitful way but for this to happen s/he needs to put maximum effort into it. It further assumes that on a continuum conflicts can move from the competitive to the cooperative. This happens not just between partners in close relationships but is a possibility in distant relationships as well. The Gandhian approach further emphasises on arriving at the truth – victory or winning is not important here; satisfaction of all the parties to the conflict with the outcome is much more important. This can only happen when something mutual is worked out between the parties. When all the parties are satisfied with the outcome, the resolution is sturdy and not fragile.

7.4.1 Types of Nonviolent Action

Gene Sharp categorises nonviolent action into three types:

- 1) “accommodation, where the opponent does not believe in the changes made but nevertheless believes that it is best to give in on some or all points to gain peace or to cut losses;
- 2) nonviolent coercion, where the opponent wants to continue the struggle but cannot because they have lost the sources of power and means of control; and
- 3) conversion, where the opponent has changed inwardly to the degree that they want to make the changes desired by the nonviolent activist (or indeed, the nonviolent activist themselves has so changed).”

Accommodation and nonviolent coercion have their basis in power; these methods depend on power that the parties involved in the conflict can exert on each other. Conversion, however, has nothing to do with power; “the touching of the conscience” is the focus here. For Gandhi, conversion is not only the most effective method of conducting a struggle but it is also “the morally correct way to conduct conflict because only through a dialectical process can truth be arrived at, or at least approached, and such quest for truth is, according to him, the aim of life.”

7.4.2 The Dialectics of Satyagraha

Violence to human beings and property clouds the real issues of the conflict while non-violence results in a dialogue between the stakeholders on the real issues of the conflict. Therefore, Gandhi warns us to “Hate the sin and not the sinner.” The satyagrahi undergoes self-suffering in the belief that the opponent can be converted to see the truth by touching his/her conscience or that a clearer vision of the truth will emerge out of the dialectical process for both the parties. However, the satyagrahi should not only try to convert the opponent but should also be open to persuasion. The main aim of Satyagraha thus is to change the attitude of the opponent, which will result in a change of behaviour.

7.4.3 Principles of Satyagraha

For Gandhi, Satyagraha is not just a set of actions; it is also an attitude, a way of life.

It entails ten principles:

- 1) Opponents should not be humiliated or provoked; otherwise it invites violence.
- 2) The satyagrahi should be clear about the essential elements of his case and the purpose of the struggle. This is less likely to invite a violent attitude.
- 3) Honest dissemination of information is essential – opponents are less likely to use violence if they are provided with a full understanding of one's case and conduct.
- 4) Essential interests, which opponents have in common, should be clearly formulated and cooperation established on these lines.
- 5) A satyagrahi should not judge opponents harder than the self.
- 6) A satyagrahi should trust his/her opponents.
- 7) A satyagrahi should always be willing to compromise on non-essentials. In fact, Satyagraha requires willingness on the part of the opponents to “make large concessions on all points except where a principle is involved.”
- 8) Satyagraha requires a just cause; it cannot be used for an unjust cause. Personal sincerity on the part of the satyagrahi is thus the key.
- 9) If a satyagrahi wants to convince his/her opponent of his/her sincerity, s/he will have to make sacrifices for the given cause.
- 10) A satyagrahi should never exploit a position of weakness in an opponent.

7.4.4 Process of Satyagraha

Thomas Weber opines that there are three prerequisites of a successful Satyagraha campaign. “They are:

- 1) that there can always be found some elements of common interest to all the contending parties;
- 2) that the parties are, or at least might be, amenable to an ‘appeal to the heart and mind’; and
- 3) that those in a position to commence Satyagraha are also in a position to carry it through to the end.”

Once these prerequisites are fulfilled the process of conversion can be initiated, which involves several steps: first of all reasoning with the opponent, secondly persuasion or moral appeal through self-suffering, which has been termed as “moral jiu-jitsu” by Richard Gregg. In case none of these attempts are successful, then the tools of non-cooperation or civil disobedience can be used.

7.4.5 Application of Satyagraha to Various Kinds of Conflicts

Gandhi was of the opinion that Satyagraha could be used in domestic situations as well as in broader fields, but “he who fails in the domestic sphere and seeks to apply it only in the political and social sphere will not succeed.” Thus, a satyagrahi had to start by solving small conflicts at the home front before going out to resolve the larger issues, “For it will be by those small things that you shall be judged.”

7.4.5.1 Inter-personal Conflicts

In conflicts such as domestic quarrels, “non-cooperation, civil disobedience of the orders of the offender if he happens to be in exercise of authority, suffering of hardships that came as a result of this resistance, fasting etc.” can be used. However, the main methods that should be employed in such cases “will be persuasion and discussion.” In the Gandhian approach, the resolution of inter-personal conflicts would depend largely on the internalisation of the principles of satyagraha. Besides these, Thomas Weber has pointed out some other techniques as well (not prescribed by Gandhi *per se* but on Gandhian lines) that can be used for the resolution of such conflicts.

The first of these techniques is known as “I-Message”. It is appropriate for conflicts where the focus is on personal needs rather than values or beliefs. The initial response in inter-personal conflicts is to blame the other for unacceptable behaviour and its consequences by sending “You-Message”, which masks the real issues of the conflict and provokes resistance. When blame statements are reformulated into “I-Messages”, it helps in clarifying issues by explaining the feelings of the speaker as a result of the unacceptable behaviour by the other and giving the speaker’s perception of the consequences of behaviour on them. The second technique is “the role-reversal technique of switching viewpoints, where each party honestly tries to argue for the other’s viewpoint, while the other listens.” It works in domestic situations or in situations where there is enough rapport viz. between friends, between neighbours etc. The last technique is a combination of “active-listening” and “mirroring”. It “could be used until hearing *what* the opponent in a conflict is saying becomes second nature.” Active listening involves “mirroring back what has been said.” This not only assures accuracy of listening but also “assures the sender that he has been understood when he hears his own message fed back to him accurately.” This technique can be used to solve immediate inter-personal conflicts. It can also be used by a third party to help one of the parties in a conflict situation clarify his/her own feelings and think creatively about solutions.

7.4.5.2 Legal Conflicts

Gandhi, being a lawyer by profession, has expressed his views on the resolution of legal (cases that go via the legal court system) conflicts. Legal dispute settlement is seen as a major method of nonviolent settlement of disputes in modern times. Gandhi, however, views the appearance of a civil case in a court as failure on the part of the parties to settle the dispute on their own. Once the case goes to the court, there is the risk of loss for one party and victory for the other; moreover, both the parties will have to pay costs as well.

Other kinds of cases that come before the courts are conflicts between individuals and the state. These may arise out of disputes between friends, neighbours and relatives or individuals unilaterally perpetrating a breach of the criminal code and getting detected for doing the same. In such cases the parties to the conflict do not confront each other in the court; the case is dealt by the lawyers that they hire to represent them. Here, as per the Gandhian approach, the lawyer can play the role of a catalyst – a mediator – rather than just indulging in legal negotiations in the court and bringing out points of law in favour of their clients. Gandhi himself did that a number of times and thus claimed:

“I realized that the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties riven asunder. The lesson was so indelibly burnt into me that a large part of my time during the twenty years of

my practice as a lawyer was occupied in bringing about private compromises of hundreds of cases. I lost nothing thereby—not even money, certainly not my soul.”

Pointing out the negatives of the legal method of conflict resolution, Thomas Weber said, “When disputes enter the legal process the disputants lose control not only of the outcome of the process but also their own ability to handle the situation—they become less than self-sufficient, more reliant on experts.”

7.4.5.3 Industrial Conflicts

Gandhi’s approach to industrial conflict is not zero-sum or compromise; he instead advocates mutual problem-solving, which will lead to the truth. Conflicts within the industry are a result of economic and/or social causes such as “changes in the social structure of the plant or changes in management policies, frustrations that result from a lack of communication with the management, a feeling of powerlessness resulting from the lack of opportunity in having an effective voice in the running of the industry, and basic conflicts of interests between workers and management.” If workers have greater involvement in the affairs of the workplace, it is likely to lessen the occurrence of industrial disputes. In order to avoid conflict between labour and conflict, Gandhi suggested that “labour should have the same status and dignity as capital.” However, once an industrial conflict breaks out, Gandhi leaves out the option of negotiations between the management and the labour because in Satyagraha one can never ask for more than is felt warranted. This would mean that one cannot bargain here.

Thomas Weber mentions two nonviolent measures of settling industrial disputes as per the Gandhian approach: “(a) moral appeals to the conscience of the employers to concede just demands, and (b) if these fail, a resort to voluntary arbitration, where the decision of the umpire would bind the parties.” In case these two measures fail, Gandhi recognised that workers have the option of resorting to strikes; in fact it is an “inherent right of the working men but must be considered a crime immediately the capitalists accept the principle of arbitration.” However, in situations where there are surplus labourers to replace the strikers, strike as a measure will not work. Then the last remedy is resignation, which may result in starvation but will at least ensure dignity of the worker.

7.4.5.4 Social Conflicts

Employing the principles of Satyagraha to group social conflicts are a difficult proposition because it is easier to appeal to the conscience of an individual and make them see reason in comparison to a group. Besides, it is also easy for individuals to remain truthful and nonviolent in contrast to a group. However, Gandhi recommends ‘Mass Satyagraha’ as a method of resolving social conflicts. The general rules of Satyagraha such as truth, non-violence, self-suffering, coercion and means and ends will also be applicable in ‘Mass Satyagraha’. Before undertaking a ‘Mass Satyagraha’ all other means of resolving the conflict must have been exhausted.

Bondurant has listed the following steps of a ‘Mass Satyagraha’ (especially in the context of satyagraha against a repressive government):

- (1) “Negotiation and arbitration. All established channels to be exhausted before undertaking further steps.
- (2) Preparation for group action. Discussion, examination of motives and self-discipline

exercises started. Issues at stake, appropriate action, circumstances of opponents and public opinion examined.

- (3) Agitation including the distribution of propaganda, marches, etc. commenced.
- (4) Issuing of ultimatum. Future steps to be taken are brought to the notice of the opponent if no agreement is reached.
- (5) Economic boycott and strikes, including picketing and general strike, commenced.
- (6) Non-cooperation. Non-payment of taxes, boycott of schools and other public institutions undertaken.
- (7) Civil Disobedience. Breaking of selected laws because they are central to the grievance or are symbolic.
- (8) Usurping the functions of government.
- (9) Parallel government.

Large nonviolent campaigns such as civil disobedience should be coupled with constructive work. Constructive work not only helps in influencing public opinion but it also equips people with the discipline for non-violence. Moreover, “it aids morale by giving the satyagrahi something positive to do rather than merely having him or her to suffer the negative aspects of frustration while waiting for something to happen.”

Another Gandhian measure for resolving social conflicts is Trusteeship, wherein owners of wealth are supposed to voluntarily convert themselves into trustees of their wealth for the poor. Redistribution of wealth however, should not involve any coercion because the foundation of a nonviolent state cannot be based on violence. Making trusteeship a social reality may seem a difficult proposition in a modern consumerist society and Gandhi was aware of that difficulty as well; however, he had faith in it, stating: “I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship in spite of the ridicule that has been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach. So is nonviolence.”

In conclusion, Thomas Weber says, “This whole area of social conflict places a great emphasis on the individual, first of all to refuse to be ruled or exploited any longer, and secondly, as with the case of the rich, to examine one’s own life-style to determine the degree to which he or she is also responsible for the oppression or exploitation of others. This introspection is particularly important to ensure that the chain is broken....”

7.4.5.5 International Conflicts

Principles like truth, non-violence and means and ends are also applicable to the international arena. These principles should guide interactions between nations as well. Gandhi expounded the concept of civilian defence to solve international conflicts instead of doing so through the means of war. Civilian defence aims to defend the whole society, not just borders or some crucial buildings. When a nation is attacked by another nation, the aggrieved citizens should adopt the method of civilian defence instead of military defence and start a political struggle employing the tactics of civil disobedience and non-cooperation. A country that adopts civilian defence is less likely to be invaded by another country because it is no longer seen as a threat. However, this can only happen when unilateral disarmament is first undertaken. Such unilateral actions will reduce international tensions. However, armaments are controlled by economic factors and therefore disarmament cannot be a reality unless nations stop exploiting other nations.

If a nonviolent society is attacked, Gandhi suggests two ways of coping with the aggressor, which he laid out in *Harijan* in 1940:

“to yield possession but not cooperate with the aggressor....the second way would be nonviolent resistance by the people who have been trained in the nonviolent way. They would offer themselves as fodder for the aggressor’s canon....the unexpected spectacle of endless rows upon rows of men and women simply dying rather than surrender to the will of an aggressor must ultimately melt him and his soldiery.”

Several scholars had subjected Gandhi’s method of civilian defence to severe criticism and termed it as impractical. However, one thing is certain that Gandhi’s “nonviolent equivalent to war suffer fewer of the moral deficiencies that war suffers from.”

7.5 SUMMARY

Gandhi had the firm belief that human beings were basically good and humanity essentially had a nonviolent nature. The underlying sources of conflict are distrust and friction and therefore the Gandhian method of conflict resolution does not focus on the immediate grievances of the conflict; it goes beyond that to look at the underlying sources of the conflict as well. Satyagraha essentially is a nonviolent method that touches all three aspects: the attitude, the behaviour and the goal incompatibility and can be applied to smaller as well as larger disputes occurring in different areas of human life.

To conclude in the words of Thomas Weber: “Satyagraha, then, from the Gandhian perspective, is a viable, autonomy-producing method of conflict resolution. Its stress on the shared humanity of all, including opponents, also makes it ethically superior to other methods of conflict resolution.” Not only that, even when Satyagraha fails to resolve conflicts, “the subjective benefits of dignity that comes from leading a moral life, is *always* present and this is missing with other methods.”

7.6 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Enumerate the fundamental concepts in Gandhian thought and practice.
2. How does Gandhi conceptualise conflict and violence?
3. Discuss and describe the various kinds of nonviolent action.
4. How does Gandhi propose to resolve inter-personal conflicts?
5. What are Gandhi’s views on legal conflicts?
6. Write a note on the concept of civilian defence as enumerated by Gandhi.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 8 APPLICATIONS OF GANDHIAN APPROACH TO PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION (CASE STUDIES)

Structure

8.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

8.2 The Chipko Movement

8.3 SEWA

8.4 The First Intifada

8.5 Petra Kelly and the German Greens

8.6 Summary

8.7 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi's main aim in life was to give people an alternative way. He not only expounded the details of his alternative way but also practised it in his personal and political life. His approach to conflict resolution was not only rooted in Indian traditions but was also informed by the best of Western thought. Post-Gandhi several individuals, groups and societies have tried to apply his alternative way to various kinds of situations – environment, self-determination, women's oppression, economic sphere, nuclear disarmament, political arena, human rights, anti-war, opposition to the military etc. – at various levels such as intra-personal, inter-personal, small group, community, organisation, society, nation, state and international. This Unit gives an account of case studies where the Gandhian approach to conflict resolution was applied – some were successful experiments, one was partially successful and another one was eluded by success.

Aims and Objectives

After going through this unit you will understand

- The application of the Gandhian approach to conflict resolution to environmental issues
- The Gandhian approach to conflict resolution to check economic exploitation
- The Gandhian approach to conflict resolution in the international arena in cases of occupation of a territory;
- The complexities of application of Gandhian approach to conflict resolution by a German political party and its leader.

8.2 THE CHIPKO MOVEMENT

The Uttaranchal division of Uttar Pradesh, a mountainous region in India was thickly forested. With the laying of roads in the 1960s, the region was widely accessed. It also witnessed massive deforestation with timber-felling inspite of people's protest. The region had had a history of protest against government forest policy since the early 20th century, which in the 1920s started being linked up with the Gandhian Congress. The timber-felling contracts were awarded to industrialists and contractors at concessional rates. Locals tried to resist this by forming their own forest cooperatives with the help of local Sarvodaya workers but they had neither money nor political clout, which was necessary to get the contracts for timber-felling.

In late 1972, voices were raised to end the contract system of timber-felling and to ensure that the locals got forest produce at cheap rates. Several demonstrations were held towards this end. In the meanwhile, the region started facing the consequences of unabated timber-felling – fuel-wood for cooking was becoming hard to obtain, springs were drying up as rainwater was running off the hills unchecked resulting in underground springs not being replenished, the running off of the rainwater was also causing floods and landslides – causing severe hardship to the population in general but women in particular as they were the ones responsible for cooking, cleaning and gathering water. Local Sarvodaya workers learnt of all this from the local women with whom they had been actively working on the anti-liquor campaign since the late 1960s.

In late 1972, the government awarded a contract to fell a large number of trees from a forest in Gopeshwar in Chamoli district, to a sports goods factory based in Allahabad. Earlier the same government had refused permission to a small local concern that specialised in processing of forest produce to take a few trees from the same forest. The small local concern, Dasauli Gram Swarajya Mandal, was run along Gandhian lines by a Sarvodaya worker named Chandi Prasad Bhatt. Initially the villagers requested the contractors not to fell trees but when the contractors persisted, the villagers decided to hug the trees and prevent it from being felled physically. This act of 'clinging' to the trees, gave the movement its name, *chipko*. Clinging to the trees saved them from being felled and forced the contractors to go back. The same contractors then shifted to the neighbouring forest of Rampur Phata to carry on with the operation of felling trees but the villagers under the leadership of Chandi Prasad Bhatt organised *chipko* protests there as well.

One year later, the women entered the movement in the village of Reni. It so happened that the forest neighbouring Reni was being auctioned. Chandi Prasad Bhatt talked to the villagers about the success of the Chipko Movement in Gopeshwar. The men decided to protest the auction to the authorities in town. In the meanwhile, the contractors started felling trees. The women of Reni decided to act and were led by Gaura Devi, a fifty-one year old widow. The women barred the path to the forest singing

This forest is our mother's home

We will protect it with all our might

This forced the contractors to go back. Gaura Devi was however socially boycotted by the village, and even received death threats; the reason being the vested interests of some of some of the men folk of the village, who were in favour of tree-felling as it provided them the opportunity to make some money by renting their house to the contractors and

the workers and also provided them with the job of cutting trees. However, Chandi Prasad Bhatt rallied behind Gaura Devi and other women of Dongri Paitoli village, who too were subjected to threats by their men folk but managed to stand up against it. The Chipko Movement spread to the whole of Chamoli district and parts of Tehri Garhwal and essentially became a women-centered movement (although it was initiated by men) because the women of the region were at the forefront fighting actively to preserve the forest around their villages. They evolved innovative methods of showcasing their protest. In Henwal Ghati, the women dressed the 'wounds' of the trees with mud and sacking to protest the indiscriminate tapping of pine trees. Radha Kumar says, "Each protest, whether it was to embrace trees, or to bandage them, reinforced the women's closeness to nature and their belief that natural resources were theirs to protect and conserve, not to exploit and destroy." The women now felt the need to organise themselves and formed Mahila Mangal Dals with the help of Chandi Prasad Bhatt and his organisation.

The movement continued throughout the 1970s under the able leadership of Sarvodaya workers like Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna. Bahuguna was in fact convinced of the far-reaching impact of the Chipko Movement. He stated:

"I am waiting for the day when the non-violent movement of the hill woman will help turn upside down the centres of power in this country."

In order to force the government to stop giving contracts for felling trees, Sunderlal Bahuguna launched a fast in 1979. He was arrested on the thirteenth day of his fast and was jailed, where he continued with his fast but he withdrew when the authorities agreed to discuss the issue. In 1980, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi invited the leaders of the Chipko Movement for talks in Delhi. Earlier in 1972, Mrs. Indira Gandhi had spoken in favour of environmental protection at the First International Environmental Conference held in Stockholm. The Chipko leaders appealed to her to consider their requests on the basis of the stance taken by her in the 1972 Stockholm Conference. Mrs. Gandhi conceded. As a result, the following decisions were reached: commercial forestry at a height above a thousand metres in the Himalayas was banned for the next fifteen years; food, fodder and fuel-bearing trees were to be planted close to the villages; and village people were given the right to take dry twigs and leaves from the government forests.

The salient features of the Chipko Movement need to be highlighted: it was led by respected Sarvodaya leaders; these leaders enjoyed good relations with many Gandhian politicians and top government officials; the leaders ensured that it progressed along Gandhian lines and ideals; the movement rigidly adhered to the principle of non-violence; the movement "was driven by a sense of moral outrage against a corrupt and rapacious regime that was impoverishing the people and their environment"; and lastly the movement managed to convince the Prime Minister to heed to their just demands.

Besides these, the active involvement of women in the movement has also added several noteworthy features. First, the protest by women against commercial timber-felling was done generally jointly with men but in several instances in opposition to the men. Secondly, women continue to be actively involved in protecting trees, stopping auctions and keeping a vigil against illegal tree-felling. Third, replanting trees is another notable feature of the movement; however, here the men and women have different choices – men choose to plant commercially profitable trees while the women prefer trees that provide fuel and fodder and fulfill other daily needs. Further, Chipko is no longer just an ecology movement in Uttarakhand; it has given rise to other movements – movement for safe environment such as anti-mining as well as movement against gender inequalities such as

anti-alcohol. And finally, to quote Bina Agarwal, “implicit in the movement is a holistic understanding of the environment in general and forests in particular...women recognize that forests cannot be reduced merely to trees and the trees to wood for commercial use, that vegetation, soil, water form part of a complex and interrelated ecosystem. This recognition of the interrelatedness and interdependence between the various material components of nature, and between nature and human sustenance, is critical for evolving a strategy of sustainable environmental protection and regeneration.”

David Hardiman opines that the Chipko Movement had a far-reaching impact elsewhere too. He says, “Chipko became well known throughout the world as an example of Gandhian environmental action, with the image of women embracing trees becoming an icon of the environmental movement as a whole. Chipko gave rise to a series of protests since that time in which activists have embraced trees or established tree houses, so as to prevent commercial felling operations.”

8.3 SEWA

Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) was a first of its kind women’s trade union formed by Gandhian socialists attached to the Textile Labour Association (TLA) in Ahmedabad, Gujarat in 1972. The TLA was originally founded by Gandhi. The SEWA initiative was led by Ela Bhatt, who was attached to the women’s wing of the TLA. Radha Kumar says, “In keeping with their Gandhian views, SEWA preferred the term ‘association’ to ‘union’ though it is possible that the acronym’s oral similarity to *seva*, the devoted care of other people, played a part in this choice as well.”

SEWA “was an organization of women who worked in different trades in the informal section but shared a common experience of extremely low earnings, very poor working conditions, harassment from those in authority, and lack of recognition of their work as socially useful labour.” The women members of SEWA were generally employed in activities such as manufacturing goods at home, selling products on the street, pulling carts, and working in the building industry. Initially, SEWA had a difficult time getting registered as a trade union because as per the Indian Trade Union Act it was neither a union of workers in a particular factory nor was it a group of employees of a particular employer. However, SEWA argued that a trade union could be based on the ‘development’ of its worker members, defining development as the “freedom from exploitation, assurance of regular work, and access to opportunities for advancement.”

SEWA aimed to improve the working conditions of its members through training, technical aid, and collective bargaining. To this end, Ela Bhatt established a co-operative bank, funded by self-employed women. The bank provided loans at low rates of interest. This was a good strategy as middlemen exploited women by advancing loans at high rates of interest. The initiative proved to be very successful in empowering the poor and “by 1993 there were 54,000 members of SEWA, with sixty co-operatives in nine districts of Gujarat.” SEWA members usually belong to the marginalised and minority sections of the population.

SEWA introduced “the members to the values of honesty, dignity and simplicity of life goals reflecting the Gandhian ideals to which TLS and SEWA leaders subscribe.” It emphasises solidarity through self-reliance and strictly non-violent campaigns. Besides, it also works to build communal harmony in Gujarat. Thus, it best exemplifies “the best of Gandhian constructive values.”

8.4 THE FIRST INTIFADA

The State of Israel was created in 1948. In the Six-Day War of June 1967, Israel annexed East Jerusalem and extended its control over the occupied West Bank and Gaza, now referred to as Occupied Territories. Since then the Palestinian people have been resisting the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed in 1964. Yasser Arafat became the leader of PLO in 1969.

Since the Six-Day War, there was a general sense of frustration among the Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories. In 1982, the PLO had been driven out in an invasion of Lebanon by Israel. It was forced to move to Tunis, thousands of miles away from Palestine. In 1985, Israel reaffirmed its 'Iron Fist' policy and authorised the military administration to use roadblocks, searches, arrests, deportations, and refusals of family reunification permits. Moreover, Israel continued to settle Jews in the Occupied Territories especially the West Bank, which was "a creeping de facto annexation that embittered Palestinians."

The word Intifada connoted 'shaking off one's laziness'. The First Intifada was an uprising of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. It began in December 1987 and continued till 1993. The uprising started in the Jabalya refugee camp after a traffic collision in which an Israeli army tank transporter ran into a group of Palestinians, killing four and injuring seven. The crowd returning from the funerals hurled stones at the local army compound. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) were unable to restore order and riots broke out. People threw rocks and Molotov cocktails at the IDF. Soon word spread and protests broke out everywhere. In the early days of the uprising, it was an improvised protest as there was no real strategy and the campaign was steered by an unstructured group of leaders. The Intifada's leaders soon set rules that violence from the Palestinian side should be confined to throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails. They did so for strategic reasons – few Palestinians owned weapons like guns; secondly, usage of firearms would give an excuse to the IDF to use heavy weapons like tanks and lastly, nonviolent action could turn world opinion against the Israelis and in favour of the Palestinians. Early in January 1988, an organisation was set up - United National Command for the Escalation of the Uprising in the Occupied Territories – the public face of the Intifada now had a name. At the heart of the Intifada was self-determination. The period was marked by a revival of traditional Palestinian mores – there was a renewed interest in Palestinian theatre, poetry, clothing, insignia etc.

In mid-January, Hanna Siniora, a respected Palestinian intellectual and editor of the Jerusalem newspaper *al-Fajr*, laid out a systematic plan for nonviolent action in two press conferences. The plan had four stages and was devised by Mubarak Awad, a Palestinian American clinical psychologist: first, giving up Israeli cigarettes; two weeks later cease the purchase of Israeli soft drinks; withhold tax payments to all Israeli authorities and finally, Palestinian workers would stop going to their jobs in Israel. Comparing the Intifada to other nonviolent movements, Siniora hoped that it could achieve what "the Gandhi movement did in India and the black civil rights movement did in the US." Non-cooperation became all-pervasive and by mid-March mass resignations followed. On the other hand, Israel intensified its campaign to break the Intifada. As the crackdown started, Israeli groups like Peace Now and 21st Year protested against the use of violent force on the Palestinians. Cracks started appearing in the IDF as some sections refused to

serve in the Occupied Territories. World public opinion was critical of Israel but that could not sway it. However, a lot of damage had been done on the economic front. Dissent within Israel grew as the scale of the crackdown expanded. In the summer of 1988, the Civil Administration ordered wholesale deportations of suspected Intifada leaders and agitators. The campaign started faltering as leaders were either deported or jailed and there was nobody to sustain it.

The Intifada may have resulted in more gains and successes for the Palestinians, if violence had not been mixed with nonviolent sanctions. When Palestinians lashed out with violence against the IDF, in the words of Gene Sharp, they fell into “the trap of shifting to fight with the opponents’ chosen weaponry.” Palestinians may not have achieved freedom with the First Intifada but it had two positive effects. First, “For the average Israeli... the Intifada brought about the realization that the status quo—continued occupation—was untenable; the Palestinians were not going to sit quietly and accept indefinite Israeli rule over them.” Secondly, “For many Israelis, the Intifada instilled the beginning of an awareness of the Palestinians as people. Everyday, one saw on television a civilian uprising. This was not a war being fought by armies with tanks and planes but, rather, women and children throwing rocks and stones and occasionally Molotov cocktails.” Thus the Intifada did meet with partial success.

8.5 PETRA KELLY AND THE GERMAN GREENS

A prominent European figure who was inspired by Gandhi and his tradition of nonviolent moral activism was Petra Kelly. She was the leader of the German Green Party (*Die Grunen*).

Kelly was born in Bavaria in 1947 into a devout family of Roman Catholics. Her family moved to southern USA in 1960. While in the US she was inspired by the civil rights movement as well as the anti-Vietnam war movement. Martin Luther King was one of her earliest political heroes. Kelly studied political science at university in Washington, where she was introduced to Thoreau’s Civil Disobedience Theory. King’s acknowledgement of Gandhi and Thoreau as inspirational examples had impressed her. Sara Parkin, Kelly’s biographer says, “Petra’s gods were Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Her bibles were Thoreau and Gene Sharp...”

Kelly returned to Europe in 1972 wherein she got actively involved in the anti-nuclear movement. In 1980, she co-founded and became the first leader of the German Green Party. The Green Party had tried to bring together a wide variety of ecological action groups. Kelly, along with twenty-six other Greens, was elected to the *Bundestag* (Parliament) in 1983 and remained there till 1990 when the Greens suffered electoral loss. During the days of her Bundestag membership, she led a series of nonviolent protests against nuclear installations and military bases, including protests in East Germany and Moscow. Kelly also took part in an occupation of the German embassy in Pretoria against German economic ties with the apartheid regime in South Africa. She went on to protest human rights violations by the Chinese in Tibet. Kelly thus engaged with several issues at the global level – human rights, women’s oppression, environment, structured violence of the military, nuclear issues, and the divide between the rich and the poor. Her main concern was the poor and the oppressed and to this end she said, “To my mind, the purpose of politics and of political parties is to stand up for the weak, for those who have no lobby or other means of exerting influence.”

Like Gandhi, Kelly was committed to active non-violence and her politics was based on truth. Non-violence for Kelly entailed “seeking opportunities for dialogue or taking actions which would liberate people from the violent system (of thinking) which prevented them from seeing the power of rightness of non-violence.”

Like Gandhi, Kelly’s politics flowed from a deep inner spirituality. She believed that “we cannot solve. ...political problems without addressing our spiritual ones.” In fact, Kelly “was drawn to Martin Luther King in part by his strong Christian faith.” Later, she was drawn to Catholic liberation theology, which gave way to a more eclectic and humanistic faith, a new “holy trinity of non-violence, personal responsibility and truth.” Kelly said, “The spiritual dimensions of non-violence as lived by Gandhi are to me most important.” She claimed that her ecological values flowed from Gandhi:

“In one particular area of our political work we have been greatly inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. That is in our belief that a lifestyle and method of production which rely on an endless supply of raw materials and which use those raw materials lavishly, also furnish the motive for the violent appropriation of raw material from other countries. In contrast, a responsible use of raw materials, as part of an ecologically-oriented lifestyle and economy, reduced the risk that policies of violence will be pursued in our name. The pursuit of ecologically responsible policies within a society provides preconditions for a reduction of tensions and increases our ability to achieve peace in the world.”

David Hardiman says, “She saw her work as being informed above all by a respect for all life forms and an understanding of their interconnectedness.”

However, unlike Gandhi, Kelly fought elections and represented her party in the Parliament. She referred to *Die Grunen* as an ‘anti-party party’. Kelly believed that party work in the parliament will have to be supplemented with action on the streets. This meant that her party “remain a perpetual opposition, the assumption being that any holding of office would lead to inevitable compromises with power and the violent apparatus of oppression controlled by the state.”

Kelly tried to create a culture of Gandhian-style civil disobedience permeating all levels of the polity. She wrote in her book *Nonviolence Speaks to Power* in 1992:

“All of us in Germany would benefit if we were to learn at last the liberating and constructive art of civil disobedience- not just in the extraparlimentary movement, but also within parliament and political parties. Civil disobedience has to be practiced in parliament or even within our own party if we become too dogmatic, powerful, or arrogant.”

There were several issues of tension and contradiction within the German Party as well as within the professional and personal life of Petra Kelly. She and her party had been unable to resolve and reconcile these tensions and contradictions in a satisfactory manner. The first one concerned her party. There was one faction within the Green Party, known as *Realos*, who wanted to become a partner in the governing coalition and push green policies. Joschka Fisher was the leader of this group. The other faction, *Fundis*, rejected the idea of the *Realos*. Kelly projected herself to be above the two factions, however, “she was in practice more in tune with the *Fundis* than the *Realos*.”

Another issue was the role of the leader within the Green Party. Kelly had wanted to create a party where people were committed to non-violence in thought, word and deed.

In her words, her party was “based on human solidarity and democracy among its members and on the rejection of a performance and hierarchy-oriented approach governed by rivalry hostile to life.” The members of the Green Party were supposed to relinquish their position within the Parliament after two years, which would then be filled by another party member. The idea was that activism within civil society was as important as parliamentary work. Members who relinquish their position would go on to do activism related work. Moreover, power within the party was to flow from the bottom up rather than from top down. However, when it was Kelly’s turn to resign, she refused partly because of personal reasons (she had resigned from her job to serve as a member of parliament and also moved her base to the capital, Bonn). Besides, she felt that the membership of the *Bundestag* provided her a good platform for her political and other social causes; people took her much more seriously – giving up her position would make all that work counterproductive for her as well as for the party. Moreover, Kelly observed that the process of rotation did not prevent the concentration of power in a few hands and it generated dangerous rivalry between the party members. Nonetheless, Kelly was criticised for giving up her principles for her political ambitions. By 1986, she was isolated within her own party and there was a lot of confusion within the party as there were no clear structures of power and means of delegating authority.

Kelly, like Gandhi, appreciated the role of a good press and felt that a moral activist like her could gain crucial publicity and support for her cause through the media. She said in an open letter to the party in 1991:

“One of the great weaknesses in both the parliamentary group and in the party has been that of media relations. The party must have the courage to appoint really independent, bright, and audacious media spokespersons who are very experienced and competent in dealing with the national and international media. One thing must change very quickly in the Green’s public presentation. We have to try to brighten up our party’s image because until now we have appeared unremittingly gloomy and intolerant. We are no longer able to laugh or show a bit of enthusiasm and zest for life. This is particularly evident at the national party conferences, and it is very depressing.”

Kelly was a media star but many people in her party had only contempt for the media.

In 1990, when general elections for the parliament were held for the first time, where both East and West Germany voted together, the Green Party decided to run a ‘personality free campaign’ and therefore Kelly’s name was not among the ones contesting the elections. Meanwhile, Die Grunen failed to forge an alliance with the Green Party of East Germany. The Greens of the East performed better in the elections in comparison to the Green Party of the West. If the two Greens had forged an alliance, they would have managed to get around 40 seats in the Parliament. However, that was not to happen and Die Grunen ended up not getting any seats.

On 19 October 1992, police found decomposed bodies of Petra Kelly and her partner, Gert Bastian from a suburb house of Bonn. Kelly had died on October 1 of a single-bullet wound to the head. Forensic evidence concluded that she was shot (It was believed that Bastian shot Kelly and then killed himself); some believe that she was murdered by the “nuclear mafia”. Who killed Kelly remains a mystery; infact, her death pointed out to an irreconcilable contradiction and tension in her private life. In spite of numerous death threats, Kelly- in true Gandhian style- refused to accept police protection (However, she allowed her partner Bastian, a soldier during the Second World War, who turned into a

peace activist later, to keep his guns from his army days. This was perhaps her way of trying to accommodate Bastian). David Hardiman rightly points out, “Kelly’s death represented a profound failure for the principle of non-violence at the most personal of levels.”

8.6 SUMMARY

Several individuals and groups in India as well as in different parts of the world have attempted to resolve issues of conflict via the Gandhian nonviolent approach. The above section has tried to give a glimpse of few of such cases. The Chipko Movement in Uttarakhand was a nonviolent movement concerned with environmental issues that directly affected the lives and habitats of the common folk. Women’s groups were the main actors there. The movement went on to become a success and inspired other social and environmental movements. Another successful Indian initiative based on Gandhian ideals is the Self-Employed Women’s Association of Gujarat. The Association has empowered the poor and managed to cut out the middlemen by coming together to form co-operative banks.

Among the international case studies, the first one is that of the Intifada I, which was largely a nonviolent movement but not strictly nonviolent as per the Gandhian approach. The First Intifada was an uprising of the Palestinians against Israeli rule. There have been several other uprisings post the Intifada I and the Palestinian struggle for freedom from Israel still continues. The last case study is from Europe and deals with the rise and fall of Petra Kelly and her German Green Party. Kelly chose to work in the political arena but her work was not confined to politics alone – she worked on a range of issues such as nuclear disarmament, environment, human rights, women’s oppression, poverty etc. Success however evaded Kelly because she was not able to reconcile her nonviolent beliefs with her professional and private life, finally leading to her violent death.

The two international case studies may not be very good examples of strict application of the Gandhian approach to conflict resolution but the idea here has been to create an understanding of the range of issues, areas and arenas to which the Gandhian approach has been applied within India as well as outside.

8.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Enumerate the circumstances and conditions that led to the beginning of the Chipko Movement.
2. What are some of the interesting and notable features of the Chipko Movement?
3. How did SEWA manage to stop the exploitation of women?
4. What was the nonviolent composition of the First Intifada? Was it successful?
5. Gandhi was a huge source of inspiration for Petra Kelly. Explain at length her non-violent activities.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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