
UNIT 9 FASTING

Structure

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

My religion teaches me that, wherever there is distress which one can not remove, one must fast and pray.

I believe that there is no prayer without fasting, and there is no real fast without prayer.

Mahatma Gandhi

'Gandhiji's own life was a unique record of research in the technique of fasting. When he found any sort of ill-will copping up in himself, a fast took the feeling away and transformed it into love. Gandhiji's fasts were meant for self-purification or arousing the consciousness of people for justice' (Kapoor and Gupta, p.98). Gandhi himself acknowledged many a time that his thoughts and methods have roots in traditional elements and religious sources. Fasting is one such method, which he evolved into a method of Satyagraha. It was a moral weapon which he considered as effective to counter violence and which can be used as a strategy to make the opponent begin the work on the resolution of a problem. It is a method of self-suffering and self-purification that has to be adopted to work effectively towards conflict resolution.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand

- The meaning and importance of fasting
- Fasting as a method of conflict resolution
- Gandhi's insistence on fasting as a means of self-purification

9.2 FASTING: MEANING AND PURPOSE

Fasting has a great religious significance. Many religions prescribe fasting (though not mandatory) to attain control over one's senses and not to give in to materialistic

inducement. It also serves the purpose of spiritual progress. As has already been discussed in one of the earlier lessons, fasting is a method that can be employed both at the individual and group/ mass levels. At the individual level, fasting is meant to convey one's displeasure or disagreement; it is largely employed in families or small groups as a means of arousing the conscience of a loved one (Iyer, p.261). When employed by a group, it conveys a message to redress the wrong done by the offending party/parties. It conveys the urgency of the need to resolve the conflict and is usually employed as a last resort to make the opponent take note of such urgency. It is less coercive in nature. It is, in a way, a non-violent coercion. Unless it is done as 'fast unto death', fasting is taken as a moral awakening to do the right thing or follow a right path. It is also viewed as having an element of coercion. It is interesting to note here that John Bondurant suggests that Satyagraha, as a method, contains a positive element of coercion. Moral coercion has become a more acceptable form of conflict resolution for it rules out physical coercion and further, the use of force.

Fasting as a means of conflict resolution or as a part of Satyagraha had immense significance during the course of our freedom struggle. The learner is already familiarised with the concept of Satyagraha as a non-violent weapon and also the other modes of conflict resolution in the present and previous courses. Therefore, it would be imperative to discuss here about the method of fasting and the importance Gandhi attached to this method of mass awakening. According to him, it is a 'fiery weapon' and a device of the last resort.

Jacques Maritain, the Catholic Philosopher, calls Satyagraha as the means of spiritual warfare. It is a non-violent direct action and is meant for self-purification. Gandhi stressed that the result of such action should not only lead to self-purification but also the paralysis of the government that continues to suppress the poor and ignorant masses. Fasting and public prayers have been the two most universal self-purification phases of Satyagraha in India (J.N.Sharma, 2008, p.34). They can also act as great morale-builders. Further, fasting is a way of voluntary suffering (which a satyagrahi undertakes most willingly) and self-denial (a worthy principle which is unselfish in nature). These indicate that a satyagrahi is willing to suffer for a noble purpose and is also willing to fight till the end with his/her moral weapon. These, in a way, convey the message to the opponent that they harbour no ill-will. 'The satyagrahis, by emphasizing the spirit of self-sacrifice and suffering, endeavour to raise the level of the issue. It ceases to be a matter of wrangling. The issue revolves around the bringing about of a just settlement of the dispute. Thus the level of fight is raised. The opponent is forced to operate at higher, less ruthless level' (Ibid, p.36). It is precisely with this motive that Gandhi undertook periodic fasts to make his opponents get down to working on the solution of the problem.

As Raghavan Iyer put it, 'Gandhi regarded fasting as a great institution in Hinduism, provided it is undertaken entirely voluntarily and also does not have a trace of coercion over others. Fasting unto death is, however, more a Gandhian than a traditional device. Gandhi's fasts were often dubbed as coercive in nature, considering the fact that the opponents are required to act in order to save a human life. His opponents largely perceived his fasts as a technique of 'blackmail'. Iyer rightly summarises what Gandhi said about fasting, that 'a particular device like fasting has its own well-defined limits. Fasts are coercive when they are intended to attain a selfish object. No doubt the dividing line between a selfish and an unselfish end is often very thin, but a person who regards the aim of another's fast to be selfish should resolutely refuse to yield to it' (*Harijan*, May,

1933). Fasting is a powerful means of purification, as Gandhi said, and occupies an important part in the life of human family (CWMG, vol.55, p.345).

9.3 GANDHI ON FASTING

Gandhi opined that ‘a fast should be characterized by perfect truth and non-violence, and should be undertaken only upon the prompting of one’s inner voice and not in blind imitation of somebody. One should never undertake a fast for selfish end; the aim behind a fast should always be common good. A fast should never be undertaken for any object which is inspired by ill will towards somebody’ (CWMG, vol.51, p.316). Gandhi believed that fasting is one of the most important means to achieve control over senses. He says, ‘if our senses cannot be controlled, we should undertake a fast. During a fast, impure desires will probably subside; but fasting alone does not yield the required result. Something more is needed. If we see God, our instinctive desire for objects of senses will also subside. After a person has seen god, it is all one to him whether he eats or does not eat’ (CWMG, vol.32, pp.131-132).

Gandhi’s experiments with fasting began with the purpose of self-restraint. It was purely for health reasons, as he acknowledges in his *Autobiography* (Autobiography, p.276). It is fascinating to note its beginnings in his words: ‘Having been born in a Vaishnava family and of a mother who was given to keeping all sorts of hard vows, I had observed, while in India, the *Ekadashi* and other fasts, but in doing so I had merely copied my mother and sought to please my parents. At that time I did not understand, nor did I believe in, the efficacy of fasting....’ (Ibid, p.276).

Gandhi, during his stay in South Africa, took up this practice for self-purification and encouraged others like the Hindus, Parsis and Christians, especially during the Ramzan days (Month of fasting by the Muslims). He said, ‘I explained to them that it was always a good thing to join with others in any matter of self-denial’. Gandhi further states that it had a tremendous impact as ‘all were convinced of the value of fasting’ and a spirit of solidarity grew among them. Gandhi admits its positive impact on him, both physically and morally. He was certain that ‘fasting can help to curb animal passions, only if it is undertaken with a view to self-restraint. Some of my friends have actually found their animal passion and palate stimulated as an after-effect of fasts. That is to say, fasting is futile unless it is accompanied by an incessant longing for self-restraint. Fasting and similar discipline is, therefore, one of the means to the end of self-restraint, but it is not all, and if physical fasting is not accompanied by mental fasting, it is bound to end in hypocrisy and disaster’ (pp.277-278). Further he reiterated that ‘fasting for the sake of personal gain is nothing short of intimidation’ (Weber, p.58). Since fasting is a spiritual instrument or weapon, Gandhi cautioned, it should not be handled by unqualified persons.

Gandhi considers that ‘fasting for the sake of loved ones is a forcible and unmistakable expression of love and therefore affects those for whose sake it is undertaken. Those whose love encircles the whole of life cannot but affect the whole creation by a supreme act of love’ (CWMG, vol.55, p.345). Fasting has an ethical dimension, which Gandhi emphasised time and again. If the necessity of fasting is admitted, the argument that it is unnatural or an act of violence to one’s own body falls to pieces. Just as a fast for regaining lost health is neither unnatural nor criminal self-torture, so is not a fast for purification of self or others (Ibid.). To the critics/skeptics who questioned his frequent spells of fasting, Gandhi’s reply was that they need not be convinced by past testimonies

or his arguments. 'Let them acquaint themselves with the rules and the science of fasting for purification and then test its efficacy themselves. That fasting does not appeal to people brought up in the midst of the dazzling materialism is an additional reason for people not to reject summarily one of the most potent methods of purification and penance' (Ibid, p.346).

9.4 FASTING FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Gandhi did not approve of fasting as a weapon of coercion, as coercion rarely leads to conversion. Gandhi himself had 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 (cit in Weber, p.58). If a fast converts an opponent towards positive mindset, the fast cannot be termed as coercion as it enables one to gauge the logic of the problem and look for aspects of justice. It should not be taken up to extort rights but to work for a reform; moreover, most importantly, a fast cannot be used as means of conflict resolution if the opponent is a tyrant or not sympathetic. It can be used effectively only in cases where there is a possibility of change in the heart of a person. Gandhi was also against taking up fast randomly by anyone and reiterated that it should be undertaken only by those who are capable of doing it in the most non-violent manner and with steel resolve. During his fast in the Ahmedabad Textile Mills case, he dissuaded the labour from fasting along with him.

Bondurant points out the example of Rowlatt Satyagraha as the true Gandhian Satyagraha. "Preparation of satyagrahis was undertaken through self-purificatory fasting and instruction in non-violent action. However, in the light of the results, it may be said that this stage of preparation should have been extended, both in breadth and in intensity. Fasting, it should be noted, was used only for the purpose of self-discipline and later by Gandhi as a penance for the outbreak of violence; but fasting as coercion was no part of the campaign" (Joan Bondurant, p.85). Gandhi was against yielding to pressure in the context of fasting. Rather, he wanted a genuine change of heart or a positive conversion in an opponent. Gandhi was categorical about his fasts as a means of working out towards a solution. He felt that the non-violent aspect of Satyagraha determines 'the aim of converting rather than coercing the opponent. The conversion is not meant to take place purely by an appeal to reason but rather through *tapas* or self-suffering'. It is apt to cite from Iyer's work in this context. "When Gandhi was told that 'moral pressure' was involved in his Rajkot fast, he replied: If my fast ...is to be interpreted as pressure, I can only say that such moral pressure should be welcomed by all concerned". He thought that moral pressure was justified insofar as it evoked a moral response, i.e., if the conversion was genuine (Iyer, p.333). Gandhi further justified his fasts on the following grounds (CWMG, vol.55, p.412):

'My definite opinion is that the general result of my numerous fasts was without doubt beneficial. They invariably quickened the conscience of the people interested in and sought to be influenced by fasts. I am not aware of any injustice having been perpetrated through those fasts. In no case was there any idea of exercising coercion on anyone. Indeed, I think that the word coercion is a misnomer for the influence that was exerted by the fasts under criticism. Coercion means some harmful force used *against* a person who is expected to do something desired by the user of force. In the fasts in question, the force used was against myself. Surely, force of self-suffering cannot be put in the same category as the force of suffering caused to the party sought to be influenced. If I fast in order

to awaken the conscience of an erring friend whose error is beyond question, I am not coercing him in the ordinary sense of the word’.

Gandhi laid down certain conditions for undertaking fasts. The conditions were meant to be adopted in the good spirit of self-purification and voluntary suffering rather than coerce the adversary into resolving conflicts. Fasts are part of the Satyagraha technique and are conducted in a specified manner. R.R.Diwakar has summarily described the terms and conditions of fasting in his work on ‘Saga of Satyagraha’ (pp.107-108).

- Fasts may be limited or unto death. Even when they are limited and are against the lapses of friends, wards, relatives, or colleagues they have to follow a certain method.
- Fast should not be undertaken in a huff or in anger.
- The motive must not be either punishment or publicity. Nor should the fast be unsystematic.
- The body should not be roughly handled during the fast. There should be no violence against it. It should be treated gently and with a view to cleanse it.
- The purpose of the fast should be made known to the person concerned. But even here a fast should be the last remedy.
- During the fast, most of the time should be devoted to prayer, introspection, meditation and the things that ennoble the mind.
- Since fasting is a fiery weapon and a great ordeal, one must sift one’s motives very carefully before one undertakes it. There should not be even a trace of impurity.
- One who has not followed the path of ahimsa and studied how to fast should not rush into it. One must earn the right to fast.

A satyagrahi should strictly follow the conditions of fasting in order to achieve the desired results. Fast unto death constitutes the last step in the scheme of achieving the right ends. Fast unto death should be taken up only as a last resort, only when all other means of conflict resolution have failed, only when there is no hope of resolution and utter darkness and despair. The step should be taken believing that this last resort would vindicate the truth one is fighting for. It should neither be taken lightly nor resorted to without absolute necessity. At no stage should there be resort to violence, lest the purpose of the fast is lost. There is often a thin line between the effective use and abuse of the method of fasting; it is too thin to be noticeable. In this context, it is necessary to exercise an utmost caution.

As Gandhi often emphasised, one has to study deeply before contemplating to use the method of fasting as the means of conflict resolution. Fasting as a weapon can only be used against ‘a friend, a follower or co-worker for they easily realise the mistake and correct themselves’ (CWMG, vol.24, p.90). Further, fasting should not make the opponent yield because of the pressure or obligation of saving the affected party’s life. There should be consideration for actual realisation. As Gandhi put it, ‘this is the worst form of compulsion which militates against the fundamental principles of satyagraha’ (Ibid, p.91). In case of mass fasting, it should open the eyes of the government towards the injustices wrought by them and work for conciliation. No help should be taken from outsiders as the opponents would believe in its inefficacy and this, in turn, affects the strength of one’s

sacrifice. Gandhi remarked that, 'the volunteers (who are fasting) fed and financed with outside help, appear to the opponent more as mercenaries than like satyagrahis who are prepared to sacrifice their all for their principles. Such a fight is the trial of material and not spiritual strength. Non-violent assertion of your rights with outside help may be passive resistance but no satyagraha' (Ibid, p.92). The act of fasting should not be inclined to humiliate or subdue the opponents. This was rightly reflected in Gandhi's method of Satyagraha to which he adhered steadfastly. The methods employed in conflict resolution have to be non-violent at all costs and at all times. Gandhi's epic fasts stand testimony to this fact and have been successful to a large extent.

9.5 GANDHI'S EPIC FASTS

Fast against the Communal Award (1932)

In 1932, the British government announced the communal award, wherein the depressed classes were recognised as a minority community and were given separate electorate. Gandhi was against this separate representation of the deprived sections, for which he had been vociferously voicing his concerns. He was against their segregation from the mainstream and being dubbed as minorities. The British government refused to accept his stand and therefore, Gandhi announced his decision to fast unto death from September 20th, 1932. Prominent Congress leaders persuaded Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, who was one of the most significant champions speaking for the rights of the untouchables, to withdraw the demand for separate electorates. It was suggested that a scheme of primary and secondary election for a limited number of seats (while simultaneously addressing the issue of joint electorate) would be worked out to enable the depressed classes to choose their leaders. It was followed by the question of timeframe after which the system of primary and secondary elections would come to an end. No conciliation was achieved on this timeframe between Gandhi and Dr.Ambedkar. In the meantime, Gandhi's health was deteriorating gradually due to the fasting; after thorough discussions between the Congressmen and Ambedkar, it was decided that the issue of timeframe would be postponed until a future date and until it would be decided by a mutual agreement. The weapon of fast that was used by Gandhi aroused strong public opinion. Various public meetings held at different places endeavoured to bring together the caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes. Fervent appeals were made to the Depressed Classes not to pursue the demand for separate electorate. Following this, the Poona conference was conducted and the Poona Pact was signed. Consequently, the British too accepted this Pact in full and Gandhi finally broke his fast on September 26th. It is necessary to note that through his fast, Gandhi brought about an attitudinal change in Dr.Ambedkar apart from making the British accept the Poona Pact to show that the Indians are united. Ambedkar rejected Gandhi's stance on Communal Award from the beginning. This incident indicates that 'Ambedkar was most reluctant to change his position throughout the negotiations, that Gandhi very definitely placed before Ambedkar the clear alternatives of accepting his terms or the responsibility for his death and the former made each concession most reluctantly with the progressive deterioration of Gandhi's condition' (J.N.Sharma, p.95). Eventually, Dr.Ambedkar and Gandhi realised as to how close they are ideologically; nevertheless the Poona Pact was signed under moral compulsion, owing the fasting that Gandhi undertook. Nevertheless it prevented further segmentation of the Hindu community, a need of the hour.

Fasts for Hindu-Muslim Unity

Here we deal not with any specific case of Gandhi's fast for Hindu-Muslim unity but mention a few that he undertook at different stages of freedom struggle. While in South Africa, Gandhi could bring together all the Indians but on his return to India, the issue of Hindu-Muslim unity posed major challenge to him all through. In one instance in 1924, the Hindu-Muslim unity was severely disturbed in the neighbourhood at Delhi. Gandhi, throughout his life, immensely struggled to keep both the communities together and observe solidarity and goodwill with each other. The tension caused immense grief to Gandhi as one riot after another wrought havoc among the people. On 17th September, he decided to undertake a fast for twenty-one days as atonement. As he remarked, "my penance is the prayer of a bleeding heart for forgiveness of sins unwillingly committed". He further said that 'to revile one another's religion, to make reckless statements, to utter untruth, to break the heads of innocent men, to desecrate temples or mosques, is the denial of God'. Though there were efforts to dissuade him to refrain from fasting, Gandhi was unrelenting in his resolve and commenced his fast on 18th September. Consequently, the leaders belonging to both the communities addressed their respective communities and resolved to remove the cause of the fast and suffering the communities had imposed on Gandhi with their inadvertent acts. Gandhi appealed to people to forge the unity of hearts and not a mere display of affection for each other in order to appease him. As Gandhi's condition deteriorated, they expressed their genuine concern to end the untold suffering. The *Statesman* of Calcutta wrote, 'where political arguments, obvious and cogent, had utterly failed, the religious emotions generated by Mr. Gandhi's fast succeeded. There remains the yet harder task of inducing the millions to practise toleration' (8th October). Another instance may be cited regarding his travel to Noakhali during the independence time, wherein he chose to soothe the pain suffered by the riot-affected people in the said area. While eminent leaders were celebrating the independence, Gandhi decided to render his assistance to the aggrieved people. He even underwent fast in order to bring the people together and as a result, people responded by resolving not to target each other's community again. Gandhi's fast was most aptly summarised by Most Rev. Foss Westcott (Lord Bishop of Calcutta): "...Mr. Gandhi entered on his fast, to enthrone God in the hearts of all men, must be accomplished if peace is to reign, for only thus can the warring wills of men be brought under the supreme control of the one Will of God" (cit in S. Radhakrishnan, p.253).

Chronology of some of Gandhi's Fasts

- 1913, Phoenix: penitential fast for a week for moral lapse of two inmates at Settlement.
- 1918, Ahmedabad: during the mill workers' strike, settlement reached after three days fast.
- 1919, Sabarmati: fast against violence by people at Nadiad.
- 1921, Bombay: five days fast following rioting and bloodshed on occasion of Prince of Wales' visit.
- 1922, Bardoli: Fast against violence in Chauri Chaura incident.
- 1924, Delhi: 21 days fast against Hindu-Muslim riots in Kohat.

- 1932, Yervada prison: Fast against Communal award.
- 1933, Yervada Prison: self-purificatory fast for better treatment towards untouchables.
- 1939, Rajkot: against Rajkot ruler for breaking solemn pact with people.
- 1943, Aga Khan Palace: 3 weeks fast in detention as appeal from the Government of God for justice.
- 1948, Delhi: against communal riots following the partition of India. It was an indefinite fast to awaken all the communities to their sense of duty; broke the fast after a written assurance from all the communities involved that pledged not to aggravate tension again. This was the last fast of Gandhi that attracted worldwide attention and was accompanied by good wishes for the successful breaking of the fast.

9.6 SUMMARY

As discussed in the Unit, non-violent methods of conflict resolution do have great significance. Fasting is one of them provided it is taken up with good intention rather than with the aim of coercing the opponent. Gandhi mastered the task of undertaking fasts. His fasts, though were criticised for being coercive and compelling, had a telling effect on the psyche of the masses. He successfully and artistically mastered the art of fasting wherein it evoked mass responses with an immediate result. He undertook fasts for numerous causes- communal unity, against untouchability, against the repressive British policies, against the violation of ethical code of conduct by Ashrams' inmates, against violent outbreaks during freedom struggle and so on. Gandhi's method of fasting as a means of conflict resolution is unique. As Gilbert Murray said, 'In a world where the rulers of nations are relying more and more upon brute force and the nations trusting their lives and hopes to systems which represent the very denial of law and brotherhood, Mr. Gandhi stands out as an isolated and most impressive figure...A battle of unaided human soul against overwhelming material force; and it ends by the units of material force gradually deserting their own banners and coming round to the side of the soul' (cit in S.Radhakrishnan, pp.157-158). Such was the power of non-violent moral weapons of Gandhi that had higher spiritual and moral superiority!!

9.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Analyse the meaning and purpose of fasting. What religious significance does it hold?
2. Examine Gandhi's views on Fasting and its relevance today.
3. Fasting is an effective means of conflict resolution. Do you agree with this? Justify.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 10 STRIKE

Structure

10.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

10.2 Strike: Meaning and Basic Precepts

10.3 Gandhi on the Ethics of Strike

10.4 Pacific Strikes

10.5 Strikes: Conditions and Conduct

10.6 Case Studies

10.7 Summary

10.8 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Strike, primarily, is a cessation of all actions and a form of protest against existing unrest. It is expressed by the dissatisfied public against the rulers and is a non-violent weapon, which, to some extent, imposes coercion on the opponent. It is a method that tries to secure the legitimate and just demands from the rulers. Strike is an expression of protest against the recognised injustice and that, which intends to invoke in the offender/oppressor a sense of guilt and wrongdoing. The terms 'strike' and 'hartal' are used interchangeably to explain the modes of non-cooperation. Iyer explains hartal as a 'traditional form of protest in India, a temporary strike with advance notice as to its duration, the closing down of shops and businesses and sometimes the halting of the work of administration' (R.N.Iyer, p.302). Nevertheless, it has been used as a non-violent method protesting the oppressive British rule. In this Unit, we learn the intricacies involved in the method of 'strike' and how it is used as a means of conflict resolution.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand

- The meaning and significance of strike
- How strike can be used as a means of conflict resolution
- The case studies that illustrate the success of the strikes.

10.2 STRIKE: MEANING AND BASIC PRECEPTS

Satyagraha is the method adopted by Gandhi during his struggles against racial discrimination in South Africa and also in India during the freedom struggle movement. R.R.Diwakar categorises satyagraha into three main streams. Firstly, it is constructive wherein constructive activities are taken up and there is a selfless service of the society; secondly, there are

methods like hartal, fasting and prayer that involve self-denying actions and purificatory in nature; and finally, where there is direct action and a deliberate breach of law, Satyagraha turns into an aggressive form, wherein repression and suffering are likely to lead to the death of an individual in an attempt to remove the evil (R.R.Diwakar, p.56).

Though fasting, strike/hartal and non-cooperation are taken as part of Satyagraha, the methods differ from one to another and are said to be consisting an element of coercion. In the statement before 'Evidence Before Disorders Inquiry Committee', on January 9th, 1920, Gandhi in reply to the question of what Satyagraha is, termed it as 'a movement intended to replace methods of violence. It is a movement based entirely on truth. It is, as I have conceived it, an extension of the domestic law on the political field, and my own experience has led me to the conclusion that that movement and that movement alone can get rid India of the possibilities of violence spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land for the redress of grievances, supposed or real' (CWMG, vol.16, p.378). Drawing a sharp distinction between hartal and Satyagraha, he stated that 'hartal may sometimes be satyagrahic or may not be. Here civil disobedience as such had absolutely nothing to do with hartal. Hartal had a two-fold purpose: one, to strike the imagination of the people as also to strike the imagination of the Government; but the second was a discipline for those who have to offer disobedience. I had no method of understanding the mind of India except by some such striking thing. The hartal is a proper index to show how far I could carry my principle' (Ibid, pp.386-387).

Bondurant remarked that 'a genuine Satyagraha campaign is, throughout, active and constructive, aggressive and synthesizing. Insistence upon arriving at the truths of the situation, together with persistence in exploring new and creative approaches, are fundamental' (Joan Bondurant, p.43). Bondurant also opined that methods like strike do not fulfill the essentials for a movement qualifying as satyagraha. They can be at the most used during some stage of satyagraha. Taken in this sense, Satyagraha enables 'the usage of distinct instruments to be utilised either simultaneously or separately' (J.N.Sharma, p.36). Strike is one such instrument used by the labour demanding a certain standard of treatment from the employer. In a political movement, it is most often taken as extracting certain demands from the government. The application of the strategy of strike is termed as satyagraha in this context. As mentioned earlier, it means the cessation of all activities and extending non-cooperation to the government in every possible way. Attacking these vantage points through the instrument of strike, consequently, becomes satyagraha strategy (Ibid, p.36). Hartal is a temporary strike of work and stopping of business, usually for 24 hours. It is a form of protest. It is prolonged if the cause is sufficiently serious and the wrong very great (Diwakar, p.56). It was estimated that there were approximately 200 strikes in India during 1920 and no fewer than 400 in 1921 (CWMG, vol.19, p.365).

Picketing is a method that spreads the message of the strike and adds to its effectiveness though strike is not the only signal for picketing. It means a general appeal to people to withdraw its patronage from concerns and shops. For example, during the freedom struggle, some of the shops importing the British-manufactured goods were picketed; in 1942, there was picketing of administrative officers, police stations and public transport.

Dharna or the sit-in protest is also a form of strike and is one of the oldest methods of protest. It draws the attention of the public to the cause for which it is being done and thus compels the offender/ offending party to come to an agreement or solution. Whether it is successful or crushed, dharna attracts and influences public opinion considerably.

Gandhi often restrained his supporters from sitting on dharna, as he was not in favour of it on the grounds of coercion.

It is important to note that strike can be resorted to only after the legitimate methods of conflict resolution fail to achieve the desired ends. Thomas Weber enlists them as follows:

- 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.

An example may be quoted from the Ahmedabad Mill Workers' strike wherein Gandhi sought to bring about peaceful resolution to the problem by appealing to the good sense of the employers to accept the arbitration principle. Strike becomes inevitable when the disputes go out of hand and call for urgency to solve the matters. A peaceful conducting of strike can be an absolute success and a violent strike would not only lead to violence but also its perpetration. It would ultimately lead to the loss of trust between the disputing parties making it all the more complex to resolve the conflict. The strikers should maintain tolerance so that the targeted party does not cave in to the pressure of the former.

10.3 GANDHI ON THE ETHICS OF STRIKE

Though Gandhi successfully used strike as a non-violent method of protest, he advised his supporters to follow an ethical code of conduct. For a successful strike he laid down the following principles:

1. never to resort to violence
2. never to molest blacklegs
3. never to depend on alms, and
4. to remain firm, no matter how long the strike continued, and to earn bread during the strike by any other honest labour.

Gandhi's principles were well understood by the workers who, in turn, accepted them and 'pledged themselves at a general meeting not to resume work until either their terms were accepted or the mill-owners agreed to refer the dispute to arbitration' (CWMG, vol.39, p.339). True to Gandhi's ethical principles, the workers adhered to their pledge and duty to maintain peace and self-respect. They daily paraded the streets of the city in peaceful procession, carrying their banner bearing the inscription '*Ek Tek*' (Keep the pledge). Gandhi noted that "strikes are an inherent right of the working men but must be considered a crime immediately the capitalists accept the principle of arbitration" (Young India, 5-5-1930). Gandhi preferred giving enough work to those who are striking; especially, the spinning and hand-weaving ensure enough incentives and income to live. Instead of leading an ordinary life, labourers may work toward making their living conditions better in many a way. There should be better awareness in order to demand their legitimate rights and even demand a respectful behaviour from their employers keeping in view their (labour's) contributions to the organisation. If these conditions are not fulfilled, there is justification in the labourers resorting to strike. 'Strikes, therefore, for the present should only take place for the direct betterment of the labourers' lot, and when they have acquired the spirit of patriotism, for the regulation of prices of their manufactures' (CWMG, vol.19, p.366).

Strikes carried out on the basis of untruth or for unjustified demands negate the very

purpose of non-violent methods of protest or reasonable demands. They are also said to have the elements of coercion but can be justified on the grounds of addressing grievances that have been in practice for long. Gandhi never supported such strikes that had no moral grounds. He felt that they would blur the vision towards attaining truth and self-realisation.

At the same time, Gandhi opined that frequent calls for hartal or strikes would amount to their abuse and also result in their inefficacy. The government would cease to respond and reform itself in response to such incidents and the very purpose of targeting the erring government is lost if these methods are abused and when they are reduced to the status of cheap gimmicks. It would render them invalid. Hartals are meant as a protest against something extraordinary; therefore, the frequent calls to observe hartals would be in bad taste.

10.4 PACIFIC STRIKES

Gandhi, in the *Young India* edition on 18th November 1926, refers to the extract titled *No More War*, an organ of the British Pacifists. Gandhi provided the extract for the benefit of the readers. A. Fenner Brockway authored the conditions towards this direction.

1. A strike in protest of social evils, which destroy human life, can be as much an act of pacifism as a strike against war. (Starvation wages kill as many human beings as are killed by guns).
2. If it be said that “constitutional” means could be used to end these evils, the same can be said of war. Our “Constitutional” machinery is inadequate. The voters two years ago had neither wage reductions nor war in mind.
3. If it be said that a strike (and particularly a general strike) against wage reductions is an effort to “coerce” the nation or the Government, the same can be said about a general strike against war. As a matter of fact, neither has any promise of success unless the greater part of the nation supports it.
4. It is not accurate to liken a strike to an economic blockade. So far as there is danger of hunger, it would be the strikers themselves who would suffer first. In actual fact, in the recent General Strike, the T.U.C. (Trade Union Congress) was prepared to co-operate in maintaining life and health. The Government refused co-operation.
5. The determining factor as to whether a strike is pacific or not is the spirit from which it springs. A strike against war in which the motive was hatred of members of the Government rather than of war and which represented a spirit which might be transformed into civil war, would not be an act of pacifism, nor would a strike against wage reductions animated by hatred of the employers or of members of the Government, or by anti-social feeling. But both are acts of pacifism when inspired by the spirit of protest against the evil themselves.
6. Whilst it is admitted that a non-pacifist spirit occasionally showed itself in the utterances, and still more rarely in the acts of strikers, I have not the least hesitation in saying that the dominant motive in the Great Strike was that of self-sacrificing moral protest and not anti-social force or personal hatred. It was this, which gave it spiritual power; in this the secret of the wonderful self-discipline of the mean was to be found.

Gandhi added one more to these admirable conditions that a 'pacific strike must be limited to those who are labouring under the grievance to be redressed'. Gandhi cautioned that strikes and hartal, though are effective means, it is definitely not difficult to misuse them. Workmen, he said, have to organise themselves into strong labour unions and the strike should be undertaken only with their consent. It is wrong to resort to strike without previous negotiations with the owners or management. It is all the more important not to strike when the management opts for arbitration and ensures scope for conflict resolution. In this case, panchayat principle (the traditional Indian practice of settling the local disputes by the five elder members chosen by the local community) is important where both the parties respect the decision.

10.5 STRIKES: CONDITIONS AND CONDUCT

Gandhi enumerated the following conditions for a successful strike. If a strike fulfills all the conditions as given below, it is said to have been successful.

1. The cause of the strike must be just.
2. There should be practical unanimity among the strikers.
3. There should be no violence used against non-strikers.
4. Strikers should be able to maintain themselves during the strike period without falling back upon Union funds and should therefore occupy themselves in some useful and productive temporary occupation.
5. Successful strikes have taken place even when all the above conditions have not been fulfilled, but that merely proves that the employees were weak and had a guilty conscience. We often make terrible mistakes by copying bad examples. The safest thing is not to copy examples of which we have rarely complete knowledge but to follow the conditions, which we know and recognize to be essential for success.

In the instances of disputes with management, the labourers should follow certain general principles. These are summarised by Thomas Weber in the following words:

1. The workers or their leaders (among whom there must be perfect correspondence and understanding) should not exaggerate their demands; they should study the pros and cons of the case carefully before formulating their demands. They should always be ready for correction if the opposite party is able to convince them that they are wrong.
2. The weapon of the strike, which is really the very last weapon in the armoury of the industrial workers, should not be resorted to unless all peaceful and constitutional methods of negotiations, conciliation and arbitration are exhausted. Even during the course of a strike, workers should be prepared for any just settlement or a reference to arbitration (This assumes "practical unanimity among the strikers").
3. Peaceful and nonviolent behaviour, even under provocation, is the *sine qua non* for obtaining justice through any mass struggle of this type. While on strike the workers should not damage the property or injure the person of anybody. They should bear no ill-will towards their employers or their officers, as they are fighting the evil in the employers and not the employers personally.

4. The workers should be self-respecting and, therefore, they should not rely on the funds raised by sympathisers for the successful conduct of the strike. A striking worker should find alternative employment during this period to maintain themselves and their family, and no work should be considered below one's dignity. This is because "there is nothing more injurious to...morale and self-respect than enforced idleness", and because labour cannot "prolong a strike indefinitely, so long as it looks to pecuniary support from public subscriptions or alms or depends on the resources of its union and no strike can absolutely succeed which cannot be indefinitely prolonged".
5. A strike is a form of satyagraha. Strikers, therefore, must not submit to superior force or hardship. Once they make a resolve they keep firm to it and even at the cost of privations, including starvation, they stick to the resolution.
6. While on strike the workers should be truthful, courageous, just and free from hatred or malice towards anybody, and should be prepared for voluntary service putting their faith in God. (Weber, 1991, pp.78-79).

10.5.1 Duties of the Workers

While Gandhi was vocal about these conditions and spoke of workers' right to strike for reasons that are genuine, he enlisted the duties of the workers and the necessity to conduct themselves in the right spirit.

- (1) If the workers wish to improve their conditions and want the goodwill of their employers, they should be honest and give up their addictions.
- (2) They should be industrious, hard working, efficient and courteous.
- (3) Carry out orders and speak with due respect not only with the employer but also with everyone else.
- (4) More important than the strike is the weapon of non-violence wherein justice for any unsettled matter may be sought from *panch* (as in the panchayat system).
- (5) In case a matter is with *panch*, during this course the workers should not continue their strike.
- (6) If any member of the Union is rude and refuses to back to work, they should cease to be the members of the Union.
- (7) Workers should not adopt coercion to concede the demands.
- (8) If a worker is unreasonable, it would only benefit the employer and not the worker as unreasonable demands do not justify strike in any form.
- (9) While a hartal may be taken up in true religious spirit, it should rule out any direct action that is damaging in nature.

10.5.2 Sympathetic Strikes

Gandhi found the sympathetic strikes to be humanitarian or political and those that are undertaken expressing sympathy for the others in need. Citing the example of the Assam-Bengal Railway and the steamer strikes, he termed it as the out of the ordinary attempt. It is necessary to gauge the pros and cons of such strikes and the consequential sufferings. He remarked in this context that the 'labourers were not ready for a

philanthropic strike. In my opinion the labourers and artisans of India have not yet arrived at that degree of national consciousness, which is necessary for successful sympathetic strike' (Young India, 22-9-1921). Gandhi was never inclined towards taking up these fasts and attributes it to the lack of our understanding regarding the wants and aspirations of these classes and our own inability to inform them of the political situation in the country. It is important not to exploit them for any ends. The best service, he said, is to 'teach them self-help, to give them an idea of their own duties and rights, and put them in a position to secure redress of their own just grievances. Then and not till then are they ready for political, national or humanitarian service' (Ibid). Secondly, as in other strikes, in sympathetic strikes Gandhi excluded the idea of causing embarrassment to the government. Sympathetic strikes have to be self-purificatory in nature and enable the wrong doer to see his folly and redress it. The merit of the sympathetic strike lies in the inconvenience and the loss suffered by the sympathizers (Ibid). These strikes should continue in spite of the threats and temptations that are held against them. The feeling of patriotism and fellow feeling is as much necessary during the conduct of these strikes.

10.6 CASE STUDIES

Here, the learner is appraised with two case studies, i.e the Ahmedabad Mill Strike of 1918 and the protest against the Rowlatt Act, which have been dealt at length in some of the previous courses.

10.6.1 Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918)

The textile mill owners and the labour force of Ahmedabad got embroiled in a dispute over the grant of a bonus ultimately boiling down to the issue of allowances. Gandhi was approached for resolution and he found it appropriate that the method of arbitration would resolve the issue. Though it was agreed upon in the beginning, the issue further escalated into a strike by the workers that deeply anguished the mill owners. On 22nd February 1918, a lock-out was declared; though Gandhi tried to prevail upon both the parties to solve the issue, it was of no avail. On disagreement over the wages, the labourers began a regular strike from 26th February. The labour adhered to an ethical code of conduct during this time. They pledged not to go for work till their demand for just wages was met; decided to observe absolute non-violence and not to create any trouble; not to indulge in looting or any bad behaviour; not to harm the property of the mill and maintain peace at all costs. Gandhi and his co-workers and supporters helped the labour by apprising them of the merits of maintaining hygiene, educated them about the issue and conducted daily meetings on the problem solving methods. Though the morale of the labour was high, the mill owners tried to thwart the workers to go further with their strike.

At this stage, Gandhi announced his decision to fast till the problem was solved. This led the mill owners to term the fast as a method of coercion; Gandhi, in the meantime, felt that fast was the only means through which he could keep the morale of the workers high. He said in this context: 'Instead of five to ten thousand blooming faces full of the lustre of iron determination, I saw but a thousand or two who seemed worn out and dejected...I am one of those who believe that one has to stick to his vow in any circumstances. I cannot even for a moment tolerate the idea that you should violate the solemn pledge you have taken. Till such time you would all get your 35 per cent increment or you are all completely defeated in your object, I am not going to touch my food nor am I riding a car'. Finally, through arbitration, the issue was resolved with the

management deciding to pay the increment of 35% to the workers. Gandhi's non-violence and his approach of no ill-will for the workers and mill owners was remarkable. His secretary Mahadev Desai noted that the 'strike was conducted with the cleanest means, on the strength of sheerest determination, and with least bitterness on both sides. The result too was beneficial to both the parties' (J.N.Sharma, p.69).

10.6.2 The Rowlatt Satyagraha

The Rowlatt Bill was the outcome of the recommendation made by the Sedition Committee presided over by Sir Rowlatt in 1918, and was prepared to strengthen the hand of the government in the control of crime and sedition. The Rowlatt Act (Govt. of India Act No XI of 1919) "was formed to enable an archical offences to be tried expeditiously before a strong court, consisting of three High Court Judges, with no right to appeal." It gave the powers of preventive detention i.e., the arrest and confinement of those suspected of acts threatening public safety, and to ask such people to abstain from any specified act. It basically bestowed with Government the emergency powers to deal with any situation viewed as subversive. Gandhi actively campaigned against its implementation traveling all over the country. He termed it as the most repressive. Gandhi mooted the idea of Hartal to protest against the Rowlatt Act on 6th April 1919. The response, undoubtedly, was widespread. Gandhi noted in his Autobiography on the beginning of the Rowlatt Satyagraha thus: "The idea came to me last night ...that we should call upon the country to observe a general hartal. Satyagraha is a process of self-purification, and ours is a sacred fight, and it seems to me to be in the fitness of things that it should be commenced with an act of self-purification. Let all the people of India, therefore, suspend their business on that day and observe the day as one of fasting and prayer. The Musalmans may not fast for more than one day; so the duration of the fast should be 24 hours. It is very difficult to say whatever all the provinces would respond to this appeal of ours or not, but I feel fairly sure of Bombay, Madras, Bihar and Sindh. I think we should have every reason to feel satisfied even if all these places observe the hartal fittingly" (Autobiography, p.383). Consequently, the whole country, with few exceptions, went on an unprecedented strike. People did not report to work, banks did not operate, public transportation came to a stand still, and so did other government offices. There was an astounding non-activity everywhere proving the effectiveness of the non-violent means. The British authorities treated this movement as "sedition". Unfortunately, even before the objectives- both short-term and long-term were accomplished, Gandhi's detention enraged the masses, that escalated towards widespread violence. Gandhi admitted his 'Himalayan Miscalculation' and realised that people were still unprepared for a non-violent movement. The hartal was thus a failure in this case and instead of leading to the repeal of the Act, it led to mass violence. He immediately suspended the movement and undertook a three-day fast as penance for the violence committed by the people. This case illustrates that the desired results of a movement need not always end up being successful. But it clearly demonstrated Gandhi's leadership acumen, his courage to take up a non-violent movement and his readiness to withdraw it in the event of violence, thus condemning violence as a means of conflict resolution.

10.7 SUMMARY

This Unit dealt with strikes/hartal as a means of non-violent conflict resolution, its meaning, methods, ethics and conditions. Unlike fasting, strike evokes a sharp response and has also an element of coercion. It is said to be one of the fastest ways of conflict resolution because of this characteristic. Nevertheless, Gandhi himself was vary of its use as it might

create a feeling of bitterness between the offending as well as defending parties to the conflict. But, applied with the right intent and will, it would yield positive results. But for a strike/hartal to be successful, it is befitting that non-violence be adhered to for greater gains and achieving the desired objectives. C.E.M. Joad, hailing Gandhi as the icon of moral force, remarked that Gandhi 'announced a method for the settlement of disputes which may not only supersede the method of force, but, as men grow more powerful in the art of destruction, must supersede it if civilization is to survive' (cited in S.Radhakrishnan, p.124). Thus, he demonstrated to the world that the power of non-violence as a method of conflict resolution is unparalleled.

10.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by strike/hartal? What are its basic precepts?
2. What are the ethics of conducting a strike? How did Gandhi envision it as a method of conflict resolution?
3. What are the conditions and code of conduct involved in the method of strike? Examine in detail.
4. Illustrate two case studies depicting the success and failure of strike as a method of conflict resolution.

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UNIT 11 DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION

Structure

- 11.1 Introduction
 - Aims and Objectives
- 11.2 Dialogue
- 11.3 Negotiation
- 11.4 Gandhi's Methods
- 11.5 Relevance of Dialogue and Negotiation
- 11.6 Summary
- 11.7 Terminal Questions
 - Suggested Readings

11.1 INTRODUCTION

In the realm of conflict resolution, Satyagraha stands tall for its espousal of non-violence. It stresses on those methods that are non-violent in nature and insists on following methods that allow the conflicting parties to amicably discuss the issue at hand rather than opting for violence to resolve it. In this context, two methods play a significant role- one, dialogue and two, negotiation. These two methods of communication intend to reduce or even mitigate the conflict to considerable extent and bring the negotiating parties together to resolve the contentious issues. We have already studied about other methods of resolution like mediation, reconciliation, adjudication and arbitration and how effective they can be in unraveling the conflict situation. Gandhi, during the years of freedom struggle, used all these methods extensively for he abhorred violence in thought, word and deed to deal with the opponents. As Weber has said, 'Gandhi was a lifelong practitioner of conducting major public conflicts and a profound conflict theorist. In short, it could be argued that Gandhi should be viewed from within conflict resolution theory, rather than being distinct from it' (Weber, 2001, p.493).

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to

- Understand the method and levels of dialogue
- Examine the negotiation process of resolving conflicts
- Analyse their relevance in the contemporary times.

11.2 DIALOGUE

Dialogue, essentially, is a conversation between two or more people. According to the Encyclopaedia of Evaluation, it is an interaction between people with different perspectives and interests who are intent on learning from one another. It can be engaged in numerous ways like conversation, debate, discussion, critique, lesson and the like. It also presumes

a certain respect for others (especially among those who may be different from each other), mutuality, honesty, and the ability to engage in critical thinking. Engaging in dialogue creates the opportunity for new understandings—the focus is on exploring others' and ones' own perspective or viewpoint. There is less agreement about whether dialogue should result in consensus or mutual deep understanding, whether of similarities or differences (see Encyclopedia of Evaluation). Dialogue can take place between two or more people, and is primarily a face-to-face interaction of the individuals. Modern technology has enabled it to take many other forms like online conferencing, collaborating and expressing views through various forums.

The encyclopedia also describes dialogue as 'a key element in a number of approaches to evaluation, including the democratic deliberative, empowerment, participatory, and critical approaches to evaluation. Dialogue in evaluation is intended to promote inclusion and understanding of stakeholders' interests. It is also understood to be an essential step in identifying issues and opportunities within a program, organization, or community that can ultimately lead to a better quality of life'. It helps in resolving long-standing contentious issues and helps dispel misgivings apart from building trust. Dialogue enables one to inquire, explore and discover others' perspective in a most constructive and non-violent manner.

Dialogue enables the stakeholders to identify, involve, be sensitive and plan to represent one's interest as well as understand the interests and intentions of the opponent groups. It should also have a degree of openness and receptiveness that is essential for both the parties. It is, as pointed out by Gergen and his associates, is critical to the success and failure of the organisations. David Bohm views it as 'a constructive endeavour in which new meaning and insight are creatively coproduced'.

Dialogue is found both in literary and philosophical genres. The dialogue introduces us to the thought process of the author who records the words between the people -living or imaginary- thus giving us an insight into the issue concerned. Dialogue also exists in the philosophical genre. It gives us an idea of particular time, period, age, people, thought, art, literature and the existing conditions of the time. This explains the philosophy of that age and people. Dialogue is said to have originated in Greece, and the historians usually attribute it as a method, which Plato introduced for a systematic use and elevated this art to its highest perfection. In essence, he can be called as the master of the art of 'dialogue'. It is to be noted that most of Plato's writings are in the form of dialogue. He used it for depicting Socrates and others as engaged in conversation, which is prominently known as Socratic method of teaching. This gained prominence as philosophical dialogue. Socrates remained the protagonist of Plato's dialogues. This form is said to have inspired others including Xenophon, Aristotle, Cicero and scholars from Hellenistic Schools who carved their own methods of dialogue. Thomas Aquinas and Augustine adopted it as philosophical format. Eminent scholars have viewed dialogue in different ways. Martin Buber sees dialogue as an effective means of on-going communication; the second Vatican Council preferred to use it for dialogue with other religions, modern society and political authorities; Paulo Freire, the eminent educationist used it as a type of classroom pedagogy; and Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian Philosopher, views dialogue as something that enables to create a new understanding of the situation that demands change. Bakhtin, in 1981, used the term 'dialogism' to interpret the approaches of the organisation (apart from the literary connotations); these include appreciative inquiry (as to what should be and what will be), dialogic communication (trying to understand better one's own position and of others), transformative dialogue (constructive and generative forms of interaction

and reconfiguring existing realities) and dialogical scripting (to form plurivocal accounts and richer insights).

In the process of dialogue, it is necessary that enough space be created for the parties to engage in conversation freely. Dialogue facilitates the process of not just talking but allows the parties to discover or empathise with the other party, which leads to the realisation that the other party too is an affected one and is seeking a meaningful solution. The purpose of a dialogue is to learn from each other. It is necessary to use appropriate language, communication methods and skills. Dialogue is not to judge in a prejudiced way but to listen with attention and respect other's opinion. If a dialogue has to be successful, it should be cautious regarding conscious or unconscious beliefs, insight, and assumptions etc. Dialogue need not always end up in a successful conclusion. It is crucial that the parties do not give way to anger, frustration or impatience during the process. It can often be marred by poor communication, rigid stance, and mutual distrust, unwarranted exercise of power, external pressure and other distracting instances.

Sometimes, dialogue is taken up by the parties, which are in asymmetrical power equations. This creates the apprehension of the powerful one gaining an upper hand and subordination of the weaker party. Therefore, it is imperative to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and democratic engagement. Another problem might be the reluctance of the parties involved in dialogue to shed their rigid stance and unwillingness to accommodate other's viewpoint. This creates an ambience that is biased rather than the one with deeper understanding and trust. Much of the success depends on the participants' ability to accommodate and respect others' views, facilitation and sharing of information, democratic and participatory approach. Dialogue is necessary for conflict resolution without whose positive involvement, a solution can never be in sight. Gergen points to its continuous relevance and momentum.

The first crisis in the process of dialogue comes when the parties involved in it come together with their own preconceived (or biased) and pent-up differences. The parties need to observe and be open to being observed, apart from reaching an understanding and come to a settlement. Peter Senge analyses it as a very crucial stage. Gradually, the members realise that they do have an option of suspending their view and adopt a flexible method. The whole process comes under intense introspection wherein members delve into the roots of the conflict. This thought usually carries the process of dialogue forward. Senge also observes that the situation may be vice versa wherein members can choose to become further rigid and diverge, and hold on to their pre-set notions and bias. This is also likely to lead to dialogue because of the 'reasoning they use to support their positions, moving to skillful discussion'. Senge analyses other stages of dialogue as instability, inquiry and finally, creativity that can generate a breakthrough in the conflict resolution.

11.3 NEGOTIATION

The Wikipedia defines negotiation as 'a dialogue intended to resolve disputes, to produce an agreement upon courses of action, to bargain for individual or collective advantage, or to craft outcomes to satisfy various interests'. According to the Dictionary of International Relations, 'negotiation is the process whereby macropolitical actors interact in order to effect a number of goals that can only, or most effectively, be realized by joint agreement'. The Encyclopedia of Law and Society defines it as 'the process of joint decision making in social interactions dealing with conflict resolution, or handling collaborative

future interaction'. Of all the methods of dispute/conflict resolution, negotiation is the most opted method for it 'allows the parties involved to resolve their differences without any third-party intervention, to manage the decision-making process and to control the outcome'. As Thomas Weber puts it, 'negotiation is a search for an outcome that is adequately suitable to both parties, but unlike mediation, the dispute is settled bilaterally, that is, the two parties are themselves the decision makers' (Conflict Resolution and Gandhian Ethics, 1991, p.22). The parties to negotiation can identify a common interest and can attain it by joining together and a complimentary interest in an exchange of different objects, which they can grant to each other.

Negotiations allow the parties to engage in constructive interaction and to improve their conditions. Since there is no appropriate, or procedural system, the parties usually work outside the system to work out better ways to settle as to what each party can give and take, and is willing to execute and obtain. It is necessary for the parties to recognise the need to secure mutual interdependence. Negotiation is supposed to be the most informal, and flexible of the methods available for conflict resolution. Negotiations have the advantage over the other methods of dispute settlement in that they are most likely to effect lasting resolution to conflict as well as reduce dependence on "experts" thereby making the parties self-reliant, giving them control over important decisions that need to be made concerning their own lives (Weber, p.22).

Negotiations take place at interpersonal, interstate and intergovernmental level apart from managing labour-management disputes. Some of the social theorists consider negotiation as 'any interpersonal communication that seeks to present the self' in the context of numerous social relationships and interdependencies. Negotiations may take place at an informal level i.e., among individuals and within groups such as families, firms, tribes, religious groups, or nations. Negotiations offer the opportunity for personal growth by exposing each party to the views of the other, providing a situation for learning- the decision being "the culmination of an interactive process of information exchange". This prevents personal, and in the long term and on a larger scale, social and national stagnation- when an agreement between the parties is reached "the position of each has been subtly changed not only by terms offered, but by its experience of the other and exposure to the other's persuasion" (cit in Weber, p.23).

There are different approaches to negotiation that also include Distributive (Adversarial) and Cooperative (Integrative) approaches. The earliest theories of negotiation focused on the distributive approach in which each party is trying to win as in a contest (Schelling, 1960). These emphasised looking into the strategies used by the parties to maximise their share of the resources in dispute, to minimise losses, and to achieve dominance. The cooperative approach emphasises on creating a cooperative atmosphere as against a competitive and individualistic one. It was developed during the Cold War years, in 1980s, and insisted on cooperative activity. The parties see themselves as 'collaborative problem solvers and principled negotiators'. The term 'integrative bargaining' emerged to symbolise the 'cooperative, collaborative, win-win, or problem solving', and takes the parties' goals are not mutually exclusive but those which both the sides can amicably achieve.

The advocacy approach involves the services of a skilled negotiator to advocate for a particular party and bring out the most favourable outcomes. The negotiator moves with caution wherein the favourable outcome does not make the other party break off from negotiations regarding the outcomes. The creative approach involves constructive talks

between the parties, exchange of information and interests that further lead to innovative ways of solving the problem. The pre-negotiation preparations, flow of information, understanding and seeking solutions, evolving new methods in negotiation- all contribute to creative approach. Shell R.G. in 'Bargaining for Advantage' (2006) identified five styles or responses to negotiation (prone to change as and when necessary) that are crucial- accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, competing and compromising.

Negotiation involves three basic elements: (1) process: refers to how the parties negotiate, context, parties, tactics, sequences and stages; (2) behaviour: communication methods involved, skills and styles; (3) substance: agenda, issues and interests, options and agreements. Other elements are added to this that comprise of strategy, tools and tactics. The first comprises goals, and final outcome; the second comprises the steps to be followed, role of the parties and preparation; and the third comprises statements, actions and responses. The recent additions have been the factors like 'persuasion and influence' that play a prominent role in swinging the fortunes of the parties involved. Two norms operate in the process of negotiations (1) the parties want to induce the opponent to reciprocate (though not mandatory) and (2) they want to facilitate agreement.

Roger Fisher and William Ury, in their work 'Getting to YES', suggested that the negotiations be based on the following four principles:

1. Separate the people from the problem. They advised negotiators to be soft on the people and hard on the problem, to depersonalize, save face, and maintain the relationship.
2. Focus on interests, not positions. The antifoundational assumption of the principled negotiation approach is that positions in negotiation veil its true movers or interests—that is, needs, desires, concerns, and fears. Later approaches differentiated between types of interests, some focusing on needs and values as the key for understanding interests.
3. Invent options for mutual gains. Keeping a collaborative, respectful atmosphere enables parties to brainstorm and generate creative options. Other scholars noted that the parties should work on their differences, avoid making premature judgments or fixating on one solution to expand the pie, create alternatives, and construct a "bridge solution" to the problems they encounter.
4. Insist on using objective criteria. This latter principle involves choosing between the options and regulating the negotiation by the parties' own agreement. They can choose a standard of fairness, efficiency, science, and even law, and avoid the dominance battle.

(Source: Encyclopedia of Law and Society).

The effects of negotiations can be both positive and negative. Before we discuss this, it is important to note that emotions play an important role in the negotiation process. The positive aspects include developing confidence, using cooperative strategy, less contentious and aggressive behaviour, enhancing the integrative gains, tendency to honour the agreements, flexible attitude, respect and tolerance towards others, reposing faith and confidence in the other party, and commitment to carry the negotiations forward with positive approach. The negative effects comprise of anger, less cooperation, distrust, narrowed focus on issues, rigid attitude, and use of negative communication skills, clouding the other party's judgement and commitment and developing unwarranted hostility. These can mar the

negotiations and lead the parties to reject each other's propositions and finally end in the failure of negotiations. In this context, it is important to note that compromise is an essential characteristic of negotiations. Reaching an agreement is essential for the parties involved. For this, sometimes, the goal evaluation is necessary wherein the goals are much more modest; settlement of such goals often proves to be satisfactory to the parties in negotiation.

The following strategies should be kept in view by the parties before initiating negotiations:

- identify the common problems,
- find a mutually accepted definition to the problems and for framing it,
- determine the goals and objectives of the process and create a mutually accepted plan of the negotiation's agenda, procedures, and setting,
- evaluate and prioritize one's goals and possible payoffs, including identifying one's best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA),
- agree on the order in which the issues should be discussed,
- keep awareness of the concerns, fears, and positions that lie beneath the interests of self and the other since their interrelation is a pathway to the solution,
- determine the zone of possible agreement (ZOPA) between the least and most-favorable solutions,
- identify the other's emphasized issues,
- identify points where issues could be packaged,
- develop and locate supporting facts and arguments to one's views and anticipate counterarguments the other side might present, and
- try to find out about the other's interests, alternatives, personal negotiation style, and approach to negotiation.

(Source: Encyclopedia of Law and Society)

The most important factor is the understanding of cultural differences involved. The factors are language, values, non-verbal behaviour and thinking and decision-making processes. Unfamiliarity with these is likely to create misunderstanding and trust deficit. Sometimes, even the managerial values lead to misconceptions. For example, objectivity, competitiveness, equality and punctuality- the factors that are most valued by Americans is likely to be unappreciated by others. The success or failure of negotiations depends mostly on the perceptions of the negotiators. One most important factor is the background of the traditional relationship between the countries. In case of traditional positive and friendly relations, the negotiating parties are likely to be more accommodating, and offer concessions while in parties with traditionally hostile relations, they are likely to be more rigid and adamant to give concessions or even dishonour commitments. While bilateral negotiations can be manageable, the multilateral negotiations may turn out to be otherwise, except that all parties are equally represented. It is said that there is thin line between enmity and amity in the process of negotiations. During negotiations, the use of force should be controlled or prohibited altogether, for they send positive signals to the parties. As pointed by Kenneth Boulding, all parties must appreciate that the price of continued conflict is

higher than the costs of reducing demands. The onus lies on the parties involved to bring about amicable solutions.

11.4 GANDHI'S METHODS

Gandhi's non-violent methods had a telling effect on the masses during the freedom struggle. The effect was equally impressive on the British government that ruled the country. Gandhi was ready to investigate into the roots of the problem wherever it existed, petition, negotiate, arbitrate, mediate and engage in dialogue where necessary. He left no stone unturned before launching his mass Satyagraha movements or individual initiatives like fasting. Except for the non-cooperation movement where the masses turned violent, most of the cases taken up by Gandhi for dispute settlement with the government turned out to be successful though there are criticisms regarding the elements of coercion. Dialogue and negotiations were taken up in most of the cases like Ahmedabad Labour Strike, the Champaran Movement, Bardoli Satyagraha, Gandhi-Irwin Pact and Poona Pact concluded between Gandhi and Ambedkar. Since the details regarding the above cases have already been discussed in previous Courses and Units, the details are not being discussed here to avoid repetition. As Weber said, 'Gandhi's well-publicized examples of nonviolent resistance and the voluminous writings on his techniques at least set the tone for the later development and phenomenal growth of conflict resolution literature in the guise of modern problem-solving and win-win (as opposed to power-based and zero-sum) approaches leading to integrative conflict resolution (as opposed to mere compromise and distributive outcomes)' (in Journal of Peace Research, 2001, p.493).

Gandhi was conscious of the difference between evil and evil-doer. Thus, he did warn his satyagrahis not to commit the mistake of hating those involved as the other party in conflict but abhor the sin that is committed by the persons involved. Gandhi's Satyagraha, thus, is a crucial method of conducting conflict apart from its goal of resolving it. Gandhi set the goals and the code of conduct in conflicts (what to achieve in the process of resolving a conflict and how to conduct oneself, i.e., not to hurt the opponent); defined the conflict (what the problem is about, views of both the parties and their goals); had a positive approach towards conflict (by taking it as opportunity to resolve long-standing issues, know the opponent's viewpoint, change the situation to better one's and other's condition); act non-violently in conflicts (adhere to non-violent methods, not to hurt or humiliate opponent); willingness to sacrifice and inflict self-suffering (as in fasting); to act in goal-consistent manner (for example, take up constructive work for positive transformation) and not to escalate the conflict (by indulging in violence and other deviating methods that are inconsistent with non-violence). Gandhi insisted on converting the opponent through Satyagraha, law of love and ahimsa instead of imposing coercion. Gandhi insisted on the right means and ends concept; therefore if the conflict is to be resolved (the end), it should be done so non-violently (the means). This, to him, was the goal to reach and realise the ultimate truth.

11.5 RELEVANCE OF DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION

The contemporary world has been witnessing wars of all sorts as it did in the 19th and 20th centuries. The war-torn and Cold War years have given way to a multipolar (or unipolar as some would call it) world where there are pertinent dangers of poverty, displacement, ethnic conflicts, environmental problems and terrorism. Often, the conflicts

are being handled through military violence (as in armed intervention) and through other forms (like imposing embargoes, economic sanctions) that hurt the people directly and indirectly. With migration of people to different parts of the world, multiculturalism is on rise. This, sometimes, is leading to the clashes in cultural values and perceptions and distrust. Under these circumstances, the solutions are being sought but not via non-violent methods. For peaceful existence of different cultures and people, dialogue is an essential feature. Thus there have come up forums promoting inter-faith or inter-religious dialogues. These are promising in nature though the visible evidence regarding its effectiveness is yet to emerge. Similarly, territorial/boundary disputes or economic disputes are on the rise. Though dialogue or negotiations are going on, these are marred by traditional/historical record of distrust and disharmony. The capacity to understand the opponent and engage in constructive one-to-one talk is waning. The rising violent incidents are adding to the existing conflicts thereby leaving no scope for dialogue and negotiation. Unless there is a massive change in the mindsets and strategies of the parties, the solutions seem to be unresolved. In the interest of mankind and in the interest of promoting world peace and order, it is imperative that non-violent methods are taken up. To repeat what Kenneth Boulding said, it is much costlier to handle an escalated conflict. The best possible solutions can be brought about through non-violent methods that impose no costs at all.

11.6 SUMMARY

Dialogue and negotiation constitute the non-violent methods of conflict resolution. They help in resolving the conflicts in an amicable manner and in understanding one's and other's position in a constructive manner. Both the methods help in forwarding one's interests; at the same time they give us an insight into others' problems. The resolutions are aimed through integrative approach, increased awareness about other's culture and values apart from constructive approach towards achieving cordial gains. It would also help in forging harmonious relations between parties or nations in order to work for a better and peaceful order in the world.

11.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by dialogue? Trace its origins and advantages.
2. Define the concept of negotiation. Analyse its principles and strategies.
3. Write short notes on:
 - a) Gandhi's methods of non-violent conflict resolution
 - b) Relevance of dialogue and negotiation in the contemporary world.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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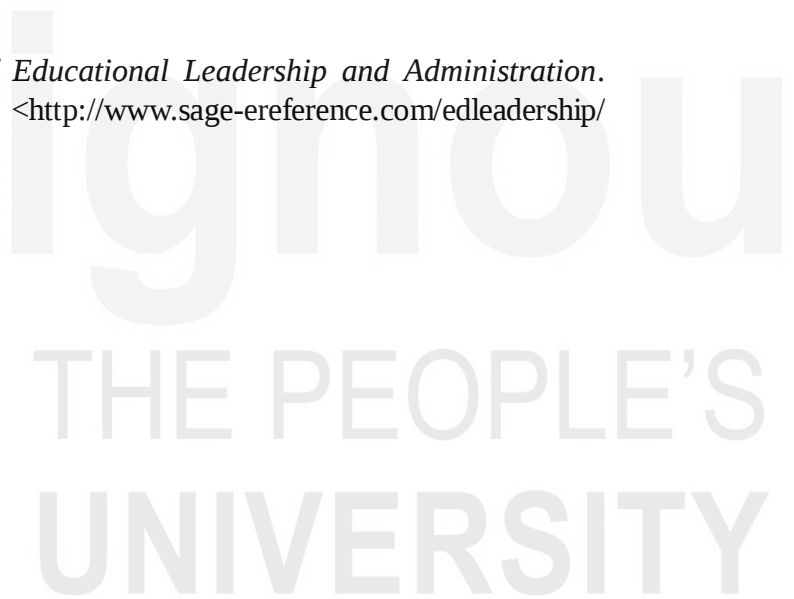
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UNIT 12 MEDIATION AND RECONCILIATION

Structure

12.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

12.2 Gandhi on Violence, Conflict and Conflict Resolution

12.3 The Concept of Mediation

12.4 Reconciliation

12.5 The Idea of Shanti Sena

12.6 Summary

12.7 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The term conflict is understood as any situation, event, or opinion in an inter-personal or other relations where there is more than one position and these are at variance with one another. When these variant positions are made to coexist within the same social matrix, conflict occurs. Thus, conflict is a process of rearrangement of variant positions to enable them to resolve differences and attempt coexistence. Conflict is seen, witnessed or experienced in every society at one point of time or the other but it is imperative that such a conflict is brought to an end if a society has to rejuvenate itself, flourish and survive peacefully thereafter. One must also understand that conflict is not *inherently* adverse or unhealthy; it can be a productive occurrence and it can rather help a society to reinvent itself and learn to coexist peacefully. Conflict lends dynamism to a situation that allows for a dialogue and reconsideration of existing situation and a possible rearrangement of interpersonal or international relations. Every society goes through a process of social and political churning whenever internal and external situations warrant it. It is an inevitable part of the process of social development and change. Lewis Coser and Ralf Dahrendorf propose in their conflict theory that conflict can be used to resolve social tensions and maintain interpersonal relations. For them, conflict is a natural manifestation of social change because in this process some groups benefit more than the rest. Resolution of tensions through the use of conflict is more desirable than prolonging the differences. Such resolution of conflict is particularly marked in pluralistic, open societies as it provides avenues for citizens to challenge the established norms and institutions.

Conflicts can be violent and non-violent, armed resistance or peaceful opposition. Whatever is the nature of conflict, while it is desirable to bring an end to the conflicts amicably and early, some conflicts are less amenable to resolution than others. Protracted conflicts elude solutions because of various factors such as complex and competing issues involved, divergent opinion on the possible solution, different methods adopted by the main actors, and a general lack of concert of interests in favour of a solution. Since all conflicts cannot be successfully resolved one way or the other, some conflicts and disputes have to be lived with. However, even as some conflicts are difficult to resolve,

they must however be contained to a level that does not endanger human life and social existence in general.

In this unit we will look at the concept of *mediation* and *reconciliation* as tools of conflict resolution, and their application by Gandhi in his efforts to resolve conflicts. While both mediation and reconciliation are important for conflict resolution, they are employed at different stages of conflict. Mediation is a method of peaceful resolution that is used to bring about a solution to an on-going conflict. Reconciliation, on the other hand, is a process of coming to terms with the reality at the end of the conflict and of preparing oneself for a renewed coexistence with other groups. Usually, mediation as a procedure comes into prominence **during** a conflict when parties try to seek a way out of an imbroglio; reconciliation is a process that normally comes into effect **after** a conflict has come to an end to heal the wounds and help a community to march on with life.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit will help you to understand

- Gandhi's position of conflict and conflict resolution;
- the concept of mediation and its utility in conflict resolution;
- the features and facets of reconciliation;
- the practice of peaceful conflict resolution through satyagraha and Shanti Sena; and
- the means and application of mediation and reconciliation by Gandhi.

12.2 GANDHI ON VIOLENCE, CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Gandhi's position on violence and conflict appears ambivalent on the face of it but a deeper inquiry shows that he had a considered opinion on both conflict and violence. While he unequivocally advocated non-violent resistance as a means of achieving resolution of conflict, he did believe that there might be situations in public life where violence cannot be wished away. Although he believed that violence thrives on counter-violence and begets the violent result that does no one good, he was not averse to the use of violence *if* the choice was *only* between violence and cowardice. It was better to wage a just war, take recourse to violence or use arms to safeguard one's people than be seen as coward and incapable of defending one's subjects. It is in this context that Gandhi supports war as a legitimate or just war if it is to save the annihilation of one's race. When Gandhi was fatally assaulted in 1908, his eldest son, Harilal Gandhi, asked him what was the right course of action he should have taken, 'whether he should have run away and seen his father killed or whether he should have used the physical force' to defend Gandhi, the father replied that 'it was his (Harilal's) duty to defend me even by using violence' (Weber, p.62). However, while practising satyagraha, Gandhi felt that it had to be employed at every level by those wanting to succeed in it. It had to be practised by applying it in everyday situations and in the larger social and political context. He added that 'he who fails to apply in the domestic sphere and seeks to apply it only in the political and social sphere will not succeed' (Weber, p.62). Gandhi does not take extreme or unqualified position on his opposition to war or support for non-violence.

The Gandhian notion of conflict and the method of its resolution i.e., satyagraha, is

premised on such sound beliefs as ahimsa, truth and moral conviction. Satyagraha is Gandhi's articulation of conflict resolution. He held that hatred, fear, anger and cowardice lead to conflict. In order to be able to rid the society of conflict, one must first resolve conflict at the individual level. There is no redemption from social conflict unless the individual is at peace with his own self and can see his social goals clearly. The individual must seek both emancipation of the self and the opponent. The idea was to eliminate the evil and not the evil-doer. The intention of a satyagrahi is never to embarrass the wrong doer; his object 'is to convert, not coerce, the wrong doer' (Gandhi cited in Weber, 2006, pp.145-6). For him, the notion of mediation is not merely a procedural intervention of a third actor; it is the spiritual mediation powered by non-violence and self-introspection for the ultimate realisation of truth. Gandhi is more concerned about 'the processes of conflict [and its resolution] rather than the substance' (Weber, p.13) or the types of conflict. Gandhi seeks to apply satyagraha as a means of conflict resolution at the level of the individual, community, society and the world outside.

Insofar as the means of resolution of the conflict is concerned, Gandhi was unwavering in his conviction that coercion of any kind was to be avoided. There are some (e.g., Bondurant, 1967; Case, 1923) who argue that Gandhi's practice of non-violence and fasting were coercive in essence in forcing the opponent into submission. Gandhi's decision to undertake fast during the Ahmedabad mill workers' strike discussed later in this unit was construed to be so, although Gandhi himself acknowledges that he allowed the mill owners to stick to their reasoning so that his fast should not be seen as a pressure tactic. In fact, Case asserts that 'satyagraha is explicitly *nonviolent* and implicitly *coercive*' but Gandhi understood it as a means of arriving at truth and deciding on the right course of action, and not as a weapon of coercion (Case cited in Weber, p.57). Every means employed to the resolution of conflict had to be necessarily **peaceful, non-violent, non-coercive**, leading to the **realisation of truth**.

12.3 THE CONCEPT OF MEDIATION

Mediation as a method and approach to peaceful resolution of conflict is characterised by the participation of a third party in the negotiations besides the directly concerned parties. When parties to the conflict are either not agreeing to talk to each other or where negotiations fail to lead to a common ground, mediation is used to make headway in the negotiations. The mediator acts as a neutral third party to promote settlement without judging the merit of a case on either side. Such a mediator is a person or a group of persons who is impartial and trusted by all the parties to the conflict. The mediating party takes the thread of negotiations in its own hands and acts as a channel of communication between the conflicting sides.

Once a mediator has been identified, the process consists of actual transmission of suggestions and solutions to the parties concerned. However, there is no compulsion that the parties must accept the solutions presented by the mediating side. It is this nature of voluntary acceptance of a solution and the cooperation of the parties to a conflict that makes mediation a peaceful process, devoid of any coercion.

In order for mediation to be successful, two conditions are essential. Firstly, the mediator should be well informed about the problem at hand and should be able to project a neutral and an impartial image. If not, the mediator always runs the risk of alienating one or the other party. Such discontentment often acts as a hurdle in successful mediation when one of the parties is reluctant to accept the compromise solution. Secondly, both

the parties should be willing to resort to mediation and the mediator should be acceptable to them. The consent to mediation and the confidence reposed by the conflicting parties in the mediator is crucial for the successful settlement of a conflict. Any deficit in trust, impartiality and confidence may jeopardise the process of mediation.

Gandhi attempted to practise non-violence through mediation wherever it was required. Although he was not always successful, he persisted with his efforts again and again. He firmly held that non-violence never begot defeat; the inability to achieve the desired result is because of the lack of perfection in practising satyagraha. The first trace of mediation efforts by Gandhi is seen in his twenty years of life in South Africa. As a lawyer, he was bound to resolve the disputes through persuasive arguments in the court but he realised soon enough that it was possible and desirable to bring about private compromises and avoid the acrimony and defeat in an adversarial situation like litigation. His first instance in mediation was a case involving Dada Abdullah Sheth and Sheth Tyeb Haji Khan Mohammed. There are many such instances where he successfully brought about reconciliation (Bhaskaran, pp.430-431).

There are two instances of conflict in India in the early years of Gandhi's political life where he is said to have resorted to mediation between two conflicting parties. One was the conflict relating to farmers in Champaran in 1917 and the other was the conflict between the labourers and mill owners at Ahmedabad in 1918.

The strike by the Ahmedabad mill workers was one of the first instances where Gandhi used strike, fasting and mediation as the methods of conflict resolution. When Gandhi initially received information about the workers' unrest at the textile mill, his opinion was that the case of the mill workers was strong. However, his own position was awkward because the main mill owner was his friend. He advised the mill owners to submit the dispute to arbitration but they refused. Then he advised the labourers to go on strike because he felt that they were perfectly in their right to do so in the face of mill owners' intransigence. Strike was also a peaceful form of protest when labourers had no other means of pressing for their demands. Gandhi himself joined the strike, attended the meetings and the mill workers every evening and took a **pledge** from them that they will not return to work until either their demands were met or the mill owners agreed to resort to arbitration. The strike continued successfully for a fortnight but thereafter the workers became anxious and showed signs of restlessness and anger. It was difficult to maintain the protest as a peaceful one and channelise the energies of the workers into fruitful and gainful engagement. In this whole process of being a part of the conflict, Gandhi reflects on the dilemmas and consternation faced by the mediator himself thus: 'The mill-hands had taken the pledge at my suggestion. They had repeated it before me day after day, and the very idea that they might now go back upon it was to me inconceivable. Was it pride or was it my love for the labourers and my passionate regard for truth that was at the back of this feeling—who can say?' (Jack, p.155). In order to resurrect a flagging strike, Gandhi decided to go on fast 'unless the strikers rally and continue the strike till a settlement is reached, or till they leave the mills altogether'.

Gandhi's dilemma was once again in attendance on his decision to go on strike since he 'enjoyed very close and cordial relations with the mill owners,' and his fast could have affected their position and decision on the dispute. On the face of it, it appeared that the fast was *against* the millowners but as a satyagrahi- in search of truth- Gandhi was certain that this was the only right course of action to induce the labourers to continue a non-violent protest that was agreed upon. He confessed that his 'fast was undertaken

not on account of a lapse of the mill owners, but on account that of the labourers' in which he had a share. 'With mill owners, I could only plead; to fast against them would amount to coercion. Yet...I felt I could not help it' (Jack, p.156). The net result of Gandhi's cordial relations with both the disputants (the mill owners and the labourers), a non-violent strike coupled with the conviction that the mill hands were justified in their demand, and the eventual decision to fast in order to keep the labourers on strike from becoming violent and unruly, led to the creation of an atmosphere of goodwill and understanding that paved the way for the resolution of conflict. The mill owners agreed to submit the dispute to arbitration and the strike was called off within only three days of fasting.

What is instructing in this episode is that although Gandhi could have taken up the case as litigation, he decided to initiate a form of peaceful protest as a means of resolving the conflict. Secondly, he decided to support the position of the labourers because he was convinced that labourers had genuine concerns in spite of the fact that one of the mill owners was his acquaintance. Thirdly, Gandhi believed that such change of heart and a climb down from their position (mill owners) was made possible in this case because the path of satyagraha and non-violence touched the hearts of the mill owners. They were equally keen to resolve the conflict and set about discovering some means for a settlement.

12.4 RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation as a concept is part of the process of rebuilding peace after the conflict has come to an end or when has been brought down to manageable levels. Every conflict passes through two stages. The first one is the process of *conflict management* that is effected through such methods as negotiation, mediation, dialogue, arbitration, etc. The second stage involves reconciliation when the *conflict* has been *resolved*. Reconciliation is a challenging process because the entire process of peace building is hinged on it. It has a dual role to play in the resolution of conflict: one, successful conflict resolution is, in the *immediate sense*, premised on reconciliation; second, it prepares the conflicting communities to *eventually* coexist with each other and thus acts as the ultimate basis for lasting peace.

Reconciliation requires developing a web of peaceful relationships between the communities and a change in socio-psychological and emotional outlook towards each other. This in turn is an uphill task when the communities have seen conflict for an extended period of time coupled with a general lack of confidence in the other group's intentions. It requires a tremendous leap of faith and belief to find emotional connection in each other so as to counter the trust deficit and renew efforts towards coexistence. Many a time, successful peace agreements have failed to establish lasting peace or to sustain negotiated solution in the absence of genuine reconciliation on the part of the communities. This is so because the peace agreements or blueprints for resolving the conflicts are negotiated by the leaders and political representatives of the warring factions but reconciliation depends on the active involvement of people and their perception about the other community. When there is incongruence between the popular perception of a conflict and the political calculations of the leaders involved in negotiations for its resolution, it is unlikely that the conflict will be successfully put to an end without effecting a change in that popular perception. Sometimes structural mechanisms for reconciliation are woven into peace agreements by way of creating interdependencies, linkages, affinities and other channels of interaction to

create conducive atmosphere for mutual respect and understanding but there is no guarantee that such structures and mechanisms will necessarily bring about a change in popular perception and orientation towards each other (Bar-Tal, p.365). Thus, no matter how successfully peace has been negotiated, reconciliation is a necessary and inevitable process to sustain that negotiated peace. James Baker, the former US Secretary of State, once famously stated that no amount of 'international conciliation can replace national reconciliation' in bringing about lasting peace.

The process of reconciliation, by definition, is a gradual, reciprocal and voluntary one. It must involve respect for, forgiveness towards, and appreciation of the rival group and its socio-political position. Although it is extremely difficult to countenance such dramatic turn around in one's perception, it is commonly held that transition and acceptance of a group from rival to a legitimate partner and stakeholder in peace is necessary for reconciliation. Intra-social reconciliation must be based on four elements: *truth, regard, justice and peace*. Truth involves 'open revelation of the past, including admission, acknowledgement and transparency'; regard is a term used by Kriesberg to denote acceptance, forgiveness, and compassion; justice 'requires rectification, restitution, compensation and social restructuring'; and peace (or security in Kriesberg's view) calls for building 'common future, cooperation, coordination, well-being, harmony...and security for all the parties' (Lederach and Kriesberg quoted in Bar-Tal, pp.366-67). Influenced by this understanding of reconciliation and Gandhi's emphasis on spiritual aspect of it, the South African Commission was named as Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Social reconciliation is contingent upon many factors such as the perceptions of the incumbent leaders and the members of the community, levels of social cohesiveness, the ability of everyone to enmesh in the local cultural matrix (if it is an intra-community conflict), and traditional, emotional ties shared by a community. Social group as a repository of cohesive identity and cultural values gets disintegrated when dissimilar attitudes are made to coexist. Traditional values are sacrificed out of sheer necessity and desperation to survive in hostile conditions. Moreover, retrieving one's sense of self-esteem and emotional fabric is an arduous task for those who have seen conflict for too long. They tend to suffer from a sense of helplessness and seething anger at being forced to endure conflict. The problem gets amplified when an entire community shares such emotional attributes of anger, helplessness and retribution and continues to live with ruptured emotional balance and a deep sense of loss. These grievances must be known, acknowledged and redressed to the extent possible by those involved in conflict resolution. Since a conflict is rarely one-sided, its resolution requires forgiveness and healing on the part all those involved in it.

Usually reconciliation is understood in Western-Christian religious-cultural context. However, in Da Silva's view, 'Gandhi's satyagraha (truth force) is an Eastern articulation of reconciliation. [Satyagraha] sustains and drives nonviolent behaviours, which are expressions of forgiveness and reaching out to the other. Nonviolence is implied in forgiveness, since we cannot be violent and promote reconciliation at the same time. Reconciliation through nonviolence has much in common with the four dimensions of forgiveness, namely, moral judgment, forbearance, empathy, and repairing of broken relationships. The assumption of human interdependence that underlies *ahimsa* is also an important part of the reconciliation process that seeks to bring together the perpetrator, the victim, and the community through restorative justice' (Da Silva's views cited in Meiring, p.1395).

During the 1940s, until his death in 1948, Gandhi devoted much of his time and energies to Hindu-Muslim reconciliation in which Shanti Sena also had a major role (see the following section 12.5). He famously stated that '[a] bullet destroys the enemy; non-violence converts the enemy into a friend', and has the ability to change the heart of even a hardcore fanatic. The last months of his life were spent in bringing about reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims in Noakhali, Bihar and Calcutta that had seen worst riots following the partition of the country. He travelled from village to village, accepted hospitality of Muslim families and addressed gatherings in the evenings in an effort to bring peace to the troubled communities. An incident that took place on 31 August 1947 in which a mob of unruly rioters arrived at his place and attacked him but the blow narrowly missed Gandhi. It made him realise that his efforts at resolving the differences had not been entirely successful. He undertook fast unto death on the following morning that continued for the next three days. That fast brought peace to the neighbourhood and forced leaders of rioting mobs, hooligans, representatives of communities and every conceivable group to rally around Gandhi and take a written pledge that there would not be communal tension in the area. Thereafter, communal disturbances occurred in many other parts of the country but Bengal remained largely peaceful. Gandhi was ready to forgive and condone those who had killed others, even those who were not clear of blood on their hands, if they owned up to their crime and if there was a true repentance.

12.5 THE IDEA OF SHANTI SENA

Gandhi tried to develop alternative structures of conflict resolution to help sustain the idea of satyagraha in action. Shanti Sena is one such structure of non-violence. Gandhi's idea of Shanti Sena is important here both as a means of peaceful resistance as well as a method of achieving reconciliation in the society when it is torn by conflict. The earliest experiments in evolving the idea of Shanti Sena can be deduced from the peace march he held in Transvaal in October 1913 and the establishment of Tolstoy farm to rehabilitate the satyagrahi families in 1910 in South Africa. In India, his efforts in resolving the issue of Champaran agriculturists and Ahmedabad mill workers (both in 1917) are in the same league (Bhaskaran, p.431). The idea of Shanti Sena as a band of volunteers germinated during the communal riots in 1921 but it could not be brought to fruition then. It was organised much later in 1947.

He believed that just as there is an army to wage war, there must also be dedicated soldiers of peace and non-violence to hold the weave of social fabric together. The concept of Shanti Sena has been variously translated as *peace brigade*, *peace army*, *shanti dal* and *soldiers of peace* to denote a group of volunteers who are practitioners of non-violence and are soldiers aiming to resolve *social conflicts* peacefully.

The Shanti Sainiks, as essential satyagrahis, must believe in fundamental concepts of satyagraha, which were: 'faith in human goodness, truth, non-violence, creative self-suffering, means and ends, rejection of coercion, and fearlessness' (Weber, pp. 41-59). While these are the concepts in which Shanti Sainiks must believe, there are yet other principles, which they must ideally try to follow. The five guiding principles are search for truth, stopping and preventing direct violence, removing structural violence, nonviolent ethics and values, and self-realisation leading to inner peace. Since these guiding principles are difficult to follow in their entirety, Gandhi believed that they must abide by as many principles as they can while endeavouring to imbibe and emulate all of them. In Gandhi's philosophy, as in his strategy, perfection must be aimed for and attained through constant

efforts; but lack of perfection need not lead to forsaking that effort altogether. He said that Shanti Sena cannot always consist of 'perfectly nonviolent people. It will be formed of those who will honestly endeavour to observe nonviolence' (Cited in Bhaskaran, p.431).

The first guiding principle of search for truth has been discussed before in the unit on Truth is God (Unit 8 in Course 3). The second principle that believes in stopping and preventing direct violence involves the mechanisms of peaceful conflict resolution such as negotiation, mediation, dialogue, arbitration, and others. A

Shanti Sainik must know to employ these methods skillfully as also to try and pre-empt the reasons that lead to conflict in the first place, such as structural violence. Structural violence is understood as the prevalence of inequality, exploitation, injustice or any form of discrimination like the system of untouchability that is the breeding ground for violence. It is the duty of the Shanti Sena to eliminate such structures of violence so that social cohesion can be established. The fourth principle of nonviolent ethics and values has to be followed all along, even in the face of conflict. A Shanti Sainik must only offer peaceful resistance without resorting to violent counter attack; he should prefer to die rather than kill others.

It is pertinent to note here that Shanti Sena was predominantly meant for resolving social conflicts such as communal riots and caste conflicts *within* a country although he did envisage its larger role as a substitute for police and eventually even the army. Though the latter part of his dream was difficult to be realised within his lifetime or thereafter, Shanti Sena (with a band of 79 volunteers) did play a major role in dousing the flames of communal conflict in the aftermath of the partition and the riots that followed in Noakhali, Calcutta and other parts of Bengal in 1947. Thus, Shanti Sena was to act as a neutral mediator of peace during a conflict as also to act as a healer in the process of reconciliation and coexistence in the aftermath of violence. It was a useful idea at every stage of the conflict resolution even while following the avowed principle of non-violence.

This context and original mandate of Shanti Sena was not appreciated in right perspective in the post-independence period by Gandhi's followers. Two reasons can be ascribed for this loss of direction. Firstly, Gandhi was assassinated within months of successfully resolving the communal tension at Noakhali where Shanti Sena had been an active agent of restoring peace. It was robbed of the vision and guidance that Gandhi could have offered for its larger role in national and international affairs. Secondly, there were competing opinions about the role of Shanti Sena among the followers of Gandhi in the post-independence period. While one section led by Jayaprakash Narayan assumed the position that it should replace the army and fight the armed soldiers of China through peaceful resistance, the other opinion held by Vinoba Bhave understood its role more moderately as that of working towards rural reconstruction and building a peaceful society, free from internal conflicts (Weber, 2006, pp.236-238 and Upadhyaya, p.75). Shanti Sena became a splintered group torn between these two competing positions.

12.6 SUMMARY

Conflict is seen, witnessed or experienced in every society but it must be contained at a level that enables a society to survive peacefully. All conflicts are not bad. In fact, some conflicts allow the differences in society to come to the fore and seek their resolution. It is an inevitable part of the process of social development and change. If conflict is a

pervasive phenomenon, methods and means will have to be devised for its peaceful resolution. In India, Gandhi stressed on peaceful means of resolving conflicts through satyagraha, ahimsa, Shanti Sena, spiritual and social reconciliation through forgiveness and penance. Mediation is one such means of peaceful resolution where intervention by a third party attempts to find a solution to a dispute while circumscribing the adversarial behaviour of the disputants. Gandhi believed in values like truth, non-violence, non-cooperation, satyagraha, forgiveness, inner purification as the mediating forces to bring about a change of heart in the opponent for effective and lasting resolution of a conflict.

Amicable resolution of conflict creates a positive atmosphere for reconciliation and the resolve among all parties to the conflict to make a fresh beginning. It holds a better promise for peace than military victory since it is perceived as a victory of *all* rather than *a* party to the conflict. For Gandhi, moral and spiritual aspect of the resolution of a conflict as reflected in genuine reconciliation was more important than external structures of peace. Therefore, Shanti Sena was his attempt to build a structure of conflict resolution to put his idea of non-violence and peace into practice. The test of a good resolution of conflict lies in retaining cooperation of all parties, after having addressed the historical realities, a sense of justice for all and a genuine effort at reconciliation.

12.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Elucidate the term conflict and discuss Gandhi's views on violence and conflict.
 2. Examine the features of mediation citing examples of its application by Gandhi.
 3. What do you understand by the concept of reconciliation?
 4. What are the factors that contribute to the success of mediation and reconciliation?
 5. Discuss the idea of Shanti Sena and its role in conflict resolution.
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