

## **Legitimate Social Change and Metaphysical Nonviolence**

N. Wijegoonawardana  
University of Colombo  
Sri Lanka

### **Abstract**

This paper is intended to elucidate how Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence influenced and contributed to developed 21<sup>st</sup> century theories of legitimate social change. Gandhi's philosophy is understood as a maximal and universal rejection of violence and war. His influence on Western thought is most often represented by Martin Luther King Jr.'s Christian appropriation of Gandhi to support the Civil Rights Movement. As Martin Luther King Jr. puts this, "unearned suffering is redemptive" (King 1986, 18). Recent history suggests that nonviolence has the power to even overthrow dictators, most clearly in how Cardinal Jaime Sin and Catholic nuns helped organize Filipino people to stand up to dictator Ferdinand Marcos' army in the 1980's. Gandhi's influence in terms of political strategies that do not need a metaphysical or religious foundation, portray how pacifism can be exercised in even the most culturally restricted contexts. Furthermore, an examination of Gandhi's metaphysical foundation through his nonviolent philosophy and practice illuminates striking links with the modern theories of revolutions. Hence this paper will argue how the use of metaphysics of nonviolence can archive legitimate social change through pacifism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Key Concepts:** Nonviolence, Social Change, Conflict and Peace

## Introduction

Non-violence today has turned into a more imminent cry of mankind than in any other period of mankind's history. In the antiquated circumstances when science and innovation were in their infancy, men could bear to be violent. Yet, in the mid-twentieth century, when the world has been isolated into two warring camps, the need of non-violence was pivotal. This situation created another discussion which comprised of peace, exchange, and open verbal confrontation, opportunity for information, open exhibitions, choices, race of authorities, and both individual and aggregate types of activity. Nonviolence action can be defined as a form action that does not involve violence or force. The metaphysics of nonviolence as a method of social struggle in the twentieth century. Mahatma Gandhi with his South African experience became the pioneer person to develop the idea of nonviolence through *satyagraha*. Truth and non-violence are the twin pillars on which rested the entire framework of the Mahatma Gandhi's glorious life and work. Gandhi opened a new era of nationalism through Indian independence by portraying the nationalist protest in the language of nonviolence. Mahatma Gandhi presented a particular empathy related to the processes of decolonization in the twentieth century.

Gandhi comprehended that a peaceful world request isn't just an otherworldly duty with respect to people all around however should be regulated both politically and financially in a democratic manner at all levels of administering. "The whole social request must be remade," he says, a society based on nonviolence cannot nurture any other ideal" (Sharp 1973, 120). "Democracy and violence can ill go together," he writes, "it is a blasphemy to say that nonviolence can only be practiced by individuals and never by nations which are compound of individuals" (Sharp 1973, 134).

In spite of the fact that Gandhi gives important details of peace education, he is considerably more profitable in filling in as an impetus testing us to reevaluate our perspectives of violence and nonviolence. Such a reevaluating, widening, and extending of our suspicions, ideas, and perspectival introductions can profoundly affect how we approach peace education. Gandhi, obviously, is extremely worried about violence in the more normal feeling of plain physical violence. He commits impressive regard for distinguishing such violence, attempting different

ways to deal with conflict determination, and giving peaceful choices. This is clear in his numerous works and battles coordinated at war, obvious fear mongering, flare-ups of class and standing violence, and Hindu-Muslim mutual psychological oppression. In any case, for Gandhi, such genuine plain violence constitutes just a little piece of the violence that must be tended to by peace education. Gandhi's way to deal with education stresses both the multidimensional idea of violence and the basic viciousness of the norm. Instructive violence cannot be isolated from semantic, financial, mental, social, political, religious, and different types of violence. These many measurements of violence commonly fortify each other, and give the topic and test for peace education. For instance, dialect, inside or outside the classroom, can fill in as a vicious weapon used to control, mortify, scare, threaten, mistreat, misuse, and overwhelm other individuals. "Tranquil" circumstances, free from plain violent clashes, might be characterized by profound mental violence. In his investigation of "ordinary" British pilgrim instruction in India, Gandhi much of the time dissects how the structures, qualities, and objectives of such instructive models incurred extraordinary mental and social viciousness on colonized Indians. Not at all like most savants and other people who receive moral and otherworldly methodologies, Gandhi puts an essential accentuation on fundamental material needs and the "ordinary" condition of financial viciousness. Over and over, he utilizes "violence" as synonymous with abuse. He is mindful to unequal, topsy-turvy, violence influenced relations in which a few, who have riches, capital, and other material assets, can abuse and command those lacking such financial influence. Gandhi relates to the situation of starving and devastated individuals and with the predicament of laborers, specialists, and other people who are impaired and overwhelmed. He stresses that such financial viciousness isn't the aftereffect of heavenly plan or a permanent law of nature. It includes human-caused persecution, misuse, mastery, shamefulness, and enduring, and, subsequently, we as individuals are mindful. Clearly, joining such worries of monetary viciousness widens and fundamentally changes the idea of peace education. Gandhi presents that peace education must accentuate the developmental preparing and socialization of youthful youngsters. A great many people don't consider colleges and classroom instructing as violent, however Gandhi contends that "typical" college training is exceptionally rough, regarding both multidimensional violence and the violence of the norm.



## **Gandhi's Path to Nonviolence**

The Western scholars like 'Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau, Socrates, Carlyle and Emerson additionally impacted Gandhi. Tally Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) the Russian author and scholar impacted Gandhi in particular. Tolstoy by his book the Kingdom of God is inside you' overpowered him in particular. Gandhi said that it cleared out a standing impact on him. About the impact of the book on his life he thought of: "It was 40 years back, when I was going through a serious crisis of incredulity and uncertainty that I went over his book, 'The Kingdom of God is inside you' and was profoundly inspired by it. I was at that time a believer in violence. Its perusing cured me of my suspicion and made me a firm adherent of Ahimsa"(Richard, 2006, 204)<sup>1</sup>. Ahimsa was the basic rule of Gandhi's whole life. It was for him a guideline as well as for a lifestyle. Rev. Joseph J. Doke, the main biographer of Gandhi is of the sentiment that the random works of Tolstoy particularly on clinical, religious and associated issues were followed out, perused and processed by Gandhi. Doke calls him "a supporter of 'Tolstoy" (Gandhi Autobiography 1969, 102)<sup>2</sup>. Tolstoy's effortlessness of life and virtue of reason affected Gandhi in particular. Tolstoy acknowledged love to be the law of Life. The standard of peacefulness depends on affection for the whole humankind. Both Tolstoy and Gandhi received the instrument of adoration to take care of all issues in their lives. What's more, additionally, they-trusted that peacefulness could cure every single social disease, expel political ills, and build up tranquility on earth and generosity among humanity. Another Western mastermind who impacted Gandhi was Sohn Ruskin (1819 - 1900). He was a creator, social reformer, and workmanship pundit, in the last 50% of the nineteenth century" (Doke, 1959, 04).

---

<sup>1</sup> See more details: M.K.Gandhi, An Autobiography *The Story of my Experiments with Truth* Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad bad, 1969, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> See Young India Sept. 20, 1928, p. 319.

## **Gandhi's influence on Western thought**

Gandhi influenced two of the most important mass mobilizations the civil-rights struggle for equality for African-Americans and Cesar Chavez's advocacy for Latino farmworkers.

"Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale," (King, 1954, 270)<sup>3</sup>. But the influence of Gandhi on the civil-rights movement pre-dated King. African-American leaders such as Howard Thurman and Benjamin Mays undertook long voyages to India on ocean steamers to meet Gandhi, while W.E.B. Du Bois corresponded with him. King was himself introduced to Gandhi's vision by African-American Gandhians such as Mordecai Johnson and Bayard Rustin.

Chavez traced his political awakening to what he saw at the age of twelve, Gandhi as a man without a gun who conquered the might of the British Empire. Chavez modeled many of his tactics on Gandhi, from boycotts to hunger strikes.

Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, imprisoned Burmese Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize-winner Rigoberta Menchu all these giants of recent, have acknowledged Gandhi as a guiding light.

Gandhi's metaphysics of nonviolence helped inspire movements that toppled dictators from Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines in 1986 and Augusto Pinochet in Chile in 1989 to the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and Slobodan Milosevic in Yugoslavia in 2000.

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan who was influenced by Gandhi from the Muslim world, founded a movement of nonviolence and social reform among the Pashtuns on the border of the present Pakistan and Afghanistan that had at its height, more than 100,000 supporters. In the 1990s, Ibrahim Rugova led a movement for independence in Kosovo that drew inspiration from Gandhi. Moreover, several activists in Palestine have adopted Gandhi's message to offer nonviolent ways of resisting Israeli occupation

## **Nonviolence and social change**

---

<sup>3</sup> See King, "The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr," April 1953-June 1954, in Papers 2: 269-279

Composed peacefulness is another wonder in history. Just toward the start of the twentieth century, with Gandhi's rebellion battles in South Africa and India, mass peaceful activity starts to rise as a reasonable method for political and social change. While cases of peaceful activity can be found all through history, as Gene Sharp whose magnum opus was *The Politics of Non-Violence* records, just in the most recent century has peaceful activity rolled out noteworthy commitments to political improvement (Stephon & Chenoweth, 2008, 20). In later decades, the Gandhian technique for vital peaceful activity has been connected and developed in a developing number of nations.

Cases of major non-violence triumphs are numerous. The energy of peaceful protection was shown significantly in mid-2011 in the unarmed upheavals of Tunisia and Egypt, as a huge number of individuals filled the boulevards to oust dug in fascisms. The "velvet unrest" of Central and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s cut down the Berlin Wall and cleared away socialist administrations over the locale. The "general population control" development of the Philippines finished the tyranny of Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. Peaceful protection was definitive in the last phases of the South African opportunity development that finished politically-sanctioned racial segregation. Peaceful developments cleared through Latin America in late decades, finishing military fascism in Chile and democratizing governments all through the landmass. Peaceful power prompted the topple of Slobodan Milošević in Serbia in 2000 and was felt in the Rose, Orange, and Tulip "unrests" of Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan in 2003-2005. Mass common defiance in Nepal finished the government and reestablished democracy in 2006. The techniques for peaceful protection have realized noteworthy political change and social change on each mainland.

Late experimental examinations affirm the prevalence of peaceful activity as a technique for accomplishing noteworthy social change. An examination distributed in 2008 in *International Security* inspected 323 verifiable cases of protection crusades over a traverse of more than one hundred years to decide if violent or peaceful techniques work better in accomplishing political change (Stephon & Chenoweth, 2008, 20). Each case included an escalated conflict, once in a while enduring quite a while, in which major sociopolitical developments attempted to increase particular concessions from government foes. The investigation by Stephan and Chenoweth (2008) utilized the most thorough insightful techniques to analyze deliberately the key effect of

violent and peaceful strategies for political battle. The outcomes conclusively approved the more noteworthy adequacy of peaceful activity. The discoveries demonstrate that peaceful strategies were twice as viable as rough means in making progress in real protection battles. In the cases analyzed, peaceful means were effective 53% of the time, contrasted with 26% when violence was utilized. Furthermore, the key factor in clarifying this outcome, as indicated by Stephan and Chenoweth (2008) is that peaceful crusades are better ready to withstand the constraint that unavoidably faces real protection battles, and may even make such suppression advantageous for them. At the point when the foe violently curbs a trained non-violent campaign, the peaceful resisters may profit politically. This is the thing that César Chávez distinguished as the "peculiar science" of peaceful activity. At whatever point the enemy confers a crooked demonstration against peaceful nonconformists, said Chávez, "we get ten times paid back in benefits"(Sandoval, 1997,114). Unjustified suppression against restrained peaceful activity can start a thoughtful response among outsiders and in the positions of the foe. This may start steadfastness moves and increment bolster for the peaceful campaigners, while undermining the authenticity of the enemy.

Above variables explain how Gandhi's metaphysics of non-violence comprehends a maximal and all-inclusive dismissal of violence and war by displaying authentic occasions which happened in various zones.

### **Philosophy of nonviolence and legitimate social change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

The developing suitability of nonviolent options to war is established in the rise of new potential outcomes for settling and changing conflicts. The improvement of new learning and practice for the anticipation of violent clashes requires an expanded elucidation of the simply war classification of "final resort." If elective methods for settling differences and staying away from violence are accessible, this changes the ethical math of war and takes out the support for falling back on outfitted violence in practically every situation. The rising components of contention change and vital peacebuilding show that gatherings to a contention can discover a method for settling differences on the off chance that they are truly intrigued.

Gene Sharp (1973) contends that peaceful activity has nothing to do with religious or good standards. It is just an ideal type of political activity with critical down to business focal points. It



works superior to violence and is a more viable and less expensive method for accomplishing social change. Sharp recognizes the significance of education and a readiness to give up. He perceives that misery can be a method for beating lack of concern and justification, yet he rejects the dispute that religious standards of pacifism are essential elements of viable peaceful activity.

Democratic peace hypothesis has been approved by observational investigations demonstrating a solid relationship amongst democracies and peace. Developing popularity based social orders never take up arms against each other. As Bruce Russett and others have demonstrated, techniques to progress unpretentious democracies can counteract war. Empirical investigations likewise affirm the connection amongst peace and monetary reliance: increased exchange streams between countries are related with lessened recurrence of war (Kriesberg, 2003,141). Solid experimental confirmation additionally demonstrates that states taking an interest together in universal organizations—the European Union being the best case, are less inclined to take part in military threats toward each other.

Worldwide organizations collaboration in taking an interest in states as well as participate in an extensive variety of peacemaking endeavors in globally weak areas. The United Nations is most dynamic in such manner, and its engagement in the interest of conflict counteractive action and peacemaking has duplicated significantly since the finish of the cold war. Since 1990, as per an investigation by the Human Security Center, UN preventive discretion missions have extended six fold, peacekeeping operations have quadrupled, and the utilization of focused assents has expanded strongly (Human Security Center, Human Security Report 2005). A RAND Corporation ponder found that a considerable lot of these UN peace building missions are successful (Dobbins, 2005), bringing about legitimate social change.

Nongovernmental gatherings and common society associations additionally take part in an extensive variety of peacebuilding exercises, for the most part from a base up point of view. Together, these numerous endeavors at various levels aimed at avoiding conflicts are diminishing the frequency and force of war. Worldwide press reports concentrate on the numerous disappointments of global peacemaking, yet there are likewise numerous triumphs. The nonattendance of mass executing regularly implies there is no news, which in this setting is uplifting news. Universal foundations and associations are adapting more about what works in

forestalling equipped violence, and their expanded engagement in emergencies around the globe has bettered and anticipated many conflicts.

The "Great Powers" can accomplish this on the off chance that they combine internal democracy and subject to disarmament and a monetary framework that keeps up their success while additionally generating opulence for every other person on the planet. In his deliver to the Third International Conference of Chief Justices of the World in Lucknow, India, 4 December 2002, Indian Gandhi researcher Sheshrao Chavan cited the accompanying 1942 proclamation by Gandhi: "The future peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a World Federation of free nations, and on no other basis, the problems of the modern world be solved. Such a world federation will ensure the freedom of its constituent nations, the prevention of aggression and exploitation by one nation over another" (Chavan, 2002), therefore the utilization of metaphysics of non-violence can bolster the efforts by such world federations.

## **Conclusion**

Gandhi's impact regarding political systems that need not bother with a metaphysical or religious establishment, depict how pacifism can be practiced in even the most socially confined settings. Besides, an examination of Gandhi's metaphysical establishment through his logic of non-violence and practice elucidates stark connections with the advanced speculations of upheavals. Real social change inside genuinely democratic social orders, obviously, is dependably nonviolent. World insurgency through world law implies establishing real world democracy without a precedent for history. This essentially involves actuating native support in overseeing as well as altering worldwide financial aspects to one that encourages all-inclusive flourishing.

Therefore, as Gandhi puts it, in order to achieve legitimate social change powers who have control over the engines of destructions have to wholly renounce their use, with full knowledge of the implications only then can the metaphysics of non-violence proceed in generating

permanent peace. This is clearly impossible without the great powers of the world renouncing a liberation from violence.

## Bibliography

Ashman, Sam. (Winter 1997). India: Imperialism, Partition and Resistance. *International Socialism* 77

Brown, J.M. (1989). *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, New Haven :Yale Univ. Press

Cortright, David.(2011). Toward Realistic Pacifism: John Howard Yoder and the Theory and Practice of Nonviolent Peacemaking. *The Conrad Grebel Review* 29, no. 3

Dobbins, James.(2005). *The UN's Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq*, Santa Monica :RAND Corporation

Doke, J.J. (1959) *An Indian Patriot in South Africa*, Sarvaseva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi

Fischer, Louis. (1950). *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*. New York: Harper & Row

Gandhi, M.K. (1921). *The secret of swaraj* .New York: B.W. Huebsch

Gandhi, M.K. (1969) *An Autobiography, The Story of my Experiments with Truth* Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad

Human Security Center.(2005). *Human Security Report 2005: War and Peace in the 21st Century*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kriesberg, Louis. (2003). *Constructive Conflicts: From Escalation to Resolution*, 2nd ed. Lanham :Rowman and Littlefield.

Sandoval, Ricardo. (1997). *The Flight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers Movement*. ed. Diana Hembree , New York: Harcourt Brace

Sarkar, Sumit.( 1983). *Modern India*. Madras: Macmillan India Limited

Sharp, Gene. (1973). *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Boston:Porter Sargent.

Sharp, Gene. (2005). *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential* . Boston:Porter Sargent.

Sheshrao Chavan (2002) *Mahatma Gandhi: Man of the Millennium*, K. S Bharathi. Publisher, S. Chand Limited.

Stephan.M.J and Chenoweth Eric. (2008). "Why Civil Resistance Works: The Logic of Nonviolent Conflict." *International Security*.vol. 33, No.1

Read ,Anthony and Fisher, David.( 1997).*The Proudest Day: India's Long Road to Independence*. New York: W.W. Norton

Richard L. (2006). *Gandhi's experiments with truth: essential writings by and about Mahatma Gandhi*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Rupert Smith.(2006).*The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*. London: Penguin Books

Tagore,Rabindranath (1919).*The Home and the World*. Madras: Macmillan India Limited

Tolstoy, Leo .(1987). *Writings on Civil Disobedience and Nonviolence*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Yoder,John Howard. (April 1955) .Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Pacifism, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 29.2