

# Gandhian Approach to Peace and Prosperity: A Philosophical Exposition

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## Abstract

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This paper has two aspects, one is peace and another is prosperity. Before discussion of the Gandhian approach to peace and prosperity it needs to define the term peace and prosperity first. But it is not an easy task to define the term peace and prosperity, it needs philosophical analysis. Hence, at the outset we will try to define the term *peace* and thereafter Gandhian notion of *prosperity*. Peace does not mean just an absence of violence, dissension of war, rather Peace is a commitment to refrain someone from any kind of harm and violence and at the same time leads to live in perfect serenity/ tranquility of mind as well as the balance of the body, mind and the soul of an individual.

**Keywords:** Gandhi, peace, philosophy, prosperity

Peace is basically the absence of conflict, disturbance and disharmony in all spheres of life. There are many controversies concerning the definition of peace. The problem is, of course, that peace derives its meaning and qualities within a theory or framework. Christian, Hindu, Islamic or Buddhist has seen peace differently as like pacifist or internationalist. Socialist, fascist, and libertarian have different approaches of peace, as do power or idealistic theorists of international relations. In this diversity of meanings, peace is not different from such concepts as justice, freedom, equality, power, conflict, class, and, indeed, any other concept. However, Gandhiji's approach to peace has some special import and techniques that basically changed the definition of peace. He never defined the term peace literally rather he realized its inner import and has tried to activate it in global way for common benefits without any sectarian boundary; hence it has practical aspect too.<sup>1</sup> There are many nations in the past have adopted his technique of peace and benefitted largely. Now this modern world also realized the necessity of his technique of peace and utilized in many nations for building a peaceful society and construction of good individuals. In this way his notion of peace has transcends the boundary and time.

Gandhiji's notion of peace can be defined in two angles: On the one hand it implies absence of violence i.e. negative aspect and on the other the presence of positive like-harmonious, cooperative relationships with all. These two angles are referred to as

negative (non-violence) and positive peace.<sup>2</sup> Gandhiji did not directly use the term peace rather, for peace, Gandhiji used the term *ahimsa* which has a strength to overpower upon the mind of a man on adversary and evil properties. Their soul force will preponderate over the sensual evil forces. Gandhi's technique of peace basically a *soul force* and free from any kind of selfish nature.<sup>3</sup> This soul force is a zeal, commitment and quest for Truth. This Truth can be attained from various sides, like-social, political, economical, collective and individual too. His concept of society is a just a society, where equal distribution of wealth and opportunities are to be extended towards all in humanistic nature. In political concern it is spiritually altruistic, democratic and people's welfare politics. There is no place of hypocrisy, inequality and disharmony in his democratic notion. Gandhiji connected political and economic pursuits with spirituality and he deviated himself from the age old tradition of peace or liberation. He has tried to achieve peace and liberation by associating with the worldly affairs and not through the renunciation of the world. He is a *Satyagrahi* and according to him, a *Satyagrahi* must be conscious for Truth and never be deviated from Truth. It is a rigorous practice and love for Truth.<sup>4</sup> In his eyes *Satyagraha* is the precondition of peace. Similarly, his notion of religion is a way of life and a quest for truth so that someone may reach in the state of peace, where an individual will exercise his freedom and at the same time he must have a sense of tolerance and respect for others that might help to establish a just and peaceful society and individuals. It is a force that can be used by individuals as well as communities. This technique of peace may be used both in political and domestic levels. Peace in political level needs just ruler who has strong moral sense and his activities will completely free from all kinds of exploitation, oppression and injustices of the people. In his peace movement everybody can join whether men, women, children and down trodden, it is immaterial to him. According to Gandhiji *Satyagraha* is an appeal to change the heart of the wrong doer also to achieve peace. In fact, *Satyagraha* is based on the presupposition of rectification to the wrong doer, so that their heart can be changed. Distrust or hatred has no place in his peace movement; there must be a trust in the goodness of the opponent and also love for them. ***Not apathy but love can change the mind of wrong doer.***<sup>5</sup>

Having political power is therefore just the first step towards peace. We all have to accept the responsibility to change the situation to remove all kind of exploitations. We have a responsibility to cultivate some of the principles by which Gandhiji practiced and lived. We will have to begin to look at sharing, caring and ensuring practices of Gandhiji and at the same time we must ensure the people's security and *sarvadaya* in the society.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Gandhiji laid much more emphasis for the progress of village *panchayet system*.<sup>7</sup> In addition to political oppression, we have seen economic, intellectual, religious, environmental, and gender oppression and exploitation in South Africa. When we talk about peace, we cannot view the indiscriminate killings and destruction of property in isolation from the poverty, illiteracy, religious intolerance, environmental threats and gender oppression faced by our people in our daily lives. But what we the philosophers will do? Will we remain aloof or keep mum or indifferent? Certainly not, because we cannot elude our responsibility and moral obligations in this regard. Actually, philosophers are the proper representatives of peace in the world. Philosophers have first identified problems and tried for logical solution. It is clear that only the change of political power in itself will not be suffice to achieve peace. So, what can we do to achieve peace in our country? How can we help to build a society

where peace will be the central concern of all its people? We think that Gandhiji would consider the following are the essential preconditions for peace:

- a) That people in power, whether political, economic, religious, civic or administrative, needs to develop a holistic view of peace. If we want a better country for our posterior generations then we need to act and ensure that such a holistic view is adopted and that a comprehensive approach is being used in addressing the issue of peace.
- b) We also have a responsibility to ensure that the community understands and approves of this approach. We must be willing to share expertise and funds, and at the same time develop the community's capacity to meet the challenges of the future.
- c) We cannot expect a new government to change things on its own. We have to take responsibility for bringing about changes and in this we can seek the assistance of the state.
- d) We need to develop a climate of love, caring, sharing and communal consciousness as we begin the process of building an equitable society through community programs. We certainly may be able to get more support for such projects from a new government.
- e) We need to build a culture of non-violence among our children and youth, through actively ensuring that we (and they) do not support war toys or violent games, media, books, stories, etc., but instead promote a culture of resistance to injustice. We need to inculcate a communal responsibility among all our people.
- f) We need to create a culture of work, and recognize the dignity of work, so that we can learn not only to meet our own needs but also those of the whole community. Examples of extreme hindrance of peace are war, systematic repression, sexual and domestic violence, envy and jealousy, totalitarianism and genocide. In conflict both the parties want to win but that often is not possible or does not resolve the conflict completely and permanently.
- g) Gandhiji's notion of peace is deeply rooted with civic virtues and liberalism of courage. His ethics has own spiritual cast, hence, he disparaged conventional political ideas that '*ends justifies the means*'.  
h) Peace never is to be achieved if religious ethics and cardinal virtues will not to be practiced. For this unity of the major religious groups are necessary. In Indian aspect basically the unity between the Hindus and the Muslims are essential. Upgradation of the sense of toleration is more vital, thus he says- there is no religion which may talk absolute Truth and for that we need inter-religious dialogue. His notion of Truth is highly relevant to establish inter-religious and inter-community peace. For this, Gandhiji unified *pro-sanatana*, *non-sanatana* and *anti-sanatan*'s views. And for that he has made the distinction between the society and the state.

According to Gandhi peace is an inevitable sign of prosperity. In his eyes, prosperity does not mean only the progress and flourishing in economic level. His view of prosperity means all round development of the nation and the individuals, like-phenomenal level and spiritual level. Prosperity in phenomenal level is related to political, economic, social levels prosperity, where as spiritual prosperity is related to moral practice, individual upliftment, freedom, justice and internationalism etc.<sup>8</sup> He

realized that Big Bazar/sky crapper buildings are not the parameter of prosperity. His prosperity means equilibrium between the phenomenal and spiritual levels of progress. Until or unless freedom, justice and equality will be established in the society none nation will not be considered as prosperous nation. At present there are many nations who have very good economic progress but lacks in spiritual development. Thus, there is no peace and as a result competitions are enlarging day by day. Thus, the balances between these two (phenomenal and spiritual levels) are the real sign of prosperity as Gandhiji said. A real *Satyagrahi* can make poise between these two and he will works for the benefit of all, thus, peace will come automatically and prevail enormously.

One distinctive character of Gandhiji's notion of peace is that his Peace can never be achieved by one-dimensional and unilateral talks or efforts. It has numerous aspects thus related to social, ethnical, religious and political elements and also copious ways to deal with them to bring and stabilize worsened situations under control. The true character of a conflict must be identified and may perhaps be attributed any of those hidden elements. Gandhi's perception of bringing peace and resolving conflict had such a diversified point of interest every time when he insisted on taking fast to bring hostile situation under control it is quite vivid. Whether there is a riot in any part of the country, peace lived in his soul consciously demanding him to take on fast even if he resides in another corner of the country. Thus, peace becomes universal and eternal. In the following paragraphs, his views on peace, as he wrote or said on various occasions when violence and warfare prevailed over nonviolence and peace in the world.

Today, governments worldwide have not used much of democratic means to maintain peace, rather bound to display their military character and power to settle down issues that disturbed peace. They often fail to realize the fact that violence erupts at the social level, commutes to the political level and seeking a resolution finally at the military level. Diplomatic efforts have become more so customary and ineffective in front of military powers. The economic status of the nations too plays a crucial role in determining the degree of success of any peace initiative.

Gandhi is not seen in this platform of world peace. His ideologies remain neglected at the global forum and are considered as a tonic for social and cultural development only. As he is known as the Father of the nation politically, economically his dictum stands as a medicine merely for building local economy. Global communities have not come and thought of Gandhi as a "*solution provider*", "*conflict breaker*" or even as a peace activist. World peace continues to be at the hands of world powers that use violence and warfare. Indeed the situation is so grim that even a global peace campaigner is quite plausibly to localize and narrow down himself and his campaign giving in to the pressures and rigid policies of the governments.

Today political leaders take chances of peace in their hands and play a role in making or breaking the nations. Nations engage in dialogue and negotiations to settle down their ethnic problems and border issues. Political, diplomatic and media powers contribute their part to facilitate this peace process but hatred and hostilities dominate the situation as peace is not achieved at the individual levels. World governments fail to identify the key personals and power-centers that govern the war frameworks and conflict centers. Dialogues are meant for mutual understanding, not for nurturing hatred and obscuring manipulations. They shall not give the slightest chance for

eruption of violence or war by both the military and the militant or rebel groups. Misrepresentation and shallow understanding of conflicts between the groups within a country and between the countries rather complicates the situation. Changing political conditions shall not set hurdles in the ongoing conflict resolution process.

Gandhi said, *“If we have no charity, and no tolerance, we shall never settle our differences amicably and must therefore always submit to the arbitration of a third party.”*<sup>9</sup> Many of today’s conflict management techniques and resolution process have a clear shadow of what and how Gandhi had seen international issues in his times. A war-hunger nation has nothing in this world whilst a starving nation needs every kind of help from the world. A nation endangering peace in the world has no security for itself. Peace can never be achieved by one-dimensional and unilateral talks or efforts. It has numerous facets of social, ethnical, religious and political elements and copious ways to deal with them to bring and stabilize worsened situations under control. The true character of a conflict must be identified and may perhaps be attributed any of those hidden elements. Gandhi’s perception of bringing peace and resolving conflict had such a diversified point of interest every time when he insisted on taking fast to bring hostile situation under control. Whether there is a riot in the eastern Bengal or unrest in the north-western part of India, peace lived in his soul consciously demanding him to take on fast even if he resides in another corner of the country. Thus, peace becomes universal and eternal.<sup>10</sup>

From the above discussion it is almost vivid to us that peace is the utmost need of our present world’s prosperity. The present world is really in danger and the crisis of peace is everywhere. Therefore, Gandhiji’s notion of peace is a real technique to achieve peace and prosperity as well.

### Notes and References

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