

## **SATYAGRAHA: THE GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The concept of satyagraha, in spite of its immense potential for the resolution of conflicts, has not been completely explored. Its nonviolent beliefs and values have not been thrashed out in totality. It still remains primarily a matter of Indian experience. This article provides insights on satyagraha's ability to resolve peacefully potentially violent conflicts in the area of industrial relations. The article meets the need to explicitly clarify the way in which satyagraha, as a technique of conflict management, can be used in practice outside the Indian arena.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The technique of satyagraha can be described as the "most potent legacy" that India inherited from Gandhi (Sharp, 1959: 410). Gandhi was a well-known Indian freedom fighter. Satyagraha was Gandhi's political philosophy. It was his technique of nonviolent activism. The term can be translated, for example, as "passive resistance," "non violent resistance," "non violent direct action," and "militant nonviolence" (Weber, 1991: 2). The philosophy of satyagraha is centered on the foundations of nonviolent action and resistance. It is a technique of social change that can be successfully applied in all forms of social and political conflict.

Satyagraha is a form of applied sociopolitical action consisting of a series of methods that employ a type of force that is different from conventional violent action. It is highly effective in effecting change through moral coercion and

persuasion. A variety of nonviolent techniques are adopted by satyagraha practitioners including civil disobedience, economic boycotts, and varying forms of strikes. The entire procedure is carefully planned, prepared, and executed depending on the dispute, the involved parties, and the final consequences (Sharp, 1959). It possesses the capacity to force change “against a totalitarian regime” and be an effective and perhaps “the only possible alternative . . . open to oppressed people” (Sharp, 1959: 404). Satyagraha, with its nonviolent approach and its innovative and original concepts rooted in morally and ethically based psychological manipulative powers, has immense potential in the field of management and in the areas of conflict management and labor relations. However, the Gandhian philosophy has not yet gained popularity and recognition in the area of management, especially within Western ideologies and practices. Literature pertaining to it has so far been relegated to political theory. The elements of satyagraha have been discussed in the context of its relevance to contemporary political theory and problems (Bondurant, 1958; Godrej, 2006). Weber (2001) explores the connection between satyagraha and theories of integrative conflict resolutions. But again, his article does not go beyond a theoretical debate. He fails to discuss the potential practical role of satyagraha in understanding class conflicts, race conflicts, gender conflicts, and all forms of humanitarian struggle. Nazareth (2006) links up Gandhi’s values and beliefs with management and leadership theories but only at a superficial level. His arguments do not provide an adequate scope or an effective applicable outlet for the philosophy of satyagraha.

The present article aims to contribute significantly to the philosophy of satyagraha and conflict management. It focuses on the implementation of the philosophy as a practical technique to be used in resolving conflicts outside the arena of politics.

### **The Philosophy of Satyagraha**

The concept of satyagraha lies in the beliefs and philosophies of Gandhi—“a pioneer in leading eight militant struggles against racism, against colonialism . . . for popular democratic participation, against economic exploitation, against the degradation of women, against religious and ethnic supremacy, and on behalf of nonviolent methods for social and political transformations” (King, 1999: 25). The basic essence of satyagraha is firm adherence to the principles of truth, nonviolence, and suffering.

**Truth.** Satyagraha means, “the path of truth” According to Gandhi, truth is moral, unified, unchanging, and transcendental. Truth (satya) is as real and omnipotent as god himself (Chatterjee, 1996). Truth is god (Chatterjee, 1996): “the world rests upon the bedrock of satya . . . which being what [it] is can never be destroyed” (Nazareth, 2006: 11). Truth can be defined as the right path and therefore powerful and persuasive. There is no greater duty than adherence to truth (Chatterjee, 1996; Nazareth, 2006). But the search for truth is a continuous

process. Man/woman is not capable of completely understanding or interpreting the meaning of truth in its absolute form. Truth could have different meanings to different people. It could be interpreted differently by different people. This emphasizes the need for man/woman to be open regarding the meaning of truth and its numerous interpretations (Bondurant, 1958; Chatterjee, 1996). The path of truth leads to justice. Justice requires that the adversary's views and requirements be given due consideration. An effort should be made to be empathetic and understanding with regard to the viewpoint of the adversary. Justice requires that the final agreement should be acceptable to all concerned.

**Nonviolence.** Nonviolence could be considered as a path toward the realization of truth—“without ahimsa [i.e., nonviolence] it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them” (Chander, 1945: 408). Ahimsa is the method to seek the path of truth. If one follows the concepts and techniques of nonviolence, s/he is bound to discover truth and emerge victorious while keeping within ethical boundaries. “Truth is the end. Non-violence is the means there to” (Chander, 1945: 408). Nonviolence means not only complete abstention from all physical, mental, and emotional injury to others but also cleansing oneself of all hatred and desire for revenge. One has to hate and confront evil but this should be done without conforming to any violent means. Nonviolence is based on the assumption that all human beings unfailingly respond to gestures of love—“The hardest metal yields to sufficient heat. Even so, the hardest heart must melt before the heat of non-violence and there is no limit to the capacity of non-violence to generate heat” (Nazareth, 2006: 13). In fact, nonviolence always seeks to propose mutually acceptable agreements without any form of humiliation or manipulation of power over the opponent. “It is a program for transformation of relationships ending in a peaceful transfer of power” (Nazareth, 2006: 13).

Satyagraha (firm adherence to truth) is this victory over the opponent through an act of nonviolence. If words fail to convince the opponent, s/he will be won over by patience and sympathy (Guha, 1996; Nazareth, 2006).

**Self-Suffering.** The third fundamental rule of satyagraha is self-suffering. Nonviolence requires the victim to undergo suffering. And the mere fact that the victim willingly and consciously endures suffering does not mean s/he is submitting to the will and might of the opponent. Instead it means “pitting one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant” (Chander, 1945: 352). Self-suffering in satyagraha is directed toward the moral persuasion of the opponent. Self suffering means voluntary injury to the self to persuade the opponent to become empathetic to the sufferer's situation and concerns.

**The role of the individual in Satyagraha.** Gandhi asserted that there is no power on earth that could make man/woman do anything against his/her will. It is necessary to preserve the freedom and integrity of the individual. Diminishing the importance of an individual and his/her freedom will ultimately lead to the downfall of the society—“no society can possibly be built on a denial of individual

freedom” (Chander, 1945: 321). Man/woman thus has the power and will to change societies and their functioning if s/he feels s/he has been mistreated or misguided.

**The three elements in Satyagraha.** The three elements, truth, nonviolence, and suffering, come together to explain the technique of satyagraha. An individual is interested in seeking and discovering the path of truth. The term truth is relative, that is, it is judged in terms of human needs. The discovery of truth leads to differences of opinion, which is the focal point of the strategy of satyagraha. Conflicts, according to satyagraha, can be resolved using nonviolent action. Nonviolent action is based on the concept of refusing to harm the other opponent and also undergoing self-suffering to morally persuade the opponent to allow justice to be done. As Bondurant (1958: 32) explicitly explains: “Truth leads to an ethical humanism. It follows that ahimsa (non-violence) which includes the concept of love, leads in turn to social science. Self-suffering . . . to demonstrate sincerity . . . implies sacrifice and preparation.”

**The problem of means-ends in Satyagraha.** Gandhi believed that means and ends are convertible terms. Means are the “end in process and the ideal in making” (Shridharani, 1939: 316). Satyagraha is an operation in which the opponent may be persuaded to revise his/her opinion and reject his/her falsity. In this case, there is little room for inflexible ends. The focal point of satyagraha is the flexibility in ends which its means allow. The individual is interested in pursuing truth (dependent on his/her human needs), and to accomplish or seek truth s/he adopts nonviolence. If s/he meets with resistance or conflict, he willingly self-suffers to change the views and perceptions of the opponent. Therefore it would be right to argue that satyagraha is a moral technique to resolve conflicts where the means determine the ends: “[I say] something different from what I said years ago. The fact of the matter is that conditions have changed. I am the same. . . . There has been a gradual evolution in my environment and I react to it as a satyagrahi” (Chander, 1945: 320).

Satyagraha has the potential to bring about political and social changes by incorporating individual will and reason in an ethical and moral manner. Gandhi (1927) actively adopted and used the nonviolent strategy of satyagraha to emancipate India from the British Raj.

In all his satyagraha campaigns, the first step for Gandhi was to carefully ascertain the facts, the issues of truth and justice for the emancipators. The next step was to talk with the opponent, try moral persuasion, and make every attempt to negotiate with him/her. Satyagraha also meant making it clear to the opponent that his/her failure to respond positively would result in nonviolent resistance or civil disobedience. If the opponent refused to negotiate, the next step was to launch a nonviolent campaign after informing the opponent, the media, and the public.

The mission of satyagraha was the creation of equitable political, economic, and social structures so as to ensure justice and a dignified and moral way of life for

everyone. It involved the creation of a society in which there was complete employment, full cooperation, and democratic participation for all members.

### SATYAGRAHA IN ACTION

A satyagraha campaign would usually adhere to certain fundamental rules:

- (i) **Self reliance:** A satyagraha campaign should never accept outside aid (at least, not count on it). It should be completely independent.
- (ii) **Initiative:** Satyagrahis (i.e., people who adopt the philosophy and strategy of satyagraha) should continuously assess the situation and initiate pressure through the tactic of passive resistance, to take the movement forward.
- (iii) **Propagation of the campaign's objectives, agendas, and goals:** Satyagrahis should continuously educate the opponent, the public, and the participants in the campaign about the overall goals and objectives of the campaign.
- (iv) **Reduction of demands to minimize deviation from truth:** Satyagrahis are required to continuously reassess the situation to adjust and minimize demands as much as possible.
- (v) **Advancement of the movement:** The satyagraha campaign should be analyzed at each stage in the light of ever-changing circumstances, and modifications should be made as required.
- (vi) **Examination of weaknesses:** Satyagrahis should maintain morale and discipline within the group and minimize any development of impatience, aggression, or negative and violent attitudes.
- (vii) **Search for avenues of cooperation:** Satyagrahis should make every possible effort to persuade their opponent through demonstrations of sincerity, honesty, and self-suffering.
- (viii) **Refusal to bargain:** Satyagraha does not believe in compromise with regard to predetermined agendas and goals. There should be no deviation from the path of truth. Satyagrahis should not engage in bargaining or barter (Bondurant, 1965).
- (ix) **Code of discipline:** A code of conduct was developed by Gandhi for his followers during the 1930 campaign (Tendulkar, 1952: 7):
  - All satyagrahis had to willingly suffer the anger of the opponent without any retaliation.
  - All satyagrahis had to refrain from obeying any orders from the opponent even when threatened with severe punishment.
  - All satyagrahis had to refrain from insults and swearing. They also had to protect opponents from insults or attacks even when the satyagrahis' lives were at risk.

- All satyagrahis were required not to resist arrest nor to resist the attachment of property unless they were holding the property as trustees. They were also expected to refuse to surrender any property held in trust even at the risk of their lives.
- All satyagrahis were expected to behave in an exemplary manner when taken as prisoners.
- As members of a satyagraha unit, all satyagrahis were required to obey the orders of their leaders and resign from the unit if any serious disagreement arose. They were required to be prepared not to expect any guarantees for the maintenance of their dependents.

### Steps in a Satyagraha Campaign

A satyagraha campaign usually follows a sequential order of stages. These stages are applicable to any movement of grievance against an established political system. The stages can also be adapted to other conflict situations as needed (Bondurant, 1965):

1. **Negotiation and arbitration:** Every effort should be taken to resolve the conflict or grievances through normal established channels before proceeding further. The preliminary action should be centered on activities that minimize the risk of conflicts or crises occurring. Satyagrahis should show that direct action will be their last and final weapon. They will use it only when no other course of action is available. The first stage of satyagraha includes exploring various legislative channels, entering into negotiations with the opponents, sending deputations consisting of influential and notable citizens to persuade the opposite side, and seeking assistance through arbitration carried out by a third party acceptable to both the disputants. When all avenues fail, the satyagrahis should move toward the stage of nonviolent direct action.
2. **Direct action:** On recognizing that a conflict situation cannot be resolved by the methods of the first stage, participants are required to carefully assess the circumstances, their opponents, the climate of public opinion, the group's capacity for self-discipline, and so forth.
3. **Agitation:** In this stage, the satyagrahis seek the support of the people who are most affected by the dispute. The objective now is to generate "cause consciousness" among all the affected groups. This stage includes action by the participants against the opponents taking the form of demonstrations, slogan shouting, boycotts, mass meetings, and strikes. Pamphlets, books, and papers explaining the reason for the dispute, its implications, and its consequences are circulated and distributed. Media such as radio, cinema, and television are used as instruments of mass propaganda to publicize speeches, group meetings, debates, and discussions. The main objective is

to gain widespread interest in the issue from a sympathetic population so as to influence the decisions of the opponents.

4. **Ultimatum:** When no agreement is in the offing, satyagrahis are required to issue an ultimatum to the opponent. An ultimatum offers a constructive solution to the problem, contains no offensive language, and is broad and flexible in terms of wording. The leader, with the consent of the group, clearly lists the demands of the group, which need to be met within a specific time. An ultimatum amounts to a conditional declaration of war. The aim is to force the issue on the opponent and threaten direct action if it is ignored or not settled.
5. **Self-purification:** The satyagrahis now move toward the technique of compulsive force. They begin their revolutionary strategy with “self-purification.” Fasting and public prayers and the refusal of lucrative government posts, luxurious articles and products, and intoxicating drinks and drugs are notable examples of self-purification. The idea is to emphasize the concept of self-sacrifice and suffering in order to morally persuade the opponent, embarrass him/her, and pressurize him/her toward a just settlement of the dispute.
6. **Types of resistance:** Resistance takes the form of picketing, dhurnas (sit-down strikes), slow-down strikes, and all nonviolent forms of general large-scale strikes. Strikes are labor’s instrument to make the employer accede to labor’s demands for a desired standard of treatment or living. A strike means abstention from work till the opponent accedes to the demands of the satyagrahis. Strikes are usually accompanied by continued education of the public about the cause of the conflict. Picketing is a natural consequence of strikes. Picketing involves an appeal to the public to withdraw its patronage from certain shops, concerns, and businesses. Large-scale rallies are held to openly inspire members of the public and persuade them with powerful arguments to disown certain groups, councils, and businesses.

A **dhurna** is a type of sit-down strike that was very popular in ancient India. It involves large groups of people blocking roadways, passage-ways, entrances to mills, and entrances to company buildings and causing inconvenience unless their demands are met. This may take dramatic forms such as people stretching themselves flat on the ground and requesting officials to tread on their bodies to enter their places of work. Dhurna, the technique of sitting down to demonstrate, has proved itself to be a powerful technique of manipulation of the public.

7. **Economic boycott and noncooperation:** This takes the form of nonpayment of taxes, boycotting of schools and offices, ostracism, and voluntary exile. Such forms of behavior result in the arrest of satyagrahis, the confiscation of land plots and leases, the confiscation of property and bank amounts, shoot at sight orders, and so on. Satyagrahis in face of these forms of oppression are pledged to receive all penalties without retaliation. They

are to suffer in silence. Such suffering usually generates sympathy from community members and officials and compels them to reciprocate by being “unable to continue with [the] reign of terror” (Shridharani, 1939: 26). This automatically breaks down the momentum of the opposition. Because without individuals, there are no groups and systems to punish the satyagrahis, and this shatters the opponents’ system.

Another strategy, known as *hizrat*, is an offshoot of no-tax campaigns. In this case, rather than retaliate, the oppressed group migrates to adjoining territories. *Hizrat* is an effective means to neutralize the power of the opponent as it is impossible to govern and punish when there is no one to be governed.

Ostracism or social boycott is a further weapon, where the community completely boycotts those individuals who refuse to join the general program of noncooperation with the opponent. The satyagrahis treat those community members as political pariahs with whom one should avoid any form of social intercourse.

8. **Civil disobedience:** Laws central to the function of the government that are symbolic of or relevant to the grievance are boycotted or not obeyed by the satyagrahis. And the attention of the media is bought to this fact. By this refusal to obey the laws and statutes of the state, the importance and influence of the government is destroyed. Also, disobeying unjust statutes and bringing people’s attention to that fact assists in generating public sympathy and support. No government will allow deliberate disobedience or breach of its laws. Civil disobedience is usually met on the part of the government with the arrest and imprisonment of the law breakers. The satyagrahis, by failing to respond with violence and by willingly submitting to punishment, will baffle their opponents. Jails and detention camps will end up overflowing with inmates, thereby neutralizing the coercive agencies of the state. “Non-violent resistance acts as a moral jiu-jitsu. Then [the] non violence and goodwill of the victim act like the lack of physical opposition by the user of the physical jiu-jitsu, to cause the attacker to lose his moral balance. He [*sic*] suddenly and unexpectedly loses the moral support which the usual violent resistance of most victims would render him” (Gregg, 1934: 43). The opponent’s conscience starts bothering him/her, leading to disgust and the cessation of violent actions and activities. For instance, as demonstrated in a 1930 campaign by Gandhi in India:

One of the bravest things I have ever seen was the way those Hindus marched out on the field and grouped themselves in little knots. Hindus hate physical pain, but they knew what they were in for that day. Some of them quite confidently believed that they would soon be dead. In each group the Indian women, in their orange robes of sacrifice, made a thin ring around the men. They would have to be hit first. . . .

In a few seconds that field was a shambles of reeling, bleeding men,



men holding their heads with blood oozing down between their fingers, men trying to ward off blows with their bare forearms . . . women shrieking and tearing at the policemen's clothes . . . throwing themselves before the swishing lathis (bamboo sticks). . . .

Then I watched the jatha of the Sikhs. . . .

The Sikh leader was like that statue of the gladiator in Rome; a Herculean man, with the beard tied to his ears, He was being struck on the head. I stood about six feet from him and watched. He was hit until his turban came undone and his topknot was exposed. A few more blows and his hair came undone and fell down over his face. A few more and blood began to drip off his dangling black hair. He stood there with his hands at his sides. Then a particularly heavy blow and he fell forward on his face. . . .

I could hardly hold myself back. I wanted to grab that white sergeant's lathi. I stood next to him, he was so sweaty from his exertions that his Sam Browne had stained his white tunic. I watched him with my heart in my mouth. He drew back his arm for a final swing . . . and he dropped his hands down by his side.

"It's no use," he said, turning to me with half an apologetic grin. "You can't hit a bugger when he stands up to you like that."

He gave the Sikh a mock salute and walked off. (Farson, 1937: 39)

After completely paralyzing the administration and neutralizing the coercive agencies of the opponents, the satyagrahis should now embark on creating a parallel government.

9. **Assertive satyagraha and parallel government:** In this final stage, satyagrahis should make an effort to take over or replicate governmental functioning with the support and cooperation of the public. In the final stage of the campaign, the satyagrahis should gradually take over the functions of the opponent's government. They should make an effort to replicate governmental functioning. They should establish a "new sovereignty by replacing the established order. Parallel government is the community's act of taking over all the functions of the tottering government . . . squeezing the established order out of existence" (Shridharani, 1939: 42). This has so far never been tried in practice. But logically it is the final stage of a successful satyagraha campaign.

The nature and type of a satyagraha campaign are determined by the nature of the circumstances and the conflict itself. They are also dependent upon issues of leadership, levels of commitment and discipline, and capacity to adapt the principles, procedures, and philosophy of satyagraha to the specific situation. An analysis of two historic satyagraha campaigns in India is undertaken next, to clarify and provide insights into the strategies, techniques, and rules of an effective satyagraha campaign to resolve conflicts and avoid any potential forms of weakness.

## TWO SATYAGRAHA CAMPAIGNS

Two satyagraha campaigns have been selected by the present author to illustrate the techniques and procedures of a satyagraha campaign. The choice has been influenced by the similarity between the campaigns, which both illustrate deadlock between labor and management and efforts to resolve it, in situations where the opponent is in a better bargaining position, rather than being influenced by the role of Gandhi as a leader. The first case study describes a campaign launched by the laborers against the mill owners of Gujarat in India. The second example outlines the nonviolent salt campaign to disobey and remove the salt laws, which were considered unjust by the Indian population. The author would encourage readers to ignore the Indian religious, social, and cultural context and instead focus attention on the tactics, procedures, and elements found in both of these satyagraha campaigns, so that readers may be able to successfully adapt them to their own conflicts.

### THE AHMEDABAD LABOR SATYAGRAHA

The Ahmedabad Labor Satyagraha took place in February–March 1918 and lasted for 25 days. The confrontation took place between the textile laborers and the mill owners of Ahmedabad in Bombay Presidency. The workers had numerous grievances against the mill owners in terms of low wages and unbearable poverty. In spite of the workers' agitation, the mill owners remained adamant. Consequently the workers sought the assistance of satyagraha to change the hearts of their employers. They pledged to abide by the rules of (a) maintaining peace, (b) seeking additional sources of work during the duration of the lockout, and (c) remaining firm and resolute as far as their demands were concerned. Whenever workers slackened in their resolution, the leaders used the weapon of self-suffering including fasting. This helped in ensuring that the workers remained loyal to their cause, making the mill owners feel guilty, and gaining the sympathy of the public. Consequently, the workers received justice with the complete acceptance of their demands within 25 days from the start of the campaign.

The success of nonviolent direct action in Ahmedabad indicates the effectiveness of the role of arbitration. Arbitration as a tool emerged in various stages during this campaign. In the first stage, Gandhi took up the role of an external arbitrator. Later an arbitration board was created. Complete confidence and faith was instilled in the decision-making process of arbitration. Therefore the satyagrahis, in spite of all the incentives offered by the mill owners, refused to be turned away from their initial demand for a 35% wage increase. Clearly this risk was justified, because the satyagrahis were successfully able to negotiate their demands with the mill owners.

Another significant outcome of this campaign was the development of the Ahmedabad Textile Labor Association. This emerged as a powerful trade union completely devoted to welfare work for its members (Bondurant, 1958).

### Objectives and Course of the Campaign

- **Background:** The dispute arose over the amount to be paid to textile workers. The management decided to withdraw a special bonus that had been granted to workers (in August 1917) during a plague epidemic. This “plague bonus” was a 70%–80% increase in workers’ wages and continued even after the danger from the plague epidemic subsided. When the mill owners decided to withdraw this bonus in January 1918, the textile workers made an appeal to the owners to increase their wages by 50% to deal with the high cost of living (Bondurant, 1958).

In the initial stages of the campaign, Gandhi took up the role of an arbitrator and approached the mill owners. His intervention resulted in both groups agreeing to submit the dispute to an arbitration board consisting of three representatives from each side. But before the arbitration process actually started, some workers, fearing a lockout, attacked the mills. The mill owners now refused to abide by any arbitration decision and declared they would increase the workers’ wages only by 20%. But an investigation of the cost of living and workers’ conditions revealed a 35% increase to be a more just demand. On the rejection of this demand by the mill owners, the technique of satyagraha was adopted to achieve a constructive solution (Bondurant, 1958).

- **Immediate objective:** A 35% increase in the cost of living allowance or going ahead with the arbitration process.
- **Satyagraha participants and leadership:**  
 Leadership: Gandhi was a close friend of the mill owners as well as the workers.  
 Secondary leadership: other satyagrahi leaders included Anasuya Sarabhai, Vallabhai Patel, Chhanganlal Gandhi, and Shankarlal Banker.  
 Participants: 10,000 textile mill laborers of Ahmedabad.
- **The opposition, participants and leadership:**  
 Management: the mill agents’ group.  
 Chief leader: Ambalal Sarabhai took up the leadership position on behalf of the Ahmedabad mill owners (Bondurant, 1958).
- **Organization:**  
 Self-sufficiency period—during the strike, the laborers were encouraged to earn a living by engaging in other forms of labor.  
 Welfare activities—during the satyagraha campaign, the laborers were instructed in and offered sanitation and medical facilities, and detailed research was undertaken on their living conditions and cost of living. These activities later led to the creation of the Ahmedabad Textile Labor Association.  
 Daily information bulletins were issued, and regular meetings were organized to deal with emerging problems (Bondurant, 1958).

- **Action Program:**

The satyagrahis were to abide by these rules: no violence; self-support during the duration of the campaign, and no surrender until all demands were met; regular pledges were made during meetings not to resume work until all demands were met; they were to behave peacefully during the duration of the campaign (Bondurant, 1958).

- **Demonstrations:** The satyagrahis participated in regular demonstrations and parades on the streets of Ahmedabad.

- **Response to the lockout:** The mill workers were encouraged to remain firm on a 35% increase even when the mill owners agreed to a 20% increase in the wage.

- **Fasting:** At any signs of weaknesses on the workers' side, the leaders resolved to fast unto death. Gandhi said, "Unless the strikers rally and continue the strike till a settlement is reached, or till they leave the mills altogether, I will not touch any food" (Bondurant, 1958: 681).

- **Agreement:** The dispute was finally resolved with the acceptance of the following formula:

Workers would resume work with a 20% increase in wage.

The case would be submitted to an arbitration board.

During the period of arbitration, the workers would be temporarily paid a wage increase of 27½% as determined by the arbitrator.

In case the increase finally decided on was more than 27½%, this increase should be accordingly adjusted. In case it was less, workers would refund the difference.

- **Acceptance of the settlement by workers:** Gandhi broke his fast upon the announcement and acceptance of the settlement by the workers (Bondurant, 1958).

### Results of the Campaign

- **Arbitration** of the dispute.

- **Decision:** A full increase of 35% was granted on 8 October 1918. And the difference of 7½% from the period July–October 1918 was also paid to the workers.

- **Peaceful resolution** of the conflict.

- **Long-term efforts:** Development of the Ahmedabad Textile Labor Association with its members pledging to its constitution of truth and nonviolence. Education of workers in various areas such as medical aid, modernity, physical culture, basic education, recreation, and so forth.

### Summary Analysis of the Ahmedabad Labor Satyagraha

The Ahmedabad Labor Satyagraha, unlike traditional labor-management conflicts, in which labor tries to pressurize management to agree to its demands, was constituted on the "truth" factor in order to enable the workers to receive a

fair and justified wage. In spite of the adoption of various techniques usually associated with traditional disputes, such as demonstrations, fasting, arbitration, and negotiation, the focus was on the issues of justice, self-suffering, and non-violence. The public was educated about the workers' cause, their reasonable demand for a 35% increase in wages to deal with the high cost of living. The ideology of nonviolence was sustained through the workers' demonstrations, regular prayers, the distribution of leaflets, and slogan shouting without any attempt being made to cause the opponent harm. The element of self-suffering took the forms of workers' forfeiture of pay and Gandhi's fasting.

The Ahmedabad Labor Satyagraha was more attuned toward ethics and moral values and was deeply entrenched in the concepts of truth, justice, self-suffering, nonviolence, and moral suasion. The ideology laid emphasis on a mutual agreement with a win-win situation for both sides. This was portrayed in the workers' decision to demand only the minimum increase suitable for the current cost of living, and also in their seeking alternative work while peacefully continuing in their agitation against the mill owners. The workers further resolved any disagreements or differences through prayer and fasting.

The Ahmedabad movement thus illustrates the effectiveness of Gandhi's ideology in the field of class struggle and labor exploitation and its role in industrial relations to resolve conflicts. It can be used as an effective weapon by the weaker groups to obtain their ends against more powerful capitalist opponents without any bloodshed and with the support and sympathy of the public (Bondurant, 1958).

### THE SALT SATYAGRAHA

The Salt Satyagraha and its surrounding events took place over a year as part of the civil disobedience movement of 1930–1931. The following account traces the entire course of the movement, concentrating on major events and incidents (Bondurant, 1958).

#### Dates, Duration, and Locale

1. The movement lasted from March 1930 to March 1931.
2. This means that the period of civil disobedience lasted for about one year.
3. The campaign was part of a national movement with its headquarters in Mumbai. Satyagraha activities were launched in every province.

#### Objectives and Participants

1. **Immediate objectives:** The British government earned up to \$2,500,000 as salt tax out of a total revenue of \$800,000,000 from salt production. This naturally led to major hardship for the people, especially the poor laborers involved in salt manufacture, which needed to be addressed.

2. **Long-range objectives:** The Salt Act was chosen by Gandhi to demonstrate the unjust practices of an alien, unpopular government.
3. **Satyagraha participants and leadership:**
  - The primary leadership of the Salt Satyagraha was centered around Gandhi and other leaders of the Indian National Congress.
  - The majority of the participants were selected members of Gandhi's ashram in Ahmedabad and noted congressmen like Vallabhai Patel representing Gujarat, Jawarharlal Nehru from the United Provinces, Konda Venkatappaya from Andhra, and Rajagopala Chariar from Tamil Nadu.
  - After the initial defiance of the Salt Act, all the people of the nation were included as participants.
  - The majority of the participants were Hindus with some Muslims supporting the movement.
  - The opposition leaders were the officials of the Government of India, the police (both Indian and British), and the army.

### **The Salt Satyagraha Program**

1. **The role of the Indian National Congress:** The Salt Satyagraha campaign was part of the overall political struggle for Indian independence. It was a program undertaken by the largest political opposition party in India, with full responsibility and power delegated to Gandhi.
2. **Succession of leadership:** After Gandhi, extensive powers were given to Nehru, the president of the Congress party. Nehru was given the authority to nominate a successor in case of his removal. Similar powers were given to provincial and local Congress chiefs.
3. **Khadi:** The uniform of the members of the Congress and all participants was khadi (hand-spun cloth).
4. **Other aspects:** Welfare and other self-sufficiency work was chosen for propaganda purposes, to promote the cause (Bondurant, 1958).

### **Preparation for Action**

1. **Swaraj:** Prior to the Salt Satyagraha campaign, the Congress party generated approval for the idea of swaraj, or complete independence.
2. **Training courses:** Satyagraha volunteers took regular training in rallying and controlling large crowds.
3. **Civil disobedience:** It was planned to break the salt laws. Gandhi along with other satyagrahis decided to march to Dandi, a coastal town in Gujarat. Vallabhai Patel was chosen to educate the people along the route about the salt laws, the objectives of the campaign and its expected results. All the participants were urged to "undertake constructive work and to abstain from intoxicants" (Bondurant, 1958: 92)

### Preliminary Action

1. **Civil disobedience notice:** The Congress party advertised and held discussions openly and widely throughout the country to agitate for independence through various civil disobedience activities.
2. **Gandhi's written statement and ultimatum:** Gandhi informed the viceroy, Lord Irwin, in March 1930 about the intention of the Congress party to set in motion intense active nonviolent force that would be expressed in the form of a civil disobedience movement (Bondurant, 1958).

### Direct Action

1. **The Dandi march:** On 12 March 1930, Gandhi with his co-satyagrahis marched from Ahmedabad to Dandi, a coastal town in Gujarat. Gandhi urged his followers on the way to continue with their constructive work, to remain nonviolent, and to continue with their support of his movement. The march was considered the beginning of the civil disobedience movement (Bondurant, 1958).
2. **The defiance of the Salt Act:** On April 5 1930, the satyagrahis reached Dandi. The next morning, after completion of their prayers, they proceeded to the sea coast, where Gandhi and his followers prepared salt from salt water, thereby breaking the salt laws (Bondurant, 1958).
3. **The media statement:** Gandhi, after breaking the salt laws, urged villagers and followers to manufacture salt. Villagers were educated about the salt laws and instructed in various methods of preparing salt. Leaflets were published and released in various parts of the country about salt manufacturing techniques (Bondurant, 1958).
4. **Public Response:** The public response was unbelievable. All over the country, people started collecting sea water to make salt; there was "the abounding enthusiasm of people and . . . salt-making was spreading like a prairie fire" (Bondurant, 1958: 94). The British government retaliated with the arrest of the satyagraha leaders. This led to mass hartal action (closure of shops and so on) throughout the country. Headmen in villages and other subordinate officers resigned as a gesture of sympathy with the arrested satyagrahis. In other parts of the nation, dramatic demonstrations were conducted. In Mumbai, a copy of the Salt Act was thrown into the sea to symbolize the end of British law within the country.
5. **Succession in leadership:** As the original leaders were arrested, they were replaced with their successors. For instance, Nehru was succeeded by his father, while Gandhi was replaced by Tyabji, and so on.
6. **Nonpayment of taxes:** Some areas like Bardoli implemented a policy of nonpayment of taxes.

7. **Adherence to the strategy of nonviolence:** Leaders persistently attempted to adhere to the path of nonviolence. They withdrew their support from any form of violent activity and those who supported such forms of activity.
8. **Gandhi's next strategic move:** Gandhi threatened in his next letter to the viceroy to march to Dharsana where the government operated a large salt works, if the government did not abolish the salt tax.
9. **Nonviolent persuasion of police:** Throughout the satyagraha campaign, satyagrahi volunteers refrained from striking back at the police or attacking them.
10. **Economic boycott:** The public also responded with other forms of civil disobedience including a boycott of foreign-made products like cloth and liquor. In spite of frequent arrests of prominent leaders and special ordinances designed to suppress publicity and people, the salt campaign continued for a year.
11. **Final settlement:** A settlement was finally reached between Gandhi and the viceroy, known as the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement, which was published on 5 March 1931 (Bondurant, 1958).

## Results

1. **Modification of the salt regulations:** The objective of the Salt Satyagraha was to a large extent realized. Even though the salt laws were not revoked, a new official interpretation was effected after the talks between Gandhi and Irwin, "for the sake of giving relief to certain section of the poorer classes . . . in order to permit local residents in villages immediately adjoining areas where salt can be collected or made, to collect or make salt for domestic consumption or sale within such villages, but not for sale to or trading with individuals living outside them" (Bondurant, 1958: 95).

Other provisions of the Gandhi-Irwin agreement were as follows:

- Amnesty declared for people convicted of nonviolent civil disobedience offenses.
  - Restoration of confiscated, forfeited, or attacked properties.
  - Withdrawal of all restraining ordinances.
2. **Constitutional reforms:** An agreement was also reached to involve Congress representatives in deliberations on questions such as federation, financial credit, defense, external affairs, and the position of minorities (Bondurant, 1958).

## Analysis of the Salt Satyagraha Campaign

The Salt Satyagraha took place during 1930–1931 when thousands of people all over India adopted the tenets of satyagraha to disobey the British Raj's policies and legal acts. The objective was the removal of laws that were proving to



cause hardship for the poor. For instance, the salt acts established a government monopoly over a food necessity—an example of injustice and subjugation of Indians by foreigners. It was decided to disobey the unjust salt laws and adopt the path of truth—“the right of Indian people to manufacture salt as they chose” (Bondurant, 1958: 100).

The campaign started with Gandhi leading a march with his followers to Dandi, on the sea shore in Gujarat, and then manufacturing salt. All the satyagraha volunteers, abiding by the principles of nonviolence, continued with the agenda of collecting salt water and manufacturing salt and suffering the resulting violence inflicted by the police force without retaliation. The satyagrahis signed a pledge to offer civil resistance without any financial expectation of support or assistance to their families. They sought the support of the media by publishing leaflets and brochures on the campaign and related activities and distributing them to the public. Subsequent action was extended toward an economic boycott, with the picketing of cloth and liquor shops, and so on. Throughout the duration of the campaign, Gandhi continued to make efforts to negotiate with government for a settlement.

The salt campaign was successful in its objectives, following the talks between Lord Irwin, the viceroy to India, and Gandhi. Even though the acts were not abolished, substantial modifications were made. The long-term objective of swaraj (complete independence) was not accomplished, but prominent Congress leaders were invited to the Second Round Table Conference to consider constitutional questions involved in advancement toward an independent Indian nation (Bondurant, 1958).

In other words, the Salt Satyagraha was a highly moral and ethical means of achieving civil disobedience in protest against oppression, injustice, and exploitation. The focus was on truth, nonviolence, and suffering and on educating the opponents about the unfairness of their acts without any insults, violent retaliation, or similar techniques. In contrast, traditional forms of protest lack the moral focus on the path of truth, nonviolence, and self-suffering. Satyagraha can be described as the “most civilized and ethical form of warfare” (Minor, 2003: 245), which is able to strike an emotional chord in opponents, thereby increasing its chances of success.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article has sought to develop a discussion of the model of satyagraha, its practical implementation, and its adaptation to resolve conflicts amicably. Satyagraha could be used as a theoretical framework to develop and design models to effectively resolve conflicts in a peaceful and cooperative manner.

But some concerns have been raised about the practicality of the satyagraha strategy. For instance, Nehru, the first prime minister of India and also a close friend of Gandhi's, comments that satyagraha “is not a political or scientific

attitude nor is it perhaps even an ethical attitude. It is narrowly moralist [and] begs the question: what is goodness? Is it merely an individual affair or a social affair?" (Baird, 2003: 37).

It has also been attacked by Sri Aurobindo, an Indian nationalist leader: "Gandhi's theories are like mental theories built on a basis of one-sided reasoning and claiming for a limited truth (that of non-violence and passive resistance) a universality which it cannot have" (Minor, 2003: 88). Gandhi's critics (Baird, 2003; Coward, 2003; Minor, 2003; Singh, 2003) focus on the role of Gandhi, his lifestyle, and his personality in connection with the success of the philosophy and concept of satyagraha. They lay stress on Gandhi and his blind belief on the concept of satyagraha as responsible for its overall success as a nonviolent conflict management tool. But it cannot be denied that "it was a program that enabled the weak and the poor to resist the strong. It was a political expedient" (Baird, 2003: 37). It had the potential to rally masses of people, usually the oppressed and suppressed, with a "rejoined sense of hope of accomplishing a civilized form of warfare over a powerful opponent in a highly ethical format" (Baird, 2003: 7).

The philosophy and technique of satyagraha as a way to resolve labor-management conflict can be described as a "self encapsulating conflict method" (Wehr, 1979: 56). This means that contemporary labor-management issues can be solved by methods that have "built in devices to keep the conflict within acceptable bounds and to inhibit violent extremism and unbridled escalation" (Wehr, 1979: 55). Labor-management conflict has the potential to become violent and uncontrollable, due to factors related to secrecy, education, and envy (Glaser, n.d.), and also issues pertaining to power, control, and politics. The aim thus becomes not to resolve the conflict for the good of all but to gather information in order to gain control and power. The goal changes from conflict resolution to becoming "one of them" in order to achieve status and authority in the organization (Glaser, n.d.). Here is where the strategy of satyagraha comes into the foreground. According to the satyagraha philosophy and technique, "conflict at every organizational level has to be treated with caution. . . . there has to be constant self supervision and sharing of information" (Wehr, 1979: 58). This means that instead of being approached with haste, conflict resolution has to be approached cautiously with constant renegotiation with the self, peers, and superiors (Glaser, n.d.).

The strategy of satyagraha advocates a step-by-step model of conflict negotiation characterized by openness of information and action. This step progression breaks the cycle of escalation, bringing labor onto the same cognitive plane as management. Consequently, labor has a better chance of achieving its goals (Glaser, n.d.). For instance, Ford workers in Russia used the strike and hunger fast in 1980, to pressure management to grant its demand for higher wages. Again, in March 2008, the Subway workers in Michigan were able to peacefully demonstrate and force management to review its buying policy. The staff,

which included the front-line employees at a Subway restaurant in Michigan, organized and conducted satyagraha on a small scale to make management accede to their demand that produce should be bought from local farmers at market value (Glaser, n.d.). The campaign followed a step-by-step progression ensuring that both protestors and management were privy to the goals and expectations of the protest:

- (a) The protestors informed the management of their goal and intended action.
- (b) They used nonviolent means: strikes and peaceful demonstrations.
- (c) They used the media to garner public support for their cause.
- (d) They conducted massive public demonstrations to educate the college students who are the major customers.

The campaign lasted for a week. Ultimately, the management did concede to pay farm hands market value prices for their crops. The move proved fruitful in establishing strong ties between the farming community and Subway restaurants (Glaser, n.d.).

Satyagraha should not be approached as a passive philosophy but as an action-oriented attitude (Reddy, 2008). “The core satyagraha principle of non-violence (ahimsa) is an inherent human tendency” (Reddy, 2008: 101). This means that every person wants to avoid conflict and achieve peace and harmony with self and others (Reddy, 2008). The basis of contemporary satyagraha is perseverance (Wehr, 1979). An individual has to keep emphasizing his/her viewpoint non-violently. “The focus is to educate and make the opponent realize his/her folly . . . at the same time not causing harm to self and to others” (Wehr, 1979: 145). In other words, satyagraha protestors should aim to educate management through due process of talking, sharing, and making them understand and finally realize their mistake (Wehr, 1979). Violent actions and behaviors may prove harmful and cause undue suffering. Satyagraha techniques advocate non-violence and peace, resisting violent means to achieve quick solutions to conflict (Glaser, n.d.).

The satyagraha strategy could be used by the maquiladora workers in Mexico. Maquiladoras are foreign-owned assembly plants along Mexican border that manufacture products for the U.S. market. It has been found that the maquiladora laborers work is unhygienic, unsafe, and hazardous work environments. The strategy of satyagraha might be useful in focusing media and management attention on the plight of the workers, in seeking sympathy for the workers, and in implementing proper remedial action (Maquiladora workers report unhealthful working conditions, 1998). Similarly it could also be adopted to improve the conditions of workers in various sweatshops throughout the United States. Sweatshops are common in U.S. cities that have large immigrant communities, for instance, the Greater Los Angeles area. Sweatshops can be described as working environments that are unsafe and unhealthy, and in which labor is paid low wages (Hearts and Minds, 2006). In fact, satyagraha

can be used in all contemporary organizations where an oppressed group lacks a proper bargaining position. The oppressed group could first generate media attention, and then nonviolently persuade the other party to agree to its demands.

This strategy might also interest academicians and researchers who want to challenge current management practices, eradicate problems in management theory, and attract the attention of academia and practitioners by focusing on the issues of oppressed and ostracized parties in corporations. It might be interesting to discuss satyagraha and its elements within the critical management studies (CMS) paradigm to shed light on issues pertaining to emancipation, injustice, and the role of ethics and morality in corporations. The Gandhian philosophy with its emphasis on truth and a nonviolent consensual approach could prove to be relevant to the contemporary business scenario involving bankruptcies, corporate scandals like that involving Enron, and other matters, to highlight the role of ethics, moral values, and justice. For instance, the concept of nonviolence was successfully used by Danube Circle, an independent civic group in Europe in 1998, to halt the building of Nagymaros Dam in Hungary during the Communist regime. It has also been used by environmental activists under the name of “climate satyagraha” to protest against climate change. Climate satyagraha has been used in the UK, the United States, and elsewhere to protest against thermal plants (that utilize coal in their operations) resulting in environmental damage and eventually climate change (Boyle, 2009). To conclude, satyagraha has tremendous potential once it is unleashed in management, especially in the areas of conflict management (labor-management, gender conflicts, race conflicts, and so forth), industrial relations, and corporate ethics.

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