

Ethics
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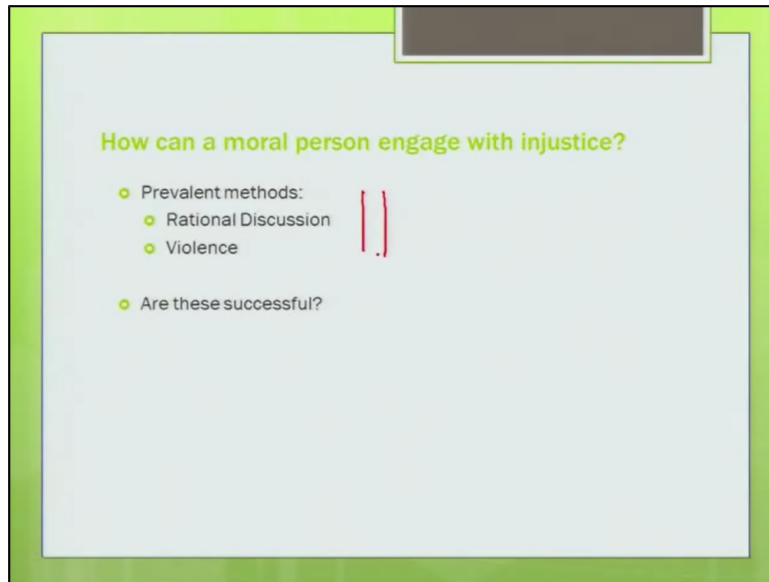
Module No. #01
Lecture No. #28
Gandhian Ethics Part-3 (Satyagraha)

Now, we are talking about Satyagraha, the most important topic on Gandhian Ethics. That well, important in the sense, because, this was the means of engagement, with the real world, that Gandhi developed, sticking onto his ethical ideals. It is one thing, and it is easy to enumerate ethical ideals. And, it is another, to implement it.

In fact, criticism, various ethicists, or religions, or moral codes, always face is that, they have prescribed a code of conduct, but how to implement it, or how to put it into action, or how to make it engage with the world out there, is a test of the theory, and the theoretician. So, when we talk about Satyagraha, we talk about Gandhi's ethical ideals, meeting the real world out there.

Now, what do we do, when a person conflicts human predicament, if I may support it. People differ in their opinions. And because, they differ in their opinions, they have a conflict about it. Now, one party in the conflict would perhaps, are accused the other of being unjust. So, we have conflicts about justice. Whether justice prevails or not. How do we arrive at the solution of a conflict?

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Now, if you take a look at the slide, we talk about conflict. How does can a moral person engage with injustice. Now here, yes. We talk about conflicts. But, we talk about conflicts, for the ease of understanding from a particular perspective, where we take the perspective of a moral person, trying to engage with injustice. So, what are the prevalent methods, of engaging with injustice. A is rational discussion. And, B is violence. Are these successful.

Now, this is a question, that we need to ponder on. That well, it is very simply put up here, that well, it is either rational discussion or violence, which seem to be, only two ways of engaging with injustice. And, that is how, perhaps it is. How can a moral person, engage with justice? The prevalent methods, that we see here, are rational discussion or violence. Are these successful? Well. Let us look at it, this way.

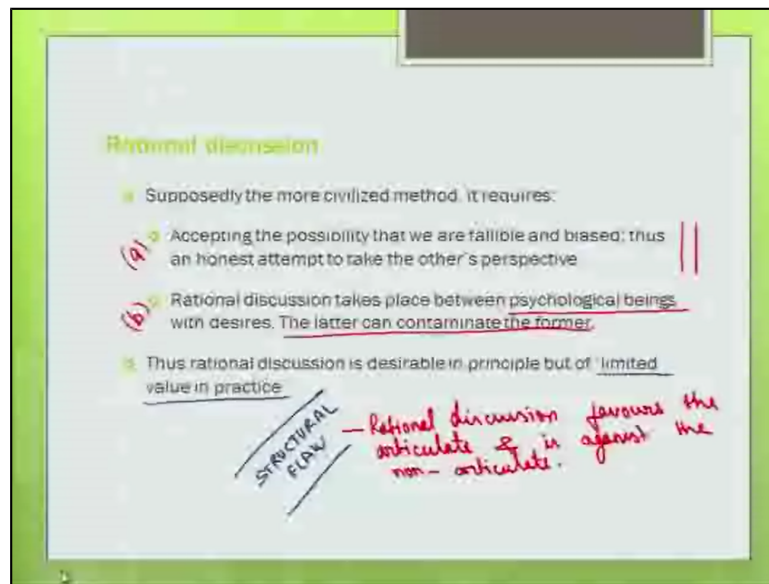
How does one engage with injustice? Say, there are various notions of injustice. Say, between a Factory Owner and a Factory Employee, between a Landlord and a Tenant. Forget about the past structures. It could be a conflict between friends. It could be a conflict between, or disagreement between family members. And, one seems to be accusing, the other of being unjust?

So, how do you, when we talk of Satyagraha, from our own perspective is, how does the moral man, wish to convince the apparently unjust person. Well. One is the entire edifice of a human justice, as practised currently today is through, means of rational discussion. That well, our

appeal to reason, the entire era of modernity, focuses its basis on, reason or rationality.

That, rationality or reason, is objective. And, by appealing to reason, we can resolve any discussion. Of course, when this fails, we always have violence, to count upon. In fact, that is why, entire nations have armed forces. And, policeman have battens and firearms in their hands. So, violence as a final means of tackling justice. Now, let us see, what does Gandhi talk about this.

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Now, let us consider the first aspect, rational discussion. Well. This is supposedly the more civilised method. And, what exactly happens in a rational discussion for, conflict resolution, or for dealing with an unjust opponent. Well. What it requires is that first, it requires, that both of them coming to the discussion table. Both the parties coming to the discussion table should, A) accept the possibility, that they are fallible and biased, and thus an honest attempt to take the other's perspective.

So, accepting the possibility that we are fallible and biased; thus an honest attempt to take the other's perspective. B) rational discussion takes place between psychological beings, with desires, and the latter can contaminate the former. So, this is an important assumption, that should be understood by the proponent, when we talk about rational discussion. That, rational discussion takes place between psychological beings, and that the latter can contaminate the

former.

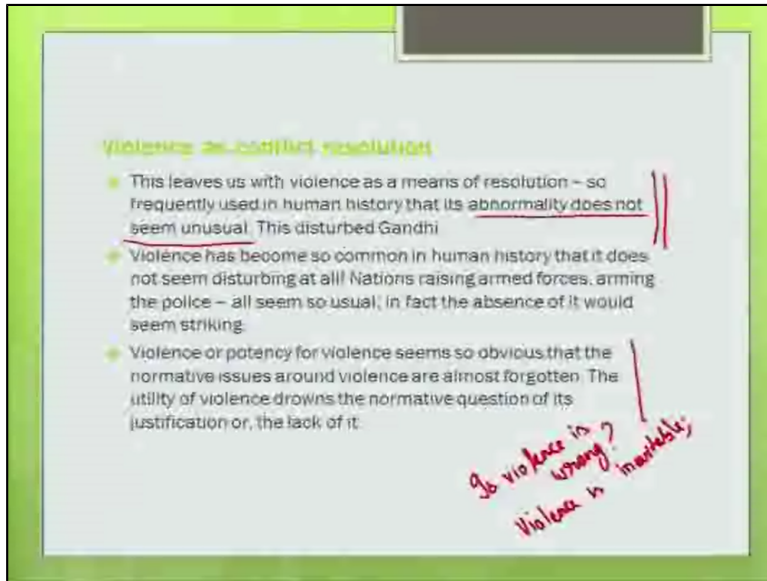
Let us briefly talk about this. Let us say, look at it, this way. The entire judiciary, in any country, is setup for enforcing justice. And, it is such a simple evident truth, that it no more strikes us as anything profound. That, when we engage lawyers, a better lawyer can perhaps win a case, undeservingly. And, an inferior lawyer, would lose a case, even though truth be on that side, or justice be on that side. Now, what does this mean?

This means, that well, rational discussion can be guided, according to the motivation. That, we are all psychological beings. That, we have seen, that rational discussion, is in favour of the more articulate. So, let us note this down. That well, rational discussion favours the articulate, and is against the non-articulate. This, I would like to term as a, structural flaw. Now, this is something, that Gandhi very much takes into account. That, rational discussion takes place, between psychological beings, and with desires. And, the desires can contaminate the, rational discussion.

So, let us think of a classic example, where in the Indian scenario, a lesser educated tribal is coming to seek justice, from urban or an establishing industry. Now, both of them seek redressal in the judiciary. But definitely, it is the industrialist, who has better access to articulate lawyers, to advocate his position in case, much better than what the tribal can do. So, if we talk about rational discussion, then rational discussion comes out to be favouring the ones, who are articulate, and it is definitely against the one, that is non articulate.

So, Gandhi being a lawyer himself, understands the importance of how rationality itself can be, guided or goaded into the detection, where one really wants it to land. Thus, Gandhi is critical of rational discussion, as conflict resolution methodology. Because, rational discussion is desirable, yes in principle, but it is of limited value in practice. After rational discussion, let us go ahead to the next option, that comes forth.

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The next option, that comes forth is, violence as conflict resolution. Now, this leaves us with, violence as a means of resolution. So, frequently used in human history, that its abnormality, does not seem unusual. This disturbed Gandhi. Now, if we see, that well, throughout the human history, we have had violence as a very dominant means of guiding history, or very dominant means of resolving conflicts. That, it almost seems so usual about it, that its abnormality, does not seem unusual.

This is what, disturbs Gandhi. So, violence has become so common in human history, that it does not seem disturbing at all. Nations raising armed forces, arming the police, all seem so usual. In fact, the absence of it, would seem striking. Violence, or potency of violence, potency for violence, seems so obvious, that the normative issues around violence, are almost forgotten. The utility of violence drowns, the normative questions of its justification, or rather more accurately, the lack of it.

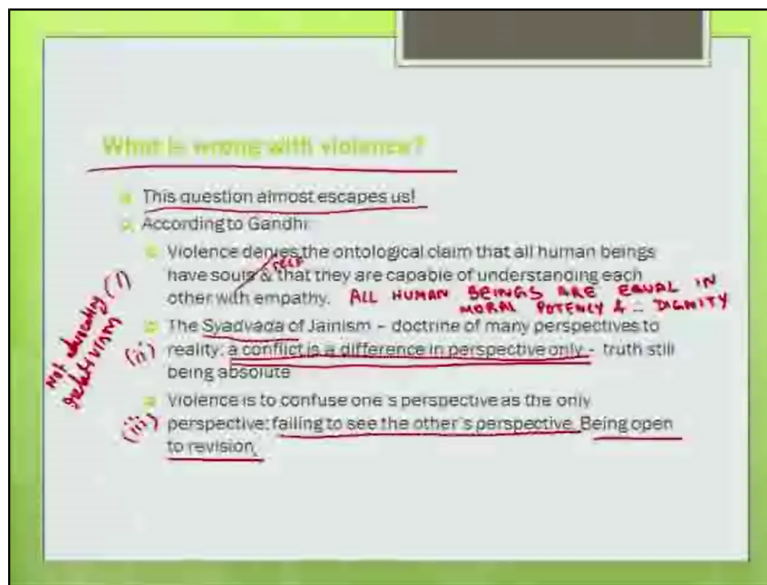
Now, what is a violence, as conflict resolution. Well. Let us consider this, that well. We engage in a rational discussion. And, it falls off. And then, we have violence as the backup method, to sort it out. And, that is why, countries and nations, nations of the whole world, raise their own armed forces. That is why, policeman are armed. Or, that they have been given the legitimacy, which is again a question that, can the state really give the legitimacy, to the internal police, to use violence against its citizens.

But that, apart for the time being. That well, it is such a common place to find armed forces, and armed policemen. All evidence or symbols of violence, as a means of conflict resolution, or tackling a disobedient behaviour. That, it seems unusual or abnormal, to conceive of a possibility, with the lack of violence. Now, look at the sensitivity of this man, later to be called Mahatma Gandhi, that he finds this notion of violence, disturbing

Something, that we are so used to it today, or perhaps in all times, that these evidences of violence, do not hurt us, or do not disturb us, more accurately. So, we find, that well, violence as conflict resolution, as a very standard backup measure. If you look at the third point mentioned here, violence or potency for violence, seems so obvious, that normative issues around violence, are almost forgotten.

Now, what are these normative issues. Is violence wrong. Perhaps, most people answer to this question would be that, violence is inevitable. Now, is this the answer of the question posed. Well. What is the normative answer of this question? So, this normative answer of the question, has almost escaped us. Because, it is being taken as a standard measure, to tackle injustice.

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Well. Let us raise the question, what is wrong with violence. Well. First, surprisingly or disturbingly, this question almost escapes us. Perhaps, we do not reflect through life about

wondering, that well, what is wrong with violence? Well. Gandhi has an answer to this. Gandhi has thought through this, and the answer flows from his ethical claims. Well. Why is violence wrong. And perhaps, immediately most of us would be, short of words, to answer this. Well. Gandhi puts, structured answer to this claim.

Well. According to Gandhi, A or I, violence denies the ontological claim, that all human beings have souls, and that they are capable of understanding each other with empathy. Now, if I am allowed to play the role of the empathetic advocate, to Gandhi's views for today's audience, I shall rather use the word, self, over here. That well, what is Gandhi meaning. Gandhi does not have a religious underpinning, as we would be sceptical of it, perhaps today.

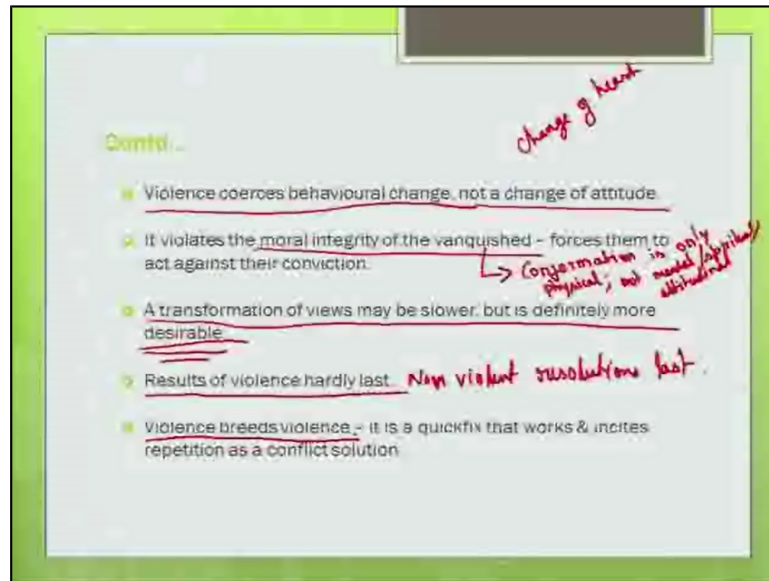
Well. What exactly is meant, that well, all human beings are equal, in moral potency, and therefore dignity. So, the point, that Gandhi is trying to make, is that well, ontologically, if all of us have souls or selves, and these selves are capable of understanding each other with empathy. So, we are all morally potent, to appreciate the other perspective, and thereof offer dignity to the other.

Now, Gandhi has been influenced by the, Syadvada Doctrine of Jainism, which claims, that there are many perspectives to reality. That, a conflict is a difference in perspective only. So, whenever we have noticed that, Gandhi is not advocating relativism. Rather, Gandhi is claiming that well, relativism is because of the difference in perspectives, not because truth is relative.

So, truth is relative, only via, till we take the perspective into account. So, II, Gandhi makes a claim, that this is an influence from Syadvada. And, it is that a conflict is essentially, a difference in perspective only. This greatly alters the way, the understanding of conflict. And, III, finally, violence is to confuse one's perspective, as the only perspective. Failing to see the other's perspective, and being open to revision.

So, these are very commonsensically simple, yet profound observations, that can be made from Gandhi's ethical ideals, that well, to be violent, is to seek a resolution. And, this resolution is required only because, one fails to see the perspective of the other. So, being open to revision, is

very much required, and is a moral, right, easier, and accurate way of, doing away with violence.
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Now, what more about violence. Well. Gandhi goes ahead and say, is that well, violence coerces behavioural change, not a change of attitude. So, when we talk about violence, it only forces. So, an army, that conquers another nation, has conquered it, but has not changed its attitude. And, what Gandhi seeks, is a change of heart, not a possession of a physical entity. If we could discuss further about Gandhi's metaphysic, we could understand that well, Gandhi postulates the necessity of assuming a self, or a soul force is because, the body is the domain of violence.

But, the soul, or the soul force, or the self, or the attitude, is not the domain of violence. And, we can contain the body. We can give pain to the body. But, to bring a change of heart, as he calls heart, and the famous dichotomy between head and heart, to change the self requires, a more non-violent peaceful intervention. What it talks about in, which is, Satyagraha. So further, why is violence wrong. Because, it violates the moral integrity of the vanquished.

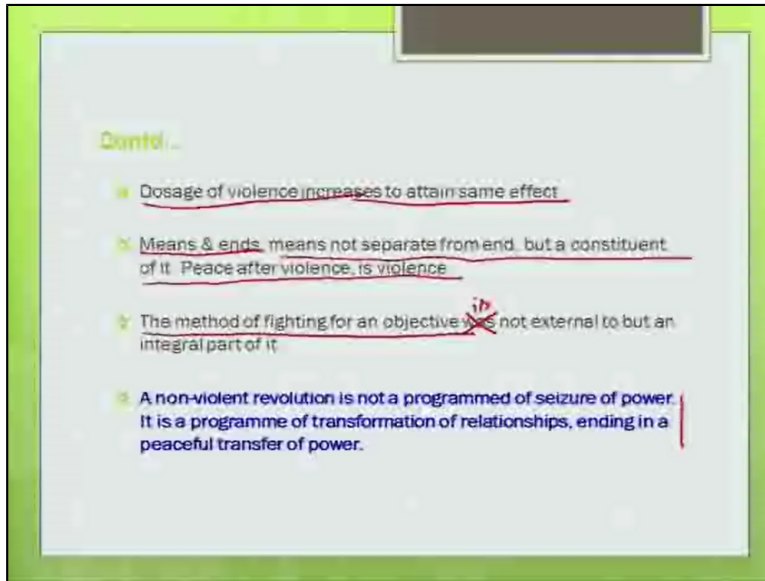
It forces them, to act against their conviction. Well. With the moment the victor, conquers the vanquished, the vanquished are forced to act in the manner, that the victors want them to act. However, this acting is not out of their conviction, but it is out of force, or fear, or coercion. So, for the vanquished, we find that their confirmation, is only physical, not mental. As, Gandhi would say, spiritual. And, what perhaps, many of us would understand as, attitudinal.

So, when we bring about a difference, that difference, we can force them, physically. When the victor forces the vanquished physically, but the aim of a resolution, is to bring about a change from the inside. Next, we talk about, transformation of views may be slower, but is definitely more desirable. Of the more impatient of the audience, they would already be poking with this question. That well, it is fine, that we can use Satyagraha, or we can use patience, or we avoid the use of violence, but this is going to take a lot of time.

It is simply easier to punish the errant citizen, by the stick of the policeman, rather than to argue, convince with him, or tolerate his indiscipline. For him to learn. Well. Accepted, that a transformation of views is slower. But, what Gandhi argues, is that, it is definitely more desirable, because it is long lasting. Which comes out in the next issue, that we talk about. Next point or bullet we talk, is that, results of violence hardly lost.

Whereas, non-violent resolutions, last longer. And finally, violence breeds violence. It is a quick fix, that works and incites repetitions, as a conflict solution. So, violence breeds violence. So, once we see, that well, a system of say, public lashing is working. So, the administration, or the leadership, is keen on using it, again and again. But, to have the same effect, perhaps it has to increase its dosage.

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So, the next bullet talks about it. Well. The dosage of violence increases, to attain the same effect. So, we have to increase the dosage of violence, to attain the same effect. So, any punishments may have to be escalated, to have the same effect. It is almost like, the case of antibiotics, that well. We use it as a last measure. But, indiscriminate use of it, reduces its effectiveness, and increases susceptibility to it. So therefore, we have to increase the dose. That was a simplistic analogy.

But, for the moment, it can be seen to make some sense. Well. Means and ends. Many times we see, that Gandhi has talked about, that means and ends. When we talk about means and ends, that Gandhi's Philosophy is always about, the importance of means and ends. When we talk about that, any act is towards a goal. But, is the goal, separate from the entire process followed, to achieve the goal.

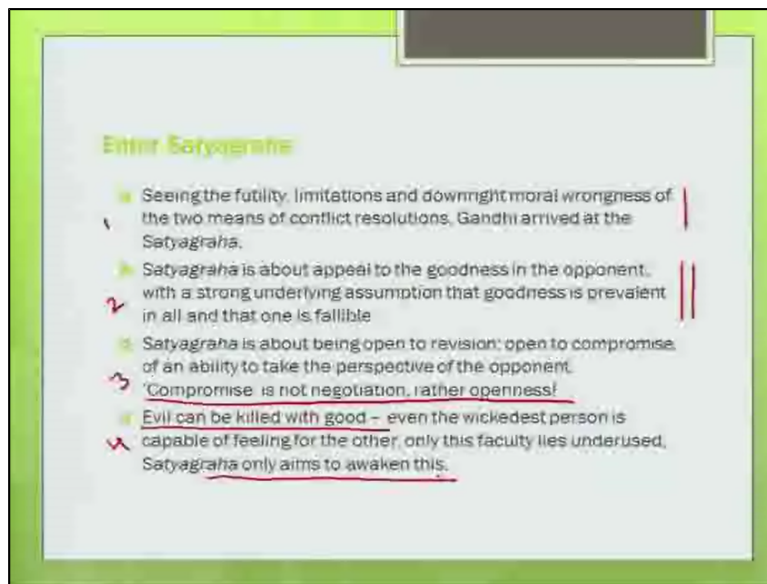
Now, for those who have a very clear, distinction between means and ends, especially considering its importance. This is of course, it is not a chronological classification, but this is a moral classification. So, when I am saying, that well, robin hood is stealing, to distribute amongst the poor. The consequence may be, well, the hungry are fed. But the means, is that be included into the action to be judged, to arrive at its moral potential.

According to Gandhi. Yes. If you look at the slide, means is not separate from the end, but a

constituent of it. Peace after violence, is still violence. So, when robin hood feeds the hungry, is still not a moral appreciable act, because the food has been stolen. The next issue, that comes out in the Gandhian Ethical model, is that the method of fighting for an objective, was not external to, but an integral part of it.

So, the method of fighting for an objective, is not external to, but an integral part of it. So, no matter, what weapons you use, the weapons that are used, or the methodology that is used, is not external to the objective, it is a part of it. As, put forth in Anthony Parel's Book, a non-violent revolution, is not a program to seizure of power. It is a program of transformation of relationships, ending in a peaceful transfer of power. Take a moment, to reflect over it. Well

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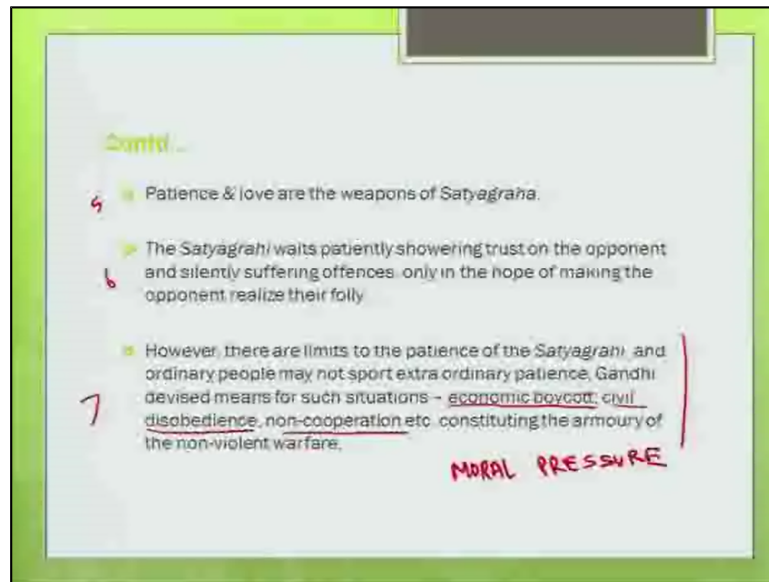
Enter Satyagraha. This is where, seeing the futility, limitations, and downright moral wrongness, of the two means of conflict resolutions, Gandhi arrives at the Satyagraha. Satyagraha is about the appeal to the goodness in the opponent, with a strong underlying assumption, that goodness is prevalent in all, and that, all are fallible. That, one is fallible. That, each one of us is fallible. Coming to the fourth point about, Satyagraha.

Satyagraha is about being, open to revision, open to compromise. It is often, ability to take the perspective, of the opponent. Compromise is not negotiation, rather openness. So, many of us would understand, compromise as negotiating, without a moral denominator. But, for Gandhi,

compromise is not such kind of a negotiation, rather it is openness. To see, that one's perspective is, perhaps inaccurate, and therefore it needs to revise. As this say, evil can be killed with good. Even, the wickedest person is capable of feeling for the other.

Only this faculty lies underused. Satyagraha only aims to awaken this. So, when we talk about selfish person, or a wicked person, is a wicked person because, his love for others, is much lesser. Nevertheless, even let us take the example of Hitler, as Gandhi has talked also about, Hitler and his cruelty. Well. Hitler loved his dog. Hitler loved his mistress. So, there is a possibility of love, even in Hitler, only it was confined to very few. The whole point of Satyagraha, is to incite this potency, spreading into decision-making.

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So, for Satyagraha, patience and love are the weapons of Satyagraha. So, when we talk about Satyagraha, what is the methodology of Satyagraha. It is patience and love. The Satyagrahi waits patiently, showering trust on the opponent, and silently suffering offences, only in the hope of making, the opponent realise their folly. Now, so briefly put, what mean by Satyagraha, is that well, it is a tools of conflict resolution, of fighting injustice. A non-violent tool.

And no, it is not confined to rationality, or rational discussion only. It incorporates, the human's motivation for action. So, when one person patiently waits, suffering injustice, in the aim of sparking out the goodness, or good sense of judgement, in the opponent. That is when,

Satyagraha is successful. That is the objective of Satyagraha. We can find various examples of Satyagraha.

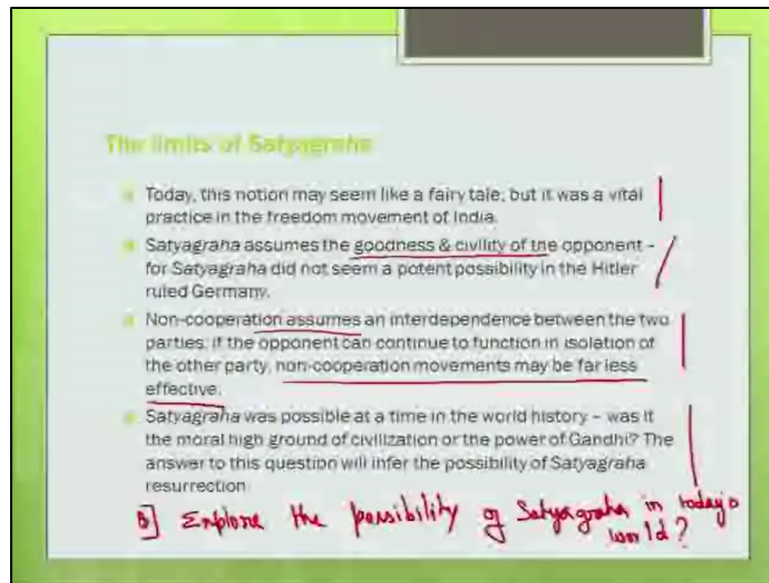
And, from a simple fact, that when you see, you land up in a heavily crowded, hot damp counter selling tickets. And, you find, that the person who is selling tickets, has mistakenly, or has intentionally, sold the ticket to somebody behind you, in the queue. Now, either you can fight over there, and ask cited as a case of injustice. But, the Gandhian or the Satyagraha way would be, to patiently smile, and to make the clerk feel, that he has done a mistake, by jumping the queue, or disregarding the queue.

That is the objective of Satyagraha. So, when one makes a mistake, and the other attacks, or accuses, it puts the doer in a defensive. He tries to bring about justifications. And, that is what Gandhi always cautioned us about, the misuse of rational justifications. You always bring about justifications, to justify that lapse. But, if one is patient, and one is loving, and one can wait for reforming the other, well, it brings about change. So, Satyagraha is all about, patience and love for the other.

And, with eternal undying hope, that moral potency, that all of us, all human beings are equipped with moral potency, it is only a matter of time and patience, with which one can spark it off, in the other. Well. But finally, there are limits, to the patience of the Satyagrahi. And, let us keep in mind that, Gandhi dealt with a lot of, this Satyagraha was not some mere theoretical speculation, in a textbook academic institution. It was a means of struggle, of the Indian independence movement. So, Gandhi has suggested, that well, the people will lose out on patience.

And, the Satyagrahi cannot be infinitely patient. So, Gandhi had devised other means, for such situations. Other means like, economic boycott, civil disobedience, non-cooperation, and various other, which constituted the armoury for, the non-violent warfare that, Gandhi talked about, and practiced against the British, with success. So, when one does not cooperate, or one boycotts the other, that is also a sense of moral pressure. What can be termed as moral pressure. Well.

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The limits of Satyagraha. Now, before you read the bullets, on the limits of Satyagraha, well, first I would say that, many of us listening to this, could be sceptical, cynical about the possibility of Satyagraha, as a means of struggle. It perhaps assumes too much, or it expects too much, from human beings, not to seek revenge, not to seek justice, by any means, rather wait for the other, to realise his or her mistake. But, let us slow down, and look at it.

That well, here was one man, who has actually used this methodology, in India's freedom struggle, with phenomenal success. And, they could make sure that, crowds of people, giving to armed policemen, latte charging them. So, I think, this instrument of non-violent warfare, has of course been demonstrated, in action, in history. But, it is also prevalently used today, in the way we discuss, in the way we talk, or deal with people around us.

How many times, many of us are Satyagrahis? Many of us, do wait for the other, to realise his or her mistake. And, in this period of it, we do suffer. Some are patience. Some are less patience.

Some are very patient. Just as, say, a father would, or a parent would be, patient towards the airing of the child, with the hope, that well, the child would realise his or her own mistake, and better over. So, let us now come back, and look at the limitations of Satyagraha.

Now today, this notion, may seem like a fairy tale. But, it was a vital practice in the freedom movement of India, as we talked about. Satyagraha assumes, the goodness and civility of the opponent. For Satyagraha, did not seem a potent possibility, in the Hitler ruled Germany. Thousands of Jews, which were almost in human skeletons, and taken to concentration camps, did not provoke the goodness, or did not invoke any goodness or civility, in the oppressing German army.

So, Satyagraha assumes, that there is goodness and civility of the opponent. Non-cooperation, assumes an interdependence, between the two parties, if the opponent can continue to function, in isolation of the other party, non-cooperation may be far less effective. Well. Gandhi talked about economic boycott, and non-cooperation. Here, we need to take the local. Because, to understand any concept, we need to take its factor in its context.

Well. The goodness and civility. Well. Many have argued that, Gandhi was possible because, the British were the colonising power. Because, of the inherent sense of practising justice, in the British. Non-cooperation was successful. Because, the Britishers used Indians, in the colonised India to run the country. So, a non-cooperation by the native Indians, did bring their administrative apparatus to a standstill. So, non-cooperation was successful. Economic boycott was successful.

Because, the Indian were essential part, to the functioning of the British in India. So, the context also lends, meaning. And, this is not a formula, or a claim that, Gandhi would say that, it is unequivocally applied cutting across the local, or circumstances. Well. Satyagraha was possible at a time in world history, was it the moral high ground of civilisation, or the power of Gandhi. The answer to this question will infer, the possibility of the resurrection of Satyagraha.

So, I leave this question with you, that well, to all of us, or to most of us perhaps, or to many of

us, who have been sceptical and cynical of this esteemed Gandhian notion. Well, for one, Gandhi did exist in flesh and blood. And, he did use Satyagraha, as a means of freedom struggle. So, we have a concrete example, of how Satyagraha was used, as a non-violent means. And, I leave this question to you, now. That, whether the Satyagraha was possible, because of the moral high ground of those times, or was it possible because of the insistence, or the magic, or the power of Gandhi.

If it was possible, because of a moral high ground of a particular time. Perhaps, my answer would be that, no. If it was possible then, it would be possible now. It is still in practice, and it would still be possible in future. Only, it needs to be summoned, or by a force like Gandhi. So, I leave this question to you, to an open-ended question, to explore the possibility of Satyagraha in your life, or in the current scenario. With this, we end the notion, we end our exploration, of the Gandhian Ethics.