

SEMINAR ON MAHATMA GANDHI'S PHILOSOPHY ON PEACE: LESSONS FOR THE WORLD

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Seminar on Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy on peace: Lessons for the world has been successfully organized on January 20th, 2007 at MITC Hotel, Ayer Keroh, Melaka by Melaka State Government, collaboration with the World Youth Foundation (WAY), Malaysian Institute of Historical and Patriotism Studies (IKSEP), Malaysian Youth Council (MBM) and Melaka State Youth Council (MGBM). The half day programmed was officiated and closing by the Right Honorable Chief Minister of Melaka, Datuk Seri Mohd Ali bin Mohd Rustam

The objectives of organizing this seminar were to stimulate debate and discussion on Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy on peace and the lessons that can be drawn from it for the world. It was also to evaluate the effectiveness of the philosophy of **Satyagraha**, assess the applicability of the philosophy in the contemporary world, encouraged a culture of learning from history and enriched the philosophical understanding of participants.

The idea of organizing Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy on peace were come upon the Chief Minister of Melaka suggestion with the hoping that the lessons from the seminar can be applied to our national, regional and international contexts of today. Participants were among senior lecturers from various universities such as UiTM, UM, KUTKM, UPM, Politeknik, UIAM, NGO's, student's leader and youths from Melaka State Youth Council (MGBM).

2.0 CM'S OPENING SPEECH

CM is saddened by the killings in the world. The world looks like hell and nations that are poor and just developing are the most affected. What is the future of the world? Man has forgotten his senses. Examples include the tension in the Middle East where people of the same ethnic race are killing each other and also can be found amongst the Christians. All religions advocate peace but human beings still are at war. Therefore, the principles of Mahatma Gandhi which comprise of non-violence and truth should be adhered to. This is utmost important for the present and future generations of today.

1. The advocator of peace-a shining example set in the legacy he left behind. Who is he? He is none other than **Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi**, or better known as Mahatma Gandhi where 'Mahatma' means the '**Great Soul.**'
2. He is well known for his principles of courage, non violence and truth called '**Satyagraha.**' He believed that the way people behave is more important than what they achieve.
3. Using the principles of '**Satyagraha**', he led the campaign for India's independence from the British. In many ways, this is similar to the way Malaysia achieved its independence through the untiring efforts of the Late **Tunku Abdul Rahman.**
4. In the quest of achieving world peace, especially in the present world which is confronted with so much violence and terrorism the principles of non-violence practiced by Gandhi should be seriously looked into.
5. To achieve a peaceful world through a strategy of non-violence requires a massive effort by the world leaders of today. Lives should be preserved, not destroyed! -

3.0 MAHATMA GANDHI'S PHILOSOPHY ON PEACE
SPEECH BY DR. CHANDRA MUZAFFAR, PRESIDENT,
INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT FOR A JUST WORLD

1. Mahatma Gandhi developed a method of action based upon the principals of courage, **non-violence** and through **Satyagraha.** Spent 20 yrs, in Africa fighting system of apartheid. Later when he returned to India, the British were ruling it. Britain was the biggest colonial power and as long as there was dominance, oppression and a struggle for human rights the country would not be free. Resistance was necessary but in the form of '**ahimsa**' –non violence. It is a whole philosophy of life.
2. After fighting against the British, a new society has to be built. Should promote and encourage human liberation. This could not be achieved through massive power and that is why he was against huge corporations. For him, democracy should start in the level of the village. The idea of '**panchaid**'-a village discussion or **musyawarah** session was necessary.

3. In order to build a society rooted in human dignity, we have to go back to the values of compassion, loving and caring for each other. Justice should be prevailed. There is enough for everyone's need in this world but not enough for everyone's greed.
4. In Gandhi's memorial in Delhi, the spinning wheel and the three holy books which comprised the **Bhagvad Gita**, the **Holy Quran** and the **Bible** are found. He could also quote from these three books. To change this world, man needs to change himself or **muhassabah**. All religions talk about change.
5. Drawing out values from religion and applying them in our daily lives.

In the world today, elites, the rulers of the world dominate the world. The Washington led the government - total spectrum of military dominance. U.S.A. & others agitated over China sending a missile to the universe. The worlds, spends 1.2 trillion dollars on military, arms solders and compare that to what we spend on human improvement. We are nowhere reaching the United Nations millennium goals. How do these elite powers control us? Through the United Nations is one example. Despite all the resolutions for a free Palestine, it has never become a reality because of the political dominance of one major power.

The value of currency is determined by foreign powers and not by our own country. Global powers control the world. **Reuters, AP, CNN and BBC** decided what they want to show to the world. News manipulated. These western powers made Gandhi look like a terrorist especially when he decided to boycott British goods. Media can break you or break you. At the global level this is very sad.

Entertainment is a very powerful tools to influences one's mindset. Zionists control Hollywood and the moment **Marlon Brando** made this statement, he was ostracized. How do you resist this?

Gandhi's principle of non-violence worked well in India. As a result of the massacre in **Amritsar**, he advised people not to fight back but instead give into a peaceful manner.

The speaker believes in non-violence and quotes examples from the **Quran**. When every other avenue fails, you have a right to force. Even the **Guru Granth Sahib** (the Sikh Holy Book) says this. Even Gandhi said, when nothing else works, you have to resort to force.

Huge corporations, global mergers destroy human dignity.

No one religion dominates the world. At global level, all religious communities are below 30 per cent. We have to co-operate and work as one human body to create world peace. Destruction of the environment, we have to live in harmony with nature. Concept of the family which must be protected and we must go back to the basic values. Skills are taught in schools but lack values.

In 1970, almost 50 per cent of the population was below poverty level but today it is well below 6 per cent in Malaysia. Today Malaysia is successful because we can achieve about 7 per cent growth for the past 10 years. As such we have wealth which is distributed through the building of schools, hospitals, infrastructures and also public utilities.

We have to use force when needed. We have to be big for a better economy and we need to generate wealth to eradicate poverty because economic growth depends on wealth. Science is a very important aspect of every society. If we master the basic sciences, there is growth and freedom.

4.0 QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

- 4.1 Concerns on the consistence of ideology opted by Mahatma Gandhi
- The revolution evolved because of oppression being made in politics.
 - Political instability occurs due to the injustice being practiced by certain leaders of the world.
- 4.2 Non-violence does not mean cowardice – small countries do not dare to oppose the powerful political bodies that control the world
- Those with powers must decide at what point non-violent is still applicable.
 - Clean upright leaders who have good contacts with the people will be able to uphold justice
 - Problems arise when there are lies
- 4.3 Oppressor and the oppressed: The Case in Palestine
- The Palestinian conflict can only be resolved when the US government accepts that there is injustice and stop protecting Israel.
- 4.4 Gandhi's situation is not the same as the present situation the leadership shown in today's scenario should change and improve with time as the current situation differs greatly in terms of economy and political stability. There is limitation to military empowerment as shown in other conflicts

such as in Vietnam and Iraq. So, the US needs to consider their military strategies to overcome conflicts.

- 4.5 Within three years' occupation in Iraq, the US lost 3000 soldiers while 650000 Iraqis died. Conflicts still go on and there are so much sufferings till embedded today as we speak. So, we need to reflect on Gandhi's principles for a better world.
- 4.6 G7, OIC and G10 should play a more significant role in ensuring that there is peace worldwide.

5.0 BIOGRAPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 in Porbandar, India. He became one of the most respected spiritual and political leaders of the 1900's. Gandhi helped free the Indian people from British rule through nonviolent resistance, and is honored by Indians as the father of the Indian Nation. The Indian people called Gandhiji '**Mahatma**', meaning **Great Soul**. At the age of 13 Gandhi married Kasturba, a girl the same age. Their parents arranged the marriage. The Gandhi had four children.

Educated in India and in London (City University), he was admitted to the English bar in 1889 and practiced law unsuccessfully in India for two years. In 1893 he went to South Africa, where he was later joined by his wife and children. There he became a successful lawyer and leader of the Indian community and involved himself in the fight to end discrimination against the country's Indian minority. In South Africa he read widely, drawing inspiration from such sources as the [Bhagavad-Gita](#), John [Ruskin](#), Leo [Tolstoy](#), Ralph Waldo [Emerson](#), and Henry David [Thoreau](#), and his personal philosophy underwent significant changes. He abandoned (c.1905) Western ways and thereafter lived abstemiously (including celibacy); this became symbolized in his eschewal of material possessions and his dress of loincloth and shawl. While in South Africa he organized (1907) his first **Satyagraha** [holding to the truth], a campaign of civil disobedience expressed in nonviolent resistance to what he regarded as unjust laws. So successful were his activities that he secured (1914) an agreement from the South African government that promised the alleviation of anti-Indian discrimination.

At the time the British controlled South Africa, when he attempted to claim his rights as a British subjects, he was abused and soon saw that all Indians suffered similar treatment. Gandhi stayed in South Africa for 21 years working to secure rights for Indian people.

He developed a method of action based upon the principles of courage, nonviolence and truth called **Satyagraha**. He believed that the way people behave is more important than what they achieve. Satyagraha promoted nonviolence and civil disobedience as the most appropriate methods for obtaining political and social goals. In 1915, Gandhi returned to India. Within 15 years he became the leader of the Indian nationalist movement.

Using the principles of Satyagraha, he led the campaign for Indian independence from Britain. Gandhi was arrested many times by the British for his activities in South Africa and India. He believed it was honorable to go to jail for a just cause. Altogether he spent seven years in prison for his political activities.

More than once, Gandhi used fasting to impress upon others the need to be nonviolent. India was granted independence in 1947, and partitioned into India and Pakistan. Rioting between Hindus and Muslims followed. Gandhi had been an advocate for a united India where Hindus and Muslims lived together in peace.

On January 13, 1948, at the age of 78, he began a fast with the purpose of stopping the bloodshed. After five days, the opposing leaders pledged to stop the fighting and Gandhi broke his fast. 12 days later, a Hindu fanatic, Nathuram Godse who opposed his program of tolerance for all creeds and religion assassinated him.

6.0 MAHATMA GANDHI'S PHILOSOPHY ON NON-VIOLENCE

The concept of nonviolence (ahimsa) and nonresistance has a long history in Indian religious thought and has had many revivals in Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Christian contexts. Gandhi explains his philosophy and way of life in his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.

He was quoted as saying:

"When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall — think of it, always."

"What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans, and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty and democracy?"

"An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind."

"There are many causes that I am prepared to die for but no causes that I am prepared to kill for."

However, Gandhi was aware that this level of nonviolence required incredible faith and courage, which he realized not everyone possessed. He therefore advised that everyone need not keep to nonviolence, especially if it was used as a cover for cowardice:

Gandhi guarded against attracting to his Satyagraha movement those who feared to take up arms or felt themselves incapable of resistance.

'I do believe,' he wrote, 'that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence.'

"At every meeting I repeated the warning that unless they felt that in non-violence they had come into possession of a force infinitely superior to the one they had and in the use of which they were adept, they should have nothing to do with non-violence and resume the arms they possessed before."

Source: Wikipedia

7.0 GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY

What is Gandhian philosophy? It is the religious and social ideas adopted and developed by Gandhi, first during his period in South Africa from 1893 to 1914, and later in India. These ideas have been further developed by later "Gandhians", most notably, in India, Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan. Outside of India some of the work of, for example, Martin Luther King Jr. can also be viewed in this light.

The twin cardinal principles of Gandhi's thought are truth and nonviolence. It should be remembered that the English word "truth" is an imperfect translation of the Sanskrit, "satya", and "nonviolence", an even more imperfect translation of "ahimsa". Derived from "sat" - "that which exists" - "satya" contains a dimension of meaning not usually associated by English speakers with the word "truth".

For Gandhi, truth is the relative truth of truthfulness in word and deed, and the absolute truth - the Ultimate Reality. Ahimsa, far from meaning mere peacefulness or the absence of overt violence, is understood by Gandhi to denote active love - the pole opposite of violence, or "himsa", in every sense. The ultimate station Gandhi assigns nonviolence stems from two main points. First, if according to the Divine Reality all life is one, then all violence committed towards another is violence towards oneself, towards the collective, whole self,

and thus "self"-destructive and counter to the universal law of life, which is love. Second, Gandhi believed that ahimsa is the most powerful force in existence. Had himsa been superior to ahimsa, humankind would long ago have succeeded in destroying itself. The human race certainly could not have progressed as far as it has, even if universal justice remains far off the horizon. From both viewpoints, nonviolence or love is regarded as the highest law of humankind.

In Gandhi's thought the emphasis is on practical idealism. Gandhian philosophy is certainly considered by Gandhians as a universal and timeless philosophy, despite the fact that on the more superficial level it is set in the Indian social context. They hold that the ideals of truth and nonviolence, which underpin the whole philosophy, are relevant to all humankind.

Gandhian philosophy is also compatible with the view that humankind is undergoing gradual moral evolution. While conflict is seen as inevitable, in fact not always undesirable, violence as the result of conflict is not regarded as inevitable. Simply put, human beings do have the capacity to resolve conflict nonviolently. This might be difficult, but it is not impossible. Liberation from a violent society is seen as requiring many decades or longer - but it is not an impossible ideal.

Gandhi's philosophy is not an intellectual doctrine. Gandhi was not an intellectual. Rather, Gandhi's thought was conceived, to a great extent, out of action and as a guide to action, by a man of action. He hesitated to write about anything of which he did not have personal, first-hand experience. In the sense of it being a call to action, Gandhi's thought can also be seen as an ideology.

As a guide to action, Gandhian philosophy is a double-edged weapon. Its objective is to transform the individual and society simultaneously (rather than in sequence, as Marxism describes), in accordance with the principles of truth and nonviolence. The historic task before humankind is to progress towards the creation of a nonviolent political, economic and social order by nonviolent struggle. The social goal was described by Gandhi as Sarvodaya, a term he coined in paraphrasing John Ruskin's book *Unto This Last*, meaning the welfare of all without exception. Its political aspect was expressed by the late eminent Gandhian Dr R.R. Diwakar in the following words:

"The good of each individual in society consists in his efforts to achieve the good of all."

As the foundation of the Gandhian or nonviolent social order is religious or spiritual, economic and political questions are seen from the moral or humanistic perspective. The welfare of human beings, not of systems or institutions, is the ultimate consideration. Materially, it centres on the following concepts and ideals:

- Political decentralization to prevent massive concentrations of political power in the hands of too few; rather, to distribute it in the hands of many. The Gandhian political order takes the form of a direct, participatory democracy, operating in a tier structure from the base village-level tier upward through the district and state levels to the national (and international) level.
- Economic decentralization to prevent massive concentrations of economic power in the hands of too few, and again, to distribute it in the hands of many. Therefore villages, which are anyway geographically decentralized, become the basic economic units. However, where unavoidable, certain industries may be organized on a more centralized basis, and their ownership and control come under the umbrella of the State.
- The minimization of competition and exploitation in the economic sphere, and instead, the encouragement of cooperation.
- Production on the basis of need rather than greed, concentrating where India is concerned first on the eradication of poverty (and on the worst extreme of poverty).
- Recognition of the dignity of labors and the greater purity of rural life.
- The practice of extensive self-reliance by individuals, villages, regions and the nation.
- Absence of oppression on the basis of race, caste, class, language, gender or religion.
- A deep respect for Mother Nature, necessitating an economic system based upon the preservation rather than destruction of the natural environment.

Such concepts clearly represent pillars for a new social order.

It is apparent that Gandhi's philosophy has much in common with several Western philosophies which uphold the ideal of a more just and equitable society. Gandhian philosophy, particularly in the Sarvodaya ideal, contains many socialist sentiments. However, Gandhi is incompatible with many aspects of Liberalism and is virtually entirely incompatible with the modern, intensely competitive, ecologically destructive and materialistic capitalism of the West.

Gandhi's thought is equally a philosophy of self-transformation. The individual's task is to make a sincere attempt to live according to the principles of truth and nonviolence. Its fundamental tenets are therefore moral. They include resisting injustice, developing a spirit of service, selflessness and sacrifice, emphasizing one's responsibilities rather than rights, self-discipline, simplicity of life-style, and attempting to maintain truthful and nonviolent relations with others.

It should be understood that by simplicity is meant voluntary simplicity, not poverty, which has no element of voluntarism in it. If there is one thing Gandhi does not stand for, it is poverty.

The ultimate responsibility of a Gandhian is to resist clear injustice, untruth, in conjunction with others or alone. Resistance should be nonviolent if at all possible. But Gandhi did condone use of violent means in certain circumstances, in preference to submission which he regarded as cowardice and equivalent to cooperation with evil.

The eminent peace researcher Johan Galtung has correctly observed that Gandhi preferred first, nonviolent resistance, second, violence in a just cause, and third, meaning least of all, apathy. In general, however, it is held that immoral means, such as violence, cannot produce moral ends, as means are themselves ends or ends in the making.

For the individual self-transformation is attempted with deliberateness rather than with haste. One should not seek to become a Mahatma overnight, because such attempts will surely fail, but to reform oneself over the whole of one's life, as far as one is capable.

The remaining central concept in Gandhi's philosophy is Satyagraha. Defined most broadly (as Gandhi defined it), Satyagraha is itself a whole philosophy of nonviolence. Defined most narrowly, it is a technique or tool of nonviolent action.

As a technique, Satyagraha was developed by Gandhi in South Africa to give the Indian population there a weapon with which to resist the injustices being perpetrated upon it by the colonial government. But Satyagraha can be practiced in any cultural environment - provided the necessary ingredients are present.

A Satyagraha campaign is undertaken only after all other peaceful means have proven ineffective. At its heart is nonviolence. An attempt is made to convert, persuade or win over the opponent. It involves applying the forces of both reason and conscience simultaneously. While holding aloft the indisputable truth of his or her position, the Satyagraha engages in acts of voluntary self-suffering. Any violence inflicted by the opponent is accepted without retaliation. But precisely because there is no retaliation (which can make the opponent feel his violence is justified), the opponent can only become morally bankrupt if violence continues to be inflicted indefinitely.

Several methods can be applied in a Satyagraha campaign, primarily non-cooperation and fasting. The action is undertaken in the belief in the underlying goodness of the opponent, and in his or her ability to acknowledge the injustice of the action and to cease the injustice, or at least to compromise. Satyagraha in this sense is highly creative. It creates no enemies, hatred or lasting bitterness, but ultimately only mutual regard. After a successful campaign there is not the least hint of gloating, nor is there any desire to embarrass the opponent. The former opponent becomes a friend. There are no losers, only winners. A truthful Satyagraha campaign, though it demands courage, self-discipline and humility on the part of the Satyagraha, brings to bear

tremendous moral pressure on the opponent and can bring about remarkable transformations.

To sum up, Gandhian philosophy is not only simultaneously political, moral and religious, it is also traditional and modern, simple and complex. It embodies numerous Western influences to which Gandhi was exposed, but being rooted in ancient Indian culture and harnessing eternal and universal moral principles.

Source: http://www.gandhiserve.org/information/brief_philosophy/brief_philosophy.html

8.0 CLOSING SPEECH

Ladies and gentlemen, after hearing the views and opinions of the delegates and speakers at this conference on Gandhi's philosophy of peace, I have come to the conclusion that in this troubled world of destruction, war and enmity, the only sane and dignified way of creating a peaceful and safe world from the clutches of terrorism and fear is through the teachings and principles of Gandhi's way of peace.

The world is threatened today and bullied by the greater powers of which there is no doubt that U.S.A under the Bush administration is an imminent force to be dealt with. Being economically and globally strong, these superpowers infringe on the rights of other weaker and poorer nations to succumb to their weaknesses by the lure of loans through bodies like the World Monetary Bank which later render them as pawns to these institutions.

Being militarily strong and technological advanced these so called superpowers are invincible fire powers to back up their commands or threats and if there no agreement to these demands, they just let loose their show of authority. And in the end, nobody is a winner. Military warfare as evident in the Middle East and the issue of Palestine has brought nothing of benefit to the masses except pain and suffering. Innocent lives are destroyed just so that some higher authorities can gain from this play of war games.

News relayed to the world is often manipulated through the likes of major broadcast stations like the CNN and the BBC to portray a negative image of the reality of the situation. If peace negotiations through the likes of major organizations like the United Nations fail, then the people of today have to resort to some means so that the world can be at peace. Hence, it is hoped that through this conference of the world assembly of youth the exchange of ideas and opinions on peace through Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence can eventually reach out to the people so that the elimination of war can give way to the road of peace. The world is a big nation of brotherhood irrespective of colour or creed

and it is our moral right to protect it from destruction. Lives should be saved not destroyed. The world is big enough for everyone's need. Therefore, let us all work together to create a peaceful world for the benefit of the future generations. Thank you ladies and gentlemen and the youth of today!

9.0 CONCLUSIONS

Two very important factors-of Gandhi:

He propounded a message for humankind that was rooted in the teachings of the prophets and seers of the past. Second, because the world was so violent, there was a need for non-violence.

PROGRAMME

- 0900 hrs. Arrival of participants
- Breakfast
- 0930 hrs. Arrival of the Right Honorable Datuk Seri Haji Mohd Ali Rustam, Chief
 Minister of Melaka and Presiden of WAY
- 0945 hrs. Recital of National & State Anthems
- 0950 hrs. Opening speech by Chief Minister of Melaka
- 01000 hrs. Presentation and discussion session
- Moderated by Hon. Datuk Idris Harun
 Deputy President of the Malaysian Youth Council and President of the
 Melaka State Youth Council
- Presentation by Dr Chandra Muzaffar
 Presiden of International Movement for a Just World
- Interventions and contributions
- 1230 hrs. Summary and conclusions
- Closing address by the Right Honorable Datuk Seri Haji Mohd Ali
 Rustam, Chief Minister of Melaka
- Lunch

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