

# **Literature review on three pacifist sources**

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Galtung, J. (2004) *Transcend & Transform. An Introduction to Conflict Work*. London: Pluto Press

Galtung, J. (1969) 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research'. *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (3), 167-191

Parekh, B. (1997) 'Is Gandhi still Relevant?'. in *Gandhi and the Contemporary World*. ed. by Copley, A., and Paxton, G. Chennai: Indo-British Historical Society, 371-382

### **Nonviolent conflict resolution: literature review**

This essay will review one chapter from a book of essays, one journal article and a book. These sources are all related to the main area of nonviolent conflict resolution. The connection is identifiable and it leads all of them to address their purposes concerning peace, nonviolent action and peace research. Further confirmation is possible to notice in the essay of Parekh (1997). In his article he argues about the relevance of Gandhi's nonviolence ideas in the current time, whereas the other documents have as subject the roots of violence and the process to try to solve, manage, change and transform conflicts. The choice of these sources is owing to the fact that when people have to cope with conflicts they should imagine a multi-dimensional task where there are many links. Nonviolent conflict resolution is a process with different stages which need to be followed to obtain a result. This essay will take as its starting point becomes the theory of Gandhi (the philosopher, activist, and father of nonviolent methodologies), because it is necessary to understand how and whether it is capable to deal with the modern conflict situations. Thus the review will be on the Parekh's (professor of Political Philosophy at the University of Westminster) book chapter. Consequently it is fundamental to know and analyse the roots of violence, so the review will be on the journal article of Galtung - the skilled an important author and thinker on conflicts management - written in 1969. As a final point it is interesting to observe whether conflict transformation can become, a potential seed, for changing societies as well as difficult conflicts. The last review will be on Galtung's book (2004) about the opportunity to find out an appropriate and nonviolent system to deal with conflicts.

It is important to begin with an analysis of the fundamental ideas of nonviolence; therefore the first source reconsidered will be the chapter of the professor at the University of Westminster.

In his fascinating and intriguing book chapter 'Is Gandhi still Relevant' (Parekh 1997) are described several of the meaningful ideas and methodologies of Gandhi which maintain their full significance at the current time. In addition Parekh (1997: 372) brightly argues that politicians and philosopher should keep intuitions into the thinking of Gandhi forefront their minds.

Why does he recommend this strategy? There are two main reasons: a) mankind is mutually dependent and all people together form a single holistic *gaming*, b) every human being uses the earth without owing it, and Gandhi's philosophy acknowledges the humanity of others to whom people are closely linked. Parekh (1997: 380-381) is able to illustrate that for Gandhi all rulers use the obedience and cooperation they receive from the majority of the population in order to rule the whole, consequently the victims, actively or passively, are part of an unfair social order. However if they should be aware that they could possess sufficient power to change that situation they could then be able to improve both their interests and the interests of the oppressors (Parekh 1997: 375-376). In his book *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Practice and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Potential*, Sharp (2005: 37) speaks of the roots of power, especially the degree of obedience and cooperation that populations give to the rulers. Not only Sharp but also Milgram (1974) and Arendt (2006) reveal the power of the obedience.

On the other hand, Sharp (2005) and Ackerman and Duvall (2000: 83) support the idea that if people refuse to follow the rulers and the population acts uncooperatively they will have the potential to take the control of the government.

A further relevant point explained by Parekh (1997: 376) is the significance of the method of fighting for Gandhi. 'There is 'the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree' (Gandhi 1980 cited in Francis 2002: 43). Means are closely related to purposes, and one cannot think of changing society with instruments that are inconsistent with the objectives one has. The Gandhian theory of revolution becomes really alternative to traditional approaches and both points about obedience to authority and the way of fighting are two basic pillars of the nonviolent conflict resolution process. Parekh (1997) demonstrates clearly the relevance of Gandhi today. There is further evidence in the work of other authors: for example in *People, Peace and Power: Conflict Transformation in Action* (Francis 2002) which elaborates on the idea that if people want to change power relations

whilst maintaining the fundamental rights of life and dignity, all means have to be nonviolent.

Gandhi was able to rework many of the concepts of political life in an innovative way, such as rights, duties, tolerance and those of freedom, equality and citizenship (Parekh 1997: 377). Moreover Fisher et al. (2000: 141-153) show that a lasting peace requires a structured process made within a society. In the chapter 'Working on the Social Fabric' the authors describe a wide range of actions for positively transforming a conflict such as education for peace and studies, empowering populations in decision-making and developing good governance. Their policies correspond closely with the Gandhian nonviolent philosophy and strategy.

Next this review will introduce the journal article of Galtung 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research' (1969).

In his relevant article the author claims that there is violence every time a person cannot realize his or her happiness. Similarly the same opinion is expressed by Curle in his book *Another Way: Positive Response to Contemporary Violence* (1995: 09) where he states that violence impedes the development of human beings and the achievement of fully maturity. Further confirmation is provided by Allen (2007) in an article about peace education in terms of self-esteem, self-realization and freedom from all forms of servitude and domination.

A fundamental insight generated by Galtung's significant intuition on the structural violence (Galtung 1990: 303) is the model of the violence triangle (Galtung 1990: 294). He conceptualises and depicts skilfully the idea of structural violence as social injustice (Galtung 1969: 171). Thereby he attains the following definition adding the notion of direct violence and cultural violence: 'Direct violence is an *event*; structural violence is a *process* with ups and downs; cultural violence is an *invariant*, a 'permanence', remaining essentially the same for long periods, given the slow transformations of basic culture' (Galtung 1990: 294). In his article he expounds at length to show the importance of structural violence because it is: a) a way of violence that often remains under the surface; b) one of the utmost causes of social injustice. This is the most valuable contribution of Galtung's approach to the roots of violence because it suggests an opportunity to overcome conflicts. The literature on structural violence includes a lot of valuable contributions such as the book of Christie, Wagner and Winter (2001), the book of Cancian and Gibson (1990). Furthermore there is the paper of Francis (2000) and the article of Harris (2010) where the authors try to escape from the prison of violence by searching roads and actions for a lasting peace.

For Galtung (1969: 172) it is possible to conceive the manifest and the latent violence, the latter is difficult to see, because it does not show its effects like the manifest one (for instance during a war). However the latent violence is very dangerous because the roots of this are deeper and invisible, thus it could erupt without any warning.

Furthermore he emphasizes another crucial distinction within violence: violence as a distance between potential and actual situations. Sometimes in real (actual) situations it is not possible to avoid violence because there is no available solution for fixing a problem (for instance the early period after the diffusion of HIV/AIDS disease). Instead if there is a possible and available solution, it means that there is violence (Galtung 1969: 168). Likewise Parsons (2007: 175) illustrates a convincing example related to the result of imposed sanctions to explain the foregoing conception. On the contrary other authors argue that it is difficult to define and to assess the concept of 'potential' (Brokate 2009: 76) and Galtung overlooks peoples perception of violence (Derriennic 1972). In spite of these criticisms, there is no doubt that the meaningful contribution of Galtung on the clarification of the concept of violence maintains all its value. Finally, his input is fundamental for the development of the nonviolent conflict resolution trail.

Galtung's book *Transcend & Transform: An Introduction to Conflict Work* (2004) is about realising peace at all levels in human arrangements. This wide investigation in a well-disposed and highly readable book underline that is possible to address conflicts at the rank of interpersonal interaction (micro), within nations (meso), between states (macro), and among whole regions or civilizations (mega). The book aims to promote an enhanced understanding of conflicts and elucidate routes and means by which to transform them, comprising a range of forty diverse conflicts including for each of them a theoretical and practical approach. In fact each conflict is outlined in three stages: diagnosis, prognosis and therapy. From time to time the therapy seems too simple to succeed, however transcendence demands not only the mind's eye and creativity, '... but also a willingness to see something valid in the other, ...' (Galtung 2004: 150).

The author's main explanation is about the way to solve conflicts. He indicates five patterns (Galtung 2004: 12-13): a) victory on the part of actor 1; b) victory on the part of actor 2; c) withdrawal; d) compromise; e) transcendence. Whereas the first three are not sufficient to properly manage a conflict, they could additionally leave a mood of frustration and revenge. The fourth solution is a better stage and it is possible to achieve it by negotiations; however parties remain only somewhat satisfied. Transcendence becomes the preferred choice because it displays a 'win-

win' situation where both parties attain their basic goals. According to the author transcendence can understand the root and the feeling behind conflicts arriving at something new that is acceptable and sustainable for both parties. There is no doubt that transcendence requires a constructive and future-oriented job where conflict workers (Galtung 1996) should carry on their commitment through dialogue with parties involved, with imagination, empathy and creativity, avoiding negative predictions. The capacity to bridge the gap between parties into the conflict will be laid out with the depolarisation of the issues into the conflict and with the humanisation of all actors.

Lastly the author suggests that the transcend methods needs to progress cautiously with little phases and if the parties are able to reach an agreement, it should be unfixed therefore the parties could untie it (Galtung 2004: 181). In fact he claimed the necessity to work in three stages to find a 'new reality' (Galtung 2008: 276) where something innovative must come into sight.

Nevertheless Eriksson (2006: 607) in his book-review article underlines that Galtung's work is not scientific according to the usual standard for declaring a method, however it is clear that there is an overwhelming consensus about the importance of transcend methodology to manage conflicts. This is shown in the book review written by Woodhouse (2001) and in the working paper based on the research applied on Andijan conflict by the Institute for Integrative Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding (IICP) (2008).

On the whole the main consideration one must make about this book relates to its ability to provide a new perspective on nonviolent conflict resolution. Hence, the issue is how to transform conflict with creativity and imagination, and how to research the causes and the perceptions for developing new responses. Finally, the book is action-oriented and with his practical approach Galtung manages to fill the void left by the critics who say that nonviolence is too theoretical. The forty concrete examples show that Galtung's methodology can have a good chance of working well on the field and it can reach at least the minimum objective to reduce the spread of violence and destruction of parties involved in conflict.

## **Conclusion**

In short nonviolent conflict resolution processes should comprehend the goal of peace through cooperation and conflict transformation by drawing answers from many disciplines. The contribution of all the literature discussed here demonstrates the necessity of coexistence and the integration of different systems of knowledge. The latter also requires well-trained and assertive conflict workers on the field both in conflicts

as well as in contemporary societies. Moreover they can help everyone to observe a new perspective to overcome violence and promote lasting peace.

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