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# UNIT 1 UNDERSTANDING PEACE

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## Structure

### 1.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

### 1.2 Understanding the Concept of Peace

1.2.1 Peace Traditions

1.2.2 Peace Movements

1.2.3 Peace-building

1.2.4 Peace-building Approaches

1.2.5 Conflict Transformation

### 1.3 State and Civil Society as Instruments of Peace

### 1.4 Gandhi as an Ambassador of Peace

1.4.1 Gandhi's twin-principles of Peace: Truth and Non-violence

1.4.2 Truth

1.4.3 Non-violence

### 1.5 Peace Movements in the post- Second World War phase

### 1.6 UN's Recognition of Gandhian Principles

### 1.7 Summary

### 1.8 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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Peace is a term that refers to an absence of hostility, safety in matters of social or economic welfare, the acknowledgment of equality and fairness in political relationships. Reflection on the nature of peace is also bound up with considerations of the causes for its absence or loss. Among these potential causes are: insecurity, social injustice, economic inequality, political and religious radicalism, and acute racism and nationalism. In Wikipedia, peace is defined as a list of synonyms which include 'respite from war', 'quiet from suits and disorders', 'rest from any commotion', 'freedom from terror', 'silence', 'suppressions of thoughts' etc. Despite religion, civilisation and culture, peace among people and nations remains elusive. But for the future of humanity, peace deserves a chance. Peace is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means. Peace is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence and justice. The comprehensive notion of peace touches upon many issues that influence quality of life, including personal growth, freedom, social equality, economic equity, solidarity, autonomy and participation.

### Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The concept of peace and its related aspects

- The role of state and civil society as instruments of peace
- The role of Gandhi as an ambassador of peace.

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## **1.2 UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF PEACE**

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Aristotle said that we make war so that we may live in peace. Marx remarked that the meaning of peace is the absence of opposition to socialism. Martin Luther King, Jr had the perception that one day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal we seek, but that it is a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means. True peace is not merely the absence of tension, it is the presence of justice. Scholars in the positive peace research tradition, most prominently Johan Galtung, identify conditions threatening human survival which include environmental issues as well as poverty and economic disparity. Given that these problems are not likely to be solved in the world's current economic and political structure, the analysis of shortcomings of the present system naturally leads to a search for policy and institutional changes that can serve human welfare. According to Galtung, peace has two dimensions: 'negative peace' and 'positive peace.' Negative peace can be described as a static state where there is an absence of war or violent conflict. Negative peace is focused on the absence of manifest violence such as war, which could be realised by negotiation or mediation rather than resorting to physical force. It recommends the use of non-violent means, total disarmament and social and economic interdependence to avoid the physical violence and discourage the use of force in conflict situations.

Galtung argues that violence is built into unequal, unjust and unrepresentative social structure. Unequal social structures produce social groups who have low income, low education, low health, and low life expectancy. One party's existence, behaviour or attributes prevent another from realising its full potential, and the human and social costs of this kind of silent violence may be higher than those of direct physical harm. As a matter of fact, the contexts in which we are born and brought up sufficiently influence our attitude and behaviour. We have different sets of values, which guide our thinking and behaviours. These values influence us to take certain actions and to reject other. This reality of life, in fact, leads us to a situation where we find people who have different perspective on life and things when we meet them or work with them. In which case, conflict happens when people pursue different perspectives and goals that clash.

Positive peace is a dynamic process rather than an end state and implies a condition where conflicts are addressed and solved. The concept of positive peace means the removal of structural violence. Positive peace would not be obtained without the development of just and equitable conditions. UNICEF describes positive peace as a situation characterised by not only the absence of war or violent conflict, but also by the presence of factors that reduce the likelihood of violent conflict and promote a better quality of life for all. These factors include social and economic justice, inter-group understanding, ecological balance, and opportunities for democratic participation in decision-making.

Peace is visible when there is freedom, equality, justice, good governance, and the enjoyment of human rights. Between the two directions of peace—negative and positive—the former is the total absence of violence, that is, the state has a set of socio-political structures to put down violence and to provide security of life and property of the individual and the communities, while the latter places 'global justice' as the central

concept of peace, stressing on the full enjoyment of the entire range of human rights of all people and the sovereignty of nations. The concept non-violence is thus a universal phenomenon covering a wide area of social and political life. Further, its ultimate goal is the harmonious co-existence of all life forms in the universe. Peace is the existence of peaceful relationships, active association, and planned cooperation among persons and groups for achieving greater aims such as justice, security, and constructive transformation of conflict.

### **1.2.1 Peace Traditions**

In order to move a conflict-habituated system to a peace system, we need to change the way we think. From the early period of human thinking, there has been a clear understanding that war is neither a natural phenomenon nor the irreversible will of God. A peaceful world belongs to a society where people can work and live together in harmony and friendship and the domination of one group over another is a major obstacle to peace. The Buddhist traditions emphasise justice, equity, non-violence, concern for the well-being of others and compassion among living beings. They also reflect a well ordered state of mind, inner peace and harmony within a culture. Tranquility in the inner state of mind and harmonious interpersonal relationship contribute to universal peace. Greek philosophers conceptualised a peaceful world in terms of lack of civil disturbances. These philosophical traditions are also linked to unity based on the moral substance of humanity in each person and the principle of world citizenship; the vision of a world without war was embraced as the core approach to peace in the Hellenic civilisation. In the Roman and Medieval periods, peace implied stable relationship among units of society that led to the control of organised violence. In Enlightenment thinking, violence and conflict, seen as the greatest evils in history, are ascribed to a disorderly world.

With their goal to realise powerful changes in improving human conditions, socialist movements since the 19th century stipulated that peace could be obtained in a classless society. The primary causes of human misery are economic inequality and a repressive political system associated with social injustice. Peace has a firm social dimension in which equity and consideration of others' well-being are crucial for a harmonious community life. People from different cultural and political traditions would be united by the achievement of an equal society. Peace thinkers like Gene Sharp view non-violent action as merely an effective strategic instrument to achieve specific political objectives and score victories with non-lethal means. Geoffrey Ostergaard who follows the traditions of Mahatma Gandhi emphasised non-violence as a principle capable of preventing the origin or existence of unjust social and economic system. Non-violent social structure in turn can be acquired by establishing egalitarian social relations.

### **1.2.2 Peace Movements**

The fact that there are now hundreds of groups working for disarmament and peace suggests an enormous democratisation of the struggle for peace; even though their total membership may be small, these organisations do provide open forums for expressions of public opinion. The pre-war official peace movement had developed from an aspiration of religious mystics, based almost exclusively on the principle of the wickedness of all wars, into a movement favouring the creation of actual political machinery cooperating with the legal profession for the reform and administration of international law and had become respectable by the support by other peace movements and above all the Churches. The peace movement received a terrible shock when World War I proved how much stronger

was attachment to the nation than adherence to internationalist and pacifist principles and how much stronger was the fear of the sanctions of one's own government and compatriots than of the sanctions of fellow members of organisations.

### **1.2.3 Peace-building**

Peacebuilding is usually understood as a transitional activity designed to prevent the recurrence of past violent conflict and to lay the foundation for (re)building political, economic and social systems that in the long(er) run will prevent further violence and wars. A distinction is often made between the building of peace 'from above' and 'from below'. Peacebuilding 'from above' includes strategies such as peace mediation, negotiation and peacekeeping aimed at getting armed factions to lay down their arms and turn to nonviolent resolution of conflict, strategies to involve the international community and neighbouring or influential states as guarantors of peace agreement. It also includes the strategies to restore public order, encourage relief and reconstruction, and relationships within and between individuals, organisations, communities and nations, attitudes and behaviours including physical violence, discrimination, prejudice, humiliation, subordination and domination, structures in particular economic, social, political, cultural and religious. The building of peace 'from below' includes strategies to develop trust and build confidence among communities at the local level.

Peacebuilding implies the strengthening of social, political and economic structures for constructive transformation of conflict and promotion of social values such as benevolence, compassion, cooperation and justice among persons and groups. Peacebuilding represents attempts to overcome structural relationship and cultural contradictions which lie at the root of conflict in order to underpin the processes of peacemaking and peacekeeping. Peacebuilding is about undertaking programmes designed to address the causes of conflict and the grievances of the past and to promote long-term stability and justice.

Goodhand and Hulme stress the need for making a clear distinction between peacemaking and peacebuilding. Peacemaking is concerned with political, diplomatic and sometimes military interventions directed at bringing warring parties to agreement, while peacebuilding focuses on the promotion of institutional and socio-economic measures that address the context and underlying causes of conflict. Peace-building includes the local or structural efforts that foster or support those social, political and institutional structures and processes which strengthen the prospect for peaceful co-existence and decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence or continuation of violence. Lederach describes this as the 'Process Structured Gap.' According to Lederach, Peace Accords are often seen as a culminating point of peace process. In the language of government and the military, the Accords are referred to as an endgame scenario. We fall prey to this thinking when we see the Accords as the way the war ended. In reality the Accords are nothing more than opening a door into a whole new labyrinth of rooms that invite us to continue in the process of redefining our relationships.

### **1.2.4 Peace-building Approaches**

Three types of peacebuilding approaches have been described by the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy (1993), all of which seem to be necessary for the successful transformation to a peace system: political peacebuilding, structural peacebuilding and social peacebuilding.

Firstly, Political Peace-building normally deals with establishing political arrangements that provide the over-all context within which to understand the relationships of the various

parties and their resources. Political Peacebuilding deals with agreements, negotiations, peace accords etc. at the political level. It is about building a legal infrastructure that can address the political needs and manage the boundaries of peace system. Negotiations, technical-working groups, fact finding, etc. are some of the examples of the political peacebuilding approach. Normally, political peacebuilding efforts tend to work on bringing peace when conflicts occur either between groups (inter-community conflict) or between nations (international conflicts). In this sense, the final outcome of the political peacebuilding is for the parties and leaders to reach an agreement and sign a peace accord.

Secondly, Structural Peace-building deals with just distribution of resources and power, correction of political and economic systems, economic activities etc. at grassroot level, middle level and top level. Structural peacebuilding is about activities, which deals with creating structures, systems of behaviour, institutions and concerted actions that support the embodiment or implementation of a peace culture. It is about building an economic, military, and social infrastructure that provides concrete and realistic avenues through which a new peace system might express itself. Disarming warring factions, repatriating refugees, monitoring elections, cooperative projects for economic and social development, etc are the activities that are considered to be closely related with structural peacebuilding. Structural peacebuilding or political development is a process of gradual change overtime in which the people increase their awareness of their own capabilities, their rights and their responsibilities; and use of this knowledge to organise themselves so as to acquire real political power in order to participate in decision making at local level; and to choose their own leaders and representatives at higher levels of government which is accountable to the people; to plan and share power democratically; and to create and allocate communal resources equitably and efficiently among individual groups. Therefore it may be possible to avoid corruption and exploitation, realise social and economic development, political stability and peace, and create a politicised population within the context of their own culture and their own political system.

Lastly, Social Peace-building deals with issues of feelings, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, values, skills (communication, negotiation and mediation) etc. It deals with feelings, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, values, and skills as they are held and shared between people, individuals and in groups. It is about building a human infrastructure of people who are committed to engendering a new culture, a “peace culture” within the social fabric of communal and inter-communal life. All people live within some form of political structure, be it formal or informal. This political structure may or may not benefit the individual or the general public as a collective entity. If the development, in its widest sense, is to truly benefit the people, then the political structure must be responsive to their needs and aspirations as well as protect their rights and their property. The terms political peacebuilding and peacemaking are interchangeably used because they mean the same thing using diplomatic, political and sometimes military means to end hostilities and promote negotiation and negotiated settlement at the leadership level.

### **1.2.5 Conflict Transformation**

Conflict transformation is a holistic and multifaceted process of engaging with conflict. It aims to reduce violence and to protect and promote social justice and sustainable peace. It requires work in all spheres, at all levels and with all stakeholders. Conflict transformation needs to be accountable to those directly affected by conflict but requires networks and linkages to sustain it; it is the ongoing process of changing relationships, behaviours, attitudes and structures, from the negative to the positive. Conflict transformation, therefore,

requires timely interventions, respect for cultural context, patience, persistence, and a comprehensive understanding of the conflict.

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### **1.3 STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY AS INSTRUMENTS OF PEACE**

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#### **State as Instrument of Peace**

The debate over the welfare state has a very significant bearing on the concept of peace and the state's role in preserving and promoting it. In contemporary times when the essence of the welfare state is made an inherent part of the state's function, the state's role in the preservation and promotion of peace has undergone a great change. 'Peace' is now conceived as creating positive conditions that contribute to avoiding and even totally eliminating conflict. The important point is that society and state are now entrusted with new responsibilities in the task of promoting peace. The state has gradually evolved to provide a framework for orderly organisation of society. Views differ whether the 'orderliness' is only in the interest of a single segment of society, like the rich, the strong, etc., or in the general interest of the society as a whole.

The following devices accomplish the task of containing conflict. The first device is to pass a framework of laws, rules and regulations. These laws and rules attempt to lay down the limits for actions of individuals and groups with a view to ensure that such actions do not disturb social peace. The second is the establishment of a vast network of administrative mechanisms to execute the above-mentioned laws and regulations. It is well recognised everywhere that crime is the most explicit and visible manifestation of disturbance to peace. Prevention of crime is therefore recognised as the maintenance of minimal peace in any society.

#### **Civil Society Dimension of Peace**

Conflict in society is always present and the state always has to cope with this given situation. There are, however, other institutions in the society which also play a role in containing conflict and restoring peace. This set of institutions, sometimes networks of institutions, is called civil society. Non-governmental organisations, community welfare organisations, and other such institutions, undertake many programmes of work ranging from public health promotion, minority rights protection, providing legal aid to poor people, making people aware of their rights, acting as watch-dogs on governments, to promoting national integration. They are mostly non-profit-making institutions deriving funding from charitable trusts from within the country and abroad. In this role, some of the NGOs act as complimentary organs to government.

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### **1.4 GANDHI AS AN AMBASSADOR OF PEACE**

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Gandhi once said: 'I honour the place in you where the entire universe resides...a place of light, of love, of truth, of peace, of wisdom. I honour the place in you where when you are in that place and I am in that place there is only one of us. Each of us must learn to work not just for oneself, one's own family or nation, but for the benefit of all humankind. Universal responsibility is the key to human survival. It is the best foundation for world peace'.

Gandhi is universally known as an Apostle of Peace and Non-violence. Gandhi himself made a skillful use of satyagraha to achieve peace and harmony and thus proved his

point. He always believed that peace contains a negative and a positive sense, the absence of configuration, elimination of wars, absence of conflicts between different classes, castes, religions, and nations is a negative sense and love, rest, mental equilibrium, harmony, co-operation, unity, happiness are the positive indices of peace. Gandhi said that the root of every violence or conflict is untruth and that the only permanent solution of conflict is truth. Consequently, to resolve conflicts, he conceived of a novel technique which he called Satyagraha. Literally, it means Satya with Agraaha or, unwavering search for the truth. And since the only way of getting to truth is by non-violence, it follows that satyagraha implies an unwavering search for the truth using non-violence. Therefore, Gandhi emphasised satyagraha as the most potent method of ensuring an enduring peace.

#### **1.4.1 Gandhi's twin-principles of Peace: Truth and Non-violence**

In authoritarian societies, whether religious or political, where votes of people do not count, where any opposition voice is silenced with bullets and imprisonment, peace cannot be permanent. Having political power is, therefore, just the first step towards peace. We have to accept the responsibility to change things. We have a responsibility to cultivate some of the principles to look at sharing and ensuring that resources are distributed equitably. We must ensure that people can see and feel the change and be able to identify a niche for themselves in the world. In addition to political oppression, we have economic, intellectual, religious, environmental, and gender oppression all over the world. When people talk about peace, they cannot view the indiscriminate killings and destruction of property in isolation from the poverty, illiteracy, religious intolerance, environmental threats and gender oppression faced by the people.

Attainment of peace should be the ultimate goal of any youthful human emotions and actions. Once their minds are at rest they can concentrate their energies for spreading the message of peace. Youth should know that social harmony is an index of peace. They should strive peacefully to make their and other people's social lives happy and undisturbed which is the aim of any society. Gandhi also warned youngsters against misinterpreting religions. All the religions such as Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, etc. have preached peace and harmony so that society can enjoy a happy and peaceful life.

#### **1.4.2 Truth**

Gandhi dedicated his life to the wider purpose of discovering truth, or Satya. He tried to achieve this by learning from his own mistakes and conducting experiments on himself. Gandhi stated that the most important battle to fight was overcoming his own demons, fears, and insecurities. Gandhi summarised his beliefs first when he said "God is Truth". He would later change this statement to "Truth is God". Thus, Satya (Truth) in Gandhi's philosophy is "God". Truth was Gandhi's favourite human value which inspired his autobiography "My Experiments with Truth". *Satya Meva Jayate* was his slogan. Gandhi wanted every individual and society to practice truth at any cost. He emphasised that all religions, philosophies, societies have unambiguously advocated truth. According to him, truth was God and that truth must manifest itself in the thought, word and deeds. He did accept that the path of truth will always be full of hardship, difficulties, sufferings, and sacrifice. To tell the truth one must be courageous. Treading the path of truth is a continuous and unending process, which has to be followed by every generation. Concepts and means of social transformation and reformation preceded in Gandhi's mind before they are applied as a mass weapon to political ends against the British.

### 1.4.3 Non-violence

Non-violence and truth are the essence of Gandhian philosophy. Bringing change in the violent exploitative society through non-violent persuasive methods has never been witnessed in the history. Wrong belief has taken possession of us that non-violence is preeminently a weapon for cowardice, but this is not the case. Gandhi conceived it as weapon of courageous and devoted people to the particular cause. Gandhi was the first to apply non-violence in political field on a massive scale. Gandhi derived the idea of non-violence from the principles ‘*Ahimsa Paramodharma*’ and ‘*Vasudeva Kutumbakam*’, which mean to earn complete freedom from ill-will, anger and hatred, and to nurture love for all. The concept of non-violence and non-resistance has a long history in Indian religious thought and has had many revivals in Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Jewish and Christian contexts. He was quoted as saying ‘when I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won’.

Gandhi was aware that this level of non-violence required incredible faith and courage, which he realised not everyone possessed. He, therefore, advised that one need not keep to nonviolence, especially if it were used as a cover for cowardice. Gandhi stated that non-violence is the rule of conduct for a society, if it is to live consistently with human dignity and make total progress towards the attainment of peace. He observed that non-violence is not a value principle alone but a science based on the reality of mankind, society and polity. In this line, Gandhi’s idea of ahimsa entails not just abstaining from all violence but embracing an enemy with love. Ahimsa is the largest love and the greatest charity that implies generally an act not only of not-killing but also abstaining from causing any pain or harm to another living being either by thought, word or deed. To practise ahimsa, one requires the qualities of deliberate self-suffering intended to awaken and convert the soul of the enemy and a harmless mind, mouth and hand; its opposite, ‘himsa’, means causing injury and harm to others and it needs no reference or discussion.

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## 1.5 PEACE MOVEMENTS IN THE POST-SECOND WORLD WAR PHASE

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In the 1950s, there was an enormous concern about environmental issues surrounding atmospheric nuclear tests, a worsening of Cold War, and changes in weapon technology which led to an appreciation that Europe had become the major target area. In the 1980s, the breakdown of *detente* and the deployment of first-strike weapons in Europe revived the dormant fear of nuclear war. The greatest achievement during this phase is that the peace movements have raised public awareness of nuclear issues across international boundaries. The peace movements generated mass protests; an unintended consequence was that it taught governments how to successfully deflect and neutralise mass protests. The peace movements were able to activate the very best in humanitarian, liberal, and moral feeling.

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## 1.6 UN’S RECOGNITION OF GANDHIAN PRINCIPLES

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The UN General Assembly has unanimously adopted a resolution on June 15, 2007 to declare October 2, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, as the International Day of Non-Violence. The UN Resolution was in fact an effect of a suggestion made in an International Conference on ‘Peace, Non-Violence, and Empowerment: Gandhian Philosophy



in the 21st Century”, held at New Delhi in January 2007. The UN Resolution to honour ‘the apostle of humanity and peace’ was unanimously sponsored by all the major countries of the world and the subcontinent of India. Even Great Britain supported the resolution against whom Gandhi successfully led an agitation through non-violent satyagraha for India’s independence. The resolution is a reflection of the international community’s collective yearning for peace and the recognition of the relevance of Gandhi’s ideals and methods in today’s world which is confronted with violence, terrorism, intolerance, discrimination and exclusiveness.

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## 1.7 SUMMARY

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Peace in the world cannot be achieved without understanding the concept and techniques of Gandhi. Therefore, it is important to understand his techniques and try to replace the present techniques which advocate violence all over the world. For instance, present peace, as Morgenthau stated in his book, “Politics Among Nations” rests as violence, force and power which create a cycle of violence among nations. Peace is more than just the absence of war. True peace is justice, true peace is freedom. And true peace dictates the recognition of human rights.” The preamble of UNESCO echoes this sentiment: “since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that foundation of peace must be constructed”. Change in the attitude and behaviour can be achieved through formal and informal peace education. Peace education can promote the development of an authentic consciousness that is necessary to change attitude and behaviour in order to achieve greater cooperation and peaceful problem-solving.

People in power, whether political, economic, religious, civic or administrative power, need to develop a holistic view of peace. If we want a better country for our future generations, we need to act and ensure that such a holistic view is adopted and a comprehensive approach is used in addressing the issue of peace. We also have a responsibility to ensure that the community understands and approves of this approach. We must be willing to share expertise and funds, and at the same time develop the community’s capacity to meet the challenges of the future. We need to build a culture of non-violence among our children and youth, through actively ensuring that we do not support war toys or violent games, media, books, stories, etc., but instead promote a culture of resistance to injustice. We need to inculcate a communal responsibility among all our people.

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## 1.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

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1. What do you understand by peace?
2. Critically evaluate the different approaches of peace-building.
3. Examine the role of state and civil society as instruments of peace.
4. Describe the role of Truth and Non-violence in ensuring peace.
5. What is the importance of Nobel Peace Prize?

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