

PEACE STUDIES PAPER 05

**GANDHIAN NON-VIOLENCE
AS A MEANS OF DISPUTE SETTLEMENT IN ASSAM:
A CASE STUDY OF TAMULPUR ANCHALIK GRAMDAN
SANGH (TAGS), KUMARIKATA**

Abhijit Bhuyan

Peace Studies
Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change
and Development
Guwahati, Assam, India

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**Introduction
Anuradha Dutta
Professor, Peace Studies**

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INTRODUCTION

There will always be conflict, but all conflict need not be violent. In most societies, in most situations, people can advance their influence through nonviolent means. Non-violence - a set of attitude and skills is a method for solving problems and resolving conflict. In North East India inter ethnic and intra ethnic conflicts have almost become a part of the political process. In this background maintenance of peace, protection of human rights and the over all development of the region are some of the important problems. To solve these problems, the Gandhian approach has been accepted in different parts of the world.

In Assam, in different parts, leaders who believe in Gandhian ideology have been working at the grassroots. Besides the network of Kasturba Memorial Trust, a few Gandhian leaders are working with the Gandhian ideology. Mr. Ravindra Nath Upadhyaya is one of the few Gandhians who has been working in Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangha (TAGS) at Kumarikata in the Baska district of Assam for more than five decades. In 1962, in the wake of Chinese aggression, Vinoba Bhave recommended that the Gandhian *Sarvodaya* workers should prepare the people of North East India to face the aggression with non-violent means. Mr. Upadhyaya was given the charge of forming the *Shanti Sena*. The *Shanti Sena* activities were to promote friendship and cooperation amongst the people. Mr. Upadhyaya organized the people together against the state to put up non-violent resistance. That was the beginning of his journey. He took up a three point programme of *Gramdan* for democracy, *Khadi* for development and *Shanti Sena* for defence.

Gandhi made *Satyagraha* an instrument of social change. Gandhi and his followers were most of the time involved in constructive programs, and he considered these the most important part of nonviolent action. The young scholar, Abhijit Bhuyan through the present study wants to show how Gandhi's theory of non-violence - *Satyagraha* - a set of constructive activities have been empirically carried out at Kumarikata with a view to extend social and economic support to the marginalized

section of the society. The researcher tries to explore how in Kumarikata Ravindra Upadhyaya has been trying to carry out these ideologies.

It's a fact that Kumarikata and its adjacent places have had long experience of militancy and conflicts. However, today the project of Kumarikata is a success story of how disputes can be settled by non-violent means. Following Gandhian principles Mr. Upadhyaya has carried out a number of economic activities. The activities include production of Khadi Muga silk, honey, mustard oil, etc. These activities help the local people to earn a livelihood. Here is a Gandhian who has proved through his involvement in various activities that capacity building of the youth can go a long way in preventing conflicts.

Gandhi's philosophy explains non-violence as a tool of action which can be effective in realizing human security. The scholar tries to explain how *Satyagraha* creates conditions necessary for human security - access to food, clothing and shelter. Realizing these basic needs, Mr. Upadhyaya at TAGS emphasizes on new economic development strategy based on self reliance, decentralization etc. From the point of view of human security *Satyagraha* generates immense social capital cutting across barriers of caste, class, creed or ethnicity.

TAGS cover almost every aspect of life of the target group. Besides looking after the economic needs, the institution also works for peace education, training and action programme. TAGS has also made efforts at guiding the formation of the *Mahila Shanti Sena* or the women Peace Corps. The scholar, therefore, makes an indepth attempt at delving into these issues and more at Kumarikata.

Anuradha Dutta
Professor, Peace Studies

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Abhijit Bhuyan

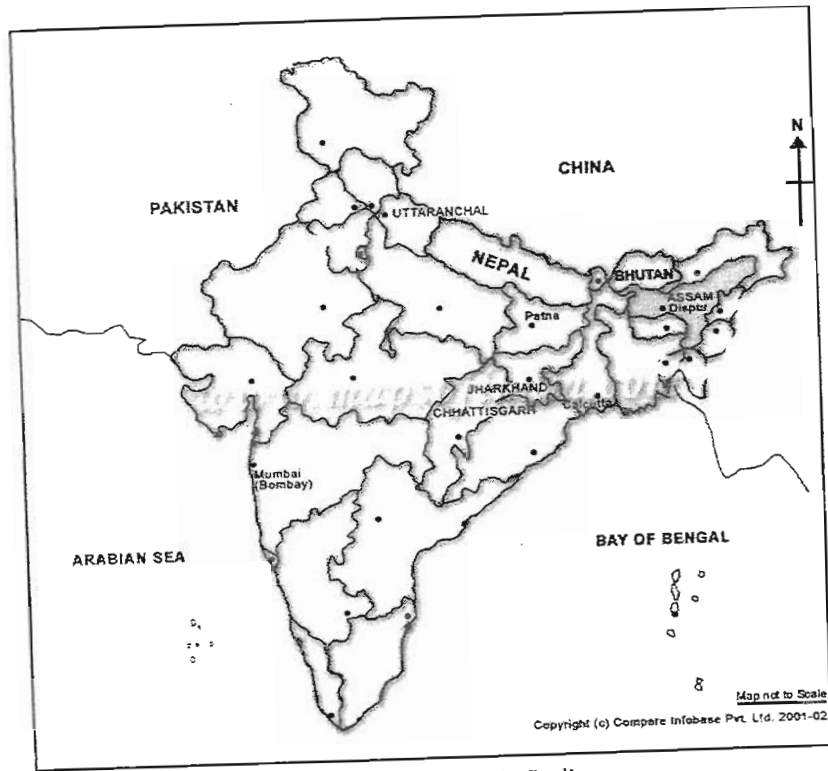
Abbreviations

BAC	:	Bodoland Autonomous Council
BFW	:	Bread For the World
BPL	:	Below Poverty Line
BTAD	:	Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District
CAPART	:	Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology
D.S.T.	:	Department of Science and Technology
GOI	:	Government of India
KGPS	:	Khadi Gramodyog Prayog Samiti
KVIC	:	Khadi and Village Industries Commission
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organization
SHG	:	Self Help Group
TAGS	:	Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangh

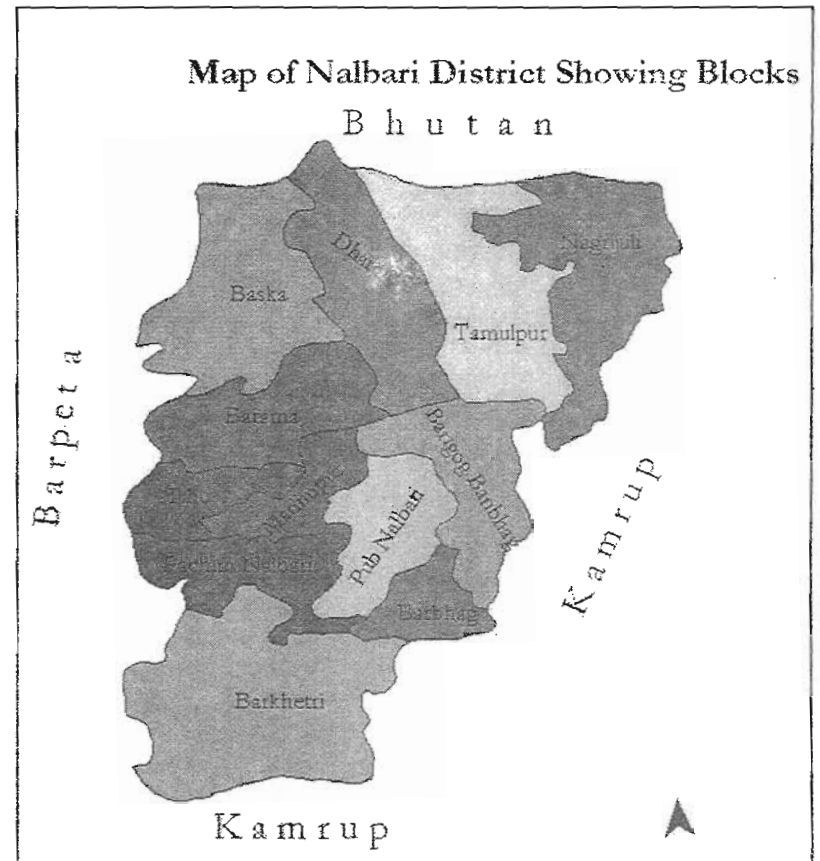
GLOSSARY

Adivasi	: a member of a group of people who have lived in a place from a very early period (in this study we are referring to tea tribes of Assam)
Anchalik	: regional
Ashram	: a traditional Indian set-up where one goes to learn the art of living and some skills
Baideo	: term used for elder sister in Assam
Balwadi	: crèche and kindergarten for children of 3 - 6 years age
Behen	: a title used after a woman's first name, showing respect.
Bhai	: term used for brother in Hindi and other Indian languages
Bhoodan	: a movement involving gifting of land for the landless - as conceived by Vinoba Bhave
Charkha	: spinning wheel
eri	: a variety of Assam silk
Ghani	: mustard oil processor
Gramdan	: collective donation of land in favour of village community (Vinoba Bhave's concept)
Gramodyog	: village industries
Gramkosh	: village fund
Gram-swarajya	: village self-rule
ji	: suffix used with names to show respect
Khadi	: hand spun and hand woven cotton cloth
Mandal	: umbrella organization
Mauza	: the smallest unit of a village for the purpose of revenue collection

Muga	: a variety of Assam silk
Panchayat	: village executive body
Sangh	: federation
Sarvodaya	: It literally means "the rise of all" or "the uplift of all". In Gandhiji's view, everyone's social obligation entailed <i>seva</i> or service. Such service was on behalf of welfare of all.
Swadeshi	: It means only using those products that came from one's own nation, culture and immediate surroundings, rather than those manufactured abroad. <i>Swa</i> means one's own and <i>desh</i> means country.
Swaraj	: independence
Tatpor	: rapid
Vidyalaya	: school



Location of Assam in India



Old Map of Nalbari District of Assam, showing Tamulpur sub-division where Kumarikata is located.

Introduction

1.1 Title : *Gandhian non - violence as a means of dispute settlement in Assam - A case study of Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangh (TAGS), Kumarikata.*

1.2 Statement of the Problem :

Conflicts as a catalyst for social, political and economic change are basic to all human societies. Infact, one could agree that many of the positive changes in world history have occurred as a result of conflict. However, the key issue is to avoid or minimise their violent expression. In this context, an overall analysis of the society in Assam would reveal that through the first three decades after independence, instances of conflict and differences of opinion were confined more to the private than to the public domain, being as they were of a less intense variety. But, over the past three decades, both politics and civil society in Assam have been getting characterised by an increasing level of violence.

Owing to a variety of interrelated reasons, social, economic and political, Assam, that was a seemingly stable democratic system, suddenly became a cauldron of unrest which has contributed to the growth of cleavages based on language, ethnicity and gender. Deployment of the Army to maintain law and order worsened matters further leading to the insurgency situation. Ethnic politics highlighting ethnic assertiveness on the part of smaller communities like the Bodos, Karbis, Dimasas and others, even at the point of the gun led to ethnic terrorism. At the same time, political parties and their leaders have played a substantial role in fostering a culture of divisiveness in the region, putting party interests before the larger interests of the community.

Against the above background of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic violence, it is necessary that an environment that maintains peace be nurtured so as to promote and protect human rights and democracy for the overall development of the region. In this context, the Gandhian

approach to peace based on the philosophy of truth and non-violence can go a long way towards solving the problem. Infact, a lot of work is being carried out on Gandhian non-violence across the world, specially in the Scandinavian countries with an emphasis on the applicability of the approach to situations of conflict and disputes. In Assam, the Gandhian approach has special relevance. It may be noted here that besides the network of Kasturba Gandhi Ashrams that have been carrying out Gandhian activities in the state since independence within their own limits, a number of individual Gandhian activists are also sincerely engaged in promoting the Gandhian principles of peace and non-violence in the state by way of their determined efforts. Mention may be made here of the names of Mr. Ravindra Upadhyaya, of Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangh (TAGS) at Kumarikata in the Baksa district of Assam, Mr. Natwar Thakkar of Nagaland Gandhi Ashram and Mr. Hem Bhai of Shanti Sadhana Ashram in Guwahati and Mr. Harish Bhai working at Gohpur, Assam, among others. However, very few studies have been undertaken on their work so far. I shall in my research work focus on the Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangh (TAGS) at Kumarikata in the Baksa district of Assam, founded by Mr. Ravindra Nath Upadhyaya, as the organisation, under his leadership, has been carrying out a variety of constructive activities based on Gandhian principles, over the past 40 years.

Non-violence

Non - violence as a concept has had a long and ancient tradition visible as it has been in almost all major cultures and regions of the world through the ages. Infact Gandhi himself said that non-violence, like truth, was as old as the hills¹. A brief over view of pre-Gandhian thinkers and philosophers corroborate this. Plato (429 - 347 BC), the outstanding philosopher of Ancient Greece was a votary of non-violence, which was evident in many of his writings. He has written on the last days of Socrates in his books, *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo*, all of which describe one of the greatest instances of individual non-violent resistance in human history. The principle of non-violent resistance was also conceived and applied independently by Zoa Tsu, Buddha, Jain *Tirthankaras* and Jesus Christ.

In the medieval times, Pierre Du Bois (1250-1312 AD), a French jurist made the first actual attempt at drawing up a European Peace Project. Sir Thomas Moore, Cardinal Wolsey, Erasmus and Pope Leo X,

expressed their own concepts of European peace and non-violence in the early 16th Century under various circumstances.

However, it was Gandhi who for the first time ever in human history brought non-violence from the high pedestal of an individual virtue and converted it into a mass-weapon of fighting injustice and oppression thereby extending the principle of non-violence from the individual to the social, cultural and political plane. Accordingly, from the level of the individual, non-violence is extended to the family, community, intra-state and finally to the inter-state levels. With Gandhi, non-violence became a social weapon without the slightest neglect of its individual and personal commitment, in word, deed and thought. Gandhi opined that truth and non-violence were not merely matters of individual practice but for practice by groups, communities and nations.² "The attainment of freedom, whether for a man, a nation or the world, must be in exact proportion to the attainment of non-violence by each", Gandhiji said.³

Gandhiji considered *ahimsa* or non-violence as the supreme religious duty of every man. To him, non-violence in the first place, encompasses both negative and positive implications. Negatively, it includes non-killing (humans or animals) and non-injury. The human killing includes murder, casualties in war and violent revolution, suicide, mercy killing, abortion and capital punishments. The killing of non-humans involve animals and plants. Non-injury not only includes not causing harm to a person's mind or body by word or deed but also non-damaging of materials. Injury may be direct or indirect. Indirect forms of injury includes exploitation, injustice and inequality. Non-violence extends for harmony between man and nature and advocate horizontality as opposed to verticality of relations.

Positively, non-violence means one must have love, sympathy, compassion even for one's opponent. It is in this context that Gandhi made a distinction between the evil doer and his evil action so as to hate the sin not the sinner. According to Gandhi, "A non-violent man will act upon the murderer through his love. He cannot, by punishing the murderer, undo the murder already committed. But he hopes by gentleness to get the murderer to repent of his deed and change the whole course of his life."⁴

In the second place, Gandhi believed that non-violence is a weapon

only of the brave and not of the weak. Those who apply non-violence are men and women with indomitable courage and strength. Infact, true non-violence involves a paradox : we must have the strength to kill before we have the ability to transcend killing.⁵ Non-violence is not a cover for cowardice but it is the supreme virtue of the brave. Exercise of non-violence requires far greater bravery that that of swordmanship. Cowardice is wholly inconsistent with non violence.

Various approaches to peace vis-a-vis the Gandhian approach (to peace)

One of the outstanding achievements of Gandhiji vis-a-vis his ideology of non-violence has been in the realm of conflictology and peace. In the context a brief over view of various peace approaches would not be out of place. It may be mentioned here, that the major causes of violence and peace relate to the way the human condition is cut through by fault lines, dividing humans and nature, normal people from deviants, different generations, races, classes, nation states. Most of the time and in most places there is "narrow peace" or an absence of direct violence across most fault lines, but not "broad peace" or an absence of both direct and structural violence, (perpetuation of exploitation through societal structures).⁶

A major approach to peace concerns in the society and community is to tilt the cultural balance in favour of peace, letting peace culture be dominant cultures⁴.

Broadly speaking, the major approaches to peace can be divided into the following six cultural spaces : ⁷

i) EUROPE :- The Roman / Greek and Modern Traditions

According to their approach, international or external peace is the absence of external wars : inter-country, inter-state or international. Social or internal peace is the absence of internal wars : national, racial, class, or ideological groups challenging central governance or each other. This concept is carried by the Roman pax - peace as a contractual, mutually agreed relation. It is the source of western international law.

ii) EUROPE :- The Christian Traditions

Here, peace is seen as ordained by a God whose law is the only valid law and valid for all of humanity. Wars must be "for a just cause to correct injustice," to be waged by a lawful authority. Hard Christianity.

iii) WEST ASIA :- The Judaic and Islamic Traditions

In this case, it is neither unconditional peace nor unconditional war. It is peace under certain conditions and war under certain conditions. The problem is to spell out those conditions.

The above three approaches, viz., the two Europes and West Asia, have one idea in common : the hierarchy or the pyramid. Essentially, this is peace from above, whether from a big power, a combination of big powers or from some central authority.

The rest of the following approaches to peace express the ideas of peace from below, small is beautiful, inspiring the search for alternative peace studies.

iv) EAST ASIA :- *Hop'ing* / *Heiwa* - The Chinese / Japanese traditions

The standard translation of *hop'ing* (Chinese) and *Heiwa* (Japanese) is 'harmony'. And one reading of harmony would be not only 'absence of violence', but 'absence of conflict'. Indications of conflict are swept under the carpet, and the person articulating conflict is frozen out of harmonious society, or prevented from expressing such views.

v) Pacific, America, Africa

The non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms in the category can be sub-divided into the following :-

a) *Ho'o pono pono*

This is a Polynesian method of conflict resolution, meaning "setting straight." It brings together around a table the perpetrator, victim, family members, neighbours, friends and others with a moderator, the "wise man", not from families or neighbours. Everyone is

encouraged sincerely to present their version, everybody accepts some part of the responsibility. In the end, the record of what happened (but not of what has to be done) is then burnt, symbolising the end of the incident and the construction of a new relation among all of them.

b) *The Peace Pipe* :- The Cheyenne Conflict Resolution Symbol

With the Cheyenne, a zone of peace is created at the top of society, with the peace chiefs being models of non-violence to be emulated by the rest. They were not to engage in any quarrels within the tribe regardless of whether their families or children were involved. Ritual like smoking the peace pipe together, makes it possible to think with one mind, one heart.

c) *Shir* - The Somalian Conflict Resolution Method

A traditional conflict resolution structure that brings together all the mature men in the clans involved in a conflict. Women, children and young hot-blooded warriors are excluded. They chat and drink tea. The various pieces that make up the main issue for which the *shir* was called will fall into place because a social climate conducive to a solution will have slowly emerged. The result will be proper peace - a peace felt from the inside.

vi) SOUTH- ASIA :- *Shanti* and *Ahimsa* (The Gandhian approach)

Although there is a trend in three faiths of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism toward unconditional peace by *ahimsa*, non-violence, the major carrier of this message of all times was M. K. Gandhi who gave non-violence and peace a concrete strategic and ideological expression. Using the formula - "there is no way to peace, peace is the way," Gandhi developed his philosophy of non-violence, executed through the technique of satyagraha. In this context, it must be mentioned that Gandhi was in favour of broad peace including absence of both direct and structural violence across faultlines. The struggle against violence, direct or structural is by non-violence. He has visualised a peaceful, non-exploitive social system based on a federation of self-contained and self-sustaining village communities. Gandhi's adulation of the small social unit, the village, makes it amply clear that for him peace in the sense of direct violence cannot

be built top-down by heavy international and national hierarchies, in the pax and Hobbesian tradition.

Gandhi's system would permit a fuller and richer life to individuals, establish rapport between individuals and communities and extinguish possibilities of exploitation of one group by another, of villages by cities, of cities by metropolitan areas and weaker nations by stronger nations and of the future generations by the present generation. His social system would provide for conservation of the natural resources and do away with the problems of exhaustion of resources, pollution and ecological imbalances.

It is the Gandhian approach to peace and conflict - resolution which becomes particularly relevant in the case of India's north-east.

Non-violence-Satyagraha-Constructive Programme

Gandhiji sought to operationalise his ideology of non-violence through the instrument of satyagraha. Satyagraha was the guiding philosophy of the Indian people in their fight against injustice and exploitation of the British Colonial regime in India and has been adopted by protest groups in other countries. Gandhi made Satyagraha, an instrument of social change. Gandhiji's doctrine of satyagraha was the logical corollary of his fundamental premises about human perfectibility, and the result of his repeated experiments with political action and social reform.

Satyagraha may be interpreted as "the devotion to truth" or as "truth force". It implies a relentless search for truth and a determination to reach truth. A satyagrahi-a person practising satyagraha - achieves correct insight into the real nature of an evil situation by observing a non-violence of the mind, by seeking truth in a spirit of peace and love. In so doing, the satyagrahi encounters truth in the absolute.⁸ By his refusal to submit to the wrong or to co-operate with it in any way, the satyagrahi asserts this truth. The satyagrahi attempts to resolve disputes by appealing to the reason and heart of the opponent. However, the satyagraha forbids any tactic suggesting the use of secrecy to one's advantage. The ultimate aim of satyagraha is to achieve the truth vis-a-vis the construction of alternative political and economic institutions without any semblance of exploitation whatsoever.

Traditionally, when disputes or conflicts are resolved by violence, they simply involve the triumph of one protagonist over the other. Such a "resolution" may occur via threat, persuasion or naked force, but in any event the presumption is that one side wins and the other loses, which is what mathematicians call a zero-sum game where for every winner there is a loser.

As against the zero-sum game of conflict where the clash between both persons and underlying principles is sought to be resolved by each side trying to maximise benefits and minimise losses, Satyagraha follows the sum-sum game which produce only gains for the parties concerned. Satyagraha seeks to conquer through conversion of hearts, based as it is on love and non-violence. In the end, there is no defeat and no victory but rather a new harmony with no negativities left behind. Satyagraha as an instrument of conflict resolution and social change has unlimited potentialities for building a peaceful society. This stems from his belief in the inherent goodness of man.

Gandhiji was of the view that Satyagraha in order to work on the ground has to be constantly backed by constructive work. He himself drew up a chart of constructive programme. Gandhiji said, "Civil disobedience without the backing of constructive programme can never lead us to independence. Shorn of it, civil disobedience becomes a method of violence bound to prove ineffective in the end".⁹ Gandhiji envisaged the constructive programme as the indispensable positive component in the systematic practice of satyagraha. The constructive programme is the long term prerequisite of a system of non-violent self-rule, without which political power or formal independence would prove to be as a sham. The constructive programme included individual and collective efforts on behalf of unity between diverse religious communities, the removal of social abuses such as untouchability, programmes of rural education and reconstruction, the decentralisation of production and distribution, schemes for the improvement of health, sanitation and diet, the promotion of local handicraft, and, in general, concerted work by all to promote the common good.

The constructive work initiated by Gandhiji had a revolutionary significance. Gandhi led a successfully heroic Satyagraha in South Africa. Thousands of people of Indian origin joined him and underwent suffering. They had to be trained in the art of satyagraha. Constructive work was devised to provide training to them in selfless public service.

Those who were incorporated into the constructive work, used to be in the forefront of satyagraha struggles. Gandhi embarked on constructive programme to promote communal harmony, the removal of untouchability, promotion of khadi and village industries, prohibition, amelioration of the conditions of women, spread of new national education, etc. After the suspension of non-co-operation, constructive work became full time peace - work for the satyagrahis.

Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangh, Kumarikata (Case Study)

My empirical data will be collected from a place called Kumarikata near the Indo - Bhutan border as it serves as the centre of Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangha (TAGS). Kumarikata is a *mauza* situated in the village of Bahbari under the Tamulpur Sub - Division of Baksa district in the Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD) area of the state of Assam. Kumarikata, as has already been mentioned, serves as the centre for Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangh (TAGS) founded by Veteran Gandhian activist, Mr. Ravindra Nath Upadhyaya. The following is a brief description of why exactly I have selected TAGS Kumarikata, as a case study for my work.

In the wake of the 1962 Chinese aggression of India, Vinoba Bhave suggested that Gandhian *sarvodaya* workers should dedicate themselves in preparing the people of North-East India to face the aggression with non-violent means as part of their *shanti-sena* campaign. Accordingly, at the age of about 39 years, Mr. Ravindra Nath Upadhyaya came to Assam. He conceived of a *gramdan sangh*, which would consist of all *gramdani* villages of a block and would be a viable unit for taking up the task of development. He helped form four such *gramdan sanghs* of which the Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangha or TAGS was one, with its centre at Kumarikata. TAGS consists of ten villages in all. The target area for intensive work covers Tamulpur, presently a Sub-Division of Baksa District and Nagrijuli Block in Nalbari District. TAGS, Kumarikata is a glaring example where the Gandhian theory of non-violence - satyagraha - constructive work - sarvodaya has been empirically carried out, largely on the basis of the three point programme of gramdan for democracy, khadi for development and *shanti sena* (peace corps) for peace and defence. Mr. Ravindra Upadhyaya was aware of the fact that a long term relationship of trust could be built with people only when they could see some hope for their economic betterment through the programmes undertaken.

This becomes relevant specially in the context of Kumarikata and its adjoining areas, which have had long experience of militancy and inter-group disputes and conflicts. The Kumarikata project is a pointer to the fact as to how disputes can be settled in a non-violent way. At Kumarikata, Mr. Upadhyaya initiated a number of innovative programmes with the objective of genuine economic uplift of the people at the grass root level. Mention may be made in this context of the activities carried out at Kumarikata with regard to the production related activities including khadi production, *muga* silk production, honey and mustard oil production, among others, employing local people and helping them earn a livelihood through the sale of their produce. Besides, the Khadi Gramudyog Training Centre at TAGS, Kumarikata is contributing in a great way in terms of capacity building and skill formation among the youths for self-employment.

A special feature of Kumarikata is the formation of the *Mahila Shanti Sena* (Women Peace Corps) composed of local women folk. The village community needs an army of peace-workers who would be willing to solve problems and resolve disputes peacefully with the help of village and neighbourhood people. In this task of neighbourhood peace building, women are likely to do better than men. That is the rationale of *Mahila Shanti Sena*. The *Mahila Shanti Sena* at Kumarikata pays special attention to over all peace in the village and attends to matters relating to children, the old and the infirm, widows, schools and health centres including potable water and sanitation.

It may be noted here that in the wake of the recent clashes between the Assamese and Bihari communities that rocked the state in 2004, the *Mahila Shanti Sena* marched through the streets of Kumarikata and adjoining areas carrying banners and proclaiming the message of peace across communities.

1.3 Objectives

The main objectives of my research work are as follows:

- i) To collect data on various activities carried out by different Gandhian institutes committed to peace and non-violence in Assam with special reference to TAGS Kumarikata.

ii) To analyse and prove how constructive activities based on Gandhian philosophy, can contribute towards generating minimum gainful economic opportunities at the grass roots and help wean away misguided youths from the path of violence.

1.4 Hypotheses

The hypotheses of my research work are the following:-

i) Gandhi's theory of non-violence-satyagraha-constructive activities has been empirically carried out at Kumarikata under the leadership of Mr. Ravindra Nath Upadhyaya with a view to extending social and economic support to the marginalised sections at the grass roots.

ii) The *Mahila Shanti Sena* (Women Peace Corps) of Kumarikata composed of local women folk has been playing a key role in the area by volunteering to work for neighbourhood peace building and resisting social ills.

iii) On the whole, the Kumarikata project is a glaring example of how disputes can be resolved in a non-violent way, generating social capital across groups and communities.

1.5 Methodology

This study is an exploratory one with an emphasis on primary data based on empirical investigation supplemented by secondary data collected from various sources including books, the Gandhi serves, encyclopedia, reports, documents, booklets, newspapers, journals and websites. As for empirical investigation, I have selected the Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangh (TAGS) at Kumarikata for my purpose. Data was collected directly from field survey, for which a combination of the interview and observational methods of data collection was made use of. The questions were administered through an open-ended and partially structured schedule.

For my empirical investigation the multi-stage convenient sampling method was adopted. The population of my research work was divided into three categories. The first category included workers within the premises of TAGS at Kumarikata. The second category included the members of the *Mahila Shanti Sena*. The third category included the

residents of Bahbari village of which Kumarikata is a *mauza*.

As for the first category, i.e., workers at TAGS, Kumarikata, there are 58 workers in all. The break up is as follows:-

Activities	Male	Female	Total
1) Khadi Gram Udyog Vidyalaya	: 6	+ 6	= 12
2) Khadi Gram Udyog	: 7	+ 7	= 14
3) Casual (Khadi / Mustard oil production unit/Carpentry/ Bee-keeping)	: 7	+ 3	= 10
4) Core Group Support (D.S.T.)	: 5	+ 1	= 6
5) Women Technology Work (D.S.T.)	: 2	+ 1	= 3
6) Casual (Project Specific)	: 1	+ 2	= 3
7) Action Aid project	: 6	+ 4	= 10
1) Khadi Gram Udyog Vidyalaya	: 6	+ 6	= 12
Total			= 58

Out of the total 58 workers, I interviewed 30 workers to ascertain their views.

As for the *Mahila Shanti Sena* members the second category of the population, I interviewed a representative sample of 15 women from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds. They included both married and unmarried women.

As for the third category, i.e., residents of Bahbari village, the total population of the village, according to the 2001 Census of India Report, GOI, is 4188 with a total of 751 households. Out of the total 751 households, I took a sample of 3%, i.e., 22 households. The residents of Bahbari village, which is a mixed population village can be classified into the following categories:

- a) Tribal Assamese
- b) Non-Tribal Assamese⁰
- c) Bengalis
- d) Adivasis
- e) Nepalis
- f) Immigrant Muslims

Based on the voters list for 2005 of Bahbari village, I covered 22 households on the basis of purposive sampling, the break up of which is as follows :-

Community	Household
a) Tribal Assamese	5 = (3Bodo households + 2 Rabha households)
b) Non-Tribal Assamese	5 = (2 Koch Rajbongshi households included)
c) Bengali	3
d) Adivasi	3
e) Nepali	3
f) Immigrant Muslim	3
Total =	22 households

(*) Non - Tribal Assamese category also includes Koch Rajbongshis.

I have also taken into account the male-female ratio as well tried to include respondents from both the younger and older generations.

1.6 Review of Literature of Contextual Relevance

I have relied on a number of secondary sources in the form of books, the Gandhi series, journals, newspaper supplements, encyclopedias, reports, booklets and websites to have a theoretical perspective about fundamental concepts relevant to my work and to collect background information regarding the Kumarikata project of Mr. Ravindra Nath Upadhyaya.

1) Books

i) Anil Dutta Mishra in his edited book, *Gandhian Approach to Contemporary Problems*, talks about Gandhi's notion of a peaceful non-exploitative social system and contains essays on how Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence enable peaceful socio-economic changes so as to permit individuals and small groups and communities to retain their autonomous existence and leadership.

ii) Anirudha Krishna in her book *Active Social Capital - Tracing the Roots of Development and Democracy*, has offered various definitions of social capital from those of Brehm and Rahn to Stole and Rochon.

iii) D.G. Tendulkar's *Mahatma - Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, Vol. I, dwells on the origins of Gandhi's Satyagraha movement, including the terminological metamorphosis of his struggle from "Passive Resistance" to "Satyagraha".

iv) In their book titled, *Peace and Conflicts Studies*, David P. Barash and Charles P. Webel have dwelt on the concept of non-violence both in theory and practice, as it was followed by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

v) D.K. Mohanty in his book, *Indian Political Tradition - from Manu to Ambedkar*, has in the chapter on Gandhi, touched upon all the concepts of Gandhi from non-violence to his idea of the state in a concise manner.

vi) J. Pandey's book, *Gandhi and 21st Century* speaks of Gandhi's conception of non-violence and its application to all spheres of human life and society. The book also makes mention of *Shanti Dals* or Peace Brigade of the Gandhian variety and highlights the relevance of non-violence in today's world.

vii) In his edited series, *Thoughts of Mahatma*, Volumes 1, 2 and 4, K.S. Bharati has tried to focus on the themes of non-violence and satyagraha in their theoretical dimensions and the evolution of the concepts in both spatial and temporal terms until the adoption of the techniques and their actual implementation by Gandhi in South Africa and India.

viii) Mark Juergensmeyer in his book, *Gandhi's way - A handbook of Conflict Resolution* talks of various methods of conflict resolution such as forced victory, accomodation and compromise and other game theory proportions and finally arrives at satyagraha adopted by Gandhi as an instrument of conflict resolution, describing the various strategies to carry it out.

ix) Naresh Dadhich's edited book, *Towards a More Peaceful World - International and Indian Perspectives*, talks about the foundation of non-violence laid down by Aldo Captini, Lanza del Vasto and Johan Galtung besides Gandhi and throws light on the concept of structural violence. The book also seeks to define peace at various levels - from the individual to the transnational.

x) In the edited book by Radhika Coomaraswamy and Dilrukshi Fonseka, titled, *Peace Work - Women, Armed Conflict and Negotiation*, the reader comes across the gender perspective in conflict situations. Issues such as women, war and violence including women's peace activism have been dealt with in the book.

xi) In the book, *Women and Social change* edited by Raj Pruthi and Bela Rani Sharma, the reader comes across Gandhiji's views on such issues as women and politics, women and militarism even as his overall idea of the status and role of women in the society is highlighted.

xii) Ramjee Singh's *Gandhi and the New Millenium* informs the reader as to how Gandhi's non-violence as a strategy for social action still holds good in the contemporary world vis-a-vis the double dynamics of constructive programme on the one hand and agitational methods such as civil disobedience on the other.

xiii) R.C. Majumdar's, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. III, in its initial chapter quotes Gandhi's concept of a non-violent man and how satyagraha differs from passive resistance. It also gives an account of the background of Gandhi's satyagraha movement.

xiv) In the book titled, *The Amartya Sen and Jean Drize Omnibus* the reader comes across the concept of "public action" as defined by Sen and Drize where they have interpreted it as involving initiatives from the state as well as the activities of the public at large. They have also expressed the view that there is little reason for presuming that the terrible problems of hunger and starvation in the world cannot be changed by human action.

II) Gandhi Series

I have referred to Volumes XV, XXVI, XXX, LIX, LXXIV, LXXV and LXXVIII of the series titled, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, brought out by the Publications Divisions of the Govt. of India containing unedited letters and speeches of Gandhi. In the volumes consulted by me, I could find relevant information on Gandhiji's idea of non-violence, satyagraha and constructive programmes expressed in his own words.

Besides, I have also referred to the book titled, *Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, edited by Raghavan Iyer containing collected letters written by Gandhiji wherein I could find specific reference to Gandhiji's concept of *Peace Brigade* and its functions.

III) Encyclopedia :

i) *The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, Vol. 16, edited by Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, contains useful information regarding the concept of peace, different approaches to peace and conflict, resolution mechanisms.

ii) *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 10, edited by Robert P. Gwinn and Peter B. Norton was useful to me in terms of finding out the definition of satyagraha.

IV) Newspaper Supplements

These include the *Saturday Fare (The Sentinel)* dated February 5, 2005 and the *Sunday Reading (The Assam Tribune)* dated February 6, 2005, containing relevant articles regarding the *Mahila Shanti Sena* (Women Peace Corps) and constructive activities.

V) Reports

I have referred to the following three reports published by TAGS, Kumarikata to get a background information about the organisation and its activities over the years.

- (i) *A Report on Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangh, 1999.*
- (ii) *Evolution of Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangh - A Comprehensive Historical Account.*
- (iii) *Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangh - Annual Report 2003-2004.*

I have also referred to the *Human Development Report, 2002 (UNDP) - Deepening democracy in a fragmented world* published by Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

VI) Booklets

These include the *Mahila Shanti Sena (Women Peace Corps) : What*

and Why ? Culture of Peace, Participatory Democracy and Mahila Shanti Sena and Revolutionary Democracy Through Democratic Revolution, all published by Mahila Shanti Sena Office, Jamui, Bihar, giving basic information regarding the Women Peace Corps.

VII) Websites

The following are the websites I have referred to for finding relevant information regarding non-violence, constructive programme and the like :

www.gandhiking.com
www.humansecurity-chs.org/activities/outreach/Sen2000.pdf
www.mkgandhi.org
www.transcend.org
www.vernalproject.org
www.womenwarpeace.org

The website, www.womenwarpeace.org contains information regarding the role of the U.N. in terms of women, peace and security.

VIII) Journals

I have referred to *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXI No. 29 and Vol. XXIV No. 48, containing relevant articles on Gandhian non-violence. I have also referred to the journal of the Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development titled *Social Change and Development* dated Oct. 2002.

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1. Singh, Ramjee, *Gandhi and the New Millenium* (New Delhi : Commonwealth, 2000), p.3.
2. Bharati, K.S. *Thoughts of Mahatma*, Vol. 1 (Nagpur : Dattsons, 1995), p.18.
3. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XXX (New Delhi : The Publications Division, GOI, 1992), p. 462.
4. *The Collected Works of Mahanta Gandhi*, Vol. LIX (New Delhi : The

Publications Division, GOI, 1974), p. 42.

5. Juergensmeyer, Mark, *Gandhi's Way - A Handbook of Conflict Resolution* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 145.

6. *The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, Vol. 16 (New York, Elsevier, 2001), p. 11134.

7. Ibid, p. 11135.

8. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 10 (Chicago : University of Chicago, 1990), p. 471.

9. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. LXXV, p. 137, 1979.

Chapter - II
**SECURING HUMAN SECURITY
THROUGH SATYAGRAHA**

2.1 Introduction

The prospects of human survival in the contemporary world have been made less favourable in view of the newly developing dangers and adversities that threaten to jeopardise the survival, daily life and dignity of human beings. While on the one hand, there is a continuing and worsening threat to survival of civilians caught in inter-community violence, on the other hand, problems in public health, including the emergence and spread of particular diseases such as AIDS, new types of malaria and so on coupled by economic deprivation have put vulnerable sections of the society at the receiving end. Developing countries like India bear ample testimony to the same. In this context, the role of the state in India also needs to be examined. Although India as a welfare state is committed to ensuring social security to its citizens, the mechanism adopted for the purpose has been that of a centralised scheme of socio-economic planning which has translated into proliferation of bureaucracy marked by concentration of power and authority. More often than not, poverty alleviation cum employment guarantee schemes have failed to benefit the target groups, with no qualitative change accruing to their lives.

Against the above background, an effort has to be made, more than ever before, to confront the forces that make human survival so insecure, which leads us to the concept of human security. Human security implies people - centred security or security with a human face, wherein people can actually enjoy basic human rights including the security of a decent standard of life in terms of access to food, clothing, shelter, health, medicine, education, and a remunerative

job. Human security can be realised by a new economic development strategy based on self reliance, decentralisation and redistribution coupled by new political mechanisms and practices. This essentially involves empowering people as actors and participants in defining and implementing vital freedoms and needs whereby they become active agents of social change rather than being passive and unconscious beneficiaries of doles.

In the above context, Gandhian non-violence as a tool for action can become effective in securing human security vis-a-vis the technique of satyagraha with an emphasis on the scheme of constructive programme as a consistently inherent component of it. It will not be out of place to give a brief description at this stage, of the genesis of the term "satyagraha". Gandhiji originally described his resistance movement in South Africa against the Registration Act of August 22, 1906, as "passive resistance". However, as the struggle advanced, Gandhi found the name "Passive Resistance" inadequate to express its real meaning. It also appeared to him "shameful" that the Indian struggle should be known only by an English name. Mahatma Gandhi suggested the word "sadagraha" meaning "firmness in a good cause". Gandhi liked the word but as it did not fully represent the whole idea, he changed it to "satyagraha" - "the force which is born of truth and love for non-violence".¹

In sharp contrast to passive resistance, satyagraha is the law of love, the way of love for all and eschews violence absolutely as a matter of principle, at all stages and in all forms. It can never go hand in hand with any kind of violent activity involving injury to person or property. The idea behind it is not to destroy or harass the opponent but to convert him or win him over by sympathy, patience self-suffering. While satyagraha hates all evil and would never compromise with it, it approaches the evil doer through love. The satyagrahi has infinite trust in human nature and its inherent goodness. In a more philosophic phraseology, it is the triumph of the soul-force over the brute force. Satyagraha could be practised by even the common people for achieving their political ends.²

Satyagraha therefore is the means whereby ahimsa is expressed and non-violent victory attained. It requires respect for the opponent and perseverance in weaning the other from error, rather than trying to injure or annihilate him or her. It must be conducted without hate,

aimed at policies, not persons. Based on absolute truthfulness, it takes the opponent seriously and seeks to engage him or her in dialogue and self-examination. In satyagraha, the goal is to persuade the adversary that all parties have more to gain by acting in harmony and love than by persevering in discord and violence. Rather than viewing the adversary as an enemy to be overcome, the satyagrahi considers him or her as a participant in a shared march for a just (i.e. "truthful") solution to the problem at hand.³

2.2 Double Dynamics of Satyagraha

Gandhiji developed his technique of satyagraha on the basis of the double dynamics of non-violent direct agitational programmes on the one hand and constructive programme on the other.

Direct Agitational Methods of Satyagraha

As regards the direct agitational programmes of satyagraha, the following are the techniques:

Non-cooperation : According to Gandhiji, non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good. However, such non-cooperation is to be directed towards the various systems of evil, rather than toward individuals.³ The methods of non-cooperation include *hartal*, boycott, strike, fast-unto-death and *hijrat*, which are discussed below:

a) *Hartal*: It is a temporary strike with advance notice as to its duration, the closing down of shops and business establishments and sometimes the halting of the work of the administration. *Hartal* according to Gandhiji strikes the imagination of the people and the government.

b) *Boycott*: It is a means to protest against an unjust political system so as to paralyse its functioning. It may be applied to an individual institution involved in corrupt or unfairly discriminatory practices. Economically boycott may be economically intended to keep out foreign goods where their presence create unemployment or destroy local industries.

c) *Strike*: It is a weapon of the labourers for the redress of their legitimate grievances. Gandhiji suggested that strikes should be direct

against corruption, injustice, inefficiency and not to eliminate the capitalist or simply seize power. The satyagrahi should adopt strike in a non-violent way. It should not be imposed and no one should be compelled to join the strike. The demands of the strike, according to Gandhi, must be clear, feasible and justified. It should not be emotional or sporadic.

d) *Hijrat*: It means voluntary exile or temporary withdrawal from the place where one cannot live with self-respect. This method was advised by Gandhi to the Bardoli peasants in 1928.

e) *Fast unto death* : It is the last weapon to be applied by a satyagrahi for self purification and changing the attitude of the evil doers. According to Gandhi, " Fast is the last resort of satyagraha. When people cannot be made to do anything it is the right of a lone satyagrahi to resort to this final measure. If my fast comes about, it is possible that it will be the complaining voice of the exploited humanity before the world." ⁴

Civil Disobedience as a Technique of Satyagraha:

Gandhiji defines civil disobedience as "the breach of unmoral statutory enactment".⁵ It implies the people's protest in a civil manner. His emphasis is on "civil", so that disobedience will not be violent. It should not be launched in an atmosphere of evil and hatred. It should be practised by a select few in the first instance. Hence, for civil disobedience, there should be a leader of the satyagrahis. The method of civil disobedience includes picketing which means to prevent the entry of persons into the picketed place; marches, non-payment of taxes and deliberate defiance of law. Civil disobedience is a complete, effective and bloodless substitute for armed revolt. But civil disobedience should not lead to outbreak of violence or lawlessness.

According to Gandhiji, " Those who consider the present condition as oppressive, and find the laws encouraging injustice and exploitation and depriving of one's liberty. they can definitely resort to satyagraha. Only that it should be done individually and it should not be devoid of politeness. It can only be done with absolute non-violence. There are good many forces contained in it. If a crore of people were to do individual satyagraha, it would baffle Government. The Government would either be helpless or resort to use of guns. You cannot sit silent

after saying that individual Satyagraha can be offered. It is one's duty to do it. If the public has stamina, it can oppose thus the looting going on under its nose. Leaving aside the question of a crore of people, if all (local) people do so at one place, it is enough" ⁶.

Constructive Programme

According to Gandhi, the Constructive Programme is the truthful and non-violent way of winning *Purna Swaraj* (complete independence). If the Constructive Programme could be successfully worked out, the end of it would be the wholesome independence we want. According to Pyarelal, "Constructive Work is devised in order to generate non-violent power of the masses. It is the drill of the non-violent soldier. The union of constructive work with civil disobedience has led them from victory to victory."⁷ Gandhi launched a movement of Constructive Programme for economic betterment and improving the condition of social life. The Gandhian Constructive Programme was a movement of the people, by the people, for the people.

Creative Programme

The constructive programme was the instrument of creative revolution. Gandhi's creative revolution was a political, economic, educational, social and moral revolution - the grandest creative revolution the world has ever seen culminating in one of the greatest political triumphs of history-without blood-shed and without rancour.

Principles of Constructive Programme

- i) It is purely a moral action which promotes the moral development of the human personality.
- ii) Co - operation , voluntary service and sharing are the core of constructive activities.
- iii) Self - reliance and self - help is another important principle of constructive programme.
- iv) The thrust of constructive programme is building from below.
- v) Constructive programme is the concrete expression of the spirit of non-violence.
- vi) Decentralisation is another important principle of constructive programme.

The Content

Constructive programme is an integral part of non-violence and it is essentially village work. The eighteen items which Gandhiji included in the programme were indispensable for the emancipation of the nation through non-violence. Gandhiji wrote a small booklet, titled *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*, on the train from Sevagram to Bardoli. He had listed the following original thirteen items in the year 1941 : (1) Communal unity (2) Removal of Untouchability (3) Prohibition (4) Khadi (5) Village Industries (6) Village Sanitation (7) Nai Talim or Basic Education (8) Adult Education (9) Uplift of Women (10) Education in Health and Hygiene (11) Provisional Languages (12) National Language (13) Promotion of Economic Equality. In 1945, Gandhi added five more items including farmers, workers and *adivasis*.

After Gandhiji's death, the following items were added by his followers to strengthen the movement : 1) Cow Protection, 2) Nature Cure, 3) *Bhoodan*, 4) *Gramdan*, 5) *Shanti Sena*. Gandhiji's constructive programme was the blue-print for social resurgence, the espousal of *Sarvadharm Samabhava* (equal respect for all religions), the craft based, skill oriented, value creating *Nai Talim* (new education), the trusteeship concept, decentralized planning, local self government, village self-government, village self-sufficiency. The adherence to constructive programme would usher in a nonviolent revolution aimed at a new social order.

Significance of the Programme

Among the items of constructive programme, Gandhiji attached the greatest importance to the economic items and particularly to khadi. Gandhiji considers economic problems in terms of the moral well being of man. His economic outlook is determined by the ideals of non-possession, non-stealing, bread-labour and *swadeshi*. Gandhiji said, "Just as arms symbolize violence the *charkha* symbolises non-violence, in the sense that we can most directly realise non-violence through it. But it cannot symbolize non-violence so long as we do not work in accordance with its spirit,"⁸.

With regard to the constructive programme, Gandhiji was of the view that it was the most novel mode of satyagraha and satyagrahi should

engage in silent, active, constructive work of socio - economic reconstruction cum reform and social service. Every satyagrahi must spend his energy for constructive programme to rebuild the society and promote common good. Gandhiji believed that simply taking over the political power would not carry any meaning.

Accordingly, non-violent direct action is an aid to constructive programme and vice-versa and both taken together, Satyagraha becomes a full substitute for armed revolt. Gandhiji said, "Congressmen in general have not realised the inevitable connection between constructive programme and civil disobedience. Civil disobedience without the backing of constructive programme can never lead us to independence. Shorn of it, civil disobedience becomes a method of violence bound to prove ineffective in the end.

Moreover, civil disobedience, even when it is mass, will only be offered by those who are bodily fit, whereas constructive programme is for all and will never be suspended. If the whole nation took it up in earnest it is enough to give us complete independence. The prosecution of the constructive programme means constructing the structure of Swaraj.

The whole theme of corporate non-violence, as I have conceived it, falls into pieces if there is no living faith in the constructive programme.

To my mind, swaraj based on non-violence is a fulfilment of the constructive programme.⁹ Thus, satyagraha for Gandhiji meant the judicious combination of effective non-violent resistance and constructive work.

The above holistic dimension of satyagraha makes it a potent force in terms of ensuring human security on the one hand and generating immense social capital in the civil society on the other, cutting across artificial barriers of caste, class, creed or ethnicity. When the community takes up satyagraha to offer resistance in specific situations of injustice and untruth even as the scheme of constructive programme is executed effectively, its members are not only able to achieve a level of economic security but also get the opportunity to co-operate to participate in the shared goal of nation-building based on decentralisation of decision making.

2.3 TAGS and Satyagraha

The Kumarikata project of Mr. Ravindra Nath Upadhyaya is a consequence of a genuine concern for ensuring human security to the marginalised and vulnerable sections of the society, where one can find clear traces of satyagraha in its holistic form, linking non-violent direct agitational methods with constructive work.

In the wake of the Chinese aggression in 1962, Acharya Vinoba Bhave recommended that the Gandhian *sarvodaya* workers of the country should dedicate themselves in preparing the people of North-East India to face the aggression with non-violent means as part of their *shanti sena* (peace corps) campaign. The aftermath of the Chinese aggression rendered the already impoverished people living in India's border areas, demoralised. The feeling that they were vulnerable and open to attack any time brought about a feeling of insecurity and unrest. Under the umbrella of the All India *Shanti Sena Mandal* - the brigade without arms, formed a week after the aggression, with Mr. Jayprakash Narayan as its president and Narayan Desai as its secretary, Mr. Ravindra Nath Upadhyaya along with nine other volunteers came to Assam in 1962 at the age of about 39 years to organise *shanti sena* work in the state for building up a non-violent defence mechanism; the defence without arms. Reporting to Amal Prabha Das of the Sarania Ashram of Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust in Guwahati, they were further split into five pairs.

Mr. Ravindra Nath Upadhyaya was teamed with Madhav Rao Chauhan and entrusted with the charge of forming *shanti senas* in Tamulpur and Tihu Blocks of the undivided Kamrup district. This strategic area lay in the Assam - Bhutan border. Since *shanti sena* activities were to promote friendship and co-operation among the people, the first task was to go from village to village and house to house trying to meet people and talk to them about peace. Initially, they stayed at Mr. Dwarik Barua's ashram who had been already working in the aforementioned area, inspired by the Gandhian ideology. With his band of workers, Mr. Ravindra Nath Upadhyaya went from village to village and house to house. Wherever they went, wherever they interacted with, individuals or groups, they spoke of *gram swaraj*, non-violent resistance, national security and thus the need for *gramdan*. During Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan campaign in a number of villages in Assam, *gramdan* had taken place. Mr. Ravindra Nath Upadhyaya

conceived of a *Gramdan Sangh* or organisation which would consist of all *gramdani* villages of a block and would be a viable unit for taking up the task of development. It was not a very easy task as can be gauged from the fact that out of 80 villages where *gramdan* had taken place in the Tamulpur block, only ten were formally recognised. These ten villages formed the Tamulpur Anchalik Gramdan Sangh (TAGS) launched in 1962 by the Upadhyaya and registered as a society in 1966. Kumarikata was chosen as the centre for TAGS and its activities. Kumarikata, near the Indo-Bhutan border is presently situated in the Baksa district of Assam.

Mr. Ravindra Upadhyaya is credited with what is known as the *Angarkata Satyagraha*. Angarkata is the name of a cluster of villages near Kumarikata which used to be professional grazing reserve. The area of this reserve is about 12,000 *bighas*. On the one hand, Hindu refugees and some Santhal and Hajong tribals from what is now Bangladesh (from where they fled after the partition in 1947) and because of increasing pressures and population rise, some plains tribals from Assam - Bodo, Kachari and Uraon, along with some Gurkha graziers, who originally came from Nepal, have been encroaching on this land. They too settled on the land only after the partition of the country in 1947. Both these populations were living in abject poverty, suffering as they were from acute economic deprivation with no access to basic human rights in terms of food, clothing, shelter, medicine and education.

To make matters worse, they were being sought to be evicted by force by the government in a most brutal manner, using elephants to demolish their homes.

Mr. Ravindra Nath Upadhyaya came in contact with the above populations during the course of his *gramdan* work. It was when some of these villages of Angarkata showed willingness to join the *gramdan* campaign, that he realised that they were legally encroachers on this land. On the tenth attempt of their eviction, Mr. Upadhyaya happened to be in Angarkata by co-incidence, when the notice for eviction arrived. He got the people together and prepared them to put up a non-violent resistance to the attempt to remove them from the land. It was March 1967. Elephants were brought to demolish the huts. The people first surrounded the huts and then the elephants. The magistrate also tried to threaten the people by preparing to

order firing on the resisting masses. However, the people who had gathered in their thousands, were undeterred and were ready to face anything. The people showed remarkable courage in standing up to the might of the government machinery, ultimately forcing the government to withdraw, even though only for the time being. They had developed faith in the non-violent methods of struggle and resistance under the mature leadership of Mr. Ravindra Nath Upadhyaya and had realized the strength of unity and organisation. They were absolutely fearless when facing the eviction party. The eleventh attempt of eviction followed in September 1967 when the Veterinary Department which was allotted a portion of the reserve, brought tractors to plough the land and in the process destroy the standing crops of the settlers. The people resisted as before. Mr. Upadhyaya was arrested along with other people. The last attempt of eviction was made in December 1968. The eviction party this time came with armed police and elephants. On this occasion the women folk under the leadership of Mr. Upadhyaya's wife, Mrs. Shakuntala - behen, played a crucial role as they virtually immobilized the elephants, policemen and other members of the eviction party by way of putting up a virulent non-violent resistance to the eviction drive. The official in charge of the eviction operation had to abandon the eviction operation in the face of determined resistance put up by the refugees. It may be noted here that in the mean time, TAGS had formed a *shanti sena* to deal with the government, its bureaucracy and with vested interests.

In a meeting of Angarkata refugees held at TAGS in the late 1990s, they complained that they were promised regularization and allocation of land by the then Revenue Minister, Mr. Siddhanath Sharma and then by Mr. Mahendra Mohan Choudhury, first as speaker of the Legislative Assembly and then as Revenue Minister succeeding Siddhanath Sharma, but no concrete step had been taken in that direction so far even though the process of movement of land, etc. had been completed. However, it may be noted here that they are now treated as defacto permanent settlers with no eviction attempt being carried out against them since 1968.

According to Mr. Ravindranath Upadhyaya, the people of Angarkata have learnt to fight non-violently against injustice and government inaction, trained as they have been in non-violent techniques of social action to get their just demands fulfilled through non-violent movement.⁽¹⁾