

# Principled nonviolence a typology

From Gene Sharp

## 1. **Nonresistance**

Nonresistant groups, such as the Mennonites or Amish are concerned with being true to their beliefs and maintaining their own integrity, rather than with attempts at social reconstruction. They refuse to resist, even with nonviolent techniques, attacks or encroachments upon their way of life.

## 2. **Active reconciliation**

This type, represented by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), favours using active goodwill and reconciliation to bring about social change. Some of the members of these groups do not believe in the use of nonviolent direct action or strategy.

## 3. **Moral resistance**

Peace societies in New England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century are representative of those who believe that evil should be resisted, but only by peaceful and moral means. Their activities included both refusal to participate in war or holding of slaves and a moral imperative to do something actively such as speaking, writing or preaching. Nonviolent resistance was not ruled out although the major emphasis was usually placed on education, persuasion and individual example.

## 4. **Selective nonviolence**

Groups of this type, such as the International Socialists, especially during WWI, and the Jehovah's Witnesses, refuse to participate in *particular* violent conflicts, usually international wars. In certain other situations the same groups might be willing to use violence to accomplish the desired ends.

## 5. **Satyagraha**

Believers in Satyagraha, which was practiced in India by followers of Gandhi, seek truth through love and right action. They attempt to convert their opponent through sympathy, patience, truthfulness and self-suffering. They try to build a new social and economic order through voluntary constructive work. The principle is combined with a variety of techniques and strategies of resistance.

## 6. **Nonviolent revolution**

Persons of this type believe that the major social problems of the world have their origins at the roots of individual and social life and can only be solved by revolutionary change. This revolution, however, is to be brought about by nonviolent, cooperative and egalitarian methods rather than by exploitation, oppression and war.

In another version of his typology, Sharp adds three types of nonviolence which are not necessarily based on principle: passive resistance, peaceful resistance and nonviolent direct action. These forms he places between selective nonviolence and Satyagraha along his continuum from least to most revolutionary. Of the three types, nonviolent direct action is of the most interest, since most of the case material cited in analyses of nonviolence seems to fall in this category. Sharp describes it as follows:

### **Nonviolent Direct Action (NVDA)**

This is a method of producing or thwarting social change by intervention aimed at establishing new patterns or policies or disrupting activities regarded as evil. The motivation of activists may vary from belief in nonviolence as a moral principle to adherence to a temporary nonviolent discipline as a practical method to achieve a particular objective. As in *Satyagraha*, the direct action may be preceded by investigation of the facts, discussions with those responsible for the policy found objectionable, negotiation, public appeals, publicity about the grievance, or prayer, or fasting, and other acts of 'self-purification'.