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The letter, along with the non-violent direct action, led to significant gains in Birmingham by the end of Spring 1963. Many of the discriminatory practices in Birmingham were abolished, and the city became notably less segregated. Non-violence referred to by Dr. King as “the sword that heals”, gave the Black Americans the dignity of moral conviction and self-sacrifice. It healed the oppressor as well as the oppressed. It did not only express hurt and anger at the white people but also made the black people experience the healing necessary for the existence of a just society in the United States.

### **16.5.3 March on Washington (1963)**

In the months after the end of the Birmingham campaign, King became intimately involved in the organisation of the historic August 28, 1963 March on Washington. The March on Washington aimed to encourage passage of civil rights bill and government action to increase the employment of black people.

The organisers intended to highlight the status of black people in the Southern states of USA. However, in order to give the march a more widely accepted audience, civil rights, labor, and religious organisations were involved in organising the march. In expanding its message beyond the scope of African American civil rights to universal labor issues, the march attracted crowds to a tune of a quarter of a million people in front of the Lincoln Memorial for Dr. King’s keynote address. Dr. King’s address drew inspiration from both the Bible and the United States Declaration of Independence. In his address he outlined his hopes for racial harmony and the prospect of equality in the United States.

King’s speech was applauded by the participants of the March as well as Americans throughout the country. In fact the March impressed television audiences throughout the world and Dr. King’s address acquired world-wide fame. The success of this speech and the march as a whole led to the passage of significant civil rights legislation; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the National Voting Rights Act of 1965 legally ended segregation throughout the country. While the passage of civil rights legislation brought King’s dream much closer to reality, there was still much work to be done at the community level in terms of implementation, and King spent the next three years working tirelessly towards that goal.

### **16.5.4 Conflict Resolution Strategy of Dr. King**

Dr. King utilized four strategies to unite the black Americans in the non-violent fight against racism in the United States. The first strategy was his effective use of the Bible. Dr. King frequently used passages from the Bible to appeal to the Christian spirit of the black people. This gave moral authority to his speeches. In fact his well-known speech ‘I have a Dream’ was full of biblical references.

Dr. King’s second strategy was to appeal to the values of the Western Civilization. He made it a point to use thoughts from the Western theological and philosophical traditions

such as the writings of Hegel, Niebuhr, Tolstoy, and Franz Fanon. He used the popularity of the traditions to communicate his thought to the common people.

The third strategy of Dr. King was his brilliant use of American constitutional and legal documents to give credence to his philosophy and movement against racism. He used the 'American Declaration of Independence, the American Constitution and decisions of Supreme court to show that he was willing to work in the legal context in countering racism. However, he also made it clear that unjust laws needed to be challenged.

The fourth strategy of Dr. King was that he consistently included both the black and white people in the society which he aimed to achieve, which he called 'the Beloved Community'. Thus he did not advocate the supremacy of the blacks over the white people. His concept of 'Beloved Community' encompassed both the blacks and the whites. He did not favour a different separate identity for the black people.

The use of violence in any conflict results in bitterness between the conflicting parties. But the use of non-violence leads to reconciliation and existence of the "Beloved Community". Dr. King distinguished between three kinds of love: *eros*, "a sort of aesthetic or romantic love"; *philia*, "affection between friends" and *agape*, which he described as "understanding, redeeming goodwill for all," an "overflowing love which is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless and creative"... "the love of God operating in the human heart." Dr. King said that "Agape does not begin by discriminating between worthy and unworthy people... It begins by loving others for their sakes" and "makes no distinction between a friend and enemy; it is directed toward both". It is through Agape love that the beloved community is created and preserved. It is due to the Agape love in Dr. King's beloved community that justice is ensured not for any one oppressed group but for all the people in the community.

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## 16.6 SUMMARY

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Vinoba Bhave, Jayprakash Narayan and Martin Luther King were three leaders who used the method of non-violent resistance to fight injustice and achieve peace in their respective societies. They were aware that there could be no lasting peace unless the downtrodden masses got freedom from poverty, injustice and discrimination. All three were influenced by the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Vinoba Bhave was one of the favourite disciples of Mahatma Gandhi. Many consider him to be the "moral and spiritual heir" of Gandhi. Though Jayprakash Narayan was initially under the influence of ideology of socialism, he was later inspired by Gandhian philosophy. He dedicated his life to furthering of the Bhoodan and Gramdan movements started by Vinoba Bhave. Martin Luther King was also convinced that Gandhiji's philosophy of nonviolent resistance was the most important weapon available for the Black American people in their fight against racial segregation and injustice. However, all three leaders introduced innovation in Gandhiji's philosophy of nonviolent resistance. They modified and adopted the Gandhiji's idea of nonviolent resistance to suit the changed circumstances. Vinoba evolved the approach of 'Non-violent assistance in right thinking'. Vinoba was of the opinion that in a democratic society this was the only effective approach of nonviolent resistance. The Bhoodan movement sought to bring about social transformation through individual acts of charity while the Gramdan movement sought to bring social revolution through collective decisions on the community. The ideal of Vinoba was to establish a 'Stateless society' through the use of Bhoodan, Gramdan and the Shanti Sena.

Jayprakash Narayan was also involved in the Bhoodan and Gramdan movements started by Vinoba Bhave. However, he later became disappointed with the impact of the movements. Jayprakash Narayan realised that the mere use of persuasion and conciliation could not bring about social transformation of Indian society. He was of the opinion that peaceful struggle and Satyagraha were needed to achieve the objective. Jayprakash Narayan made efforts to promote internal and external peace. Jayprakash Narayan achieved world fame due to his leadership of the movement for 'Total Revolution'. The movement for Total Revolution used Gandhian techniques to achieve total transformation of not only the material conditions of the people but also the moral character of the individual.

Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the most charismatic leaders of the civil rights movement in America. It was under his leadership and guidance that the Black Americans initiated movements of non-violent resistance against racial inequality. Martin Luther King reinterpreted the Gandhian concept of non-violence in the context of Christian ethics. He successfully led the black Americans during the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1956) and the Birmingham Campaign (1963). Both these movements were turning points in the struggle of the blacks to gain civil rights in America. It was the March on Washington (1963) organised under the leadership of Martin Luther King that led to enactment of the civil rights bill. He promoted reconciliation between the black and white people of America by putting forward the concept of 'Beloved Community' where both black and white people live in peace and harmony.

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## 16.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

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- 1) Explain the innovations introduced by Vinoba Bhave, Jayprakash Narayan and Martin Luther King in the Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent resistance.
- 2) Write a note on Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan Movement.
- 3) Explain the features of Vinoba Bhave's Gramdan Movement
- 4) Describe Jayprakash Narayan's 'Total Revolution' movement.
- 5) Write a note on Montgomery bus boycott and the Birmingham Campaign.
- 6) Explain the conflict resolution strategy of Martin Luther King.

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