

1. Constructive Program is the scaffolding upon which the structure of a new society will be built while struggling against the old.

Michael: I would say that it's almost being built before you undertake the struggle against the old. Gandhi said, "If you think that we're going to win our freedom and then fix India's problems, you're dreaming. We have to fix those problems first. Strengthen ourself, deal with our own weaknesses, and then freedom will follow as a matter of course." You know, it'd be relatively easy.

He also made an interesting parallel. He said that satyagrahis, that is soldiers of nonviolence, need at least as much if not more basic training as soldiers of violence. And whereas military soldiers, their basic training is in the art of killing, the basic training for satyagrahis, for civil resisters is in constructive program. Learning how to cooperate with one another, keeping up a steady pressure of work, sometimes doing things or wearing things that you don't particularly like. All of these little sacrifices could be a training for the dramatic obstructive confrontational dimension of satyagraha.

Another thing or set of things that I would say about constructive program, meaning why it's so important as a scaffold, is what I would call continuity and community. By continuity I mean if you are protesting something and that's all you're doing. And your protest succeeds or it fails. Those are the two, generally speaking, outcomes.

Whether it succeeds or it fails, your movement is over. But if you've engaged yourself in rebuilding the society, as we say here at Metta, "Building the world you want," that job goes on continuously. You're not waiting for somebody to do some kind of atrocity that you're going to react to.

So, you have continuity in the movement which is so important. Because we've seen so many times people come to together, express themselves, it either succeeds or fails. And then they go home. Something else happens that they feel compelled to resist and they have to start all over again. You know, whip the old databases and so forth.

So, in addition to continuity through time, you also are forming community with other people. Because you can do a certain amount of constructive program yourself. I'd say the classic example was spinning in India. The spinning wheel. You could do that by yourself up to a certain point. But where are you going to get the cotton from and whom are you going to sell it to?

So, eventually, Gandhi was able to create a network, a grassroots network that embraced just about all of India through constructive program. And we can do that also.

While all this is going on within your community, you're also reassuring the larger community that we sometimes call, "The reference public." This can be critical. If you think of movements that have been resistant, but have not had a constructive element to them, they can get pretty nasty. I mean the nastiest example that pops into my mind is the Sendero Luminoso, the

Shining Path guerilla movement in Peru. They proved that they could kill and kill, but eventually the Peruvian people got fed up with them because, you know, they killed some of their relatives.

Some of the policemen were related to them. And anyhow, they were not showing that they had any capacity to run the country once they got control of it.

Another thing, this may be, in a way, the most important. And we've seen this quite recently in quite a few movements. If you have a well-developed constructive program, you can pre-empt the biggest danger in an insurrection. And that is when it succeeds, you topple the existing regime, you create a power vacuum.

Who's going to rush into that power vacuum? You know, not the grandmothers. It's going to be people who are dealing with power in the first place who have some constituency behind them. Maybe they have weapons. Maybe they have money. So, over and over, I mean we see even with the Bolshevik uprising in Russia in 1917, how they got swept away by a communist. But if you have built an almost complete, a tolerably complete regime, before you topple the old regime, there's no such danger. You're ready to go.

And you're also able to be proactive instead of waiting for some atrocity that happens to galvanize the anxiety and the resistance of the public. So, you can choose your battles. You can say, "You know, I want to build schools. And at some point the oppressive regime is going to tell me I can't do that. And that's when we're going to struggle with them directly." So, this way you are choosing your battles and quite importantly, you're taking the moral high ground.

I can remember when communists were always involved in anti-racism work in this country. And they were the ones who were doing it. And other groups in the U.S. were not doing it. So, that gave them the kind of moral high ground. That they had been doing the work that we should have been doing. They were showing up the inadequacy of the regime in the general public by doing that.

I think, you know, there's a lot more that could be said about constructive program, but I think that would probably be enough for building the general scaffold and we'll go on from there. Thanks.