

GANDHIAN WAY OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Dr. Rajesh Kumar Pandey

Associate Professor, SSR IMR, Silvassa - Permanently Affiliated to SPPU, Pune

ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi is a symbol of peace, spirituality and morality. He is always remembered for the great contribution of his hard work, simplicity, faith in truth, non-violence, humanity, and unity. His largely advocated principles & philosophy include Satyagraha, Shared Vision and Core Values, Self Reliance, Innovations in operations, Doctrine of Non-Cooperation, Public Relations, Transparency, People Welfare, Trusteeship & Leadership Styles. In the society the conflicts have been the part of the natural progression of civilization. Conflict is a natural & inevitable outcome in any group. It is perceptual in nature and has every scope to be tackled & curtailed. The philosophy of Gandhiji helps dealing with the conflict situations. The Industrial domain has been practicing the Gandhian way of conflict resolution for establishing a better Industrial social accord.

This paper attempts to understand the Gandhian Philosophy in General and the concept of Conflict Resolution in light of Industrial context. The study further attempts to present the Gandhian way of Conflict Resolution and its existence in the Industrial Context. The study is descriptive in nature, completed by the help of the secondary data. The understanding gathered on the concept of Conflict resolution in general & the learning on Gandhian way of conflict resolution in the industrial context forms the scope of the study. The author has considered the Gandhian way of conflict resolution in general rather for any specific condition or situation, which may be the limitation of the study. Hence the learning gathered from the literary contribution will be indicative in nature rather exhaustive. Gandhian way of life has broadly been considered as model path to success & hence adopting the Gandhian way of Conflict resolution shall have a promising approach towards enhancing Industrial harmony.

Keywords: Gandhian Philosophy, Conflict Resolution, Gandhian way of Conflict Resolution.

INTRODUCTION

“Generations to come, it may be, will scarcely believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth”

- Albert Einstein

The mesmerizing personality of Gandhiji was acknowledged & referred by many. While his efforts in the field of Social development & National Freedom will be cherished forever however his deeds had a whole lot of lessons to every walk of life. The Industrial domain certainly had benefits out of the lessons and the Gandhian philosophy is acting as a guiding principle for many segments of the Industrial life. Gandhiji's principles have been widely referred as the Revolutionary Transformer of Management. He may rightly be conferred as Management Guru as his leadership style & management principles have transformed businesses. His contribution to business management is commendable and even supports the businesses instincts in current era. Inevitably his deeds & virtues have been the guiding principles for Institutions & Organisations. Gandhian Management Principles and Philosophy have played an essential role in corporate world. His complete thinking about management was based on trust and human goodness. His philosophy has a positive impact on the corporate world. (Sain, 2017)

Conflict situation in society is inevitable and so is for the Industries as well. Industrial Relations (IR) has been a massive talk in the industrial town. Creating harmony is the priority for Organisations and that gets accomplished through massive focus on conflict resolutions. Conflict exists in all situations where individuals and groups are in disagreement with each other for whatever reason. The disagreement in Industrial atmosphere ranges from Task allocation to Supervisory services and travels through communication problems via resource mobilization issues.

Inevitably the conflicts do arise and attract resolution. Gandhian way of conflict resolution is a very prominent way of meeting the harmony. Gandhiji applied the principle of Trusteeship as a one stop solution for massive Organisational problems. Trusteeship approach strengthens the Organisational instincts and creates a sense of unity from top to bottom. The Gandhian Leadership style teaches Oneness in approach, networking with people, relationship development and focusing on the target irrespective of the troublesome path or conflicts. Such Leadership style support the Organisational effort towards building a better industrial atmosphere and equipping employees with strength to tackle conflicts.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The Author has considered the following objectives for the study:

1. To understand the Gandhian Philosophy in General and the concept of Conflict Resolution in light of Industrial context.
2. To study the Gandhian way of Conflict Resolution and its existence in the Industrial Context.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Organisational harmony is an aim of every Organisation. Conflicts are inevitable and Organisations need to be prepared. Gandhian approach addresses the issue of conflict at individual level. As per Gandhian thought, "Conversion rather than Coercion was his remedy for conflict resolution". The fundamentals followed by Gandhiji in the form of Satyagrah and Non Violence have been the guiding force for many conflicting situations. As per a recent study done by Times of India among 23000 respondents, 30% believes that Non Violence is the most relevant Gandhian value. 74% stated that Non Violence immediately makes them think of Gandhiji. This essentially signals that Gandhian thought is still relevant in the minds of modern day people. The relevance of the Gandhian Philosophy, its influence on the Conflict resolution process and implication of conflicts for the Organisation rationalizes the significance behind the study of Gandhian way of Conflict resolution.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Article on Gandhian way of Conflict Resolution is a conceptual study conducted with the help of massively secondary data. As part of the Primary Data collection, the Author has presented thoughts gathered from Interaction with the Industry representatives. The study aims at understanding the Gandhian Philosophy in General and the concept of Conflict Resolution in light of Industrial context. It further aims to study the Gandhian way of Conflict Resolution and its existence in the Industrial Context.

The scope of the study comprises of the thoughtful review of the significance of Gandhian Philosophy & Principles towards Conflict Resolution. The inferences from the study lead to development of refined thoughts on Gandhian way of Conflict Resolution. The Author has considered the Gandhian Philosophy towards Conflict Resolution for the Industry at large rather any specific segment of the Industry & also the inferences are massively based on secondary data, this may be a major limitation of the study as the results gathered from the study are more indicative in nature rather exhaustive.

RESEARCH PROCESS

The Author has adopted the following research process to present the study on Gandhian way of Conflict Resolution:

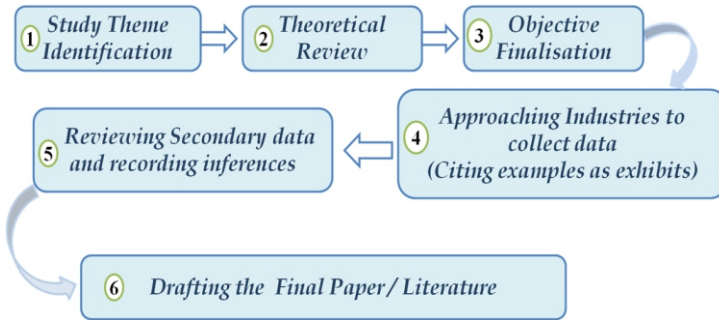


Chart No.: 1: Research Process

Source: Author's Study

VALIDITY OF THEORETICAL REVIEW:

The Author has conducted the validity test of the Theoretical review performed for the study by help of demonstrating the Word Cloud:



Figure 1: Validity Testing through Word Cloud development

Source: Word Cloud processed through the NVivo software

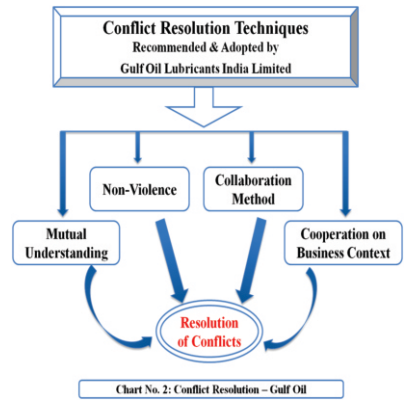
The largest words in the word cloud being Gandhi, Conflict, Management etc. prove the effort for the study in the right direction as the review sources have been relevant.

Exhibit No. 1: Gulf Oil Lubricants India Limited, Silvassa

“Mutual understanding and cooperation on business context is the first motto towards tackling Conflicts”.

- Gulf's Philosophy towards Conflict Resolution

The Organisation welcomes conflict at their premise but in a positive way of thinking for possibilities of constructive outcomes. The Organisation believes that Conflict, need to be understood well & its root cause has to be tackled. Mutual understanding and cooperation on business context will be the first motto. Avoiding personal attacks (some time happens but need to be avoided) whereas mutual discussion by listening will provide much influence in resolving conflicts. Compromising and Collaborative method are the best way to resolve. A 500 employee strong company which started its journey 25 years ago has adopted the Collaborative method of Conflict resolution while aligning the same with the MBTI personal assessments.



The trend of Conflicts at the Organisation is in a wave format i.e., at times lesser in proposition while at other times increasing in trend. The Organisation believes that conflict must be there at times and one needs to find the way to resolve through one to one meetings, group discussions and feedback mechanism. The Organisation attributes Business Behaviour & Individual behaviour towards this fluctuation in trend. “The Gandhian way of Conflict resolution is very valid in the Industrial domain”, says the Manager HR & Admin. The Concept of Non-Violence supports the dialogue mode of handling conflicts. The Organisation believes in this ideology. The IR issues in the Organisation are mostly tackled by proper communication like listening & understanding to the employee's problems and industry problem. Especially the Trade Union matters require patience to tackle. Gandhian way to resolve conflicts could resolve smaller to bigger aspects of conflicts just on the base of understanding issues & discussing the way out.

Source: Personal Interview with Mr. Subodha K. Sarangi, Manager HR & Admin., Gulf Oil Lubricants India Limited, Silvassa

GANDHIAN PHYLOSOPHY

“A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes.”

- Mahatma Gandhi



The Gandhian Philosophy largely discussed are Satyagraha, Shared Vision and Core Values, Self Reliance, Innovations in operations, Doctrine of Non-Cooperation, Public Relations, Transparency, People Welfare, Trusteeship & Leadership Styles. Gandhian philosophy is primarily based of truth and nonviolence.

The philosophy is integrated with the principles and practices that add to the world of management. However the application of Gandhiji's principles in today's management is a definite matter of discussion, if not a concern. Satyagraha, Non Violence, Trusteeship etc. have been regarded as the massive contribution of Gandhian Philosophy towards development of Management practices in Industries at large. Gandhi's whole philosophy centered on the Universalistic idea of human welfare (Kumar, 2015) and this is very much relevant in industrial practices today. Famously Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd. (GCMMF) – (Brand AMUL) has adopted Gandhian Philosophy. In Education Banasthali Vidyapith and in Social services Sewa (Self Employed Women's Association) have successfully implemented Gandhian Philosophy. The Gandhian Philosophy has massively contributed to the Conflict Resolution aspects as well. The Satyagrah format eventually helps to control the conflict situation. The Trusteeship format has the potential to govern the situation in such format that the conflict automatically stands resolved. (www.mkgandhi.org)

CONFLICT RESOLUTION/MANAGEMENT

Conflict is the process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party. Conflict is a perception, so it exists whenever someone believes or feels that another person or group might obstruct its efforts. Conflict may be a slight disagreement between two people regarding the best choice in decision. Conflict exists in all situations where individuals and groups are in disagreement with each other for whatever reason. The Industrial domain experiences conflicts through several sources, it may comprise of Differentiation in task allocation & supervision, Task Interdependence, Scarce Resources, Ambiguity, Communication Problems, Goal Incompatibility etc. There are several types of conflicts that may be experienced; these are Intra-personal conflict, Inter-personal conflict, Intra-group conflict, Inter-group conflict & Inter-organizational conflict.

Conflict management is the process of planning to avoid conflict where possible and organising to resolve conflict where it does happen, as rapidly and smoothly as possible. For any organisation to be effective and efficient in achieving its goals, the people in the organisation need to have a shared vision of what they are striving to achieve, as well as clear objectives for each team / department and individual. You also need ways of recognizing and resolving conflict amongst people, so that conflict does not become so serious that co-operation is impossible. All members of any organisation need to have ways of keeping conflict to a minimum - and of solving problems caused by conflict, before conflict becomes a major obstacle to your work.

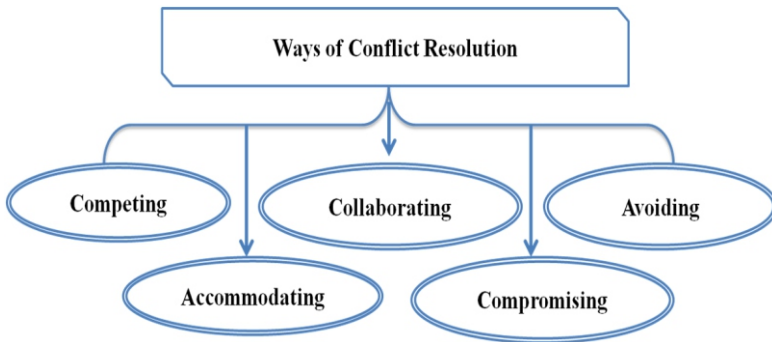


Chart No.: 3: Ways of Conflict Resolution in General

Source: Author's Study

Conflict is a Positive attribute towards developmental goal. The perceived Outcomes from Conflict includes increased group performance, improved quality of decisions, stimulation of creativity and innovation, encouragement of interest and curiosity, provision of a medium for problem-solving, creation of an environment for self-evaluation and change. Managing the conflicts is possible and resolving the same is manageable. Competing with the situation on merit, Accommodating the change due to conflict, Collaborating & Compromising with the conflicting parties & situation, and trying the avoid the conflict (proactive measures) constitutes to a few measures of Conflict resolution management.

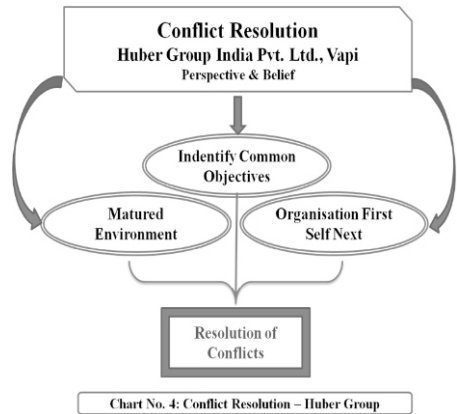
Exhibit No. 2: Huber Group India Private Limited, Vapi

**Over the years, we have developed the culture of
"Organisation First - Self Next".**

- Huber's Philosophy towards Organisational Environment

Huber Group is in the business of Printing Inks. The 4000 Employee strong company with experience of 30 years; ideally considers conflicts with welcome approach at the premises and doesn't shy away. The Organisation believes that the

pre-requisite to conflict management is to identify the common objective on which there are differing views. Once the objective is agreed upon by all the involved entities, resolution is faster though paths may be different. Although they do not follow any defined model or format for the Conflict Resolution / Management, yet they proactively attend any such situations with the best of their Organisational Intellect.



Conflicts are occasional, mostly in reference to new initiatives as systems are already set for old ones. The reason for occasional conflicts and more importantly decreasing trend for conflict is the level of maturity of the organization. Over the years, Huber has developed the culture of “Organisation First Self Next” and this helps to enhance the collaborative environment in the organization. They do advocate the Gandhian way of Conflict Resolution and find it to be valid in industrial context. “Gandhian way is really powerful method of conflict management. Persistence with a noble intention is a sure shot formula for success” says the VP HR.

Source: Virtual Interaction with Mr. Aniruddha Panchal, Vice President Human Resources, Huber Group India Pvt. Ltd., Vapi.

GANDHIAN WAY OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

**“A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes.”
- Mahatma Gandhi**

Conflict cannot be resolved through mere decision making process. Also Conflict being an essential element for bringing out change in society; we should not attempt to suppress the conflict. Gandhiji was firm believer of the fact that a society necessarily need to depend on truthful virtues. Similar is the context of the Organizations where in honesty is the best policy right from people's approach till the cliental service.

The SATYAGRAHA movement during freedom struggle was considered one of the best movements, often referred by various leaders worldwide. Gandhiji had adopted the same at South Africa as well. Organisations benefit out of this philosophy by ensuring integrity in all its functions. A truthful effort always lands victorious.



Chart No. 5 : Gandhian way of Conflict Resolution
Source: Author's Study

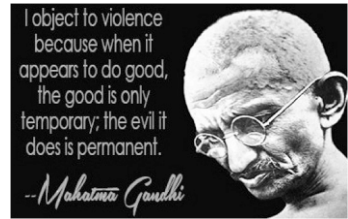
Gandhi evolved SATYAGRAHA as the most pragmatic and effective technique of conflict resolution. Satyagraha is accompanied by the Non Violent approach. Conflict resolution through nonviolent means involves accommodation and conversion of the opponent. Through 'conversion', the opponent changes its conscience within and thus tends to make peace with the nonviolent activist, leaving no scope for revenge. Satyagraha's main elements, Truth and Nonviolence, are inter-related as Ends and Means. Conflict resolution through Satyagraha is based on the assumptions that some elements of common interest to the disputants always exist and also disputants appeal to the heart and mind.

Conflicts within industry that often lead to strikes have economic or social determinants, e.g. wages, management policies, employee-employer relations and fear of powerlessness in employees. Industrial disputes must have as their outcome a continued relation between management and employees. Gandhi believed that for avoiding industrial disputes, "labour should have the same status and dignity as capital." Employees being co-owners in Industry, "should have the same access to the transaction of the Organisations as the shareholders." He wanted the workers to be organized: "When labour is intelligent enough to organize itself and learns to act as one man, it will have the same weight as money if not greater." Once this has come about through nonviolent means of Satyagraha, the 'owners' will not drive the labour to strike but will embrace them as partners. But this calls for patience, restraint, discipline, unity and faith in the organization. Gandhiji applied the principle of Trusteeship to solve the economic problems and economic disparity in the society. Gandhi suggested this concept as an answer to the economic inequalities of ownership and income, a kind of non-violent way of resolving all social and economic conflicts prevalent in the world. As per the Trusteeship concept more than the ownership fact, it has to be custodian fact. This resembles quite a bit in the corporate life, where by the leaders doesn't sound too much of an owner rather they project themselves as team member heading towards common goal. Trusteeship approach strengthens the Organisational instincts and creates a sense of unity from top to bottom. (www.mkgandhi.org)

Exhibit No. 3: Resolution to Ahmedabad Mill Strike, 1918

“Non Violence – Gandhian way of Conflict Resolution”.

Ahmedabad Mill Strike, 1918 was one of the initial movements led by Gandhi in the beginning of 20th century after his return from South Africa. In February / March 1918, the conflict between the Gujarat Mill owners and workers evolved to a greater height. In Ahmedabad there were many textile mills. Prices had gone up and the mill workers were demanding higher wages. Also they had no favourable responses on the question of Plague Bonus of 1917. The mill owners were not agreeing to the demands. The Mill Owners wanted to withdraw the bonus while the workers demanded a 50% wage hike. The Mill Owners were willing to give only 20% wage hike. At this point, Gandhiji was invited by Anasuya Ben Sarabai and her brother Ambalal Sarabhai, rich mill-owner of Ahmadabad towards the cause of the mill owners. Anasuya had just returned from England and was a socialist.



Gandhi sympathized with the workers and took up their cause. He launched a struggle and resorted to peaceful resistance. The workers proudly followed Gandhi and pledged their full support to him. They paraded the streets with large banners, and said they would not go back to work until a settlement had been reached. The strikers were getting impatient and their discipline became weak. Gandhiji feared that some workers would break their pledge and go back to work. That would be a great moral defeat. One morning he called the workers and said, 'Unless the strikers rally and continue the strike till a settlement is reached. I will not touch any food.' Hunger Strike began. The workers were shocked. Gandhiji did not want anybody else to fast. His fast was not against the mill owners, but against the lack of co-ordination and unity among the workers. The fast lasted only for three days. It influenced the mill owners so much that they came to an agreement with the workers. The result was that the strike was successful and the workers got a 35% wage increase. Gandhi used the weapon of Hunger strike & Non Violence to peacefully get the strike over.

Source: www.gandhiashramsevagram.org and www.gktoday.in

Exhibit No. 4: HR Consultancy & Outsourcing firm - Total HR, Silvassa

“Trusteeship is a massive input extended by Gandhiji towards eradicating the conflicting situations in Society”.

- Shri. P. K. Jadia, Total HR, Silvassa

Gandhiji's persona has been always a commanding persona with deeds & virtue. Gandhiji was never against Wealth creation instead he advocated self sufficiency among society. He promoted the fundamentals of Trusteeship whereby the wealthy must be care take of the wealth. Gandhiji suggested the Trusteeship principle as an answer to the economic inequalities of ownership and income, a kind of non-violent way of resolving all social and economic conflicts prevalent in the world. Trusteeship concept suggests that more than the ownership fact, it has to be custodian fact. The ace HR Consultant from the region stated that the Initial days of Gandhiji's struggle in Indian Independence has been more referred in context to British Rule however there has been several activities that Gandhiji has demonstrated as an example for Social upliftment. Shri. Jadia cited example of the Ahmedabad Mill Strike. He referred that it was one of its first kind of conflict resolution whereby the mode was completely Non-violent and result oriented. The 1991 reforms which opened the gates for development in the Nation, also indicates that since then there has been a downfall in the Industrial unrest pertaining to strikes / similar agitations.

Having said that still there are instances. To a large extent the Industrial domain is experiencing better ways of resolving conflicts at Organisations. The Gandhian way of Conflict resolution massively supports the way out to the Industrial unrest. "Understanding the Gandhian way of conflict resolution in true spirit with patience is essential" says the Leader at HR Consultancy & Outsourcing firm.

Source: Personal Interview with Shri. P. K. Jadia, Founder & Leader at HR Consultancy & Outsourcing firm, Total HR, Silvassa.

RECOMMENDATION

Conflict Resolution techniques have been tried and tested in the Organisations since ages. The Trade Union era has taught the Industries about Industrial Harmony & peace through tough lesson. While at one end the Industrial unrest has gradually experienced decrease in its existence, to the other end different forms of unrest have developed. Conflicts are inevitable. Ideally Organisations welcome conflict and consider the same as positively engrossed phenomenon. However if the Conflicts aren't tackled appropriately then there will be repercussion beyond the control of the Organisation. The Gandhian way of Conflict Management broadly defines Satyagraha, Non Violence and Trusteeship as the way out to Conflict Management. The Author has carved a recommendary model of Conflict resolution whereby the Gandhian philosophy is the base however the way out is defined in process suitable to the Industrial context. The Author has broadly considered three segments for the Conflict Resolution Mechanism at the Organisation. Those segments are Pre Conflict Zone, Conflict Zone and Post Conflict Zone.

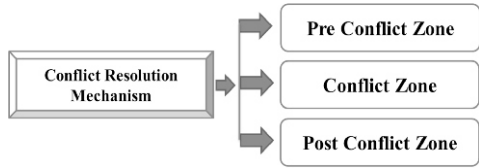


Chart No.: 6 Author's Contribution -Conflict Resolution Mechanism

The Author recommends the following approach towards Conflict Resolution in the Industrial context. As suggested in Chart No. 6, the approach is divided into three segments.

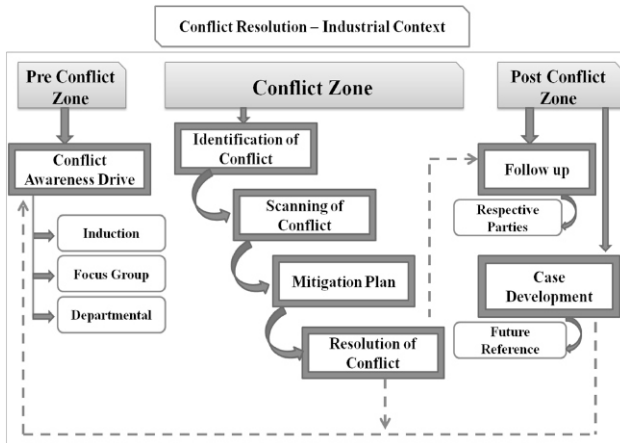


Chart No.: 7 Author's Recommendation -Conflict Resolution Industrial Context

The Recommendary model has a base of Gandhian principles & philosophy in terms of extending opportunity for all to participate and get the resolution in the Non Violent approach. As Trustee of the empire the Owner has the right to ensure the appropriate progress of the resolution to organisational issues. The Pre-Conflict Zone, Conflict Zone and Post Conflict zone has potential to ensure a smooth conduct of conflict resolution.

PRE-CONFLICT ZONE

This zone represents the proactive measure taken by the Organisation whereby the Organisation can create a Conflict Awareness Drive through the help of the Induction programme, Focus Groups and Departmental discussion rounds. This eventually helps the Organisation to curtail the conflicting situations. The inputs in these sessions can be sought through the Conflict Resolutions in past and cases developed at the Organisation accordingly.

CONFLICT ZONE

The Conflict zone comprises of Identification of the Conflict i.e., whether Employee - Employee, Employee - Employer, personal ground, anonymous etc. Once

identified the conflicts, the Scanning of the conflict leads to reaching appropriate results. The Scanning involves understanding whether the conflict has Organisational impact, personal impact, cliental impact or impact on the other stake holders. The next potential step is to prepare the mitigation plan towards the conflict resolution. It may be the dialogue mode, disciplinary mode, rationale development, escalation mode etc. The escalations may be to departmental heads, senior management or the Top management. The plan once implemented supports the Resolution of the conflict. It may be through convincing the parties involved, providing the desired solutions, seeking commitment etc.

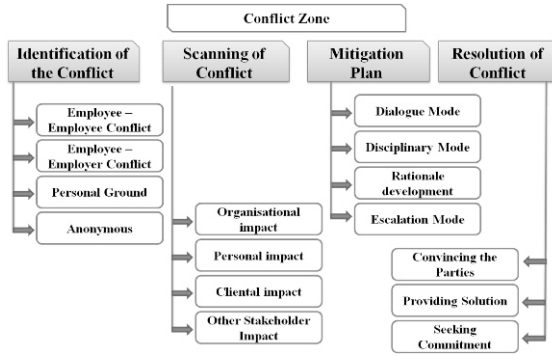


Chart No.: 8:Author's Recommendation -Conflict Zone

POST CONFLICT ZONE

The post conflict zone involves the follow up on the resolutions gathered in the conflict zone. Follow up essentially means enquiring the respective parties upon any post conflict situations. Also this zone may attract case development approach which may serve as ready reference in future to tackle similar conflicts and create awareness.

CONCLUSION

Conflict Resolution is the matter of general consciousness for mankind. The society at large and the Industrial class in specific certainly demand a better technique with change in time to control the conflicts. The Author through the study has presented the thoughts of a few companies & their beliefs on conflict Management. The study concludes that Companies do welcome Conflicts at Organisation however the same is inclined towards the positive outcomes. The Study reflects the principles & philosophy of Gandhiji that includes Satyagraha, Shared Vision and Core Values, Self Reliance, Innovations in operations, Doctrine of Non-Cooperation, Public Relations, Transparency, People Welfare, Trusteeship & Leadership Styles. The Recommendary model presented in the study leads to the understanding that the Conflict resolution efforts start much prior to actual conflict witnessed in the

Company and shall follow post the conflict is resolved. The Pre-Conflict Zone, Conflict Zone and Post Conflict zone demonstrated in recommendations section aptly enables the Organisations to move towards an enhanced version of their efforts towards the Conflict resolution. Gandhian way of Conflict resolution has an immense scope and the same has been witnessed at the Organisations. While at One end the World considers Gandhi as brand of Noble attributes, to the other end it's his deeds that although gets discussed universally yet it needs to practiced locally. The essence of Non-Violence, Satyagrah & Trusteeship shall always be the effective message towards Conflict Resolution.

FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present effort is a conceptual study pertaining to the Gandhian way of Conflict resolution. The Author has gathered the insight on the Techniques of Conflict Management / resolution advocated by Gandhian philosophy, his deeds & virtues. The inferences are more learning oriented & relates to theoretical understanding with a glimpse of primary data in terms of interviews of Industrial domain respondents. The study is massively completed by the help of the secondary data and limited primary data. The study has a future scope in the form of massive Primary data collection considering the Industrial conflict situations& linking the same with the Gandhian way of Conflict Management. Such effort will lead to concrete results on execution of Gandhian Philosophy towards Conflict resolution at Industries.

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