

Segment – B

CHAPTER - IV

THE FOUNDATIONS OF GANDHIAN SATYAGRAHA

ARTICLE – 1

(A) Meaning of the Term Satyagraha

The vision of Satyagraha is as old as the Indian civilization with its roots in Sanskrit and like several compound words in Sanskrit, Satyagraha is precisely a compound term of *Satya* and *Graha* meaning *Truth* and *Holding Fast*. Thus in coining the term Satyagraha, Gandhiji, more than any other political figure, stressed two highly significant aspects of our being: truth and holding fast to it. The search for truth is one of the strong yearnings of human beings transcending all barriers and Gandhiji, in contrast to other political figures, equated Satyagraha with truth, the ever lasting yearning of Man, his dream. Spiritual reality remains one of the highest forms of truth and non-violent philosophy a true path to reach that goal in life. In a specific sense, the ideology of Satyagraha, as Gandhiji practiced it, is the vindication of truth by means of self sacrifice, a form of love, without causing pain and suffering to others. The world's great exponent of *ahimsa* said that Satyagraha "is gentle,"¹ adding that "it is the complete opposite of compulsion. It was conceived as a complete substitute for violence."² **In the global context, individuals still have to appreciate the power of Gandhian Satyagraha as the true way to resolve conflicts.** The technique of Satyagraha is the pursuit of truth by adopting non-violent

methods: etymologically it means truth. Generally, political leaders suppress truth while Gandhiji, the saintly politician, upheld it in Satyagraha.

(B) Foundation and Ideology

A political or social ideology is known by the principles and objectives that guide it viz., the foundation on which the ideology is built. In the past, a number of ideologies had radically altered the thinking of mankind in several parts of the world and with that the very history of man. The twentieth century witnessed the birth of some of the most perverted and most violent ideologies known to mankind such as Fascism, Nazism, Communism and Colonialism leaving a long trail of destruction and exploitation from which a great part of the world is still trying to recover, from the pain and destruction caused by them. The ghosts of the violent ideologies are still haunting various continents.

The last century also witnessed the birth of the most non-violent ideology ever recorded in history: Satyagraha, the opposite side of the violent doctrines that came to light, spread hope in the last century. Gandhiji, its father, challenged the conventional wisdom of meeting violence with violence, and aggression with aggression signaling a sharp departure from the extremely violent ideologies of the same century in the form of Nazism and Fascism in Europe. He employed Satyagraha, his most powerful non-violent tool, to end 350 years of the British colonial misrule with its trademark belligerence in India. The importance of employing Satyagraha with its basis in non-violence to fight colonialism, an extremely violent economic and political ideology, may be understood by the fact that during the years, 1876 to 1914, the colonial misrules had illegally seized 22.3 million square kilometers of prime land in the world with a total population of 236.8 million inhabitants.³ Following the outbreak of the war in 1914,

the colonies had accounted for approximately 67 per cent of the world's land mass and 60 per cent of the citizens of the world.

Gandhiji, directing his non-violent Satyagraha against the most violent and unlawful aspects of colonialism in India, set in motion a process of decolonisation in several parts of the world. He won the anti-colonial campaign in India in a most peaceful manner. What are the foundations of the ideology of Satyagraha? What are its teachings? How can they be applied to resolve conflicts? Although Satyagraha has been explained in general terms in the succeeding pages of the study, let us evaluate certain specific aspects of its tenets and objectives.

(C) Formulation of Satyagraha

The non-violent technique of Satyagraha, born out of the adverse circumstances faced by the Indian residents in South Africa, was Gandhiji's lasting contribution to India and to the rest of the world which, until Gandhiji introduced that non-violent ideology, had lacked an effective non-violent philosophy to resolve conflicts. Anyone who reads the works of Gandhiji would easily understand that the Gandhian technique is erroneously associated with passive resistance or non-violence. During the early days of the development of Satyagraha Gandhiji himself had used the term 'passive resistance', and not the term Satyagraha. The basic reason for this wrong equation of the term was that the technique was still in the state of experimentation. In his own words:⁴

I am myself growing in the knowledge of Satyagraha. I have no textbooks to consult in time of need...Satyagraha as conceived by me is a science in the making.

(D) Evolution of Satyagraha

As early as 1946 Gandhiji coined the term Satyagraha in South Africa during his non-violent resistance to the retrogressive Asiatic Law

Amendment Ordinance introduced in the Transvaal Legislative Council. Anti-Indian laws in South Africa were dragging the law-abiding Indian settlers, a vast section of humanity, down a suicidal path after having languished for years in the African nation's political wilderness. Gandhiji did not want the lingering bitterness to continue and first called the movement Passive Resistance expressing moral outrage against the deadly cocktail of such laws. In order to differentiate it from the campaign of the suffragettes in the United Kingdom and South Africa under the banner of passive resistance Gandhiji's sharp intellect found the new term.⁵

A new term, or ideology in uncharted waters requires clarification to have the maximum appeal to and acceptance by the people and in the absence of its clear principles and objective, its followers would fall by the wayside. In order to clear the confusion, as Joan Bondurant points out, the Gandhian doctrine of Satyagraha can be characterized as follows: (A) Gandhian goals (Sarvodaya or common welfare; (B) Gandhian techniques (truth, ahimsa and the dignity of labour); and (C) Gandhian methods (Satyagraha, fast and land gift or *bhoodan*). In this connection we only deal with the powerful tool of Satyagraha representing a true Gandhian method of non-violent resistance.

Gandhiji, more than any one in our times, had practiced Satyagraha, which, he admitted, was an evolving science. For, he says: ⁷

For the past thirty years I have been preaching and practicing Satyagraha, as I know it today, constitute a gradual evolution.

Gokhale, Gandhiji's protégé, defined the non-violent technique as something "essentially defensive in nature,"⁸ pointing out further that it also "fights with moral and spiritual weapons."⁹ Gokhale goes on to say:¹⁰

A passive resister resists tyranny by undergoing suffering in his own person. He pits soul-force against brute-force; he pits the divine in man against the brute in man; he pits suffering and against oppression.

Gokhale, with his strong influence on Gandhiji's thinking, further characterized Satyagraha as a strong instrument that "pits faith against injustice and right against wrong." The technique permits many phases of winning over an adversary. The first phase emphasizes persuasive methods by appealing to reason and the later stages are characterized by persuasion and personal suffering. The Satyagrahi peacefully tries to draw attention to different issues and to get through to the adversary's unprejudiced judgment and in this attempt he may consciously arrive at a level where the opponent may be persuaded by judgments based on reason.

(E) The Basic Elements of Satyagraha

Every movement should have certain basic principles to guide its followers to achieve its prescribed objectives and if we were to guide someone to the technique of Satyagraha, the following essentials of Satyagraha deserve special attention.

- (i) *Training and methods of the movement.* Training must be made an integral aspect of the campaign with the goal of convincing the novice that it is one of the most effective methods of action for a peaceful resolution of conflicts. Education of the Satyagrahi, the opponent and the participants must go on apace as appropriate methods of attaining the ultimate objectives of the campaign.
- (ii) *Self-reliance.* A Satyagrahi should rely on his own convictions that non-violent resistance is much more effective than violent reaction. In his efforts, outside assistance may, under proper conditions, be accepted, but should never be expected all the time.
- (iii) *Elimination of Weakness.* A Satyagrahi must be mentally strong to resist violence with non-violence. A weak person can never be a valiant Satyagrahi. The greatest advocates of non-violent resistance in history,

Gandhiji included, were also history's strongest and the most civilized human beings. A Satyagrahi is a civilized individual and his goal is to adopt civilized methods against the infectious virus of violence and other forms of evil before they damage the fabric of society.

(iv) *Refusal to surrender principles.* A Satyagrahi acts on the principles of non-violence and reconciliation. He is called upon to exclude attempts for compromise which may damage the basic tenets of the noble ideology of Satyagraha or its valid objectives. Satyagrahi's efforts become a model for others to seek a peaceful resolution of the issues and should exercise caution against bargaining or barter in negotiations with the opponent.

(v) *Steadfast search for channels of cooperation.* A Satyagrahi, with his firm faith in the spirit of cooperation with the opponents, should be encouraged to win over the adversary by assisting him in times of need. This cooperative spirit would force the opponent to reconsider his belligerent attitude and adopt a conciliatory attitude. Love is the basis of this approach and Gandhiji adopted such a conciliatory attitude in settling issues with Botha in South Africa.¹²

(vi) *Agreement on fundamentals.* Care must be exercised to reach an agreement on the basic ideals prior to a final settlement.

(vii) *Conciliatory attitude.* A Satyagrahi should always adopt a conciliatory attitude in his negotiations with the opponent, who should not be offended or provoked in the process. Any attempt to insult the adversary is outside the boundaries of the ideology of Satyagraha with its basis in humility, love and cooperation, which would win over the opponent.

ARTICLE – 2

(A) The Code of Conduct

One hastens to add that Gandhian Satyagrahi should be an individual of exemplary character with the attitudes of a monk or a spiritual leader. Satyagraha is an aspect of India's spiritualism. In the campaigns in the 1930s¹³ Gandhiji promulgated a code of discipline for Satyagrahis requiring great mental discipline on their part. Some of these requirements are:

- (i) Harbour no ill-feelings or anger toward the opponent whose assaults should receive no violent response from the volunteers, but only **love and reconciliation in a concentrated form.**
- (ii) Refrain from resisting arrests.
- (iii) Do not insult or swear at the opponent.
- (iv) Refuse to surrender to angry orders although harsh penalty may be the bitter fruit of the refusals for submission.
- (v) Even at the point of risking life, protect the adversaries from physical attacks or insults from others.
- (vi) If imprisoned, act in an exemplary and civilized manner toward the officials who may have a different attitude. That would change the minds of the adversary.
- (vii) As a volunteer of a Satyagraha unit, accept the orders of the Satyagraha leaders, but resign in the event of serious differences of opinion.

Undoubtedly, Gandhiji's code of discipline put Satyagraha on an extremely high level of human conduct rooted in his deep spiritual convictions. The code of discipline of a Satyagrahi with Gandhiji's clear

signature on it is the antithesis to the training of a soldier who is trained to destroy his enemies and even, kill innocent women, children and men, raze houses, with rape and loot as common practices among warriors. In contrast, a Satyagrahi is friendly and amiable and aims at the reform of his enemy.

(B) The Methods of Satyagraha

Satyagraha, as a technique of social action, is used to resolve conflicts without resorting to violent methods and to realize its objectives it uses divergent forms of action, all based on non-violence, even risking ones own life. After Gandhiji inaugurated his non-violent movement to topple the British colonial power, he employed a number of non-violent methods including non-cooperation with the British, non-violent boycotts of British products and mass civil disobedience, which are widely employed today in the fight for justice and equality.¹⁴ Such methods represent the positive side of the campaign causing no injury to the adversary. We shall evaluate them here.

(i) *Boycott*

During India's effective and arduous non-violent struggle for freedom Gandhiji used the peaceful means of boycotting British products, which were ruining India's home industry, driving the artisans into penury. In this non-violent attempt he was striking at the root of British colonialism in the most peaceful manner as the primary goal of the colonizers was to use India as a market for their goods. Gandhiji urged the people of India to boycott British products with a view to bring down the colonial edifice. Peaceful boycott, a form of Satyagraha, is not intended to cause injury to anyone, **but to stage a protest in a highly forceful and non-violent manner against exploration.** We have to understand that Satyagrahis are not boycotting the opponents, but their action is directed against an unethical system.¹⁵

(ii) *Fasting*

One of the most effective weapons in the Satyagraha movement is fasting with its own form of science,¹⁶ used by Gandhiji on several occasions for just causes. (Gandhiji said: "Most religious people are politicians in disguise while I am a religious man in the guise of a politician.")¹⁷

(iii) *Who Can Be A Satyagrahi?*

To be a full-fledged Satyagrahi may be as difficult as climbing the Mount Everest. A Satyagrahi requires great self-discipline and self-control and Gandhiji, who fasted for various purposes, called it "a fiery weapon," claiming that "it has its own science."¹⁸ He further pointed out the following in reference to those eligible for fasting as a weapon in the arsenal of Satyagraha.¹⁹

A fast may be undertaken by him who is associated with the person against whom he fasts. The latter must be directly connected with the purpose for which the fast is being undertaken.

Gandhiji admitted that no one "has a perfect knowledge of it [fast]"²⁰ adding that;²¹

Unscientific experimentation is bound to be harmful to the one who fasts, and it may even harm the cause espoused. No one who has not earned the right to do so should, therefore, use this weapon.

According to this interpretation and the requirements of fasting, an individual should fast as an adjunct to the other forms of Satyagraha in view of the fact that fasting may cause serious damage to an individual's general health and should not be regarded as a mass method of Satyagraha.²² In "representative Satyagraha" certain volunteers are chosen to represent a group for particular reasons. Realizing the immense spirit of a Satyagrahi, Gandhiji laid down the qualifications for a Satyagrahi in three stages, in 1921, 1930 and 1939.²³

1. A Satyagrahi should have abiding faith in God, who is his eternal guide.
2. He should lead a chaste life, willing to give up his life and earthly possessions.
3. He should have strong faith in truth and *ahimsa* and belief in the basic goodness of all men hoping to evoke his commitment to truth and love expressed through suffering.
4. He should be a spinner and wear khadi wearer as these two requirements were essential for Indian conditions.
5. He should obey with an open heart all the codes of discipline as may be laid down from time to time.
6. He should obey the rules in jails in the event of imprisonment unless such rules are specifically meant to damage his self-respect.
7. He should not use alcohol and other intoxicants to enable him to have a clear vision.²⁴

(C) Fasting As A Forceful Instrument

Gandhiji considered fasting as the last instrument in the arsenal of Satyagraha with a clear²⁵ distinction between fasting by a Satyagrahi and suicide. Fasting, a voluntary act adopted by an individual dedicated to a cause, is meant to change the mind of the opponent without causing him any harm but to make him reconsider his attitude toward the individual who refrains from eating or even drinking and face a perilous outcome of such a brave act. In this sense a Satyagrahi has to be truly brave in his endeavour to redress injustice done to himself or to an entire society. **Gandhiji often undertook fasting, moved by LOVE of his fellowmen to remedy social injustice caused by other fellowmen toward whom he harboured no ill-feelings, even bringing his life to the verge of death forcing in an extremely non-violent manner to reconsider the opponents' attitude toward a particular issue, be it political or social or religious in nature. By bringing his life to the jaws of death, he gently**

touched the soul of the opponent. Is there anything more moving than this selfless action?

Gandhiji's selfless fasting resulted in grave concern about his health, not to say of criticism of his action and to those who said that fasting was tantamount to suicide under a fast moving train or by leaping from the bridge. He responded to the criticism stating that suicide by abstaining food and water was still better than violence.²⁶ **Gandhiji globalized the idea of fasting, a powerful non-violent method of a Satyagrahi, and since his time it has been practised in several parts of the world with varying degrees of success. Is it not an effective way to attain a specific objective without causing pain or pangs of hunger in an opponent? If we can change the mind of another individual by a non-violent method like fasting, why raise clenched fists against him! Non-violence would never fail.** Until all individuals become Satyagrahis, violent actions are bound to result in violent responses with their dire consequences for the present generation and the generations to come.

Concerning fasting as a non-violent tool available to the Satyagrahi, Gandhiji, a life-long practitioner of fasting, has made a few important distinctions.

(A). Fasting can be coercive if it is carried out for a selfish objective and as such it is a self-defeating attempt to be avoided at all costs. A Satyagrahi cannot be a selfish human being. Moreover, if the goal of fasting is to usurp money or other valuable possessions from another individual, it would be a coercive attempt²⁷ foreign to the philosophy of Satyagraha. **Accordingly, a Satyagrahi's fast should be grounded in sheer love.** Gandhiji stated that "if it is greed that my fast sprang from, then it is coercion..."²⁸ and added:²⁹

It is the implicit and sacred belief of millions of Christians that love of Jesus keeps them from falling and that it does so against themselves And if all

this love could be regarded as coercion, then the love prompted my fast on several occasions

Fasting can be divided into three distinct categories, all related to one another and all undertaken with selfless motives. They are (A) for bodily cleansing; (B) as an act of the spirit's supremacy over the physical; (C) as an aspect of nature cure; and (D) for the purpose of penance.

The Satyagrahi's³⁰ fast is motivated by his firm intention to resist the forces of social and political injustice as well as to change the mind of the opponent by personal suffering³¹ until a change in attitude takes place in him. It is only by accepting these basic conditions of fasting, that it is turned into a powerful tool by a Satyagrahi to convert the evil doers before they take another jab at society.

ARTICLE - 3

(A) Self-Sacrifice and Preoccupation

There is no evidence to indicate that Gandhiji ever undertook fast in his non-violent campaign in South Africa. During his public life in India one of Gandhiji's chief preoccupations had been to bring about communal harmony and with that clear vision he resorted to fast until death. He undertook the last fast in life in January 1948 to further the cause of unity in the country where communal rivalry was tearing it apart. The deep chasm and the subsequent agitation that erupted in Delhi and in other volatile areas following the partition of India were a great source of mental anguish to Gandhiji compelling him from all directions to fast until death. (The partition of India and the havoc it created have been highly exaggerated in several parts of the world. True, partition of the country was a painful reminder of the infectitious sickness of communal rivalry affecting various levels of the Indian society. The death and destruction it caused were but

pale in comparison with the political balkanization and havoc in other continents of the world. Exaggeration of different developments in history can produce dangerous results). During his fast to create unity in India he had announced that he would fast until the Muslim brethren, could move about freely in New Delhi. The threat of self-sacrifice produced the expected result, as a scientist precisely knew the final result of combining two chemicals in a test tube. **Gandhiji's non-violent step to fast until death touched the hearts of all communities which vowed to give up violence. Peace was restored in the midst of despair and clouds of hopelessness.** At a critical juncture in the history of India Gandhiji's fast, a technique of Satyagraha proved invaluable, proved effective.

(B) The Role of Personal Suffering

A Satyagrahi should be willing to undergo periods of personal suffering to achieve his goals in society and fully realizing the role of suffering, Gandhiji even considered Satyagraha the law of suffering.³² A soldier in arms also experiences sufferings in the form of taking refuge in a bunker on rainy days, during the day or at night or during a heavy snow-storm, depending on the region and the climatic condition. But the purpose of a warrior's basic education, fully armed from head to toe, is to meet violence with violence, arrogance with more arrogance, flights of fury with bursts of fury and aggression with more aggression in contrast to a Satyagrahi who is determined to meet aggression with love and non-violence. They constituted two clashing realities. Gandhiji believed that a Satyagrahi is only capable of knowing relative truth and not the absolute truth and in that sense he could not be violent to the adversary to change his attitude. What seems truth to the Satyagrahi may not be so to the opponent. Therefore, he can only attempt to convert the adversary by inflicting violence on himself and in this case by personal suffering and deprivation.³³ Violent means against the opponent would hurt both the evil

and the evil-doer with a deterioration in relationship damaging the non-violent ideology. The success and impact of the non-violent principles and their application depended on the individual suffering of a Satyagrahi as Gandhiji perceived. He elaborated:³⁴

Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone by the sufferer. The purer the suffering, the greater is the progress.

Gandhi was convinced that by operating under this law of suffering it was possible for an individual to resist “an unjust empire.”³⁵ For, he points out:³⁶

Working under this law of our being [suffering] it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire, to save his honour, his religion, his soul, and lay the foundation for the empire’s fall or its regeneration.

(C) Civil Disobedience

Satyagraha, like a tree, has several branches and off-shoots one of which is civil disobedience. Gandhiji, who advocated civil disobedience and non-violence against colonial oppression and injustice, derived his inspiration from Count Leo Tolstoy’s monumental work, *Essays On Civil Disobedience and Non-violence*. Tolstoy denounced the use of violence and upheld the importance of civil disobedience to attain social objectives.³⁷ He says:³⁸

It is thus with the law of non-resistance. People know it is wrong to use violence, but they are anxious to continue to live a life secured by ‘the strong arm of law,’ that instead of devoting their intellects to the elucidation of evils which have flowed, and are still flowing, from admitting that man has a right to use violence to his fellow-men, they prefer to exert their mental powers in defense of that error. ‘*Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra*’ – ‘Do what’s right, come what may’ – is an expression of profound wisdom.

This expression of profound wisdom of doing what is right irrespective of its consequences forms one of the foundations of Gandhian Satyagraha and civil disobedience, with its strong arm of non-violent resistance in

Gandhiji's life in South Africa and in his activities and those of countless Satyagrahis in India with Gandhiji as its shipmaster. In India he steered the ship of civil disobedience campaign against the violent storm of colonial oppression, high tide and strong waves, all with the goal of giving Satyagraha a permanent place in history as an acknowledged form of non-violent resistance.

It is common knowledge that while Thoreau and Tolstoy provided Gandhiji with the theoretical framework of non-violent resistance, Gandhiji converted the theory into a practical formula in the world's civil disobedience campaign in India, the largest exercise in man's history.

Tolstoy and Gandhiji, owed a great deal to Jesus Christ in their denunciation of violent methods, applied under different pretexts. Tolstoy adds:³⁹

It was just this sophistical justification of violence that Christ denounced. When two enemies fight, each may think his own conduct is justified by the circumstances. Excuses can be made for every use of violence, and no infallible standard has ever been discovered by which to measure the worth of those excuses.

The terms Civil Disobedience imply civility in attitude and disobedience in practice. Although the term disobedience means any type of anti-social behaviour, it becomes incumbent on an individual to question immoral laws for the simple reason that non-compliance to such a law is compliance to the higher laws emanating from truth and justice.⁴⁰ The word *civil* is opposite to a violent and criminal deed. Gandhiji said that disobedience "must be sincere, respectful."⁴¹ and that it should have other attributes:⁴¹

.....it should be respectful, restrained, never defiant, must be based upon some well-understood principle, must not be capricious and above all must have no ill-will or hatred behind it.

In other words, civil disobedience represents the direct contravention of a set of specific laws and the resistance against such regulations for their just implementation may take the forms of nonpayment of revenues, boycotting various products or massive peaceful demonstration against the unjust laws of the state.⁴² Unjust laws are the trademarks of states. Civil disobedience becomes the ultimate non-violent weapon of the society to rectify unjust laws, as unjust law is a contradiction in terms since the purpose of law is to create justice and order. Unjust law is as inconceivable as a river without water.

Civil disobedience against the unjust law demands self-discipline and the atmosphere surrounding the campaign should be free of violence, acrimony and resistance. Describing the attributes of civil disobedience campaign, Gandhiji pointed out that "one must have a willing and respectful obedience to the state laws."⁴³ He even conceded the limitation in a huge civil disobedience campaign as a "Himalayan miscalculation."⁴⁴ If the campaign has to be civil in nature, in its application and the realization of its objectives, it has to be public and made known to the officials⁴⁵, who should not be provoked.

Human beings are products of love. Satyagraha is a product of love, specifically of Gandhiji's love of human beings. Therefore Satyagraha is extremely humane with the Gandhian emphasis of love of one's rivals.

ARTICLE - 4

(A) Distinct Categories

A civil disobedience campaign can be divided into two distinct categories which, according to Gandhiji, are "aggressive, assertive or defensive civil disobedience..."⁴⁶ Gandhiji adds:⁴⁷

Civil disobedience is willful disobedience of the laws of the State whose breach does not involve moral turpitude and which is undertaken as a symbol of revolt against the State.

During the peaceful struggle against the British colonial rule, Gandhiji popularised the idea of civil disobedience campaign in India and the rest of the world more than any other individual, later to be adopted by Rev. Dr. King in his struggle for racial justice in the United States. Today, this well-known Gandhian legacy is practised in several parts of the world including America, Caribbean island nations and Europe for social justice, to oppose escalation of arms race or the part of an island nation being used by another state for mindless target practice for the military.⁴⁸ Gandhiji upheld the importance of civil disobedience in reference to the disregard for laws.⁴⁹

Thus disregard of laws relating to revenue or regulation of personal conduct for the convenience of the State, although such laws in themselves inflict no hardship and do not require to be altered, would be assertive, aggressive or offensive civil disobedience.

If aggressive civil disobedience is a source of intimidation to the opponent, it should be bypassed,⁵⁰ lest such a step should deteriorate the situation, something that Satyagrahis should avoid in their conciliatory attempts to convert the opponent into the philosophy of non-violence by setting an example in non-violent practice. Aggressive form of disobedience should be applied only if its practitioners have to face harsh discipline, but it should be avoided if the adversary is in the clasp of a difficult situation.⁵¹ The purpose here is to avoid embarrassing the opponent who should only be converted by the good deeds of the Satyagrahi, guided by a set of higher moral codes.

(B) Firm Intention

Gandhiji believed that the code of civil disobedience is based on the purest form of social agitation with the strength of the inalienable right of the citizenry.⁵² He states:⁵³

Civil disobedience combined with love is the living water of life. For, civil disobedience is a sovereign method of transmitting this undisciplined, life-destroying latent energy into disciplined life-saving energy whose use ensures absolute success.

The theory and practice of civil disobedience by its practitioners presuppose the firm intention of disobedience to the unjust laws of the State without the fear of sanction, as any deviation from that path would seriously erode the effectiveness of the campaign. Based on that assumption individuals can accept it only as a last resort and by a handful of individuals against the authority of the State in the first instance.⁵⁴

The purpose of civil disobedience is to remove the excess of those laws of the State that are not conducive to the general welfare of the citizens by adopting peaceful methods as Gandhiji did in South Africa and India. Violence and acrimony are alien to the concept of civil disobedient acts as violent methods tear apart the fabric of life. In the words of Tolstoy, "life, based on the principles of violence, has culminated in the negation of the basis on which it was founded."⁵⁵ Here the ideology of civil disobedience campaign unmask the folly of violent means to resolve conflicts at local, national and international levels at a time when the application of violent means is justified to put an end to violence as though pouring fuel on fire can stop the rising flames of fire. Referring to this great contradiction in human thinking, Tolstoy again says that "it has often been said that the invention of the terrible military instruments of murder will put an end to war, and that war will exhaust itself..."⁵⁶ He elaborates:⁵⁷

This is not true. As it is possible to increase the means for killing men, so it is possible to increase the means for subjugating those who hold the social life-conception.

Civil disobedience campaign is directed against laws for subjugating the individuals by the State or against the possible chances of subjugating them at a future time by reshaping the existing laws. In South Africa Gandhiji championed the non-violent struggle against the excesses of the government as reflected in legislating harsh laws against the interests of the Indian settlers. In the same manner, he led civil disobedience movements in India to put an end to the British laws to subjugate the people of India. The British anti-Indian legislative measures in India were often much more harsh than those passed against the Indian settlers in South Africa. It demonstrates the effectiveness of the Gandhian civil disobedience campaign in putting an end to a basically corrupt administrative structure. A soldier in arms believes in spilling the blood of the opponent to realize his goal by adopting the most violent means while every effort is made to protect his life. A Satyagrahi wants to protect the life of his opponent without spilling a drop of his blood. He is willing to spill his blood. Satyagrahis are honourable individuals. Satyagrahis do not shatter the lives of other individuals, by disobeying the laws in the most civilized manner.

(C) Resisting Unjust Laws

It is the birthright of individuals to disobey an unjust law or even resist the attempts of the legislators to enact an unjust law. It was with this precise goal that Gandhiji inaugurated his Civil Disobedience Campaign in India. In the absence of such a campaign, the British 'lawmakers' would have callously passed severely restrictive laws in India to tighten their grip on the nation and to prolong their misrule. (The British ruling class had also passed several restrictive laws bordering on autocratic methods against their own subjects in England. After John became king in 1199, he abused

his power and demanded more military service from the feudal class than did his predecessors. He sold royal positions to the highest bidders and increased taxes without the consent of the barons or the people who revolted against the king. He was compelled to lighten the burden on the people. In 1215, Magna Carta came into being *engrossed* (written in legal form) guaranteeing certain privileges including religious freedom and less governmental interference. In defiance of individual freedom, the British Parliament adopted stern measures against the Catholics and in 1606 imposed severe penalties on them as they did in India two centuries later. More details in notes and references).⁵⁸

Non-violent resistance against unjust laws is an integral aspect of any civil disobedience movement as windows and doors are integral parts of a house. The more mass-oriented the peaceful resistance is, the wider is its effect upon the authority to effect changes in the society. Referring to the importance of such a resistance, K. Santanam makes the following remarks:⁵⁹

Resistance is the most aggressive form of Satyagraha. It has naturally the greatest appeal to those who are eager for spectacular results. It may take the form of *disobeying the laws which are objectionable in themselves* in order to bring home to the people that the satyagraha is opposed to the government as a whole. (Emphasis added).

It may also take the form of a government or social institution so that it is driven to inflict some kind of suffering on the satyagrahi which will generate moral force necessary to *bring about the necessary change*. (Emphasis added.)

Refusal to comply with the regulation to perform an unlawful obligation imposed by an unjust authority is an aspect of the Gandhian philosophy of civil disobedience. Refusal to pay an unjust tax and to support an unjust law offer examples of this method and the Satyagrahis who question the legitimacy of the laws may have to experience personal suffering in the form of physical abuse or long prison terms. It is the inevitability of personal suffering combined with a high degree of moral

conviction that is vital to self-suffering directed against flagrant injustice and political oppression that constitute the dynamic forces of the civil disobedience campaign. Throughout his public life Gandhiji went through cycles of personal sufferings which did not matter him much since he was an ardent champion of Satyagraha and its effective arm, the civil disobedience campaign. The study of Satyagraha is the study of India, the discovery of the soul of India. Gandhiji imbued others with the enlightened spirit of Satyagraha and in the process created an army of volunteers in India to resist unjust laws. They were particularly unjust since they were imposed upon Indian people by a alien colonial nation which had passed several laws to strengthen the colonial grip against the common interests of India. The massive Civil Disobedience Campaign which Gandhiji launched against the foreign rule had Gandhiji's magic touch.

SUMMARY

1. By coining the term Satyagraha, Gandhiji, stressed two important aspects of our existence viz., truth and clinging fast to truth. While the vast majority of political leaders are known for suppressing the truth, Gandhiji upheld it and elevated Satyagraha, as a philosophy of peaceful resistance, to a higher level. Compared to other ideologies of the last century, the foundation and principles of Satyagraha were the noblest. They were based on love and no-ill feelings toward the opponents.

2. The ideology of Satyagraha was the noblest in the twentieth century. Gandhiji devised the formula for that. Its foundation was in Indian religions and philosophical thinking in addition to the influence of Henry David Thoreau and Leo Tolstoy.

3. A Satyagrahi should be an individual of exemplary character, he should live by certain codes of disciplines as laid down by Gandhiji for the maximum benefits of his/her non-violent endeavour.

4. Accordingly, a Satyagrahi should barbour no ill-feelings toward his opponents, should be willing to give up his worldly possessions, give love utmost priority in all his dealings with the adversary, should be willing to undergo personal suffering and should not resist arrest. These are but few of the important qualifications to be a true Satyagrahi.

5. The training a Satyagrahi receives and that a common soldier receives are like north and south poles. They are two clashing realities. While the actions of Satyagrahi are based on **love and non-violence** with the opponent, those of a soldier are based on the extreme opposites of hatred and violence meant to kill the opponent, cripple him or spill his blood in a field, on a street corner or in a river.

6. The training of Satyagrahi and that of a soldier in arms are markedly different. A Satyagrahi believes in nurturing human values while as a soldier believes in torturing others. Nurturing is far better than torturing.

7. According to Gandhiji, the code of civil disobedience is based on the purest form of individual behaviour elevating it to a higher plain of social response, the response being non-violent and free of rancour.

8. Fasting was an important tool of Gandhian non-violent resistance. He fasted for a variety of reasons, all with good intentions. On a number of occasions the fasting, a form of self-sacrifice, brought him to the brink of death. His abstinence from food often changed the minds of those who otherwise would have not changed their attitudes toward others.

9. Fasting was not meant for everyone. The Satyagrahis who undertook fasting had to meet certain qualifications as laid down by Gandhiji.

10. Fasting can be a coercive exercise if it is carried out for a selfish reason and a Statyagrahi cannot be a selfish human being. For instance, Gandhiji always fasted for common political or social objectives setting examples for others in the society by his own actions.

11. It is the birth right of every individual to resist unjust laws. Several prevailing laws are unjust and it is incumbendent on the citizenry to oppose them. Gandhiji opposed unjust laws in South Africa and India and urged others to do the same in the most peaceful manner.

12. Gandhiji said that British rule in India "is evil." He opposed the evil system in the most non-violent manner by organizing civil disobedience campaigns in the forms of Salt Satyagraha, peaceful marches, and mass demonstrations, but asking the people to be non-violent and conciliatory.

13. True to the ideals of Satyagraha campaign, Gandhiji never resisted arrest by the law enforcement officials proving the higher level of the code of the entire Satyagraha movement.

14. **Love** is the foundation of Gandhian ahimsa. Nay it means pure love for him during his public life in his dedication to the cause of the Indian settlers in South Africa and in all his activities in India. He defined love as the capacity to love those who hated you. Accordingly, one who subscribes to the Gandhian doctrine of Satyagraha there is no room of enmity, but plenty of room for amity,

Notes and References

1. *Harijan*, April 15, 1933, p. 8
2. *Ibid.*, p. 8
3. Following the outbreak of the war in Europe in 1914, the colonies and independent territories had accounted for approximately 67 per cent of the world's entire land area and 69 per cent of its citizens. Employing **non-violence** as the most effective instrument Gandhiji launched the history's greatest movement to expose the evil face of colonial aggrandizement and to eliminate colonial rule in India. No foreign colonial ruler had any right to imprison Gandhiji in his own land of birth **as the twentieth century's greatest champion of human rights and the most influential crusader of peaceful means.**
4. *Harijan*, September 24, 1938, p. 266
5. *Young India*, March 23, 1961, p. 89-91
6. J.V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence*, (Bombay, 1959), p. 6
7. *Young India*, March 23, 1921, p. 5
8. S. Radhakrishnan, (ed.), *Mahatma Gandhi's Essays and Reflections*, p. 214
9. *Ibid.*,
10. *Ibid.*, One of Gandhiji's important contributions to India and the rest of the world was the non-violent tool of Satyagraha which is based on supreme human values that would outlive the violent ideologies of Nazism, Fascism and Communism. These ideologies of the last century are dead or are slowly dying while the values of the Gandhian Satyagraha remain with us. A detailed assessment of Satyagraha is provided in *Gandhi the Man*, Eknath Easwaran, (Bombay, Delhi: Jaico Publishing Company, 1997). Esp. Chapters 2, and 5 to 8)
11. *Ibid.*,
12. The case in point was the strike by workers in South Africa. The Indian settlers were involved in the strike. In a conciliatory manner Gandhiji asked the Indian labourers to call off the strike to avoid embarrassing the government. Later Prime Minister Botha had nothing but praise for Gandhiji's initiative to prevent the deterioration of the labour situation in South Africa. Gandhiji's humane attitude won him popularity as a man of goodwill and willing to make peace with opponents, a prerequisite of a Satyagrahi.
13. R.N. Bose, *Gandhian Technique and Tradition in Industrial Relations* (Calcutta: All Indian Institute of Social Welfare and Business Management, 1956). p. 34-49. Satyagraha is a highly disciplined technique of social action characterized by dedicating oneself to truth by relying on behaviour which is non-violent and which includes self-suffering. While violent agitation also involves suffering, its purpose is

to cause violence to the opponent. In Satyagraha the issue of causing harm to another person is completely foreign. Further details can be found in Richard B. Gregg, *The Power of Non-violence*, (rev. ed., London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1938). The author gives an objective account of the application and effectiveness of the non-violent means as a more powerful force than violent means. He grew up when Gandhiji was practicing non-violent methods in South Africa and India and was familiar with the Gandhian techniques. Also in *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, J.V. Bondurant, (Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1956) Chapters 3 and 5.

14. It is a well-known fact that based on the effectiveness of the history's largest civil disobedience campaign in India, the non-violent technique has been used by Afro-Americans-Americans in the United States and by several groups of people in that country and in Canada, especially by teachers and trade unions. Recently, Alejandro Toledo, the opposition leader in Peru, pledged to emulate the non-violent resistance of the late Rev. Dr. King against the Peruvian Government and its internationally condemned election procedures. "I don't want to compare myself with Martin Luther King, with Curazon Aquino in the Philippines," Toledo said. "I don't want to compare myself with Gandhi. But there are democratic forces, which, collectively, are going to unite to reconstruct democracy in Peru." *The Montreal Gazette*, May 28, 2000, p. A7. Gandhiji's message of civil disobedience has spread to different corners of the world. In Peru, Toledo promised to lead non-violent protests across the South American country and seek further international condemnation of the Peruvian authorities for their alleged illegal actions.
15. *Harijan*, February 18, 1933, p. 4
16. *Ibid.*, October 13, 1940
17. *Harijan*, October 13, 1940. Please see *Gandhian Thought and Contemporary Society*, Ed. by J.S. Mathur, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1974). The authors explain different techniques of Satyagraha and their positive results for the society to remedy conflict situations.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
19. *Ibid.*,
20. *Ibid.*,
21. *Ibid.*, The relationship between the forces of Satyagraha and state is explained in *Satyagraha and the State*, K. Santanam, (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1960)
22. *Ibid.*, One's true education to Satyagraha is important for the performance and ultimate success of Satyagraha. Gandhiji had often cautioned against the indiscriminate use of the fast. He also knew that "there is much violence behind such fasting." *Harijan* March 11, 1939. Still, he firmly believed that fasting, and act of great self-

sacrifice, can be a potent weapon to convert the opponent with the recognition that the different aspects of its application should be carefully weighed.

23. These qualities are paraphrased from *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, Gopinath Dhawan.
24. *Harijan*, March 25, 1939, p. 64-65.
25. One can eliminate simple fasting, strike or simple protest march as they are far from fulfilling the essential attributes for a campaign qualifying as Satyagraha. Satyagraha at best may be employed during some phase of a non-violent movement and Gandhiji did precisely that.
26. *Harijan*, October 30, 1940. p. 323.
27. *Ibid.*, May 6, 1933, p. 1
28. *Ibid.*,
29. *Ibid.*,
30. *Ibid.*, October 13, 1940, p. 322. Gandhiji, more than any political figure in India, approached the people of India with the basic principles and the teachings of the Vedas, with reminders from Upanishads, with quotations from the Gita as well as exhortations familiar from the age of Manu. The Indian people, with the great traditions behind them, responded to an appeal reflected in the currency of the Jain, Buddhist and Hindu religious principles, which found its way into the philosophy of Satyagraha. Please see *The Ethics of the Hindus*, Maitra Sushil Kumar, (Calcutta: University Press, 1925).
31. *Ibid.*, Personal suffering is an important part of Satyagraha and without the willingness to undergo individual hardships no Satyagraha campaign can succeed in realizing its objectives.
32. *Young India*, August 11, 1920, p. 3.
33. M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, p. 79.
34. *Young India*, June 16, 1920, p. 3.
35. *Ibid.*, August 11, 1920, p. 3.
36. *Ibid.*, June 16, 1920., p. 4.
37. *Tolstoy's Writings on Civil Disobedience and Non-Violence*, Leo Tolstoy. (New York: Signet Books, New American Library, 1968). This is a book that influenced the entire thinking of Gandhiji in his formulation of India's massive civil disobedience campaign against political oppression and injustice perpetuated by the colonial alien rule.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 188. Throughout the book Tolstoy explains his views on religion, violence as he saw around him in Europe and the urgent need to uphold justice by adopting peaceful methods of social change.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

40. *Young India*, January 5, 1922, p. 5.
41. *Ibid.*,
42. *Ibid.*, March 24, 1920, p. 4. Civil disobedience represents contravention of specific laws that are unjust and against the basic interests of the citizens. The steps adopted to eliminate such laws, may include refusal to pay taxes, peaceful protests and going to jail without resorting to violent demonstration. More details in *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Conquest of Conflict*. J.V. Bondurant, cit. op., p. 36-45.
43. *Autobiography*, M.K. Gandhi, p. 357-58. In this brief assessment of Gandhiji's attitude toward established institutions and traditional approaches, notably with respect to religion and ownership, unorthodoxy emerged as a significant aspect. Gandhiji's Satyagraha and civil disobedience movement led to revolutionary social changes. The case in point here is the Champaran working class people and their struggle against the established system in the indigo fields of Bihar resulting in a revision of remarkable proportions. The Gandhian system of non-violent strikes upset the traditional patterns, which had assured a submissive labour force. In the same manner, the well-known Satyagraha of Vaikom for the right of low class to gain access to temple road radically altered the entrenched authority wielded by the members of the upper class. Related details in *Studies In Gandhism*, Nirmal Kumar Bose, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: India Associated Publishing Company, 1947) and *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, G.N. Dhawan with a forward by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, (Bombay: The Popular Book Depot, 1946).
44. *Ibid.*, p. 357-58.
45. *Harijan*, April 1, 1939, p. 72.
46. *Young India*, February 9, 1922, p. 85
47. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
48. For instance, the people of the Caribbean island nation of Puerto Rico recently staged a non-violent demonstration against their island being used for the explosion of weapons of mass destruction by the U.S. military as part of an experiment. The non-violent demonstrators did not resist arrest by the police, but vowed to return to protest against further testing of the deadly weapons in their backyard. The fact that no demonstrator resisted arrest indicated his/her commitment to the non-violent principles of Satyagraha.
49. *Young India*, February 9, 1922.. 85.
50. According to Gandhiji, civil disobedience is reluctant non-violent and non-compliance of unlawful governmental regulations which can be found in different societies in the world. There would be no change in such laws if they are not defied, and the defiance should be peaceful. The formation of teams of volunteers for non-violent demonstrations or holding public rallies still adhering to peaceful methods "no

contemplating or inciting to violence in spite of prohibitory orders, is defensive civil disobedience." (*Young India*, February 9, 1922, p. 85.). In his memorable work, *On Civil Disobedience and Non-violence*, Leo Tolstoy has expressed similar views in his arguments against unjust laws. If the law makers heed the call of individuals like David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy and Gandhiji many of the harsh realities of unjust laws could be prevented for common good and make the people bring closer to the administrators who often ignore the interests of the people creating the need for non-violent resistance. By any definition, a Satyagrahi is a man striving for lasting peace and he would not go about starting quarrels or preparing blueprints for confrontation in advance against unjust laws or unjust social systems.

51. As a dedicated Satyagrahi, Gandhiji cooperated with South African officials when they faced difficult situations such as strikes by various groups of individuals and won the goodwill of the authorities.
52. *Young India*, January 5, 1922, p. 3
53. *Ibid.*, March 27, 1930, p. 107-08.
54. *Ibid.*, March 23, 1921, p. 90.
55. *On Civil Disobedience and Non-violence*, Tolstoy, *Ibid.*, p. 259.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
58. England, more than any region in the world, established its so-called reputation on the number of colonial possession, which it acquired by means of perfidy and violent aggression. Different parts of the globe that it colonized were poorer when it left their shores than when it first landed on the new shores and beach-heads to launch further aggression. The authorities in England had hardly resorted to violent means that they had not taken in their land to quell popular riots against the autocratic rule of its kings and barons. In many ways they were colonial attitudes against their own subjects.
59. *Satyagraha and the State*, K. Santanam, (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1960) p. 17. With preface by S.P. Sinha, Chief Justice, The Supreme Court of India.