



*Remembering Mahatma Gandhi (150th Birth Anniversary)*

## **Engaging with the Gandhian Ideas of Non-Violence and Satyagraha**

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### **Abstract**

*Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi (October 02, 1869 - January 30, 1948) or Mahatma Gandhi or Gandhiji or Bapuji is regarded as the Father of the Nation who was at the forefront of the freedom struggle of India. Gandhiji was the apostle of peace, spirituality, universal brotherhood, non-violence and satyagraha. He stood for the universal values and ideals which inspire the people throughout the world irrespective of race, nationality, religion, caste or any other criteria which embody potential divisive tendencies. Gandhiji combined the unique qualities of a philosopher, thinker, writer, political activist, social reformer and a larger than life persona which is unparalleled in the history of humankind. Gandhiji was perhaps the only thinker of his time who had the courage of conviction to accept his own mistakes in no uncertain terms and also tried to rectify such mistakes as and when he had the opportunity to do so. He would not advise his followers in particular and the people in general to do anything which he himself did not believe in or had not experimented with.*

**Keywords:** *Satyagraha, Nonviolence, Passive Resistance, Freedom, Humanism.*

Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi (October 02, 1869 - January 30, 1948) or Mahatma Gandhi is regarded as the Father of the Nation who was at the forefront of the freedom struggle of India. Gandhiji was the apostle of peace, spirituality, universal brotherhood, non-violence and satyagraha. He stood for the universal values and ideals which inspire the people throughout the world irrespective of race, nationality, religion, caste or any other criteria which embody potential divisive tendencies. Gandhiji combined the unique qualities

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of a philosopher, thinker, writer, political activist, social reformer and a larger than life persona which is unparalleled in the history of humankind.

Even though Gandhiji's early life could be described as not different from that of any other ordinary Indian during the colonial era, some of the incidents point towards the making of the Mahatma towards the later part of his life. As he belonged to an upper middle class Gujarati family with traditional values and lifestyle as per the wish of his father, he was sent to London for legal studies. Then he went to South Africa for legal practice. His life would have been that of a successful legal practitioner in the then South Africa and would have been that of any other professional of that time. But the course of his journey of life took a completely different term when due to certain circumstances, incidents and factors, he joined the anti-apartheid struggle, social justice movement and worked for the emancipation of the downtrodden. In the meantime India was in a critical juncture of the colonial regime that witnessed a curious mixture of extremism, liberalism, moderate viewpoints as well as reconciliatory approaches among various sections of population. Gandhiji arrived in India in the year 1915 and that became the turning point in India's freedom struggle which ultimately became the starting point of one of world's largest peaceful freedom movement of which Gandhiji was the undisputed torch bearer for the next thirty two years.

Gandhiji was inspired by a number of thinkers and writers throughout the world who had great influences on the thought process, writings and activities of Gandhi. Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), the American transcendentalist was one such writer who published *resistance to civil government* in 1849. The major idea of Thoreau was civil disobedience. In this essay, he argued that citizens should not act beyond their conscience. They should not allow any government to act beyond their reasoned voices or any activity which goes against the principle of natural justice. Thoreau himself was influenced by the institution of slavery as displayed in the then society as well as the vagaries of Mexican-American war of 1846-48. Gandhiji appreciated the logical explanations and positive view points of Thoreau. In the course of his activities in support of the oppressive people of South Africa, Gandhiji published a small translated version of Thoreau's ideas in *Indian opinion* in 1907. There he gave Thoreau the credit for the social movement in support of abolition of slavery in the American society. He also drew a parallel between the sufferings of the slaves and that of the Indians in South Africa. Another aspect that deserves a special mention is that Thoreau was not only a thinker and writer but also he was a dedicated social activist. He would not propagate anything that he himself did not believe in or practise. This personality trait influenced Gandhiji to a great extent. Thoreau was imprisoned by the authorities due to his outspoken nature and participation in the movement in support of the oppressed sections of the society. Gandhiji adopted such an approach to life during his entire public career.

John Ruskin (1819) – (1900), one of Britain's famous art critics during the Victorian time wrote *Unto This Last* (1860) which is regarded as a book on his economic idea. In fact the last essay of this book summed up the central viewpoint of Ruskin which influenced the socio-economic ideas of Gandhiji. In 1908, Gandhiji translated this book in Gujarati and gave the title "Sarvodaya" (Uplift of All). Gandhiji made use of the central ideas of Ruskin as

propagated by the British writer in the said book. Three years after the demise of Gandhiji, Valji Govindji Desai re-translated Sarvodaya in English in 1951 and published it under the title “Unto the Last: A Paraphrase”. The ideas given in the book are followed by many of the Gandhians even today.

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), the renowned thinker and writer of Russia and who is considered as one of the greatest literary figures of all times influenced Gandhiji and his approach to life and work. A special mention may be made of the book titled *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, published in the year 1894. In this book Tolstoy, among many other values and ideas, discussed the notion of non-violent resistance. Gandhiji got the ideas like peace, non-violence (Ahimsa), satyagraha (Love for truth or peaceful resistance), etc. from the writings of Tolstoy.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866=1915), the towering liberal thinker, leader and social reformer was the founder of The Servants of India society. He was also an advocate of self-rule and moderate views during the freedom struggle. Gokhale, while propagating the cause of self-government was also a votary of constitutional path and constructive cooperation with the colonial regime at that point of history. He had a significant role in the context of Morley-Minto Reforms in India. Gokhale visited South Africa in 1912 on the request of Gandhiji. It is widely believed that Gandhiji returned to India due to the insistence of leaders like Gokhale. In fact Gandhiji in his autobiography *The Story of My experiments with Truth*, mentioned Gokhale as his mentor and guide. While depicting Gokhale’s personality, Gandhiji wrote that Gokhale was as pure as crystal; gentle as a lamb; brave as a lion; and chivalrous to a fault and the most perfect man in the political field. However, there is little twist in the story. Even though accepting Gokhale as the mentor Gandhiji could not accept the idea of western political institution can be the means of achieving political reforms in India.

*Hind Swaraj* translated into English as Indian Home Rule in Gujarati in Indian Opinion on 11th and 18<sup>th</sup> December. Gandhiji was travelling from England to South Africa between 13<sup>th</sup> Nov and 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov, 1909 in the ship SS Kildonan Castle when he wrote Hind Swaraj in Gujarati. The British Government banned this book in 1910. But the strange fact is that the English translation of this book was not banned as the colonial authorities thought that the English speaking Indians would not be influenced by the ideas expressed by Gandhiji in the book. The critics point out that Hind Swaraj provides a glimpse of his world view, humanitarian approach and self rule by the Indians which can be accepted as very progressive and futuristic at that point of history. The book is in the form of dialectics that is question and answer between a reader and the editor. For instance the reader would ask Gandhiji’s views on Indian independence which looked like a dream then and Gandhiji would put forth his ideas by way of clarifying the confusion or doubt that was evident in the question. For Gandhiji home rule precisely means self-rule. His idea of swaraj is Indian in structure as well as substance; not a replica of English society after the exit of the British. He advocated that the power of love and empathy is much greater than the power of violence and arms. He propagated the idea of passive resistance and self reliance as the essential elements of self rule. One statement of Gandhiji that the presence of the British colonialism in India is only a

small part of the gigantic problem and India is under the influence of modern civilization without considering its positive and negative aspects continues to be prophetic even today after more than seven decades of Indian Independence.

Gandhiji published *Indian Opinion*, in Gujarati, Hindi Tamil and English in natal South Africa with the active participation of the natal Indian Congress. Its inaugural issue was published on June 06, 1903. In 1904, Gandhiji shifted the publication to Phoenix near Durban. This publication concentrated European groups should be aware of the problems, constraints and concerns of the Indian community. For instance, the plights of Indian labourers in South Africa and the early resistance movements by the Indians were covered by the Indian opinion.

Mahatma Gandhi published another weekly journal *Young India*. It was in circulation between 1919 to 1931. This weekly paper aimed at highlighting some of the emerging issues of India and its population in the inter world war period that was also the beginning of Gandhiji's active involvement in the freedom struggle. Some of the prominent topics as printed in one of the initial volumes that is Vol.11, Issue No.1 of January, 1919 included India's claim to fiscal autonomy; women's position in India; and India Facing Famine, etc. In a sense the ideological orientations and viewpoints of Gandhiji in relation to various socioeconomic and political affairs of the then Indian society could be ascertained from his writings in *Young India*.

On September 7, 1919, Gandhiji published *Navajivan*, a newspaper in Gujarati. In the editorial, Gandhiji wrote that he had great responsibilities as the editor of a vernacular paper. It aimed at carrying forward the messages of Gandhiji to the Gujarati speaking population. The Navajivan Trust which is at the background of the famous Gujarat vidyapith has preserved the original printing press established by Gandhiji and it continued with its publication and has completed hundred years of its existence in 2019.

Gandhiji published *Harijan*, a weekly English newspaper which literally means God's people. It was launched in 1933 and it continued up to 1948. In Gujarati, the newspaper was published as *Harijan Bandhu*. The hindi journal was called *Harijan Sevak*. In the inaugural issue of *Harijan*, Gandhiji mentioned that if you would delectantly study *Harijan*, it would equip you for the delicate task. You would become a fellow worker in the movement of liberating millions of human beings. He also informed the readers that the weekly newspaper would sustain itself only through the subscription amount given by the readers. He further announced that *Harijan* would not seek any advertisement. Its publication would depend upon the support of the subscribers. In the concluding paragraph of the write-up, Gandhiji declared, "I am an irrepressible optimist." As his contemporaries and people who were born later know it very well, he had no quarrel with his so called opponents. His futuristic vision could be seen from another sentence which says, "If *Harijan* stands for truth and if the reformers have patience, the opponents of today will be the reformers of tomorrow." Sri R.V. Sastry was the editor, the inaugural issue had a Bengali poem translated into English by nobel laureate R. N. Tagore. There were many news items regarding the condition of Harijans and information

about the entry of people of all class including Harijans into temples. Harijan as a newspaper aimed at removal of untouchability from the society. Gandhiji was the soul force behind Harijan as he promoted its publication even when he was imprisoned by the British and was lodged in the Poona jail. Another significant statement by Gandhiji was that Harijan should not deviate from its stated principle and it should scrupulously avoid politics. For instance the much hyped Government of India Act of 1935, otherwise called the mini constitution of India that made headlines world over did not find any place in the pages of Harijan. Rather it carried several articles on village life, rice, nutritious food, milk etc. that are so close to the rural population even today. Thus, Harijan became the mouthpiece of village industries. In 1938, in one of the issues published on September 24, he wrote that Harijan is not just a newspaper. It is a view paper, meaning thereby his views and writings as the backbone of the paper.

When the British Government unilaterally declared that India was a party to the Second World War without consulting the Indians Gandhiji was very critical of it and he did not appreciate the press censorship imposed on the writings and publications. In fact, he wrote in Harijan on October 24 that if all the writings are to be sent to the press advisor in New Delhi, it is impossible on his part to write anything freely. He maintained that liberty of the press is a dear privilege. Any order that infringes such freedom is uncalled for. He criticized the interference by the British Government as a draconian order against the publications in India. Gandhiji was of the view that the press regulations were of such sweeping character that it can curtail even the fundamentals of thinking and writing. He opined that his first task was to educate the public mind in India and the world opinion. His idea of freedom is not only confined to the Indian society but also it extends to the freedom of humanity around the world. In the July 19, 1942 issue, Gandhiji declared that Harijan the paper may be suppressed. But its message can never be suppressed till he was alive. He believed that the spirit of Harijan would survive the death of the body and millions of country men would carry its voice forward.

During his life time, Harijan, the weekly could be published in English, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Odiya, Marathi, Gujarati and Kannad. Preparations were on for editions in Bengali, Assameese, Malayalam and Sindhi. After the conclusion of World War and the subsequent lifting of the ban on publications, Gandhiji wrote in the Dec 3, 1945 edition of Harijan that the revival of the weekly newspaper was more relevant when the fascist powers could be defeated in the World War. He continued to write in Harijan even though the writing became smaller day by day. When one of the readers wanted him to retire or stop the publication of the weekly, he replied that he would continue to write till his health permits. In the issue just after the assassination of Gandhiji on Jan 30, 1948 Dr. Rajendra Prasad wrote in a signed editorial that may be out of assess on the banks of The Yamuna will arise a force that will blow off all the mist and cloud of misunderstanding of distrust and establish the kind of peace and harmony for which he lived and worked and alas at last became a victim of the assassin's bullet. This volume was published on February 3, 1948. In the issue dated Feb 15, 1948 C. Rajgopalachari, the Governor General of India wrote that the Harijan was Bapu's voice. And when his body has been consigned to the elements, the Harijan cannot go on. Any

attempt to continue it must take a different shape. In fact, the end came very soon and the publication of Harijan stopped.

Besides the books and the journals, the writings, speeches, letters and other types of communications of Gandhiji have been compiled in about one hundred volumes consisting of main subjects and indices. One volume is meant for providing glimpses of Mahatma Gandhi's life, work activities, major thoughts and significant aspects related to his lifetime. Just to give an example of one particular issue which was so close to the personality of Gandhiji reveals that he has given different viewpoints on a particular topic at different times and again has given clarification that one should accept the later view as he himself could revise his own earlier views due to personal experience or experiment. This aspect also indicates that many of the criticisms about Gandhiji and his ideas or viewpoints to be contradictory in nature do not have any strong ground. Gandhiji was perhaps the only thinker of his time who had the courage of conviction to accept his own mistakes in no uncertain terms and also tried to rectify such mistakes as and when he had the opportunity to do so. He would not advise his followers in particular and the people in general to do anything which he himself did not believe in or had not experimented with.

The life of Gandhiji is an open book of which each page can be considered as a timeless treatise for the humankind. Some of the notable quotes or statements of Gandhiji are testimony to this fact. His assertions or affirmation that be the change you want to see in the world continues to be one of the most quoted or repeated statements throughout the world. He had something for all the sections of people in a society. One statement that is very appropriate for the youth which declares that what we think we become. We are in a time that has witnessed tremendous changes in different fields of human endeavour including that of science, technology, communication etc. However, the youth continue to be at the centre of all such developments and young men and women hold the key to all such activities. The moment they think that they will be successful in ant field, eventually that resolve would take them to the pedestal of success. When we witness a phenomenal rise in the atmosphere of mistrust and intolerance in the society and people always feel that their ego is hurt by others, Gandhiji's view that nobody can hurt us or do any harm to us without our permission or acceptance of such a wrongdoing can be taken as a panacea which can not only eradicate the negatives but also usher in a healthy and cooperative social environment.

The individuals in modern times have access to all possible resources, amenities and facilities which can make them happy. But the irony is that happiness is missing from the life of a vast majority of people across societies. In this context, Gandhiji's idea that harmony among our thought, words and action can contribute to real happiness which is intrinsic to human persona and may not necessarily depend upon the external factors and forces.

### **Gandhiji on Non-violence**

Non-violence is both a philosophy and a way of life. Contrary to the common place, connotation, non-violence is not a weapon of the weak. It can be experimented and adopted by one and all. Its first step is forgiveness. As the saying goes, only the powerful and brave

heart can forgive others. Then only they can think of the next stage of adopting non-violence. Even though throughout human history and stages of evolution so many thinkers and writers have dealt with the notion of non-violence, perhaps Gandhiji was one of the pioneers who tried to bring the principle of non-violence from the individual to the social and political realm. Non-violence is the greatest force in relation to day today interactions at the disposal of the mankind. It can achieve its desired objectives without causing any physical or mental harm or agony to the other side. It is mightier than any weapon of mass destruction that has perceptible repercussions both on the perpetrator as well as the victims. It is much superior to brute force. It is a living force of indomitable power which has no parallel in world history. Nobody has been able to surpass its sphere of influence till date. Again it is most unlikely that some one will ever be able to measure its scope or sphere of influence.

Mahatma Gandhi has never claimed that his method of non-violence including its dimensions offered an instant panacea to deal with the menace of violence at any given point of time. Rather he suggested that it can be the leading light before all of us in ensuring peace at all levels of human interactions including our quest for world peace. In fact the Gandhian notion of non-violence can open up immense possibilities and evolutionary trends that can be beneficial to the leaders and the common people in myriad conflicting situations. It has been proved time and again that recourse to violence and violent means has not contributed to any kind of permanent solution or resolution of enmity. Even though violence perpetrated by the more powerful party achieves temporary victory, ill feeling and bad blood continue for an indefinite period. In the process of such a forcible or seemingly acceptable truce, eternal peace becomes the real victim. On the other hand history is the witness to the fact that sworn enemies and groups and nations engaged in incessant or intermittent conflicts over a long period of time could find amicable and plausible solutions as and when they have decided to accept the path of non-violence and start negotiations on the basis of mutual respect and trust.

In 1931, Gandhiji while discussing the nature and implications of the freedom movement expressed the view that in case India becomes free during his lifetime and he would have still energy to be active in public field, then he would like to contribute to build the Indian nation particularly on the basis of non-violence. At the same time he also made it clear that he shall not take up any official position or post in the formal governmental structure. The Second World War (1939-1945) caused innumerable damages in many parts of the world both in the axis and allied countries. But the most tragic incident that shook the moral fabric of human kind was the dropping of devastating and catastrophic atom bombs in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan by the American war planes. This step proved to be the most heinous crime against humanity by any nation and was condemned by the humanist peace-activist including some of the sympathisers of the United States. The mindless use of the dreaded atomic weapons that killed innocent civilians and caused unthinkable damages could actually reinforce Gandhiji's unequivocal faith on non-violence and the need for propagating the principles of non-violence throughout the world and to advocate for peace and cooperation among all the nations in the context of protecting universal values and ensuring a safe future for the posterity. In his writings, speeches and interactions As a strong believer in the Almighty he was more than convinced that he has

come to this world for the worthy cause of propagating non-violence. Gandhiji emphatically pointed out that the humanity is in requirement of this mission than it needed ever before.

He believed that there are different ways by which people try to solve their problems throughout the world. In many of such methods, there can be some link with violence or violent methods including battle, war or revolution. India from the time immemorial is the storehouse of peace and non-violence which many other countries of the world have emulated and put to practice. So he was of the view that going by the tradition and heritage of India we can adopt non-violence as the best possible method of conflict resolution although the path of non-violence may be circumscribed but it is undeviating. It is a well-known fact that Gandhiji practised the techniques of non-violence, both in South Africa and India to resolve a large number of conflicting situations. There were times when he had to face the wrath of the authorities, security forces and many others who did not appreciate his points of view. But Gandhiji did not succumb to any pressure, not even from his friends and followers to shun non-violence. Rather on many occasions he had to suspend his non-violent struggle which he thought is preferable to abdicating his chosen path and working against morality and conscience. One such incident which is a remarkable one was the Chauri Chaura issue that happened in Gorakhpur of the United Province, the present-day Uttar Pradesh. On 4<sup>th</sup> February 1922, the police opened fire at the protestors. Some of them in return burnt the police station. As a result twenty two police personnel and three common people lost their lives. Gandhiji was deeply hurt by this tragic incident and when the non-cooperation movement against the British was at its peak he suspended the movement on February 12, 1922. This was not all. Gandhiji started fast which continued for five days. He wrote that perhaps he could not spread the message of non-violence among the people of India which resulted in such violent act by them. Some of the repercussions of this incident reaffirmed Gandhiji's faith on non-violence. The British authorities launched massive retaliatory measures and arrested a large number of people for rioting and arson. Some of them died in jail before the actual trial could begin in the court. Gandhiji along with many other leaders were imprisoned. The British wanted to hang as many as 172 Indians at one go. However, the Allahabad High Court reviewed the judgement on April, 20, 1923 and reduced the quantum of punishment. While nineteen persons got death sentences, one hundred ten were sentenced life imprisonment.

It is sometimes argued that non-violence simply means absence of violence or not doing any violent act. This is only one of the aspects of non-violence. Some of the other aspects of non-violence include adoption of positive mindset and translating the same into positive action. It also means resisting oppression in a peaceful manner without any retaliatory measures with a view to bringing about the desired change either mental or practical. Another very significant dimension of non-violence is to do away with antagonism but not causing any harm to the opponents. The opponent can still be won over by concurring over his or her mind or heart. It also involves a great act of persuasion by which the other party would know that your point of view is correct. This situation reinforces one of the cardinal principles of non-violence that believes in the fact that under no circumstance, our opponent should experience any hardship. It can lead to another positive angle of non-



violence that even our opponents would feel that we are willing to accept pain for bringing about positive change in them. There are a number of techniques of non-violence which have been used by Gandhiji and that have been followed even decades after the attainment of Independence which was one of the immediate objectives of his non-violent struggle. Some of them include, among others, civil disobedience, peaceful demonstrations and protests, fasting and hunger strike, picketing, peaceful blockades and holding vigils. There are a large number of preparatory measures, contributing factors and implications of non-violence. They include fearlessness, patience, respect for others including different points of view, moral strength, not resorting to revenge or non-acceptance of the notion of tit for tat, etc.

### **Gandhiji on Satyagraha**

Satyagraha is love or passion for truth. It also implies firmness for truth. It is one of the expressive forms of resistance of civil action which is primarily non-violent in nature. It is qualitatively different from the notion of passive resistance which is basically withdrawing from any kind of action or aggressive behaviour. Satyagraha faces violence and violent activities boldly through non-violent means when a person can withstand extreme pressure or provocation perpetrated with the help of violence and still can stick to non-violence. Gandhiji studied and analysed different concepts and notions relating to peace, peaceful means and passive resistance and devised the term Satyagraha which became the most significant tool for the rest of his life and which continues to guide innumerable individuals and groups throughout the world who want to face or confront violence with the help of non-violent means. There are different interpretations of the term Satyagraha which do not corroborate that a satyagrahi would behave like a coward. Gandhiji was very particular about the brave and fearless persons who only qualify to be the true satyagrahis. It is the inherent moral force within its followers who muster courage to withstand different types of pressure tactics including the violent means used by the authorities or the opponents. Some of the critics point out that the idea of Satyagraha has been borrowed by Gandhiji from the notion of civil disobedience as advocated by Thoreau. The fact is that Gandhiji has used peaceful resistance in South Africa against the anti-Indian laws and practices long before he had the opportunity to go through the writings of Thoreau. This was called passive resistance and it can be considered as the beginning of the evolution of Satyagraha. After practising passive resistance for the benefit of the Indian community in South Africa and organising peaceful protests against injustice and improper treatment. Gandhiji went on to improve the idea and the end result was Satyagraha which was originally coined for the readers in Gujarati who might not follow the English terms and ideas. Gandhiji used the method of Satyagraha as the utilization of the power of truth and continued to improve upon it due to its application in different protests and similar activities wherein he could add the elements like patience on the part of the satyagrahis and compassion for the opponents or perpetrators of violence. This in turn strengthened the soul force of the practitioners of Satyagraha. While replying to queries and accusations of his detractors regarding the similarity between passive resistance and satyagraha, Gandhiji expressed the view that passive resistance as practised in some of the western societies has sometimes resorted to violence. Again it is also regarded as one of the weapons of the weak. On the other hand, Satyagraha is meant for the brave and the fearless persons. It has spiritual, logical and practical implications. It never supports the use of

violence in any manner. As truth is the universal expression, under no circumstance it should be abrogated. It is also to be remembered that non-violence and Satyagraha are so integrally related to each other that it is difficult to imagine the existence of one in the absence of the other. Going by the writings, speeches and practices of Gandhiji both non-violence and Satyagraha exchange their respective positions as means and the end depending upon any given place, situation or circumstance. At a higher plane, he equates both these concepts as corollary and complementary to each other and which function like the two sides of the same coin.

Gandhiji always maintained that both means and end are equally important aspects of any situation. An inappropriate means cannot justify any end. Similarly an improper end cannot justify the adoption of any types of means. The end will be justified if the means are proper and vice versa. Gandhiji cited an instance to drive this point home. For example Mr. A owns an asset and Mr. B wants it. This give and take situation can happen in three possible means, i.e. Mr. B can purchase the item; he can get it by force or deceit; and, or accept it as a gift from Mr. A. Gandhiji said that under any circumstance, the second means can never justify the transfer of the item from Mr. A to Mr. B. While applying this principle to the real life situation in the society, he mentioned that there are many situations in which injustice is done and the people do not get their due. Resorting to violent means could be taken as the easiest step. But even in such cases he advised that the people could follow Satyagraha and non-violence which from the moral and practical points of view is far superior means and can lead to long term peace and reconciliation as well as resolution of conflicts in amicable ways. During the freedom struggle there have been many such instances in which the British authorities adopted unfair and violent means which could easily be answered by the people in equal terms. Gandhiji himself adopted and also advised his followers not to be provoked by such violent acts but to remain calm and continue with the practice of satyagraha that ultimately led to attainment of Independence from the colonial rule.

Gandhiji at one point of time while projecting the virtues of satyagraha contrasted it with duragraha which is the opposite of satyagraha or truthfulness and clinging to the truth at any cost. Duragraha is that type of thought and action which is done with negative mindset and ulterior motives. It means that one does everything to counter the move by others and without trying to change the attitude of them. Satyagraha does exactly the reverse of it. It is not only meant to purify the mind and action of the satyagrahis, it also aims at changing the attitude, thought and action of the other party with the help of the power of truth and non-violence. While Satyagraha stands for understanding of the issue or problem at hand with a clear and positive mindset and extremely tolerant attitude for others, duragraha on the other hand is coupled with intolerance, misunderstanding and retaliatory steps that can only add to the confusion and perpetuation of enmity and violence. There are two other vital aspects which clearly draw a dividing line between Satyagraha and duragraha. First, A satyagrahi is more than willing to accept suffering and sacrifice for truth and welfare of others and duragraha does not have any space for such moral and human elements. And secondly, Satyagraha in its true spirit and ultimate culmination has the miraculous capacity even to the extent of transforming the opponents as they would be compelled to accept truth, non-

violence, peaceful means and wellbeing of all which are the cardinal principles of Satyagraha and are never found out in case of duragraha.

Even though there are hundreds of instances in which Gandhiji practised Satyagraha during four decades of his participation in public life both in South Africa and India, a few landmark events deserve special mention. Between 1906 and 1914 Gandhiji experimented with Satyagraha (then referred to as passive resistance). In South Africa, time and again particularly for upholding the rights and dignity of the Indian community and the Asian people; suppression of the migrant population and imposition of improper taxes and inhuman legal provisions; and, protection of the privileges of the railway passengers, etc. are some of the instances in which Gandhiji could experiment with the techniques of Satyagraha that witnessed success and failure depending upon the nature of the problem, level of participation and response of the South African authorities.

Gandhiji returned to India in the year 1915. He took a few months to study and analyse the prevailing socio-economic and political conditions of India by undertaking extensive tours within the length and breadth of the country as well as interacting with cross sections of people. It helped him a lot in carving out a path of dedication and sacrifice that led to the attainment of Indian independence. The first ever perceptible Satyagraha launched by Gandhiji took place in Champaran of Bihar that aimed at projecting the exploitation by the British owners of the poor workers in indigo plantation areas. Many critics are of the opinion that Champaran Satyagraha announced the arrival of Gandhiji in the public domain in India that changed the idiom of freedom struggle and its methodology. In 1918, Gandhiji resorted to Satyagraha with a view to resolving the conflict between the mill workers and the factory owners in Ahmedabad. In the same year he started a similar movement in Kheda, another district of Gujarat in which the main demand was that the authorities should not charge excessive taxes on the farmers who had suffered extensive crop loss due to severe famine conditions. The Imperial Legislative Council under the control of the British Indian Government passed the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, known as The Rowlatt Act on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1919 which extended the emergency provisions imposed by the defence of India Act, 1915. It gave the Government the power to imprison any person suspected of terrorist activities up to a period of two years without any trial. It also provides for preventive detention indefinitely and arrest without a warrant. It had provisions where political acts could be tried without a jury by the administrative authorities. It had another anti-people provision that the convicted persons were expected to deposit securities upon their release and they would refrain from taking part in any political, religious or educational activities. This Act put severe restrictions on the freedom of the press. All the Indian members of the Council vehemently opposed the Act. But the Government was adamant about passing the bill, which was overtly anti-people. Gandhiji was convinced that the constitutional measures would be futile in opposing the Act. So he called a nation-wide Satyagraha against the Rowllat Act which began on April 06, 1919. The Government started heavy repressive measures that resulted in violent classes in many parts of the country. Gandhiji decided to suspend the Satyagraha in the wake of violence. In Punjab two prominent personalities namely, Dr. Satya Pal and Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew were arrested by the authorities. On 13<sup>th</sup>

April, i.e. just one week after the launch of the Satyagraha thousands of unarmed and common people attended a peaceful protest in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. They had twin objectives. They wanted to celebrate Baisakhi, the most popular festival of Punjab and also to condemn the arrest of the two leaders. Then started one of the darkest Acts in modern Indian History when a British army official named Colonel Reginald Dyer arrived along with his troops. He did not allow men, women and children to leave the place. The troops closed the only narrow entrance of the park and without any kind of provocation and without giving any warning Dyer gave firing order in which by conservative estimate 2000 people were killed and several others were critically injured. May be there is no parallel crime in human history that can match the massacre that shook the entire nation. It may be mentioned it took about three years as in March 1922, the British Government repealed 23 Acts that included the infamous Rowlatt Act.

Between 1920-22, Gandhiji started the non-cooperation movement against the British. This movement marked complete acceptance of the twin principles of non-violence and Satyagraha with a view to making the people of India aware about the misdeeds, exploitative tactics as well as their support for the notorious divide and rule policy in the then India. Gandhiji called upon the influential sections of the Indian society to return the honorary titles to the British authorities and also to resign from the nominated post. Even the Indians working for the colonial administration as the government servants were requested to quit their jobs. People were called upon to withdraw their children from Government controlled educational institutions and to enrol them in the schools started by the nationalists and social reformers in India. In fact in different parts of the country a number of such schools started functioning. Some of the schools like the now famous Gujarat Vidyapith started a new and constructive educational system called basic education or Naitalim as per the Gandhian principles and ideas. Indians were requested by Gandhiji to boycott foreign goods in general and British goods in particular. He urged the people to use only goods made in India like khadi which came to be known as swadeshi movement. Some of the significant elements were that the people should stop paying taxes to the British authorities and boycott law courts that became instrumental in imposing or validating unjust laws in India. During the course of the movement clamour for Swarajya or self-rule got louder and louder. A significant contributing factor for the movement was that the Indians felt betrayed by the British as there had been a feeling with many about attainment of self-rule by the Indians in return of their support for the British during the First World War. The launching of Home Rule Movement by Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak boosted the spirit of the Indians who participated in the non-cooperation Movement. Similarly, the leaders of the Khilafat Movement started by the Muslims to persuade the British authorities not to abolish the Caliphate joined hands with the leaders of non-cooperation movement and Gandhiji and decided to launch joint protest against the British. Gandhiji called off the non-cooperation movement in February 1922 just after the Chauri Choura incident in which the people did not follow the basic principles of non-violence and satyagraha and resorted to violence. Some of the top leaders of the movement including Motilal Nehru and Chitta Ranjan Das did not support the suspension of the movement by Gandhiji just because of few incidents of violence. Gandhiji instead of

resuming the movement started fasting according to his belief in Satyagraha and the need for self-purification to change the minds of others.

Between 1923-29, Gandhiji launched a number of Satyagraha Movements in different parts of the country with a view to propagating the ideas of swadeshi, swarajya, khadi, basic education, ahimsa or non-violence etc. which aimed at keeping the spirit of the freedom movement alive. Some of these stayagrahas also focused on the rights of the untouchables including their right for temple entry and protest against the imposition of exorbitant land revenues by the British authorities. In the Lahore session of Indian National Congress in December 1929, the leaders adopted a resolution in support of complete independence from the British rule or 'purna swaraj' and decided that the last Sunday of January 1930 should be celebrated as the Independence Day by the Indians. The draft resolution prepared by Gandhiji stated that the British government in India had not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but also has exploited the masses and ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. But as the fate would have been, Indians by themselves symbolically observed Independence Day on January 26, 1930 while actual independence was still a distant reality.

Gandhiji started the salt satyagraha as part of the Civil Disobedience Movement on March 12, 1930 from the Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad. It was a march by foot or pada yatra along with seventy eight followers towards Dandi at the western coast to cover a distance of about three eighty five kilometres. They reached the place on April 06, 1930. He defied the salt law promulgated by the authorities which debarred the common people from making salt out of sea water and gave monopoly to the Government to prepare salt. This incident was replicated by the Satyagrahis in different parts of the country. The authorities launched massive repressive measures to control the spread of the Movement. After series of discussions and negotiations in two round table conferences in London no concrete agreement could be reached. Gandhiji resumed the Civil Disobedience Movement which witnessed sufferings and largescale imprisonment of the satyagrahis. On July 14, 1933, Gandhiji announced the withdrawal of mass satyagraha and on April 07, 1934 the Movement ceased completely.

The most decisive stage during the Freedom Struggle started by Mahatma Gandhi was the Quit India Movement that was declared during the Bombay Session of Indian National congress on August 08, 1942. The next day on August 09, The Movement started and Gandhiji's call to the nation i.e. Do or Die became the slogan that ignited millions of people. This Movement witnessed imprisonment of almost all the top leaders of India within hours of its launch. The common people became the torch bearers of the Movement. Gandhiji called upon the people to resort to non-violence and Satyagraha. In spite of this, violence erupted in many parts of India. Gandhiji was released from the jail in 1944. He continued his peaceful resistance and Satyagraha and went on a 21days fast .Though the actual process of transfer of powers could not start till the end of the Second World War, The Movement for the first time achieved many historical objectives including bringing about massive cooperation among cross sections of the Indian People and making the British Government realise that it was the

time to actually quit India and start the process of independence of India from colonial rule which came on August 15, 1947. But this also came with significant riders. India shared Independence with Pakistan as well as 656 princely states most of whom were quite ambivalent and unclear about their ties with India. Another issue which came as a repercussion of partition was communal tension and riots. Gandhiji was deeply hurt by this human tragedy. While the country was celebrating Independence, Gandhiji was in Noakhali, one of the worst hit areas of communal tension and was trying to maintain harmony. His ideas and practices of nonviolence and satyagraha faced its ultimate test. The principle of satyagraha was put to test by him to confront the politics of fear and hatred under serious threat including threat to his life.

### **Epilogue**

Outwardly, one gathers the idea that the principles and practices of nonviolence and satyagraha as propounded by Gandhiji could not achieve all the desired goals even during his life time. Many of his ardent followers also could not accept the teachings of the Mahatma. India of his dreams continues to suffer due to the ill effects of rampant violence and rejection of many of the core Gandhian values. The story of India during the first seven decades after Independence and beyond does not corroborate what Gandhiji stood for and sacrificed his life in the process. So, there have been voices which advocate that in view of Gandhiji's own experiences and what has happened afterwards, there is hardly any relevance of the ideals and viewpoints of Gandhiji in the twenty first century. These people conveniently forget that the Indian society, and for that matter any other society in the world, is a product of long historical factors and forces that had contributed to so many conflicts and contradictions which need to be resolved in an ideal situation in the best interests of all concerned. But we tend to forget that as the problems have originated over such a long period of time, the solutions would take similar if not equal time span. As Indians accepted the Gandhian path and tools of conflict resolution, innumerable lives could be saved. Enmity, distrust, and misunderstanding could be kept to the minimum. It is anybody's guess as to what could have been the outcome just in case Indians would have used violent means to achieve Independence as well as any other national objectives.

India, the multicultural, multilingual, and multi-religious society, has survived throughout the centuries due to the universal and humanistic principles of adjustment, accommodation, discussion, negotiation, and fellow feeling that have contributed to lasting peace and co-existence. Generations of leaders and the common people alike have been inspired by the Gandhian values of nonviolence and satyagraha throughout the world which shall continue to be relevant till the human civilization survives.

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