

***Gandhian Satyagraha:
Conceptual and Operational
Dimensions***

A Dissertation

**Submitted to the Himachal Pradesh University
In Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of**

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In
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Dated:.....10.1.2002

Dr. (Mrs.) Vijay Sharma

*DEDICATED TO
MY PARENTS
WHOSE TREMENDOUS CONFIDENCE
IN ME HAS ALWAYS HELPED ME
CHOOSE THE RIGHT PATH*

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Shimla

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(Vijay Kumari)

CONTENTS

No.	TITLE OF THE CHAPTER	PAGE(S)
1.	INTRODUCTION	1-14
2.	SATYAGRAHA: THE CONCEPTUAL DIMENSION	15-35
3.	SATYAGRAHA: THE OPERATIONAL DIMENSION	36-57
4.	AN EVALUATION	58-70
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	71-74

Chapter I

Introduction

Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi (1869-1948), popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi was born at Porbandar in the princely state of Kathiawar which is located in western India. His father and grandfather had been the Prime Ministers of that state. After, having been already married, Gandhi went to England to study law at the age of 18 years. There he was admitted to the bar in 1891. After returning back to India that year, he unsuccessfully tried to practise law in Bombay and Kathiawar. When a business firm of Porbandar offered to send him to South Africa as its counsel for an important law case; he accepted the same and left India in 1893 for what was to become the decisive experience of his life. He encountered such indignities witnessed so much exploitation and discrimination against the Indian labourers working in the tea, coffee and sugar plantations that he resolved to devote all his energies for aiding his fellow countrymen in their distress. He lived and worked in South Africa for 21 years during which he underwent a remarkable personal development and experimented, both successfully and unsuccessfully, with various political programmes and methods. The most notable of these was *Satyagraha*, or "truth force" which became the keynote of his later career in India.¹

1. Mackenzie Brown, *The White Umbrella, Indian Political Thought from Manu to Gandhi*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1953, pp. 139-40.

The method of *Satyagraha* was essentially based on the philosophy of civil disobedience. But through its application and refinement, it became a technique for social and political change. *Satyagraha* became something more than a method of peaceful resistance to particular legal norms; it got transformed into an instrument of struggle for positive objectives and fundamental change. The concept of civil disobedience in the west has usually been understood to be substantially as a matter of an individual consideration. This means disobedience of a given law against his moral conscience. Mahatma Gandhi experimented this technique during the struggle for Indian independence for mass action and extended it beyond the limits of civil disobedience and thus emerged a new technique which he called *Satyagraha*.²

The word *Satyagraha* was coined during the movement of resistance launched by the Indians in South Africa against the *Asiatic Law Amendment* ordinance introduced in the *Transvaal Legislative Council* in 1906. In the beginning, Gandhi designated this movement as passive resistance. But as the struggle continued, he became aware that some new principle had come into being and this could not be fully described by the word passive resistance. Therefore, he announced through the pages of his newspaper, *Indian Opinion*, that a prize would be given to one who would find out a suitable name to describe this movement. One of the readers of his paper

2. Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1959, pp. 3-4.

suggested the word *Sadagraha*, meaning 'firmness in a good cause'. This gave Gandhi the clue and he modified it as *Satyagraha*. Truth (*Satya*) implies love and firmness (*Agraha*) and serves as a synonym for force. This is how he began to call the Indian movement "*Satyagraha*", the force which is born of truth and love or non-violence, and gave up the use of the phrase "Passive Resistance".³

From the first use of the word *Satyagraha* in South Africa to Gandhi's last days in New Delhi as the technique evolved, Gandhi not only wrote elucidations of the term but also strove to understand and explain its implications. *Satyagraha* became the heart of every Gandhian pronouncement. It became basis of every concept with which Gandhi identified himself. In fact, *Satyagraha* provides the key to an understanding of Gandhian political philosophy.⁴

A number of studies have been made on Gandhiji's social and political philosophy in general and his concept of *Satyagraha* in particular.

Mackenzie Brown's study on Indian Political Thought⁵ is one of the important works that have dealt with the political ideas of Gandhi. It discusses how Gandhian ideas had deep roots in the classic Indian tradition and had been influenced by the Hindu religious texts of the Bhagvat Gita, the Ramayana, the Santiparvan of the Mahabharata. Brown elaborates how the doctrine of *Ahimsa* or non-injury became a central core of Gandhi's system of

3. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, translated from Gujarati by Valji G. Desai, Stanford: Academic Reprints, 1954, p. 172.

4. Joan V. Bondurant, *op.cit.*, pp. 7-11.

5. Mackenzie Brown, *op.cit.*

political thought. He describes how Mahatma was also indebted to his Indian contemporaries and to western thinkers like Thoreau. The author has specifically emphasized on Gandhi's concept of *Satyagraha* which was a natural application of his basic doctrine to the field of politics.

J.V. Bondurant has made a path breaking study on Gandhi.⁶ She has defined his basic precepts of *Satyagraha* – Truth, Non-Violence and *Tapasya* and analyzed the conduct and results of some of the *Satyagraha* campaigns undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi. She has also examined the applicability of the techniques of *Satyagraha* in other contexts and in other countries and suggested that *Satyagraha* has far-reaching implications for social and political theory. She has pointed out that traditional political theories have failed to deal adequately with the problem of means. These theories have either ignored the question of means or at least misconstrued the relationship between the ends and the means. She has suggested that social and political theory can rise to meet the challenge of our times only if it grapples with the means whereby end structures may survive the inevitable conflict.

The study of O.P. Goyal⁷ starts with the observation that academic works on Gandhi have been relatively scanty and in any case they have lacked a definite focus. The aim of Goyal's work has been claimed as the delineation of the political thought of Gandhi. His main thesis is that Gandhi was neither a communist nor a socialist but a progressive individualist. In the

6. Joan V. Bondurant, *op.cit.*

7. O.P. Goyal, *Studies in Modern Indian Political Thought*, Allahabad: Kitab Mahal Pvt. Ltd., 1964.

light of this thesis, Goyal has interpreted the personality and thought of Gandhi in his book.

He starts with a chapter on the origin and the background of Gandhi's political thought. Goyal concluded that the personality and thought of Gandhi was so very different from contemporary schools of thought in India that it led to the dissolution of the differences between the moderates and the extremists. In second chapter, the author discusses the fundamentals of Gandhi's thought – Truth, Non-Violence and Purity of means. He points out that the insistence on the means is a major contribution of Gandhi to the political thought. In chapters three and four, Goyal analyses *Satyagraha* as a non-violent political method. In chapter five, the controversial problem of the validity of *Satyagraha* in a democratic state has been discussed. The discussion is both academic and political. Goyal has concluded that *Satyagraha* is the secondary stage of constitutionalism and that it is permissible in a democratic state if the constitutional possibilities have been exhausted or are not available.

V.P. Verma has in his work⁸ dealt comprehensively with the philosophical, ethical, sociological and economic foundations and implications of Gandhian political thought. According to him, Gandhism is not an explicitly and narrowly analytical and positive body of political knowledge. The author has expressed the view that Gandhi had a comprehensive approach and political life. He wanted the subordination of political and social

8. V.P. Verma, *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvodaya*, Agra: Education Publishers, 1965.

considerations to moral considerations. In view of the above, Verma opines that only a comprehensive theoretical enquiry could do justice to Gandhism.

In his book on Gandhi, H.J.N. Horsburg⁹ has made an attempt to describe Gandhian approach to the problem of human conflict. The main object of the author in writing this book was to consider whether Gandhian non-violence can be said to provide us with an acceptable passage between the horns of our dilemma.

Horsburg has dealt with a number of preliminary questions. The first chapter of the book is partly a critique of armed force and partly a general analysis of the requirements of an acceptable substitute. It ends with the suggestion that *the Gandhian Satyagraha* may satisfy these requirements. This has been followed by a discussion on the nature and bases of *Satyagraha*. After this the author has considered some of the central issues arising in connection with defence. This has been done for making a critical examination of the non-violence defence system prescribed by Gandhi. The author has also attempted to make an assessment of this non-violent system of defence. Last but not the least, he has considered the prospects of non-violence in a world that appears to be committed to reliance upon armed force.

In Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya's study on Gandhi¹⁰, it has been argued that the social and political thought of Gandhi seems to be of great

9. H.J.N., Horsburgh, *Non-Violence and Aggression: A Study of Gandhi's Moral Equivalent of War*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

10. Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Social and Political Thought of Gandhi*, Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1969.

contemporary importance at least from the two points of view. In the first place, Gandhi is the most important of the great thinkers of modern India who have drawn their inspiration largely from the intellectual and cultural tradition of India and tried to relate their thought to contemporary social and political realities. Secondly, the power politics approach to the national and the international politics during the last few centuries has led to a situation which calls for profound rethinking. Hence, the author has concluded that the social and political thought of Gandhi seems to have a more universal appeal. However, Bandyopadhyaya has expressed the view that vast literature of Gandhi generally deals with Gandhi's biography rather than with his thought. According to the author, of the very few existing works on Gandhi's thought practically all seem to be lacking in objectivity.

Therefore, he has attempted in this book what he considers to be the first comprehensive and critical assessment of the social and political thought of Gandhi from the point of view of social science. The book has been divided into three sections. In the first, he has made a critical analysis of the ultimate values of non-violence, freedom and equality, the consumption of which is the goal of the Gandhian social dynamics. In the second, he has discussed the two levels of the ideal society visualized by Gandhi, which according to him would instantiate the ultimate values through a process of successive approximation. In the third, the author has critically examined the means of social control advocated by Gandhi, for transforming the existing social reality gradually into the ideal society of his conception, namely, the 'constructive programme' and *Satyagraha*.

Raghavan Iyer has in his book on Gandhi¹¹, elucidated the central concepts in the moral and political thought of Mahatma Gandhi with special attention to the relationship between his presuppositions and his precepts. According to the author, although there has been vast literature on Gandhi, little justice has been done to the solid conceptual foundations of his thought. Iyer has therefore, made an attempt to fill up that gap. He has discussed in detail the basic precepts of Gandhi's philosophy i.e. truth, non-violence, the relationship between these two concepts, the concept of *Satyagraha*, its scope, and significance, his concepts of *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi* and the relation between ends and means in politics.

According to the author Gandhi's political concepts possess a variety of meanings ranging from religious purity to political expediency. But he was neither a pure absolutist nor a mere opportunist in the interpretations of the terms that he used. Gandhi certainly evolved his concepts and elaborated them in the context of practical problems that he faced as a politician and a social worker. On this basis, his concepts of *Satya*, *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha*, cannot be regarded merely as rationalizations of political passions. According to the author, it is far more appropriate to consider Gandhi's concepts in terms of their metaphysical and moral presuppositions than to regard these as techniques justified solely by their results.

11. Raghavan Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1973.

A well known scholar on Gandhism, Ramjee Singh has tried to clarify some important aspects of Gandhian thought in a well known study.¹² He has expressed the view that Gandhian thought is not only what Gandhi has so far said or written, although he is perhaps the most documented author. It is ever growing. Singh adds that if we can face the problems before us with faith in truth and non-violence, we shall always be able to discover and re-discover Gandhi. The author has arranged his writings on Gandhi under various heads like philosophy and ethics, politics, education, economics, social change and constructive programme. ✓

Another specialist on Gandhi Saroj Malik, in her book¹³, has argued that the *Gandhian Satyagraha* is a moral scientific approach to the problem of social change in contemporary world since *Satyagraha* in action is an open process, devoid of fear. According to her, it can be started only when talks, negotiations and all other possible means fail. The author is of the opinion that the *Gandhian Satyagraha* is also relevant to tension theory. She holds that the tension is latent in the social order and the non-violent technique of *Satyagraha* consists in bringing it out on the surface. According to her, the world can be helped by Gandhiji's work for inter-class harmony and social stability. She has also argued that *Satyagraha* can also be applied to international conflict situation. According to her, Gandhi's theory of progressive application of non-violence to world politics certainly represents a

12. Ramjee Singh, *The Relevance of Gandhian Thought*, New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company, 1983.

13. Saroj Malik, *Gandhian Satyagraha and Contemporary World*, Rohtak: Manthan Publications, 1985.

great advance in the direction of political idealism. Consequently, *Satyagraha*, in her view, becomes relevant to the rule of law in the contemporary world as it is the step that gives conscience a better chance to resist errant authority. Finally, Malik holds that *Gandhian Satyagraha* is relevant as a social expression of non-violent order in contemporary world although, this expression of non-violent social order is a protracted process marked by partial advances, occasional breakthrough, inevitable setback and only eventual triumph.

J.K. Mehta's book on Gandhi¹⁴ is a compilation of a series of lectures which attempt to analyze various concepts and ideas of Gandhi and evaluate their relevance for contemporary society. He has dealt with Gandhi's objectives of life and argued that realization of the self was the final objective of life for Gandhi. He has also dealt with Gandhi's views on fasting. Further, the author has also made an attempt to explain Gandhi's concept of non-violence and truth, by quoting from his speeches and writings. Besides this, Gandhi's views on religion, *Satyagraha* and machinery too have been discussed and analyzed by the author.

In his book on Gandhi, Ajay Shankar Rai, has made an attempt to study *Gandhian Satyagraha* in a philosophical way by analyzing its basic principles from a critical viewpoint.¹⁵ The author has divided *Satyagraha* into

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14. J.K. Mehta, *Gandhian Thought: An Analytical Study*, New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1985.
 15. Ajay Shankar Rai, *Gandhian Satyagraha: An Analytical and Critical Approach*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2000.

two components – forms and elements. The forms relate to political actions and the elements to the underlying ideas of God, Truth, and Non-Violence. In the introduction to the book, Rai has given a brief life sketch of Mahatma and has traced the roots of *Satyagraha*. Chapter one is devoted to a discussion of the *Satyagraha* of Gandhi and post *Gandhian Satyagraha* advocated by Vinoba. The author has clearly pointed out that *Satyagraha* can be undertaken only for social good and never for personal gain and it aims at cleansing of the whole atmosphere and voluntary change of heart and mind of all parties to a conflict. In the second chapter, he has analyzed the principle of *Satyagraha* and comes to the conclusion that it is not a new doctrine but is found in the form of seeds in all the religious scriptures and anthologies. In the third chapter, he has thrown significant light on various techniques or forms of *Satyagraha*. In fact, the author has made a scientific analysis of the techniques of *Satyagraha* in this chapter.

He has competently dealt with the concept of *Satyagraha* in the fourth chapter and discussed different forms of *Satyagraha* in the fifth chapter. The author has brought out contradictions in the areas of non-cooperation and civil disobedience. In the sixth chapter, the author has attempted to analyze the different elements of *Satyagraha* adopted by Gandhi and to bring to light inherent contradictions in these. The final chapter of the book has described the negative implications of *Satyagraha* in our society and its effects. Referring to the present scenario of the modern society, which is full of violence and immorality, the author has argued that the *Gandhian Satyagraha* is one of the weapons to make our society pure and moral.

However, according to Rai Gandhi was unable to see the negative implications of his Satyagraha movement.

A distinguished scholar on Gandhism, S.L. Malhotra has attempted to analyze Gandhi's attitude to important issues in one of his authentic works.¹⁶ In the beginning, he has traced the background of Indian nationalism and described the Indian political scene at the time of Gandhi's return from South Africa. After this the author has described the religious evolution of Gandhi, the transformation in his mode of life and acquisition of new values, his ethics, economics, and political movements and his attitude to war and untouchability. All these have been treated in separate chapters. According to the author Gandhi was no theorist. His principles evolved in response to his own needs. Gandhi was pragmatic enough to understand the need of the hour. His training as a lawyer was an asset to Gandhi as a political leader. But as a leader of the masses, his appeal was to the hearts of the people.

This study is an analytical interpretation of a man whose life reflected many lasting human dilemmas and who attempted to resolve them in a particular historical situation but in a way which had considerable significance in his homeland and beyond. Malhotra has, however, given greater weight to Gandhi's Indian years because India was where his work had the deepest and longest impact, and where his ideas fully matured and were most severely tested. This study, undoubtedly, makes a fresh study of Gandhi as

16. S.L. Malhotra, *Lawyer to Mahatma: Life, Work and Transformation of M.K. Gandhi*, New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 2001.

a whole – in totality of his life and traces the development of an ambitious barrister to Mahatma.

Rama Hari Shankar has in his book on Gandhi¹⁷ described that the Indian national movement was the product of the clash of interests of the colonial power with the Indian people. And this antagonism led to a prolonged struggle against the colonial rule. To get rid of the British, two schools of thought emerged. One was represented by Mahatma Gandhi and the other by the revolutionaries. And, these two opinions to attain freedom were also antagonistic. Gandhi advocated that it is only through “good” means that lasting peace and progress can be attained and thus saw truth as the end and non-violence as the way. He gave the name *Satyagraha* meaning, truth force born of non-violence to the path which he wanted to adopt to free India from colonial rule. Although there were fundamental differences between the ideologies of Gandhi and the revolutionaries, the author holds, “Both believed in inflicting injury on oneself for promoting their cause. The revolutionaries believed in sacrificing their life after harming the enemy but Gandhi believed in bringing about a change of heart in the opponent by self-suffering”. In this book, Shankar has tried to explain how Gandhi influenced the thoughts of revolutionaries and to what extent the latter supported Gandhi in his plans to attain freedom. The author has provided understanding of the two parallel schools of thought which contributed to freeing India from the clutches of British.

17. Rama Hari Shankar, *Gandhi's Encounter with the Indian Revolutionaries*, New Delhi: Siddharth Publications, 2001.

Objectives of the Study

The present study is intended to study Gandhian concept of *Satyagraha* with emphasis on its conceptual and operational dimensions. In the context of the research problem, the following aspects have been taken up for study:

- i) Meaning of the term *Satyagraha*.
- ii) How, when and under what circumstances did this term originate?
- iii) The basic precepts of the concept of *Satyagraha*.
- iv) Forms of *Satyagraha*.
- v) Various stages of action involved in a successful *Satyagraha*.
- vi) Fundamental rules laid down by Gandhi for *Satyagrahi* in action.
- vii) *Satyagraha* as a technique of action during independence movement of India.
- viii) How far *Satyagraha* was successful in its practical application?
- ix) Whether social and political conflicts can be solved through this method?
- x) Whether *Satyagraha* can be used in isolation or along with other means as a supplement?
- xi) Is there any place for *Satyagraha* against the state or is there any special limit to its use in a free democratic society?
- xii) What is its significance under the present circumstances?

Methodology

The question of methodology largely resolves itself into the question of approach and that of the appropriate tools and techniques for data collection and analysis. This concept of *Satyagraha* can be analyzed by going through the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi on different aspects of society and politics. In this context works of political philosophers, researchers and academicians on Gandhi's philosophy and specifically his concept of *Satyagraha* have been reviewed. As the pure textual analysis does not enable the researcher to understand possible hidden or oblique references so the textual analysis though necessary and basic cannot be called sufficient in itself. Along with textual analysis evolutionary method has been followed in order to study and understand the context and the circumstances under which this concept emerged, grew and was applied by Gandhi during India's struggle for independence. Under this method the researcher tries to trace the history of development of a phenomenon and tries to locate the unity.

The study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is concerned with introduction to the concept and the review of literature regarding the concept. The second chapter deals with conceptual dimension and the third with operational dimension of the concept. The last chapter includes evaluation of the concept as a technique to resolve social and political conflicts.

Chapter II

Satyagraha: The Conceptual Dimension

Satyagraha literally means 'holding on to truth' or 'insistence on truth'. It was defined by Gandhi as the "vindication of truth, not by the infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's own self".¹ This literal meaning of the term *Satyagraha* leads us to basic precepts of this concept. These precepts are: truth, non-violence and self-suffering.

"The word *Satya* (Truth) is derived from *Sat*, which means being. And nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why *Sat* or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact it is more correct to say that Truth is God, than to say that God is Truth... It will be realized that *Sat* or *Satya* is the only correct and fully significant name for God".²

From first to last, *Satya*, or truth, was sacred to Gandhi – the supreme value in ethics, politics and religion, the ultimate source of authority and of appeal, the *raison d'être* of all existence. He regarded it as a "philosopher's stone", the sole talisman available to mortal man.³ Gandhi declared that morality is the basis of things and truth is the substance of all morality.⁴ For him truth was not only the most important and an all inclusive principle, but it was logically prior to all the other human virtues and excellence.⁵

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1. *Speeches of Gandhi*, p. 501, quoted in O.P. Goyal, *Studies in Modern Indian Political Thought: Gandhi ah Interpretation*, Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1964, p. 20.
 2. *Young India*, July 30, p. 196, quoted in J.V. Bondurant, *conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1953, p. 17.
 3. *Yervada Mandir*, translated by V.G. Desai, Ahmedabad: Navjivan, 1932, ch. I.
 4. *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, translated by Mahedev Desai, Ahmedabad: Navjivan, 1956, p. 34.
 5. *Ibid.*, p. 504.

Gandhi distinguished between the absolute truth, which is universal and infinite, and the relative truth, which varies from person to person, place to place and time to time. He expressed the view that the absolute truth can be seen only through the divine eyes by the extra ordinary persons. The ordinary human beings can perceive only the relative truth as they do not have divine eyes. Gandhi contended that it is impossible for human beings to realize perfect truth so long as they are imprisoned in their mortal frame. Perfect truth can only be visualized in their imagination.⁶ In spite of this, according to Gandhi one must have faith in the absolute truth that cannot be attained but merely imagined and therefore there is nothing wrong if every man follows truth according to his lights. He opined that, indeed, it is his duty to do so. Then, if there is a mistake on the part of anyone while following truth, Gandhi held that it will be automatically set right.⁷

He had an optimistic view of the triumph of truth in human life and society. He believed that those who followed truth in all their acts need not repent because it certainly bears fruit in its own time. He also held the view that those who have that living faith never fear anything or anybody. According to him, "Their truth is their defence and armour, their faith their impregnable shield".⁸

Gandhi was of the opinion that although truth is by nature simple and self-evident, a purificatory discipline is required to remove ignorance, that is

6. *Yervada Mandir*, op.cit., p. 5.

7. Raghavan N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 158.

8. Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase*, Navjivan, 1958, Vol. I, p. 423.

the basis of evil and which obscures the truth. He held that a devotee of truth must always hold himself open to correction and whenever he discovers himself to be wrong he must confess at all costs and atone for it. Along with this, on the basis of his own experience, Gandhi also advocated that every person must undertake the vow of truth so that he could always remain devotee of truth. It is pertinent to bring to the sharp focus that this vow of truth which he pleaded for, does not only consist merely in verbal truthfulness, but also includes the increased and constant observance of truth in thought, speech and action. According to Gandhi, the vow of truth meant that there is no place for prejudice, evasion, deception, secretiveness or distortion. He also asserted that this vow of truth cannot be taken properly without also taking the vow of fearlessness.⁹

Gandhi's concept of truth gradually settled solidly into the sphere of ethical consideration as he went on pursuing his experiment with truth. In fact, with the march of time, the emphasis on truth became increasingly centered upon the problem of means to attain the end – the individual realization of God, which is Truth. Gandhi wrote in *Young India*: in 1924; "I want to see God face to face. God I know is Truth. For me the only certain means of knowing God is non-violence – *ahimsa* – love". This makes it clear that the inseparable combination of truth and love in the Gandhian position forms the nucleus of his solution to the problem of means.¹⁰ According to

9. Raghavan N. Iyer, *op.cit.*, pp. 162-165.

10. Joan V. Bondurant, *op.cit.*, pp. 19-24.

Gandhi *ahimsa* and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. He insisted that they are like the two sides of a coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. He argued that it is not possible to seek and find truth without *ahimsa*.¹¹

It needs to be taken note of that etymologically the word non-violence appears to be negative in character. Gandhi, however, refined the crudities of the concept of non-violence and popularized its positive aspects. This is evident from his following observation, "I accept the interpretation of *ahimsa* namely that it is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the active state of *ahimsa*, requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically".¹² Gandhi identifies *ahimsa* with love.

Gandhi justified non-violence on the basis of three main arguments. In the first instance, the non-violence satisfies the test of universal applicability as it is equally applicable to all countries and all peoples, irrespective of age or sex. Secondly, it enhances all other values without detracting from any of them. Thirdly, there is no limit to the degree or extent to which non-violence can be applied; the greater the application of non-violence, the greater will be the realization of justice.¹³

11. J. Bandyopadhyaya, *Social and Political Thought of Gandhi*, Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1969, p. 39.

12. *Young India*, January 19, 1921, quoted in O.P. Goyal, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

13. J. Bandyopadhyaya, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

It must be remembered while dealing with this concept that Gandhi was a votary of absolute *ahimsa*. However, it has also to be kept in view that he also perceived that absolute *ahimsa* like absolute truth is only an ideal. He recognized what can be realized is relative non-violence, which is nothing more than an approximation to the ultimate value of non-violence. "Perfect non-violence", according to Gandhi, "is impossible as long as we exist physically..."¹⁴ Thereafter, he accepted that non-violence, as an ideal, means, in practice, the maximum possible relative non-violence which an individual is capable of at a given moment.¹⁵

Gandhi classified *ahimsa* into three categories: the *ahimsa* of the strong, the *ahimsa* of the weak and *ahimsa* of the coward. The *ahimsa* of the strong was the non-violence of choice. Gandhi practised this kind of non-violence throughout his life. He always accepted *ahimsa* as a creed, as a principle and a way of life. The *ahimsa* of the weak, according to Gandhi, was based on expediency and convenience and not on choice. Those who pursue this type of non-violence do it on account of compulsion as they do not have the strength to use violence. The Indian National Congress, Gandhi rightly felt, adopted non-violence only as a matter of policy. The *ahimsa* of the coward is based on the cowardice practice of the non-violence of this type. He or she is compelled to be non-violent out of fear. This type of *ahimsa* is in fact, a cover for fear. According to Gandhi fearlessness is the virtue and the cowardice is a sin. Therefore, he preferred violence to

14. *Harijan*, July 21, 1940, quoted in Bandyopadhyaya, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

15. J. Bandyopadhyaya, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

cowardice. Gandhi was of the belief that there is hope for a violent man to be some day non-violent, but there is no hope for a coward to become non-violent in a genuine sense. Non-violence in its dynamic condition for Gandhi meant no more and no less than conscious suffering. But for him it did not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer. Instead, for Gandhi, it meant the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant.¹⁶

It must be kept in view that Gandhi considered self-suffering as the basic element of *ahimsa*. In fact, just as *ahimsa* carries in the Gandhian ethic the positive meaning of love and good will, self-suffering also implied the positive attitude of courage. It needed inculcation of discipline for overcoming fear. It is pertinent to remember that in *Satyagraha* self-suffering is directed towards the moral persuasion of one because of whom it is undertaken. It is not merely a substitute for inability to use violent means to achieve victory over an opponent. The resort to self-sacrifice and voluntary submission to injury is a positive policy and is not merely a matter of last resort. In this context, Gandhi makes a distinction between the evil and the evil-doer. He did not advocate *Satyagraha* against the evil doer but against the evil.

Gandhi also made a distinction between the concepts of 'Passive Resistance' and *Satyagraha*. According to him, the passive-resister aims to embarrass the opponent into submission; the *Satyagrahi* wins him over through love, persuasion and self-suffering. He also held that for a passive-resister, the ends are known and significant but for a *Satyagrahi*, the ends are

16. O.P. Goyal, *op.cit.*, pp. 16-17., J.V. Bondurant, *op.cit.*, pp. 26-28.

means-in-the process and the ends and means are convertible terms. Gandhi also emphasized that a passive-resister is more concerned with the things and conditions. He is involved in the preservation and conservation of the status quo. On the other hand, according to Gandhi, *Satyagrahi* has a dynamic personality. He does not accept things as they are. He does not submit himself to the static conditions. He is engaged in the constant endeavour to change conditions and things with a view to secure progress and social justice. Gandhi also made a clear-cut distinction between pacifism and *Satyagraha*. He observed that *Satyagraha* is a curious amalgamation of peace, progress and justice. He was of the view that these three can be pursued only through a dynamic political method. According to him, the deliberate acceptance of suffering for a great cause serves three purposes. Firstly, it purifies and ennobles the sufferer. Secondly, it makes a direct appeal to the soul of the oppressor and compels the oppressor to yield to the demands of truth and justice. Thirdly, it intensifies favourable public opinion.¹⁷

Gandhi has made a clear-cut distinction between his method of *Satyagraha* and that of the 'Passive Resistance'. While the 'Passive Resistance' implies lack of capacity to employ violence and, in fact, tends to be a preliminary step to violence. A *Satyagrahi* on the contrary, accepts love and non-violence as virtues having universal application. Gandhi asserted

17. V.P. Verma, *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvodaya*, Agra: Educational Publishers, 1959, pp. 200-201.

that even an opponent is not to be hated by a *Satyagrahi*. A *Satyagrahi* is required to hate evil but not the evil-doer. That is why Gandhi hated the British system in India but not the British in India. He emphasized that *Satyagraha* is not a static or stagnant phenomenon. It is dynamic but it is not violent.

Gandhi conceptualized *Satyagraha* as a technique of action characterized by adherence to a stated truth by means of behaviour which is not violent but which includes self-suffering. According to him, it seeks to effect change and it operates within a conflict situation.¹⁸ Gandhi asserted that like all techniques of action for effective change, the *Satyagraha* also employs force. But the character and the result of the force of the *Satyagraha* are essentially different from those of conventional-violent techniques of action.¹⁹ *Satyagraha*, according to him, may assume various forms of non-violent action. Bandyopadhyaya has described five broad forms of *Satyagraha*:

1. Fasting,
2. Defiance of violence,
3. Self-imposed suffering other than fasting,
4. Non-cooperation (including strikes), and
5. Civil disobedience.²⁰

18. O.P. Goyal, *op.cit.*, pp. 21-22.

19. J.V. Bondurant, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

20. J. Bandyopadhyaya, *op.cit.*, p. 227.

Out of these, according to Bandyopadhyaya, non-cooperation and civil disobedience were most commonly employed during the national movement in India. Non-cooperation in principle, is simply the refusal to cooperate with a requirement which is taken to violate fundamental 'truths' or refusal to cooperate with those responsible for such violations.²¹ It can be both complete and partial. Partial non-cooperation may assume many forms like economic or social boycott and strike. In its extreme form, it could assume the form of the non-payment of taxes.²²

The purpose of non-cooperation, according to Gandhi, is to rid ourselves of the feeling of helplessness by being independent of all government control or supervision i.e. to govern ourselves in all possible affairs.²³ He asserted that Gandhian non-cooperation is not to be directed against a person or persons. It has to be directed against the system of which the person or persons are merely the victims. Non-cooperation against a system according to the author, must be non-cooperating, not with a part, but with the whole system. Only then it can be effective. The exact policy of non-cooperation, Gandhi accepted, may differ from country to country and in changing circumstances. He, however, asserted that for Gandhi the spirit of self-sacrifice was the very soul of the non-cooperation movement.²⁴

According to Mahadev Desai, Gandhi regarded civil disobedience as a synthesis of civility and disobedience. He recognized that disobedience in

21. J.V. Bondurant, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

22. O.P. Goyal, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

23. *Young India*, April 6, 1921, quoted in O.P. Goyal, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

24. O.P. Goyal, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

itself was anti-social, but it becomes the duty of man to disobey immoral laws. Then it, in reality, becomes obedience to a higher moral law, the law of truth and justice. According to the author for Gandhi "Civil" is the very opposite of the "criminal" and the "violent". Civility, to him, does not mean here the mere outward gentleness and desire to do the opponent good.²⁵ It cannot be civil unless and until the *Satyagrahi* has disciplined himself and the atmosphere around is tranquil and non-violent. Disobedience to be civil, according to Gandhi, must also be public and made specially known to the authorities. He made it clear that before one can be fit for the practice of civil disobedience, one must have rendered a willing and respectful obedience to the state laws. Gandhi emphasized that civil disobedience can be practised only as a last resort and by a select few in the first instance at any rate.²⁶

According to Verma, Gandhi recognized two kinds of civil disobedience – aggressive and defensive. Aggressive or offensive civil disobedience is non-violent willful disobedience of laws of the state whose breach does not involve moral turpitude and which is undertaken as a symbol of revolt against the state. Verma holds that Gandhi had expressed the opinion that disregard of laws relating to revenue would be aggressive civil disobedience. On the other hand, according to him defensive civil disobedience is involuntary non-violent disobedience of such laws as are in themselves had and obedience to which would be inconsistent with one's

25. Mahadev Desai, *Gandhi: Autobiography*, Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1956, p. 33.

26. O.P. Goyal, *op.cit.*, p. 33-34.

self-respect or human dignity. That is why Gandhi considered formation of volunteer corps for peaceful purposes, publication of articles not contemplating orders, as defensive civil disobedience.²⁷

According to Verma, Gandhi recognized that there can be individual as well as mass civil disobedience. Mass civil disobedience meant intensive spontaneous action by the masses and for this masses will have to be rigorously trained for action.²⁸

The author has also observed that Gandhi also made a clear-cut distinction between violent and non-violent civil disobedience. According to him, violent disobedience deals with men who can be replaced. In this case, the evil is felt untouched and is often accentuated. On the contrary, non-violent civil disobedience is the only effective remedy and it is obligatory upon him who would dissociate himself from evil.²⁹ In Goyal's opinion, Gandhi also made an unambiguous distinction between general civil disobedience and particular civil disobedience. In case of latter, disobedience is directed against some particular unjust laws of the state but other laws are to be regularly obeyed.³⁰

According to Gandhi, complete civil disobedience or refusal to render obedience to every single state made law can be a very powerful movement.

27. V.P. Verma, *op.cit.*, p. 210.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*, p. 211

30. O.P. Goyal, *op.cit.*, p. 34.

He also expressed the view that it could become "more dangerous than an armed rebellion".³¹

Gandhi regarded fasting as the most extreme form of *Satyagraha*. He considered it as the most powerful weapon. He had, however, warned against the indiscriminate use of this form. Although Gandhi recognized that fasting could be a most effective weapon in the armoury of *Satyagraha*, he insisted that its use must be determined carefully.³² According to Bondurant, Gandhi believed that fasting in general may be used as an adjunct to other forms of *Satyagraha*. He has argued that it should not be considered as a form of *Satyagraha* in the sense of mass action. It can, however, be used in the case of *Individual Satyagraha*, because only those persons are selected as *Satyagrahis* in this type of *Satyagraha* who could make effective and proper use of the fast.³³

Bandyopadhyaya has also categorized *Satyagraha* on the basis of the number people participating in a particular act of *Satyagraha* and on the basis of the area of its operation into the following:

1. Individual Satyagraha
2. Group Satyagraha
3. Mass Satyagraha
4. International Satyagraha

31. M.K. Gandhi, "Civil Disobedience", *Young India*, August 4, 1921, quoted in V.P. Verma, *op.cit.*, p. 211.

32. J.V. Bondurant, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

33. *Ibid.*

1. Individual Satyagraha

According to Bandyopadhyaya, individual *Satyagraha* is an essential concomitant of Gandhi's view that, in the ultimate analysis freedom belongs to the individual and that, therefore, the individual himself is the final guardian of his freedom. Bandyopadhyaya has argued that for Gandhi individual *Satyagraha* is essentially an attempt on the part of the individual to use his moral power for the achievement of justice in a conflict situation in which he may or may not be involved personally.³⁴

The author has argued that while commenting on this Gandhi once wrote, "My work will be finished", if I succeed in carrying conviction to the human family, that every man or woman, however, weak in body, is the guardian of his or her self-respect and liberty. This defence avails, though the whole world may be against the individual resister.³⁵

Bandyopadhyaya has expressed the view that individual *Satyagraha* of Gandhi, like *Satyagraha* in general, belongs to realm of applied social science. According to him innumerable individual *Satyagraha* were performed by Gandhi and his followers during his life time, and there is enough case material on the subject for a whole book to be written on it. Bandyopadhyaya observes that time and again Gandhi has explained that the effectiveness of *Satyagraha* depends on quality, not on the strength of numbers. Active non-violence is a powerful, universal and timeless force which, when adopted by an individual and practised in a pure form, will

34. J. Bandyopadhyaya, *op.cit.*, p. 235.

35. *Ibid.*

inevitably produce results far out of the proportion to the physical significance of the individual of the numerical value of his actions. While explaining the power of Individual *Satyagraha*, according to Bandyopadhyaya, Gandhi had written, "Non violence in its dynamic condition means....the pitting of one's soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under the law of our being. It is possible for single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul, and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration".³⁶

The author has also pointed out that Gandhi had emphasized the need of considering the individual *Satyagraha* in its historical perspective. In this context, he has quoted the following remark of Gandhi, "It is the quality of which they are made that becomes the deciding factor. The greatest men of the world have always stood alone. Take the great prophets, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed. They all stood alone like many others whom I can name".³⁷

2. Group Satyagraha

Bandyopadhyaya has argued that according to Gandhi attainment of justice is as much the duty of individuals as of groups. *Satyagraha* logically become a technique of resistance against injustice in the hands of all kinds of social groups. In the actual application of group *Satyagraha* the various methods like defiance of violence, non-cooperation, civil disobedience,

36. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

37. *Ibid.*

fasting, etc. can be used either successively or in combination.³⁸ The scholar has, however, pointed out that in fact there have been many cases in the history of group *Satyagraha* in which determined groups of *Satyagrahis* have defied police violence without themselves indulging in any acts of violence.³⁹

3. Mass Satyagraha

Appodorai has argued that according to Gandhi in a mass *Satyagraha* it is not essential that everyone should be all perfect so long as he is disciplined and has learnt to obey. Just as in a war, the commander is obeyed by the rank and file, so too if the select leaders in a *Satyagraha* campaign were well trained, the man under them would carry out the orders.⁴⁰ In this context, Bandyopadhyaya has remarked that it is easy to see that mass *Satyagraha* is necessarily relatively inferior form of *Satyagraha* not only because, in terms of the inner logic of Gandhian thought, it is vitiated by the element of expediency involved in it, but also because the actions of large masses of men cannot be made to conform to the strict rule of *Satyagraha*.⁴¹

That is why, in the case of *Satyagraha* as involving large number of people, Gandhi merely insisted that the *Satyagrahis* must observe the discipline imposed on them by their leaders. But Gandhi considered even this relatively inferior form of *Satyagraha* to be as effective as other

38. *Ibid.*, p. 269

39. *Ibid.*

40. A. Appodorai, *Indian Political Thinking in the Twentieth Century*, New Delhi: South Asia Publisher Ltd., 1987, pp. 60-61.

41. J. Bandyopadhyaya, *op.cit.*, p. 292.

forms so long as the minimum necessary discipline was observed by the *Satyagrahis*. Only two mass *Satyagrahas*, namely, the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-23 and the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-33, were organized and led by Gandhi. Although Gandhi, it may be stated, regarded *Satyagraha* as universal means of conflict resolution, applicable equally to individual, group, national and international conflicts, he did not articulate his views on *Satyagraha* as a means of national defence against foreign aggression until he was moved to do so by the events preceding the Second World War and the war itself.

Sometimes an attempt has made by scholars to enumerate the different stages of action involved in a successful *Satyagraha* campaign, one step logically following another until the objective is attained. Thus K. Shridharani made the first attempt in this context. He has given a list and a diagram of thirteen successive steps involved in a successful *Satyagraha*.⁴² While stating that such a pattern is “applicable to a movement growing out of grievance against an established political orders”. Bondurant reduced the thirteen steps mentioned by Shridharani to the following nine steps:

1. Negotiation and arbitration,
2. Preparation of the group for direction including self discipline,
3. Agitation,
4. Issuing of an ultimatum,
5. Economic boycott and form of strike, including *dharna*,

42. Krishan Lal Shridharani, *War Without Violence*, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1962, ch. I.

6. Non-cooperation, including voluntary exile,
7. Civil disobedience,
8. Usurping of the functions of government, and
9. Parallel government.⁴³

Bandyopadhyaya has expressed the view that the attempt of these two authors to enumerate the different stages of action is somewhat misconceived and even confused and he has given certain reasons for the belief. He has given the following arguments to support his view. Firstly, even in the summary form presented by Bondurant there is some overlapping of the steps mentioned. For instance, economic boycott and strikes are very clearly forms of non-cooperation and not separate steps in a *Satyagraha* movement. Similarly, the usurpation of the functions of the government and the setting up of a parallel government are simply two different descriptions of the same act. Secondly, all these steps do not necessarily develop successively in a single *Satyagraha* campaign. Thirdly, the basic assumption behind this enumeration is that of a mass national movement against the established government, national or foreign. But *Satyagraha*, is meant to be as much a weapon of the individual as of the small group and the nation. Finally, in this list some of the methods of resolution of conflict have been confused with "steps in a *Satyagraha* campaign". But to discover a definite

43. J.V. Bondurant, *op.cit.*, pp. 40-41.

pattern of action in *Satyagraha* is to misunderstand its essentially versatile and dynamic quality to which Gandhi attached such great significance.⁴⁴

According to N.K. Bose, Gandhi laid down certain fundamental rules essential for *Satyagraha* in action. These rules are:

1. Self-Reliance at All Times

Outside aid may, in the proper circumstances, be accepted, but should never be counted upon.

2. Initiative in the Hands of the Satyagraha

Through continuous assessment of the conflict situation, *Satyagrahis* should, by means of constructive efforts where possible, by positive resistance, where indicated, or by the tactics of persuasion and adjustment, press the movement ever forward.

3. Propagation of the Objectives, Strategy and Tactics of the Campaign

Propaganda must be made an integral part of the movement. Education of the opponent, the public, and participants must continue apace.

4. Reduction of Demands to Minimum Consistent with Truth

Continuing reassessment of the situation and the objectives with a view to possible adjustment of demands is essential.

5. Progressive Advancement of the Movement through steps and stages

determined to be appropriate within the given situation. Decision as to when to proceed to a further phase of the *Satyagraha* must be carefully weighed in

44. J. Bandyopadhyaya, *op.cit.* pp. 229-230.

the light of the over-changing circumstance, but a static condition must be avoided. However, direct action is to be launched only after all other efforts to achieve an honourable settlement have been exhausted.

6. Examination of weakness within the Satyagraha group. The morale and discipline of the *Satyagrahis* must be maintained through active awareness of any development of impatience, discouragement, or breakdown of non-violent attitude.

7. Persistent Search for Avenues of Cooperation with the Adversary on Honourable Terms

Every effort should be made to win over the opponent by helping him thereby demonstrating sincerity to achieve an agreement with, rather than a triumph over, the adversary.

8. Refusal to Surrender Essentials in Negotiation

Satyagraha excludes all compromise, which affects basic principles or essential positions of valid objectives. Care must be exercised not to engage in bargaining or barter.

9. Insistence upon full agreement on fundamentals before accepting a settlement.⁴⁵

But Raghavan Iyer points out that Gandhi also laid down few points as a code of discipline for volunteers is the 1930 movement. A *Satyagrahi* will harbor no anger but will suffer the anger of the opponent, put up with assaults but never retaliate nor submit out of fear to orders given in anger. He will

45. N.K. Bose, *Studies in Gandhism*, Calcutta: Indian Associated Publishing Co., 1947, p. 175.

voluntarily submit to arrest and not resist the removal of his property by the authorities, but he will refuse to surrender property in his possession as a trustee even at the risk of injury or death. He will never swear or curse, or insult his opponent and he will seek to protect officials from the insult or attack of his companions. He will behave courteously toward prison officials but refuse to submit to humiliating and unconventional orders. He will not make distinctions between an ordinary prisoner and himself, or regard himself as superior in anyway to the rest, or ask for special favours, or fast to obtain conveniences. He will act with the most scrupulous honesty, cooperate with prison officials, set an example to co-prisoners, and perform his allotted tasks. During the campaign he will joyfully obey the orders issued by the chosen leader of the corps and, if they appear insulting or foolish, he will comply while also appealing to higher authority. He must determine the fitness of the corps before joining, then submit to its discipline however irksome, and if the sum total of the energy of the corps seems to be improper or immoral he has a right to sever his connection but not to commit a breach of discipline.⁴⁶

According to V.P. Verma, these fundamental rules laid down by Gandhi for a *Satyagrahi* suggest that Gandhi was always emphatic upon the persuasive character of non-violent *Satyagraha*. He denied the presence of even any mental violence or coercion in it. He stressed its spiritual nature

46. Raghavan, N. Iyer, *op.cit.*, p. 298.

and regarded action based on ahimsa to be always superior to action based on violence.⁴⁷

O.P. Goyal has argued that the applicability of this concept of *Satyagraha* as a method in the political context depends upon Gandhian concept of human nature. According to him, although Gandhi admitted that man is not all good, he is mixture of good and evil, however, he believed that inherently man is good and essentially capable of coming back to the normal cause of goodness. Evil is only deviation. Goyal has pointed out that according to Gandhi if the goodness that is inherent in man and that is basic to his nature, can be provoked, then *Satyagraha* is practicable. *Satyagraha* is a noble concept and a spiritual weapon. It is the method of one who does not believe in self and one who does not desire gains. A *Satyagrahi* is one who believes in the conquest of the soul over the body, one who would renounce everything, including his body, for a cause. Such a man would always win. Such a man would never be in a hurry. For this man, *Satyagraha* is not only a method, it is a way of life. It is a pursuit life-long and life-after.⁴⁸

47. V.P. Verma, *op.cit.*, p. 218.

48. O.P. Goyal, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

Chapter III

Satyagraha: The Operational Dimension

Satyagraha is a technique of action. This technique was applicable not only in the fight of the oppressed people against foreign rule or a country subjected to armed invasion from outside, it was also applicable to the attainment of socio-economic justice, irrespective of the form of government which operated, to industrial strikes, and to social evils, like communalism and untouchability. In practice, the main conflict of India's nationalist forces being against the British government, most of Gandhi's *satyagraha* campaigns, even those involving socio-economic issues, were applied against the foreign government.

The first *Satyagraha* organized by Gandhi in India in 1917 was against the economic and social injustice suffered by the Indigo cultivators of the Champaran district in Bihar, but it was against the British rather than the planters though peasants were actually benefited by the outcome. Champaran (1917), Kheda (1918) and Bardoli (1928) are some of the instances of the successful non-violent direct action in the agrarian sphere.¹

The Champaran *Satyagraha*

Champaran became the seedbed of many of Gandhian firsts, such as his concern for the masses, his genius for compromise, his utter emphasis on

1. S.P. Verma, *Modern Political Theory: A Critical Survey*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1975, p. 419.

the means as much as on the ends, and finally, the Gandhian technique of non-violent struggle – a completely revolutionary idea in the second decade of the 20th century.²

Champanan is at the foot of the Himalayas in the north-west of Bihar, a province in which indigo plantations were developed in the nineteenth century. Prior to their development the land had been in the hands of peasant cultivators. But when indigo plantations and factories became a profitable investment, these were rapidly displaced by Europeans, who, whether as owners or as tenants of the manufacturers, soon took control of the region and exploited the peasants with great ruthlessness. Far from opposing these developments, the authorities introduced legislation favouring the planters. The most important of these legal instruments was that which made it obligatory for the ryots to plant three twentieths of their holdings with indigo. This requirement was known as the *tinkathia* system and was much hated by the peasants.

When chemical substitutes for indigo were developed the area devoted to its cultivation began to decline. As a result the planters sustained heavy losses. These they tried to recover from the peasants, mainly by forcing them to accept a large number of illegal exactions in exchange for being allowed to grow indigo on fewer than the statutory three-twentieths of their holdings.³

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2. M.M. Verma, *Gandhi's Technique of Mass Mobilization*, New Delhi: R.K. Gupta & Company, 1990, p. 168.
 3. H.J.N. Horsburgh, *Non-Violence and Aggression: A Study of Gandhi's Moral Equivalent of War*, London: Oxford University Press, 1968, pp. 87-88.

Eventually a farmer from this remote district appealed to Gandhi and he agreed to go to Champaran and investigate the peasants' grievances. On his arrival the Secretary of the Planters' Association informed him that he had no business to interfere and almost immediately the local Police Superintendent served him with a notice to leave the district. He refused and was summoned. But the Lieutenant-Governor of Bihar, when informed of this, saw that it would be a mistake to proceed with the case in view of Gandhi's reputation and the likelihood that it would create the suspicion that the government wished to stifle inquiry. The case was therefore withdrawn. Thereupon Gandhi and his fellow workers began to investigate the conditions under which the peasants lived and the systems of illegal payments which they had been forced to accept. They took statements from thousands of peasants, questioning them very closely about their grievances.

When their inquiry had been proceeding for sometime the Lieutenant-Governor grew restive and intervened again, setting up his own committee of inquiry. Gandhi was invited to serve on this committee. He accepted the invitation, only stipulating that he was to remain the ryots' advocate and that if he disagreed with the committee's conclusions he was to be free to act as he thought fit. However, the official inquiry found in favour of the ryots, and recommended that the planters should refund a portion of the exactions made by them which the committee had found to be unlawful, and that the *tinkathia* system should be abolished by law.⁴

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

Soon after Gandhi's arrival in Champaran he decided that work of a permanent nature was impossible without proper village education. The ryots' ignorance was pathetic. They either allowed their children to roam about or made them toil on indigo plantations from morning till night for a meager amount. And so, after consultations with his fellow workers, he set up primary schools in six villages, making it clear to the teachers that they were expected to teach the children not grammar and the three R's so much as cleanliness. As part of the same constructive programme the people were taught about sanitation, and a great deal of sanitary work was carried out by Gandhi's helpers. Doctors were also brought in and simple forms of medical relief were provided. As a result of these activities Gandhi's volunteers gained the confidence and respect of the village folk and were able to bring good influence to bear upon them.⁵

The Kheda *Satyagraha*

The Kheda *Satyagraha* was intended to bring relief to the peasants of the Kheda district of the Gujarat who had been reduced to conditions bordering on famine by the widespread failure of their crops. Their Land Revenue Rules provided for a total remission of dues when crop yields were less than one-quarter of the normal ones. An inquiry carried out by Gandhi and several members of the Servants of India Society concluded that the failure of crops was such that land revenue should be remitted. But officials disputed this and returned the peasants' petitions on the ground that they had

5. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

not been properly submitted. Agitation followed, but the Governor of Bombay declined to take any action.⁶

Gandhi was reluctant to intervene because the First World War was in progress and he did not wish to embarrass the British authorities. Nevertheless, he asked for an official inquiry into the crop failure, and when this request was denied with the threat that those who failed to pay their dues in full would be liable to forfeit their land, he urged the peasants to withhold payment of revenue. He and his followers toured the district, pointing out to the villagers that officials were the servants and not the masters of the people. But the peasants, over-responding to this new view of the situation, became hostile to officials. The government's counter measures were severe and many ryots suffered much hardship. Consequently Gandhi thought about for some graceful way of terminating the struggle which would be acceptable to *Satyagrahis*. This he did when instructions were issued by the government that land revenue was not to be collected from the poorer peasants.

Although Kheda *Satyagraha* did not fully achieve its objectives, Gandhi was able to say of the Kheda *Satyagraha* that, "it marks the beginning of an awakening among the peasants of Gujarat, the beginning of their true political education.... it was the Kheda campaign that compelled the educated public workers to establish contact with the actual life of the peasants. They learnt

6. *Ibid.*

to identify themselves with the latter. They found their proper sphere of work, their capacity for sacrifice was increased".⁷

The Bardoli Satyagraha

The Bardoli campaign of peasants against the government of Bombay officially began on 12th February 1928 and concluded on 4th August 1928. A no-tax movement led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel took place in the Bardoli taluka of the Bombay presidency in 1928. One of the periodic resettlements of land took place in that year, as a result of which land tax in Bardoli was raised by an average of about 25 percent. The rise on tax amounted in certain cases to as much as 60 percent. The peasants of Bardoli protested against the government's decision. Firstly, they argued that any larger or better produce they had from their land was due to additional investments made by them in capital and labour; and secondly, the rate of increase of land tax was in any case far out of proportion to whatever rise might have taken place in their incomes. The peasants did not refuse to accept any rise in the land tax, but they demanded the institution of an impartial enquiry into their real condition and paying capacity, and the refixation of the rate of land tax on the basis of the findings of the enquiry. The government refused to accept this demand, whereupon preparation began for a no tax movement under the leadership of Sardar Patel who had been invited by the Bardoli peasants to guide their movement. Patel entered into a correspondence with the government which proved fruitless, and on February 12, 1928 a resolution

7. Mahatma Gandhi, *My Experiments with Truth*, p. 366, quoted in Horsburgh, *op.cit.*, p. 90.

was adopted at a conference of the farmers which enjoined on all the farmers of the taluka not to pay the enhanced taxes until the enquiry demanded by them was instituted.⁸

The total number of peasants involved was about 86,000. Most of them either refused to meet the officials who came to collect the taxes, or read out to them extracts from Patel's speeches and argued with them about the Justice of their demand. The government responded with large-scale attachment of land and movable property in lieu of the taxes and also resorted to mass arrests and violence on the peaceful peasants. The *Satyagrahis*, however, remained firm and completely non-violent in the face of the governmental repression. Large numbers of them submitted themselves peacefully to arrest. Women volunteers often built huts on attached lands and men sowed these lands in defiance of the attachment orders. Petty officials of the taluka were persuaded to resign their offices, the non-conformist farmers were socially boycotted, though otherwise treated with courtesy and consideration, and most important of all, no official could receive any cooperation or service from the local people without the express sanction of the *Satyagraha* Committee. It was this last factor which angered the government most.⁹

After six months of prolonged struggle, however, Patel was invited for discussions with the Governor in July 1928, and in the following month an

8. J. Bandyopadhyaya, *Social and Political Thought of Gandhi*, Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1969, pp. 286-87.

9. *Ibid.*

agreement was reached to the satisfaction of both the parties. The farmers agreed to pay the excess revenue through an intermediary on condition of the appointment of a judicial enquiry committee and pending the decision of this committee. All prisoners were released, all forfeited lands and property were restored to the owners, the officials who had resigned were reinstated. The District Collector was replaced by a new one. The Enquiry Committee which was set up received the full cooperation of the farmers and reported that an enhancement of the land tax by only 6.75 percent would be justified. The government accepted this finding, and in some cases, on further representation by the farmers, did not increase the rate of tax at all. The Bardoli *Satyagraha* was thus highly successful in so far as the eighty six thousand peasants of the taluka resisted the enhancement of the land tax by the government through non-violent civil disobedience.¹⁰

The Vaikom Temple Road *Satyagraha*

The Vaikom temple road *Satyagraha* was non-cooperation with the prohibition imposed upon the use by untouchables, of roads passing by a temple in the village of Vaikom. The campaign was both against an unjust order of the state of Travancore and a non-violent struggle towards freeing Hindu society of the evil of untouchability.¹¹

The Vaikom temple road *Satyagraha* began in April 1924 and lasted until September 1924. Vaikom is situated on the northern border of Travancore. A main road passed through the whole length of the town and

10. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

11. M.M. Verma, *op.cit.*, p. 189.

there was a famous Hindu temple at one place on the road. The untouchables of the area were allowed neither to enter the temple nor even to pass along the main road. Social reformers were aware of this serious disability of the lower castes in this area, but it was only in the first quarter of 1924 that a *Satyagraha* movement was launched. A procession led by caste Hindus, moved along the road and came to a stop near the temple. The orthodox Brahmins attacked the procession in strength and beat up a number of processionists and handed over others to the police. The *Satyagrahis*, when attacked, made no attempt to retaliate and when taken to court they pleaded guilty and accepted the punishment in the true spirit of *Satyagraha*.¹²

The news of this incident spread throughout the country and volunteers from different places came to Vaikom to strengthen the movement and to replace the volunteers who had been beaten up and arrested. The Maharaja of Travancore ordered the suspension of arrest and directed that the reformers and the untouchables should be prevented from using the road. The method that the *Satyagrahis* now adopted was to approach for barricades which had been set up around the temple and to sit down and stay there indefinitely, all the time arguing with the Brahmins and the police there. They operated on a shift basis so that there was never any suspension of the struggle, the police and the Brahmins were kept under constant moral pressure and persuasion. Gandhi paid a hurried visit to Vaikom and advised

12. Subrata Mukherjee, *Non-Violence and Satyagraha*, New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1996, p. 176.

the *Satyagrahis* to be prepared for a patient and long-drawn-out struggle involving great suffering on their part.¹³

The movement continued for several months. The *Satyagrahis* continued to squat in heavy rain and remained relentless even when the water was shoulder high. The patience and orthodoxy of the Brahmins tended to wear out. Their first move was to argue with the *Satyagrahis* regarding the rationale of the traditional point of view. They also started bringing food and clothing for the *Satyagrahis*. But when the latter refused to yield until the Brahmins recognized the right of the untouchables to use the road, the Brahmins eventually conceded their demand.

The Vaikom temple *Satyagraha* was thus one of the most successful *Satyagrahas* organized in India. The rules of *Satyagraha* were strictly observed by the *Satyagrahis* and there was a genuine change of heart on the part of the Brahmins. As a result the immediate objective of the untouchables, namely, the opening of the road to their use, was achieved. It is also true that the success of the Vaikom *Satyagraha* focused the attention of the whole country on the evils of untouchability as a social phenomenon and the serious disabilities of the untouchables throughout the country. This *Satyagraha* thus helped the cause of the untouchables elsewhere in the country, and can truly be regarded as a turning point in the movement against untouchability in India.¹⁴

13. Bandyopadhyaya, *op.cit.*, pp. 272-273.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 273-274.

The Ahmedabad Labour *Satyagraha*

The Ahmedabad labour *Satyagraha* of February-March 1918 was regarding the dispute developed between the textile labourers and the mill-owners of Ahmedabad in Bombay. The dispute over the amount of dearness allowance to be paid to textile workers began with the withdrawal of a special bonus which had been granted to workers to persuade them to continue work during a plague epidemic. The 'plague bonus' in some cases was as high as 80 percent of the workers' wages, and had been continued after danger from the plague had subsided. When mill owners made known their intention of withdrawing the bonus, the workers made an appeal for at least a 50 percent increase on the July salaries as a continuing cost of living allowance. They pointed to the sharp rise in prices, amounting to as much as two to four times the old prices.

Gandhi was informed of the situation first by one of the mill owners, who asked him to intervene. He went to Ahmedabad and began his own investigation. Both sides agreed to submit the dispute to an arbitration board to consist of three representatives from each side. Gandhi was one of those appointed on behalf of the workers. The arbitration had scarcely got under way, when labourers in some of the mills, acting upon fear of threatened lockout, struck work. Thereupon the arbitration broke down, the mill owners declaring that they would not abide by the arbitration and would dismiss all the workers who were not willing to accept a 20 percent increase as the living allowance.

Upon Gandhi's further investigation into details of costs and workers' conditions, he concluded that a 35 percent increase was a just demand. He thereupon advised the workers to demand no more and no less than 35 percent. When the mill owners rejected this demand then a conflict followed. Gandhi, who had entered the earlier situation as a conciliator, became the leader of the workers, and introduced *Satyagraha* as the technique whereby a constructive solution could be achieved. A 35 percent increase in cost of living allowance or submission of the dispute to arbitration.¹⁵

One of the important characteristics of the Ahmedabad Labour. *Satyagraha* was the use of the fast by Gandhi as an instrument of non-violent force. Between five and ten thousand labourers participated in this *Satyagraha* and these labourers followed the principle of self-sufficiency i.e. that the labourers during strike earned their living by undertaking other labour. The labourers also undertook welfare activities like rendering medical assistance, sanitation and collection of information with regard to living conditions among labourers. Upon signs of weaknesses within the labourer ranks Gandhi took to fasting as an instrument of non-violent action. Ultimately, Gandhi agreed to settle the dispute by arbitration and to compromise on details of the settlement.

Secondly, the Ahmedabad movement illustrates the role which arbitration may play in the course of *Satyagraha* and it was as a result of arbitration that full 35 percent increase was awarded in the end. The further

15. J.V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 65-66.

significance of the Ahmedabad *Satyagraha* is reflected in the development of the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association with a constitution pledging members to truth and non-violence, and a programme including medical aid, maternity benefits, education, recreation and social reform activities.

Although, by Gandhi's own judgement Ahmedabad movement did not measure upto ideal *Satyagraha* as he admitted the coercive character of the fast, however, according to Mackenzie Brown this movement did qualify as *Satyagraha* on the grounds that the social justice underlying the demand for increased allowance constituted for this movement the 'truth' factor and the element of self-suffering was also present in the fasting of Gandhi.¹⁶

The Rowlatt Bills *Satyagraha*

Another *Satyagraha* movement undertaken was nationwide *Satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Bills, from March 1, 1919 to April 18, 1919. The plan of action regarding this movement originated in Ahmedabad and headquarters were established in Bombay. The most vigorous action developed in Bombay Presidency and in Northern India, with Madras city and Calcutta also prominent centres of struggle.¹⁷

The First World War came to an end on 11th November 1918. Gandhiji was lying ill at that time. The Defence of India Act and similar laws had been in force. Under these laws the government could arrest any person. In those days, after the partition of Bengal, a new generation of revolutionaries came into being. They began to murder or terrorize Englishmen and government

16. J.V. Bondurant, *op.cit.*, pp. 71-73.

officers in various places. Such incidents often happened and by 1918 their number had increased considerably. The government appointed the Rowlatt Commission to inquire into these incidents and to stop them by bringing changes in the constitution. Its Chairman, Sir Sidney Rowlatt, was a British judge. To give effect to the recommendations of the Commission a bill known as the Rowlatt Bill was introduced. The so-called Rowlatt Act was framed to enable anarchical offences to be tried expeditiously before a strong court consisting of three High Court judges, with no right of appeal. It also provided for powers of preventive detention, the arrest and confinement of persons suspected of acts threatening public safety – as well as power to order a person suspected of subversive activities to furnish security to reside in a particular place, or to abstain from any specified act. The act further provided that 'dangerous' persons could be continuously detained.

A second bill, which was 'intended to make a permanent change in the ordinary criminal law of the land', was never brought before the Indian Legislative Council. It included provisions such as: '... possession of a seditious document with the intention to publish or to circulate the same... to be punishable with imprisonment'. There was popular resentment of the bills. As soon as Gandhiji recovered from illness, the opposition to the Bill became stronger.¹⁸

The agitation began as early as December 1918. Gandhiji called upon the people to observe a countrywide strike on 6th April, 1919 as a protest

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

against the Rowlatt Act. In April, 1919, he launched the first of his nationwide political campaigns against the British rule over India. His aim in doing so was to rouse the people of India against British rule.¹⁹ The immediate objective of this struggle was the withdrawal of the enacted Bill and prevention of the passage of the second Bill. Gandhi initiated the movement together with associates at his ashram in Ahmedabad and the movement was further supported by nationalist leaders throughout India. The closing of shops took place throughout the country. The date, originally set for 30th March, was later changed to 6th April. *Hartal* began in Delhi on 30th March because leaders of the movement there had not received the announcement of postponement. *Hartal* elsewhere occurred on the 6th and was nearly complete. Processions were taken through the streets of the major cities and there was initial adherence to strict non-violence. But later on, in response to violent retaliation by police, and later to the arrest of leaders, non-violence broke down in many places after the first day of mass demonstration. Stone-throwing was reported in Delhi, and elsewhere buildings were burnt, telegraph lines were cut, and both English and Indian officers were killed. Gandhi suspended movement and went on 'penitential fast' for three days. As Gandhi tried to proceed from Bombay to Punjab, he was served with a notice prohibiting his entry into Punjab. He was arrested upon his refusal to obey this order and was escorted by police back to Bombay.

19. Rajendra Prasad, *Legacy of Gandhi*, Agra: Shivalal Agarwal & Co., 1962, p. 25.

Martial law was imposed in Ahmedabad, Lahore, and Amritsar. It was out of the martial law rule under General Dyer that the infamous Jallianwala Bagh massacre emerged in Amritsar. Police, under the direction of British officers, fired upon a crowd gathered within a confined area, killing hundreds of helpless persons. This period also saw degrading punishments, such as public flogging and the hated 'crawling order' which forced Indians to crawl upon their bellies when passing a certain lane where an Englishwoman had been assaulted.

The objective of the campaign was not immediately realized. However, the Second Rowlatt Bill was never brought before the Legislative Council, and the Act which had precipitated the campaign was never invoked by the government.²⁰

The response to Gandhiji's call for a *Satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Bills was both heartening and tragic. It was heartening because for the first time in the history of India the masses responded magnificently to his movement of protest against the government. It was tragic because in many cities the *Satyagraha* was marked by death and violence on a scale which led him to confess that he had committed a 'Himalayan Blunder' or 'miscalculation' in assuming that the masses are sufficiently educated in the principles of *ahimsa*. This led him to suspend the civil disobedience

20. J.V. Bondurant, *op.cit.*, pp. 80-81.

movement. The Rowlatt campaign was conceived by Gandhiji in the spirit of struggle for larger freedom.²¹

The Rowlatt *Satyagraha* was, in terms of Gandhian *Satyagraha*, a failure as it was characterized by the out break of violence. Forces had been released which Gandhi and his workers could not control. According to Bondurant the Rowlatt *Satyagraha's* disintegration into violence was the result of an appeal to the masses before they had been adequately prepared to offer *Satyagraha*. It was a failure to communicate the meaning, the philosophy, and the implication of the all-important technique to its mass participants, and finally the failure to plan for a non-violent resistance to elements within its own ranks which had turned to violent means.²²

The Salt *Satyagraha*

The Salt *Satyagraha* was part of the year long civil disobedience movement of 1930-31. It forms part of the great independence campaign which, taken as a whole, is certainly the largest and most significant experiment in non-violence. The long term aim of this struggle was political independence but its immediate aim was the repeal of the Salt Acts which created a government monopoly of salt and imposed a tax that caused hardship to the poor.²³

21. Asha Rani, *Gandhian Non-Violence and India's Freedom Struggle*, Delhi: Shree Publishing House, 1981, p. 129.

22. J.V. Bondurant, *op.cit.*, pp. 82-88.

23. H.J.N. Horsburgh, *op.cit.*, p. 91-92.

The British Government had a complete monopoly on salt in India. It made the salt and it sold the salt, and to the sale price it added a stiff tax. It even went so far to destroy salt where it occurred naturally along the sea so that poor people could not use it. Salt, such a side issue beside the great claim for independence, was apparently a superbly ingenious choice, solving many of the dilemmas which faced Gandhi. It was decided that he himself would deliberately break the law. He would march to the sea and extract from sea-water tax free salt. This would be a signal for all of India to begin making salt and breaking the salt laws. It was to be the first move in a civil disobedience, that was to include non-payment of taxes, withdrawal from government schools, courts and offices, boycotting of British goods and shops.²⁴ Preparations for the campaign were very thorough. They included training courses which provided volunteers with instruction in such matters as the control of large crowds. Participants in the inaugural action were carefully selected, and all those who took part in the campaign at any stage were obliged to take a pledge of non-violence and obedience. The preparations ended in an ultimatum sent by Gandhi to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, giving him a general account of Indian grievances followed by objections to the Salt Acts, and informing him of the time and nature of the action that would be taken if these Acts were not withdrawn.

Lord Irwin did not reply to Gandhi's letter. The campaign of active resistance began with a march of 200 miles from Ahmedabad to Dandi, on

24. Harpinder Kaur, *Gandhi's Concept of Civil Disobedience*, New Delhi: Intellectual Publishing House, 1986, pp. 81-83.

the coast. On the way Gandhi urged the villagers to take part in the campaign, recommending that they did constructive work as well as join in civil disobedience. On 6th April the *Satyagrahis* extracted salt from sea-water, thereby infringing the letter of the Salt Acts. This was the signal for nationwide civil disobedience. In addition to making salt, tax laws were contravened in some parts of the country, shops were closed all over India, and there were widespread resignations of village headmen and other subordinate officials.²⁵

Early in May, Gandhi wrote again to Lord Irwin announcing his and his co-workers' intention of attempting to take over the large government salt depot at Dharasana. Gandhi was arrested before the raid. But the *Satyagrahis* went ahead with their plans under the leadership of prominent members of Congress. Almost at once they were attacked by the police and submitted non-violently to a succession of lathi charges. As the government later attempted to suppress the news of this wholesale violence it is fortunate that several well-known journalists, including the Americans Webb Miller and Negley Farson, were present to record what took place.

The raids on salt depots were discontinued when the monsoon began because open-air evaporation of sea-water is impossible at this season. But other forms of resistance went on – the boycott of foreign-made products and the burning of cloth, the picketing of shops which ignored the boycott, and the violation of the special ordinances that had been introduced by the

25. H.J.N. Horsburgh, *op.cit.*, p. 92.

government in an attempt to daunt the *Satyagrahis*. The use of these methods only ceased with the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement of 5th March 1931.

Although the Salt Acts were not repealed they were reinterpreted in such a way as to make them less burdensome. Other concessions were also made to the resisters, including the grant of an amnesty to those guilty of civil disobedience, and the return of property which had been confiscated in the course of the campaign. It was also agreed that the Congress should be represented at future constitutional talks.²⁶

In Bondurant's opinion the Salt Acts *Satyagraha* is note-worthy because the volunteer *Satyagrahis* who initiated this campaign rigorously abided by the principle of non-violence and self-reliance. The *Satyagraha* proceeded through the early steps of negotiation, agitation, demonstration, the issuing of ultimatum and the settlement leading to redress of grievances arising from the salt acts, and also representation of the Congress in the Second Round Table Conference to consider constitutional questions involved in the advancement of India along the road towards full Independence.²⁷

In examining *Satyagraha* in action, it becomes clear that *Satyagraha* operates as a force to effect change. Gandhiji came to evolve fully the technique of non-violent *Satyagraha*. He equipped the armoury of non-violence with its essential weapon such as *Satyagraha*, civil disobedience,

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

27. J.V. Bondurant, *op.cit.*, pp. 100-102.

constructive programme, fast, compromise and mass-contracts. He used these weapons with success in limited regions.²⁸

The various movements of non-violent resistance led by Gandhi bear ample testimony to the unique capacity of *Satyagraha* for winning adherence, building up morale, invoking sacrifice, arousing public opinion and weakening the adversary. The *Satyagraha* at Vaikom was successfully fought under Gandhi's guidance to remove the social tyranny of the caste Hindus and vindicate the civil rights of the untouchables. In Champaran in 1917 and at Ahmedabad Labour *Satyagraha* in 1918, Gandhi had shown the effectiveness of *Satyagraha*. By 1919, *Satyagraha* had become a part of the Gandhian way of dealing with the country's and the government's injustice.²⁹

Study of various *Satyagraha* campaigns shows that the action undertaken in a *Satyagraha* campaign varies distinctly from one circumstance to another. Tactics are evolved to meet the specific situation, both offensively and defensively. In all cases the early emphasis was on persuasion. *Satyagraha* operates as a force to effect change. The effectiveness of its action is governed by criteria centering upon the degree of persuasion effected, the extensiveness of the constructive programme and the degree to which the non-violent character of the action has been preserved.³⁰

Gandhi's critics say that for about three decades *Satyagraha* was tried in India under Gandhi's leadership. He did achieve the liberation of India but

28. Asha Rani, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

29. M.M. Verma, *op.cit.*, pp. 226-230.

30. J.V. Bondurant, *op.cit.*, p. 104.

not its political unity. He was able to carry out only a very small part of his social ideal during his life time. *Satyagraha*, according to them, is a thing of history, a mere relic of bygone age, which cannot work successfully in the complex conditions of the modern world.

It is true that *Satyagraha* as corporate action raises complicated questions of leadership, organization, discipline, training and strategy. *Satyagraha* is essentially a matter of quality rather than quantity. But its use in group affairs should not be difficult, if there could be found a few or even one perfect *Satyagrahi*. According to Gandhi, one perfect *Satyagrahi* was enough in the battle of right against wrong.³¹

31. M.M. Verma, *op.cit.*, p. 218.

Chapter IV

An Evaluation

The most potent legacy that Gandhi left to India was the technique of *Satyagraha*. In Bondurant's words, "*Satyagraha* had become the cry of all those who felt aggrieved and popular agitations, however, organized and whatever their objectives, were widely described as *Satyagraha* movements".¹

This technique was adopted by him to bring change in society and politics. The main goals were to end British rule in India, to attain the repeal of unjust legislation, to extinguish violence and tensions between Hindu and Muslim Indians, to improve the conditions of untouchables, to upgrade Indian women, to restore Indian village industries, to solve industrial and agrarian disputes and to substitute a moral force for war. Methods of *Satyagraha* that Gandhiji proposed were boycott of foreign made goods, non-participation in government schools and colleges, courts and parliamentary institutions, individual or mass disobedience of selected laws, picketing, fasting, the non-payment of taxes, the renunciation of state honours and titles and *hartal* the time honoured method of strike. By versatile use of these techniques, Gandhiji applied pleasure to the struggle for truth and justice.²

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1. J.V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 4.
 2. Saroj Malik, *Gandhian Satyagraha and Contemporary World*, Rohtak: Manthan Publications, 1985, pp. 2-3.

In R.B. Gregg's words, "He is a great scientist in the realm of social truth. He is great because of the choice of his problems, because of his methods of solution, because of the persistence and thoroughness of his search and because of the profundity of his knowledge of the human heart".³ Gandhi himself said in 1933, "The science of *Satyagraha*... has come to me... by scientific research. It is a result of the hardest labour a human being is capable of. I have applied this research all the skill of a scientist".⁴

The Gandhian philosophy of *Satyagraha* is a natural outcome from the supreme concept of truth. *Satyagraha* is a powerful assertion of spiritual and non-violent forces over the immoral and the violent. As a soul force, "*Satyagraha* is more quiet and moves one's heart", and "after the consummation of *Satyagraha*, two parties draw closer to each other in heart".⁵ It implies a three dimensional progress in truth, non-violence and love. It may better be understood as a "technique for resolving conflict and a method for fighting evil".⁶ It largely appears to the public as "civil disobedience or civil resistance".⁷

Primarily employed as a technique to resolve conflicts and to solve all social, economic and political problems, *Satyagraha* embraces the method

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3. S. Radhakrishnan, (ed), *Mahatma Gandhi*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1949, pp. 80-81.
 4. Chandrashankar Shukla, *Conversations of Gandhi*, Bombay: Vohra & Company, 1949, p. 41.
 5. Interview with Acharya Dada Dharmadhikari, leading Gandhian, on 20.7.1977, quoted in Saroj Malik, *op.cit.*, p. 2.
 6. Buddhadeva Bhattacharya, *Satyagraha in Bengal, (1921-39)*, Calcutta: Minerva Associates Publications, 1977, p. iii.
 7. *Young India*, January 14, 1920, quoted in Saroj Malik, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

and the essential philosophy of civil disobedience. Gandhi regarded *Satyagraha* as a universal means of conflict resolution, applicable equally to individual, group, national and international conflicts. The question that arises in this context is regarding the extent to which these conflicts can be solved through *Satyagraha*.

N.K. Bose, in his book, 'Studies in Gandhism', considers *Satyagraha* as definitely superior to war in theory, if war is defined in the broad sense of armed combat between individuals, groups, communities or nations for resolving a conflict of interests. He has enumerated various reasons for superiority of *Satyagraha* to war, (i) while war leads to the victory of one side and the defeat and subjugation, or even extermination of the other through the application of armed force, *Satyagraha* is expected to lead to an agreed settlement between the contending parties, which in a sense may be termed as a victory for both. (ii) In war victory depends on superior armed might, while in *Satyagraha* even physically the weakest person may achieve success. (iii) In the course of a *Satyagraha* there is the opportunity and duty for either side to see and accept whatever justice may be there in the case of the other side; but in war the rights and wrongs of the enemy's case are not examined sympathetically. (iv) Apart from the physical violence used, war necessarily involves a great deal of falsehood, deception, trickery, etc. all of which amount to violence in the Gandhian sense, whereas in *Satyagraha* the ultimate values are expected to be adhered to at every step. (v) In war hatred for the enemy is deliberately inculcated at the individual, group or

national level, while love and respect for the opponent is a minimum precondition of *Satyagraha*. (vi) Since physical power is necessary for participation in war, such participation is necessarily limited; but since in *Satyagraha* even the physically weakest can participate, logically it may involve universal participation by the masses. (vii) In *Satyagraha*, since the opponent is physically unharmed, he is left free to fight for his cause again if he is unconvinced about the claim of the other side, while after a war the vanquished is seldom in a position to resume the struggle immediately. (viii) In *Satyagraha* the suffering is borne entirely by the *Satyagrahi* himself, while in war it is invariably inflicted on the opponent. (ix) Not only war, but even preparation for war involves the decline of non-violence, freedom and equality, while preparation for *Satyagraha* involves self-control and a constructive effort which promote these values. (x) Even in theory war is not expected to lead to a permanent resolution of the conflict; the conflict is merely aggravated or escalated and the enemy incapacitated. But theoretically, a *Satyagraha* is expected to resolve a conflict more or less permanently through mutual agreement.⁸

In Saroj Malik's view Gandhian philosophy of *Satyagraha* provides a remedy to the socio-psychological tensions in contemporary world. She has supported her view point by quoting Massignon's opinion that, "not every

8. J. Bandyopadhyaya, *Social and Political Thought of Gandhi*, Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1969, pp. 387-388.

desire is functional in mankind, we must select the tension towards good, the desire for truth and justice, that is *Satyagraha*".⁹

The socio-psychological school is probably as alert as Massignon to the need for constructive aspiration of people, the difference between the two being more apparent than real. It would seem that the 'tensions' approach to world problems is benefited by Gandhiji's emphasis on interplay between the self disciplined individual, and the purposely directed socially useful group. Here, too, the world can be helped by Gandhiji's work for interclass harmony and social stability and his call for men to liberate themselves from all types of fear by means of inner resources, and to do without relinquishing contact with social and political reality, is a gain for the mental climate of the individual engaged with world.¹⁰

Bandyopadhyaya had a different opinion in this regard. According to him Aurobindo was more scientific than Gandhi because he believed that the first step towards international harmony should be to concentrate military power in the hands of a world organization rather than to rely entirely on peaceful methods for resolving all international conflicts.¹¹ "To rely upon the common consent of conflicting national egoisms for the preservation of peace between the nations", observes Aurobindo, "is to rely upon a logical contradiction. A practical improbability which, if we can judge by reason and experience amounts to an impossibility, can hardly be a sound foundation for

9. Saroj Malik, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

10. *Ibid.*

11. J. Bandyopadhyaya, *op.cit.*, p. 374.

the building of the future. A league of peace can only prevent armed strife for a time.... The creation of a real, efficient and powerful authority which would stand for the general sense and the general power of mankind in its collective life and spirit and would be something more than a bundle of vigorously separate states loosely tied together by the frail bond of a violable moral agreement is the only effective step possible on this path. Whether such an authority can really be created by agreement, whether it must not rather create itself partly by the growth of ideas, but still more by the shock of forces, is a question to which the future alone can answer".¹²

Theoretically *Satyagraha* may be expected to resolve the conflicts through mutual agreements but in practice, according to Bandyopadhyaya, *Satyagraha* cannot be the universal panacea for all social conflicts. This technique of social control, though of considerable merit in many ways, is subject to several serious limitations summed up as follows: (i) It has a reasonable chance of success only in a relatively liberal socio-political system, in which minimum democratic freedoms like those of expression, organization, publicity, propaganda and agitation are guaranteed; on the same logic its chances of success in a totalitarian socio-political system would be rather meager. (ii) It has greater chances of success against an individual, a group or a government which is sympathetic to the cause, than against a heartless adversary. (iii) It can succeed only when there is general

12. Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1950, pp. 256-57, quoted in J. Bandyopadhyaya, *op.cit.*, pp. 374-375.

support for it among the people. (iv) It has greater chances of success when well known national leaders are associated with it, especially in the case of an individual *Satyagraha*, than when relatively unimportant and unknown individuals are involved. (v) Its success is often facilitated by external assistance or extraneous factors. (vi) Since there are no universally accepted criteria of justice, even when the direct action involved in *Satyagraha* results in the opponent accepting the demands of the *Satyagrahi*, it is by no means certain whether the opponent has agreed with the *Satyagrahi's* conception of justice or merely yielded to what he may consider to be undue pressure. (vii) Even when it achieves apparent success, its impact often turns out to be purely emotional and temporary. (viii) It cannot hope to be a general instrument of national defence against foreign invasion in the foreseeable future, in spite of the nuclear menace.¹³

In Bandyopadhyaya's opinion the main reason for the relative failure of *Satyagraha* is that it is based on a relatively simplistic, and, therefore, unscientific approach to social conflict and its resolution. Similar opinion has been given by Aldous Huxley. In his words, "Good intentions and personal devotion are not enough to save the world... If the world is to be saved, scientific methods must be combined with good intentions and devotion. By themselves, neither goodness nor intelligence are equal to the task of changing society and individual for the better".¹⁴

13. J. Bandyopadhyaya, *op.cit.*, p. 388.

14. Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1940, p. 159.

Kenneth E. Boulding, a renowned economist and authority on social conflict theory also considers simplistic character of *Satyagraha* theory as its basic limitation. He has observed in his article in *Gandhi Marg*, "Thus the failure of Gandhism is not a failure of *Ahimsa*, but a failure of *Satyagraha*. The modern world is so complex that the truth about it cannot be perceived by common sense or by mystical insight, important as these things are. We must have more delicate and quantitative sampling and processing of information provided by the methods of the social sciences if we are really to test the truth of our images of social and political systems".¹⁵

Gandhian concept of *Satyagraha* has also been criticized specifically with respect to its non-cooperation and civil resistance aspects by personalities like Gokhale (1886-1915), Vijayaraghava Charior, President of the Indian National Congress in 1920, Srinivasa Shastri (1869-1946), Surendernath Banerjee (1848-1925) and Sivaswami Aiyar (1864-1946).¹⁶

Speaking at Allahabad in 1907, Gokhale considered it preposterous that any body should imagine that non-cooperation was feasible 'in the present state of the country'.¹⁷ Vijayaraghava Charior considered non-cooperation such as boycott of school and courts, not only impracticable but undesirable.¹⁸ Srinivas Shastri, a trusted counsellor of Gandhi, opined that non-cooperation is a doctrine of negation.¹⁹

15. Kenneth E. Boulding, "Why did Gandhi Fail?", *Gandhi Marg*, October, 1964, p. 389.

16. A. Appodorai, *Indian Political Thinking in the Twentieth Century*, New Delhi: South Asia Publisher Ltd., 1987, pp. 54-55.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

In his book, *The Political Philosophy of Mr. Gandhi*, M. Ruthnaswamy has made some thoughtful criticisms of the political ideas underlying non-violent non-cooperation. According to him Gandhi's theory of non-cooperation is based upon false political premises, viz., that governments exist only if their subjects cooperate with them. The basic mistake which Gandhi made in his view is that he took an over-optimistic view of human nature, that man is by nature good and peaceful.²⁰ A general spirit of civil disobedience to the states, if engendered in the mass of the people, is likely to be harmful to the stability of the state in the long run. "It may help to destroy British rule, but will it be easy to exercise it even in the India of Swaraj?"²¹

Another critic of Gandhi, Mr. Weatherly, held in 1924 that non-cooperation is a way of violence and not of love, that it is an appeal in the end to violence rather than reason.²²

Though *Satyagraha* is not necessarily a way of violence, it could lead to it when it is introduced prematurely. Gandhi conceded this on several occasions. He admitted to a critic in 1919 that he had underestimated the power of hatred and ill-will which entered into his campaign in India, but reiterated his conviction that India's salvation lay in adopting soul-force or

20. M. Ruthnaswamy, *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, Madras: Tagar and Co., 1922, p. 59.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

22. *Young India*, April, 1924, quoted in Raghavan Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, London: Oxford University Press, p. 325.

Satyagraha as the sole weapon to fight wrongs.²³ His critics, however, were unconvinced. In the same year Annie Besant also expressed her doubts about mass *Satyagraha*. In her words, "I have always been ready to break a bad law and suffer the penalty; I have never been ready to break all laws (without moral sanction), leaving my conscience to be ruled by a committee. The first is the act of a reformer; the second of an anarchist".²⁴

In 1931 Jamshed Mehta, Mayor of Karachi, criticized the consequences of the *Satyagraha* movement. According to him *Satyagraha* led to indiscipline, hatred among the people and the habit of indiscriminate law breaking.²⁵

Most of the criticisms of *Satyagraha* are of this nature, pointing to the undesirable results of its application on a mass scale, but not denying, its value or legitimacy when adopted by exceptional individuals as a conscientious protest against an unjust law.²⁶

Another important question that has been raised with respect to *Satyagraha* is that, is there any place for *Satyagraha* against the state, or is there any special limit to its use in a free, democratic society? In an essay "law and liberty". V.N. Gadgil, former Governor of East Punjab, condemned the tendency in India to start *Satyagraha* in the form of civil disobedience on the slightest pretext. According to him, the individual is entitled to awaken the

23. Raghavan Iyer, *op.cit.*, p. 325.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 325-326.

conscience of the community by civil disobedience, but his disobedience to law must not run counter to the basic moral foundations of the society. There is, however, no room for mass civil disobedience, violent or non-violent, in a constitutional democracy because once this precedence is established that a government freely elected by a majority can be thrown out by recourse to unconstitutional and illegal means, the very foundations on which parliamentary democracy and constitutional government rest would be weakened and this would lead to anarchy.²⁷

K. Santhanam has similarly argued that general *Satyagraha* against a democratic government cannot be justified. He, however, believed that *Satyagraha* can serve as a supplement and in some cases as a substitute to law in a modern society, based on the rule of law. If the laws are unjust or oppressive and constitutional remedies are not available owing to the attitudes of the rulers or majorities then *Satyagraha* is a legitimate weapon of the injured individuals or groups.²⁸ However, in the preface to Santhanam's book, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, B.P. Sinha, did not permit individuals or groups to indulge in law-breaking.²⁹

S.G. Bharve, a staunch social and political worker on the other hand, has argued in *favour* of the role of *Satyagraha* in a democratic system. In his opinion, *Satyagraha* is not a mere political weapon and is not restricted to any

27. Sovani and Dandekar (ed.), *Changing India*, Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1961, ch. 4.

28. K. Santhanam, *Satyagraha and the State*, Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1966, pp. 67-68.

29. *Ibid.*, p. viii.

individual group or to any one system. If the aim of *Satyagraha* is to seek and uphold the truth and to establish the rule of truth, then it can be allowed to play its role in a democratic system.³⁰

Raghavan Iyer opines that in general, the doctrine of *Satyagraha* asserts the right of resistance to every form of injustice but it also lays down the need for active loyalty and the acceptance of collective responsibility in a well-ordered system. Its application as a method of resistance requires the fulfillment of strict conditions and the observance of several rules, and especially presupposes the habit of willing and fearless compliance with law that do not conflict with conscience. The indiscriminate use of *Satyagraha* in any society is equivalent to misuse of the notion of conscience. Gandhi himself believed that before resorting to civil disobedience in the name of his conscience or the higher law, a *Satyagrahi* must take recourse to other methods that are constitutionally guaranteed and politically open.³¹

Even if the use of *Satyagraha* (in the narrower sense of civil resistance) is to be restricted in a democracy, its application (in the broader sense of constructive action) is quite relevant in a democratic system. In the last year of his life, Gandhi reaffirmed his conviction that *Satyagraha*, transcending parties and the divisions of class and creed, should, "permeate the whole of our being and society. This I do say, fearlessly and firmly, that

30. S.G. Bharve, "Satyagraha and Democracy", *Gandhi Marg*, October, 1957.

31. Raghavan Iyer, *op.cit.*, p. 320.

every worthy object can be achieved by the use of *Satyagraha*. It is the highest and the infallible means, the greatest force".³²

The truth that the doctrine of *Satyagraha* emphasizes is that social and political conflicts can best be resolved in an atmosphere in which the contestants respect each others moral worth, distinguish between measures and persons, conduct their battles in a spirit of self-criticism and abstain from the cruder forms of coercion.³³

The various movements of non-violent resistance led by Gandhi in South Africa and India bear ample testimony to the unique capacity of *Satyagraha* for winning adherents, building up morale and invoking sacrifice, arousing public opinion and weakening the adversary.³⁴

Gandhi's message of *Satyagraha* should find acceptance by the people in the present dark and uncertain age when greed, force and violence are on the increase. Today, as ever before, not only India but the whole world needs Gandhi's message of truth, non-violence, peace, love, liberty and justice.

32. *Harjan*, November, 1947, quoted in Raghavan Iyer, *op.cit.*, p. 322.

33. Raghavan Iyer, *op.cit.*, pp. 343-344.

34. M.M. Verma, *Gandhi's Technique of Mass Mobilization*, New Delhi: R.K. Gupta & Co., 1990, p. 226.

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