

# **Non-violent Resistance Study Guide**

## **Non-violent Resistance by Mahatma Gandhi**

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# Plot Summary

Satyagraha is a compilation of the writings and philosophy of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, known also as Mahatma Gandhi, or in the honorific, Ghandiji. "Satyagraha" is also the name of Gandhi's philosophy and practice of nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience used to fight against the oppression of the Indian people by the British and Indian governments.

The term "Satyagraha" combines two Sanskrit words, "Satya" (truth) and "Agraha" (holding firmly to). Thus, Satyagraha literally means "holding firmly to truth." Satyagraha, in Gandhi's words, is "the Force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence." It is more than mere civil disobedience because the struggle involved in Satyagraha is spiritual in nature.

Satyagraha aims not to coerce an opponent to obey the will of those who practice Satyagraha (Satyagrahis); instead, it aims to convert the wrong-doer in order to achieve true cooperation. Satyagraha also entirely rejects the use of violence in any circumstance; the Satyagrahi must be willing to die for love and truth. Throughout the book, Gandhi elaborates on the principles of Satyagraha, explaining how it is to be employed during civil disobedience, how Satyagrahis must live their lives, and how Satyagraha Campaigns must be conducted.

Gandhi (1869-1948) is a famous and world-renowned spiritual and political leader of India during its independence movement. His philosophy of Satyagraha not only produces Indian independence but inspires civil rights movements and freedom all over the world. In Indian he is understood as "Father of the Nation" and his birthday is still a national holiday, celebrated as the International Day of Non-Violence.

Gandhi begins using non-violence while practicing law in South Africa during the local Indian community's first push for civil rights; when he returns to India in 1915, he puts together protests of peasants, farmers, and city workers to fight exorbitant land-taxes and discrimination. He leads the Indian National Congress in 1921 and fights to reduce poverty, increase women's rights, heal tensions between religions and ethnic groups, end the notion of untouchability and promote Indian self-reliance. He tries to bring about Swaraj, or the elimination of the foreign domination of India. He also leads the famous Salt Satyagraha against the British-imposed salt tax. He spends some years in jail in both South Africa and India.

Gandhi practices ahimsa, a philosophy of love and truth, lives with few material resources in a small self-sufficient village and always wears traditional Indian garb that is home spun. He is a vegetarian and undertakes long fasts to purify himself and protest injustice. The book covers Gandhi's writings and interviews on all these subjects.

Each chapter or "section" contains many small articles cover general themes. Section First explains Satyagraha; Section Second outlines the disciplines involved in Satyagraha. Section Third reviews the ideas of non-cooperation and civil disobedience.



The next four sections look at Gandhi's writings during various cases of Satyagraha, the Vykom, Kheda, Bardoli, Salt, Indian States, and anti-war Satyagrahas. Section Ninth contains various miscellaneous writings concerning fasting, women, and social reform. Section Tenth contains a series of interviews and Section Eleventh is the conclusion.



# Section First: What Satyagraha Is

## Section First: What Satyagraha Is Summary and Analysis

Satyagraha literally means "holding on to Truth" and is soul or spirit. It bars the use of violence because man cannot know the absolute truth and so is not competent to punish. Sometimes the English speak of passive resistance but this concept does not exclude violence. Satyagraha is also more than mere Civil Disobedience because it is only a branch of Satyagraha. Instead, non-cooperation means to withdraw from the State that in the non-cooperator's view is immoral but it excludes fierce disobedience. It is practiced as a last resort. Gandhi then illustrates with an example in interacting with his wife.

The civil resister does not seek to avoid the penalty of law, unlike the lawmakers who break it. They consider it unjust to render obedience. Gandhi finds such a case with the Rowlatt Bills. Gandhi encourages fast, prayer and suspension of work on the 6th of April and there is a vast response. It is purely voluntary but Gandhi is arrested. However, the leaders do not react effectively.

Violence should not be used for good ends because violence is the means used by the oppressor and so it is hypocritical to use it. Further, it involves using a means that by nature corrupts the end even if it is achieved. Means must be appropriate to ends. Gandhi then illustrates with examples, such as with robbery. He next argues that there is some historical evidence of success but that the nature of the human spirit shows that it will be successful. The very existence of peace anywhere demonstrates this.

Further, law cannot bind if it is unjust, even if it is passed by a majority; to believe otherwise is superstition. Yet brute-force cannot be used. In the next section, Gandhi's testimony before the Hunter Committee is printed in extract. In the extracts, Gandhi is accused of political subversion but he defends his method as just, peaceful and voluntary, and denies any association with violence resisters. Gandhi is examined on the doctrines of Satyagraha. The examiners attempt to trip Gandhi up and get him to confess to their accusations.

In the final section, Gandhi argues that Satyagraha is independent of financial or material assistance. It is non-violent, for violence is the opposite of spiritual force. Satyagrahis, or followers of Satyagraha, must realize that there is something superior in many to the brute nature in him. Followers of Satyagraha must adopt poverty, becoming indifferent to whether we can feed or clothe ourselves. Satyagraha is also a form of education.



# Section Second: Discipline for Satyagraha

## Section Second: Discipline for Satyagraha Summary and Analysis

The second section outlines the practice and disciplines of Satyagraha, and requires Truth, Non-violence, Chastity, and Non-Possession as the primary four. The other seven are: Fearlessness, Control of the Palate, Non-stealing, Bread-Labor, Equality of Religions, Anti-untouchability and Swadeshi.

Gandhi argues that taking vows is a sign of strength. God is the image of the vow for He never deviates from His own law. Truth is the first premise: nothing exists except the Truth and Truth is God and God is the Truth. Without Truth there is no true knowledge. Devotion to the Truth is the only justification of existence. This requires Truth in speech, thought and action. Realizing truth requires single-minded devotion and often involves self-suffering and even death, with no trace of self-interest.

Ahimsa or love is next and is hard to balance with Truth. Truth depends on faith and Truth cannot be fully realized in the mortal body. Gandhi argues that it is better to endure those who cause us to suffer for if we stop them they shall only go on to others. We must understand our kinship with thieves. Ahimsa involves causing no harm to any living thing and yet we cannot allow ourselves always to be destroyed. Ahimsa is the means to Truth.

Chastity means utter selflessness and so it rejects the selfish purpose of having children and running a household. Ahimsa cannot be achieved through marriage because it involves focused, non-universal love. Those married can behave as if they are not married and free themselves from lust. Chastity, or brahmacharya, must be observed in thought and deed, not only organs of passion but of sense as well, and the palate is included.

Finally, there is non-possession. Possession implies worry about the future but the follower of the law of Love cannot save for tomorrow and creates only what is needed for the moment. The body is included as a possession.

Next Gandhi explains "Yajna", or acts directed to the welfare of others which aims at the greatest welfare to the greatest number in the area. Yajna is required in modest amounts to even keep the world alive. Yajna sounds hard but those who devote themselves will grow in faith each day.

Satyagraha also has moral requirements. Passive resistance is key and Gandhi defends his position again. He argues that even one man can practice it. So many live



non-violently; in fact, the social order is maintained by it. Gandhi then reiterates his other practices.

In later sub-sections, Gandhi emphasizes non-retaliation as key to Satyagraha. He also exhorts followers of Satyagraha to discipline. Humility is also crucial and produced by Satyagraha. Non-violence requires relying on God and this produces humility. Non-cooperation tests sincerity.

Gandhi then turns to discuss suffering in jail. Surviving jail is key to Satyagraha since suffering will come from ruling authorities. The non-cooperator must maintain non-violence in jail and submit to discipline. In prison, the Satyagrahi must act with honesty, cooperate with prison officials, obey all reasonable discipline as an example to co-prisoners, ask no favors and claim no privileges, never fail to ask what we need and do not get irritated if it is not received and to do the first five tasks to the greatest of one's ability.

Satyagraha has public prerequisites. There must be public support behind it for it to work. Non-cooperation requires the support of the people but the people must also love liberty and tolerate inconvenient state laws. Followers of Satyagraha must also be willing to suffer. Gandhi sees his political program as one of achieving real freedom from within through self-purification and self-help. Gandhi then notes that while all civil disobedience is a branch of Satyagraha, all Satyagraha is not civil disobedience but requires something more.

After several further sub-sections, Gandhi emphasizes that Satyagraha has several qualifications, for it presupposes self-discipline, self-control, self-purification and social status for the person offering it.

The Satyagrahi cannot forget the distinction between evil and evil-doer, and must love the evil-doer. Satyagrahis must harbor no anger, suffer the opponent's anger, put up with assaults from the opponent, never retaliate, submit to arrest, refuse to surrender property he is the trustee of, avoid swearing and cursing, not insult his opponent, never salute the Union Jack, and protect officials from insult or attack with one's life.

Gandhi then repeats his rules for prisoners. He adds rules for units and communal fights. He also defends acts of "full surrender." One must reject political power for Satyagraha as well. The chapter includes various other instructions for followers as well. Satyagrahis must have faith in God, believe in truth and non-violence, live a chaste life, avoid alcohol, and so on. He also specifies qualifications for peace brigades.

Next Gandhi outlines physical training for the followers of Satyagraha. Trained physiques are needed, as is great discipline. Gandhi advocates the formation of non-violent armies.



# Section Third: Non-Co-Operation and Civil Disobedience

## Section Third: Non-Co-Operation and Civil Disobedience Summary and Analysis

The chapter opens with a sub-section, "The National Week," which occurs after the Rowlatt Act passes in March 1919 and which allows authorities to arrest and imprison those suspected of engaging in activities prejudicial to state security. Gandhi leads a non-violent revolt which leads to the Jalianwala massacre. Gandhi institutes the National Week from April 6th to 13th as a week of prayer and fasting following the massacre. During the week, Gandhi encourages the achievement of Satyagraha. Further sub-sections discuss the Satyagraha Week and the Jalianwala massacre. He encourages his followers not to despair and not react with racism against the Muslims, whose blood is mixed with theirs.

In the next subsection, Gandhi is accused of being more of a politician than a saint and Gandhi addresses the criticism. He denies that he is a saint or a politician. His critic attacks him for direct action but Gandhi affirms its effectiveness. He cites Buddha and Christ as proponents of direct action as well. He also emphasizes that no country has ever risen without its purification through the fire of suffering. He argues that the Jalianwala massacre should strengthen the followers of Satyagraha's resolve. They must do right and not wait for wrongdoing to be righted.

Next Gandhi discusses how to bring about non-co-operation. It has four definitive stages. First, all must give up titles and resignation of honorary posts. Second, other government officials are called out of office unless he cannot otherwise support his family. The third stage aims for the withdrawal of the police and military and the fourth the suspension of taxes. Gandhi then shows that the Non-cooperation committee encourages non-violence and the encouragement of active cooperation, physical suffering, rejection of government loans, boycott of Government schools, Reformed Councils and many other things.

Gandhi next addresses Dr. Sapru, who argues that Muslims in India should avoid non-co-operation but he has no substitute. He is worried that non-cooperation by the ignorant will produce distress and chaos but Gandhi denies this. It is worse to participate. He also defends his particular recommendations for how to implement non-cooperation. He rejects accusations of disloyalty towards the end of the chapter.





# Second Fourth: Vykom Satyagraha

## Second Fourth: Vykom Satyagraha Summary and Analysis

The Vykom Satyagraha is undertaken to get the government to allow "untouchables" to use roads around the temple in Vykom in Travancore, South India. Gandhi argues that the Vykom campaign provides an interesting study in Satyagraha because of how calmly it proceeds. Gandhi defies his critics on either side, arguing that the campaign is just. The Satyagrahis do not attack the whole system but instead are simply fighting prejudice. Gandhi also defends his decision to not send aid from outside Travancore. He argues that the local Hindi must solve the problem and that untouchability is a Hindu sin. The untouchables cannot receive aid because the people of Vykom must embrace Satyagraha of their own will.

Gandhi next notes that various authorities in Vykom have objected to Satyagraha in Vykom. Next follows a sub-section which notes that the Vykom Satyagraha has entered its last stage. Violence brews and the Satyagrahis must retain their commitments. Gandhi maintains that the Vykom struggle must embrace all parts of Satyagraha and that Satyagrahis must not lose hope. The Vykom Satyagrahis must fight against age-old wrong and prejudice.

The following sub-section is a verbatim report from a talk Gandhi gives to prisoners at the Satyagraha Ashram at Vykom. The prisoners are arrested for barricading a temple where untouchables are usually not allowed to pray. Gandhi maintains that the Hindus are fighting to remove from their religion its greatest fault. He continues to exhort his followers to practice the extreme sacrifice required by Satyagraha. They must see themselves as soldiers and see themselves as examples of unselfishness.

Finally, Gandhi addresses the worry that the "unapproachables" are growing restless and losing faith in Satyagraha, but Satyagraha works slowly and must not be rejected. He later finds that the Vykom Satyagrahis are maintaining the faith. The implications of the Vykom Satyagraha are profound; the short-term goal is opening the roads surrounding the temple but ultimately "untouchability" must be removed entirely. Compulsion must be avoided in ending untouchability as well; drastic steps are required but not violent ones. Gandhi ends by maintaining that the religious Satyagrahi must do whatever they can to avoid mixing selfish motives with those that come from Satyagraha. Aggressiveness and resentment must not show.



# Section Fifth: Kheda and Bardoli Satyagrahas

## Section Fifth: Kheda and Bardoli Satyagrahas Summary and Analysis

Section Five concerns the Satyagrahas during the famines in the Kheda District of Gujarat in 1918. The government is unresponsive to the famines and so Gandhi advises the owners of the land to withhold land revenue payment. The government then grants remission to poorer peasants. This is brought about through the work of the Kheda Satyagrahis.

Next, in Bardoli, an area in Gujarat, Gandhi finds a place where he can try mass civil disobedience; in 1928, Gandhi leads the people to fight a land tax increase of 25% on the grounds that the redistributive process is not transparent. The government finally yields to the wishes of the people.

During the Kheda Satyagraha, Gandhi is president of the Gujarat Sabha and they send petitions and telegrams to the Government. The land cultivators' demands are clear as daylight. Gandhi then discusses his organizational team. The Satyagrahis sign a pledge that tax collection be suspended until the famine is over. When the Government does not respond, the Gujaratis are interested in the Satyagraha. The farmers, known as Patidar farmers, are new to the practice. The government imprisons many people before the fight is over.

The next sub-section addresses Bardoli's decision in 1922 to try Satyagraha and make an irrevocable choice to resist. The people understand the implications of religious unity and the truth of non-violence; they even invite the untouchables to join them. Gandhi then discusses the resolution they pass, announcing that the Bardoli are ready for mass civil disobedience. They will disobey for the redress of the Indian peoples and maintain the practice of Satyagraha. The conference is not prohibited.

However, later the Government tries to goad the people to act violently. The Bardoli may not withstand the last trial. The Satyagrahis are collecting funds to aid them. The Government grows concerned about the non-cooperation movement. In the next subsection, Gandhi discusses the limitations of Satyagraha in Bardoli. It is difficult to keep Satyagraha non-political. Practical politics often baffles Satyagraha in any event.

In sub-section ninety-five, Gandhi notes that a settlement has been reached over the Bardoli Satyagraha. Gandhi congratulates the Bardoli but encourages them not to rest until they have consolidated their position. The chapter ends with Gandhi celebrating the lessons of non-violence and its power as a method of social change.



# Section Sixth: Salt Satyagraha

## Section Sixth: Salt Satyagraha Summary and Analysis

In 1930, Gandhi engages in civil disobedience to stop some of the evils of British rule by revolting against the Salt Laws. These laws tax salt and salt is the only flavoring for rice and other grain that the poorest in the land can afford. In the first sub-section, Gandhi's Working Committee defends civil disobedience in the case of the salt laws and gives Gandhi permission to lead a peaceful revolt. Gandhi maintains that he has a heavy duty of promoting ahimsa but that civil disobedience is often demanded by love and is one of the only escapes from the "soul-destroying heat" of violence.

Gandhi expects to be arrested and acknowledges that he must prepare for it. He must remain absolutely non-violent yet absolutely active. Everyone around him must be inspired to do the same. Gandhi believes that he must never mentally submit to imprisonment and start Satyagraha even among the inmates of the Ashram.

Next a letter of Gandhi's to the Viceroy is printed; the letter demands the end of the evils of the British Government. In it, he argues that it is sinful to wait any longer to relieve the poor of suffering. Gandhi announces his ambition to convert the British people to non-violence and uses the word conversion deliberately because only through conversion can British hearts be melted. If the Viceroy will not see the truth, then Civil Disobedience is the only way forward. Gandhi claims that he is not issuing a threat but announcing his sacred duty.

Gandhi addresses the criticism of his movement that it leads to violence, although not because his followers are violent. Gandhi denies that the violence is due to non-violence, that this is absurd and that the violence is already implicit in society and within people's hearts. In a speech on the eve of the march, Gandhi exhorts his followers to take care of themselves when Gandhi is arrested and to never break the peace. The Congress of non-violence must tend to the movement. Pandit Jawaharlal will be their guide. He then argues for Ashram discipline during the march.

In many cases, those interested in truth and justice have a duty to disobey. However, those who disobey should not seek to destroy those who work for the state. Later when the embargo is lifted, Gandhi considers other possible laws to revolt against but relevant laws are hard to find.

Next comes the Dandi March on March 20th, 1930. Gandhi maintains the right to criticize the Viceroy and insists the government must be held accountable for its duty to the people. The sight of the impoverished is humiliating to all. In another sub-section, Gandhi encourages his followers to remember the 6th of April and the important lessons about civil disobedience that were learned from it.



Gandhi often speaks on Hindu-Muslim relations, and always maintains that the two need each other to fight against oppression. He wants the help of all races and peoples. In the next sub-section, Gandhi announces the right of the government to arrest those who are disobedient to the law; however, they are wrong to confiscate salt from those who resist. Blood is drawn as well. Gandhi wants a trial between "strength" and the people.

Gandhi goes on to rail against the inhumanity of the Salt tax, particularly now that the government has drawn blood on its behalf. However, later he is happy to announce that the mass protest has exceeded expectations in Gujarat but there is saddening news from Chittagong where violence has broken out. However, the Satyagrahis press on. He hopes that all the protestors will retain their strength. He then reviews various new reports. Following this he discusses various other resisters and their imprisonment, such as Mahadev Desai. Gandhi argues that the people must resist savage and unjust imprisonment with "great suffering."

The next sub-sections contain Gandhi's message to the nation of the eve of his arrest, his second letter to the Viceroy and a report from one of Gandhi's followers about his arrest. Gandhi maintains that he is obliged to follow his philosophy of non-violence to the end and that he wants India's self-respect to be symbolized in the handful of salt that they fight for. God guides the movement and the movement will not give up until the Salt Tax is repealed, everyone is arrested, or everyone is beaten or killed. He hopes the government will be civilized. Gandhi is arrested on the morning of May 12th, 1930. He is taken away peacefully, although he is very frail.

Gandhi is released in 1931 to negotiate a settlement with the Viceroy; in his writing he speaks of turning from a mentality of war to peace with the government and obedience to the settlement. Gandhi encourages his followers to be grateful for the settlement. The chapter ends as the Indian Congress meets to discuss Gandhi and his followers' demands. Gandhi defends the power of ahimsa, and criticizes the violence or "goondaism" of the Congress. He defends conquest over the body in order to resist.



# Section Seventh: Indian States Satyagraha

## Section Seventh: Indian States Satyagraha Summary and Analysis

Section seven covers the history of further Satyagrahas. Rajkot is a state of Kathiawas and is ruled by a prince. The people want constitutional reform but they are repressed, with the repression supported by the British. Gandhi spends his childhood in this state and is linked to the ruler. To fight the repression of the ruler, Gandhi fasts in Rajkot in 1939 and appeals to the Viceroy, who then brings about arbitration. Gandhi's side wins but he is unhappy that the coercion involved in arbitration had to be used.

The chapter opens with Gandhi encouraging a suspension of the Satyagraha in Rajkot. He thinks he made a mistake opening the Rajkot Satyagraha to all Kathiawadis. They relied on numbers rather than pure Satyagraha. Gandhi next notes that his reception of the Rajkot award makes him a coward.

Gandhi next turns to advise the suspension of civil disobedience in Travancore. He encourages those involved in Satyagraha there to not despair.

Gandhi next argues that the "Rajkot" chapter of his life is proof that the non-violent movement is not perfect and untainted. Gandhi also regrets imposing Satyagraha too harshly. Further, the Congress has failed to be effective in producing nation-wide Satyagraha.

Next Gandhi compares violence and non-violence. Gandhi claims that he is no example of perfect ahimsa and that he is evolving but he feels helpless among violence and is upset that the English seem not to have seen that the Satyagraha Gandhi leads is genuine. Gandhi regrets being blind to Hindu-Muslim hostility.



# Section Eighth: Individual Satyagraha Against War

## Section Eighth: Individual Satyagraha Against War Summary and Analysis

Britain enlists India in World War II without its consent in 1939. The country is upset over this because Britain will not promise them independence. They feel that the war is only fought to preserve the British Empire and not for freedom as a result. Therefore, the people want to engage in civil disobedience but Gandhi wants to avoid embarrassing the British during a crisis and wants his people to be more non-violent.

Gandhi is successful for a year and then he has to allow freedom of speech to Satyagrahis. This occurs during 1940 and 1941. Afterward, Britain fails to accede to Indian demands for more autonomy in the Cripps mission of 1942. Gandhi then advocates his "Quit India" slogan. His followers and he are imprisoned. Gandhi is only allowed to publish again in 1946.

Gandhi begins by noting that he does not suppress free speech among the Satyagrahi but that there is too much restraint involved and that hurts his country's cause. Gandhi merely suspends civil resistance. Next Gandhi argues that each Congress Committee should become a Satyagraha Committee and should elect Congressmen that will cultivate a spirit of goodwill to all. They should keep a diary of their work. These are active Satyagrahis. There are also passive Satyagrahis—those imprisoned and suppressed. Gandhi then claims that non-violence can lead to a liberated India.

Civil disobedience, if it is to be civil, must appear in this way to the opponent; he must understand that the resistance does not mean him harm. The English of the day see non-violence as a cloak and so Gandhi emphasizes a genuine civil disobedience. He also expresses pessimism that mass civil disobedience can be organized. Finally Gandhi notes that his writing will be stopped once his is arrested and to not suspend resistance. This is only a test in Satyagraha.



## Section Ninth: Miscellaneous

### Section Ninth: Miscellaneous Summary and Analysis

This chapter contains various reflections of importance but that are not tied together by a single theme. Gandhi first claims that fasting can be understood as a form of penance for sin and he gives an example of his own penance. He goes on a seven-day fast due to an error in the conduct of his Ashram children. He then distinguishes true and false Satyagraha. Satyagraha cannot be pursued out of personal gain or it will not be successful. The Satyagrahi must not resist for himself or to hurt an opponent; he must resist rather for the common good.

Next Gandhi emphasizes the importance of fasting as part of Satyagraha and as prayer. He denies that fasting is coercive despite trying to alter the behavior of others. However, he also emphasizes that fasting should only be pursued as a last result. Fasting for Gandhi is also a form of self-surrender. He emphasizes that he cannot understand his Protestant friends' aversion to fasting since it involves mortification of the flesh which brings spiritual progress.

A proper Satyagraha fast requires the proper will behind it and he again denies that fasts are coercive. They can be coercive but these are fasts to attain a selfish object. He then argues that fasting is a potent weapon for the Satyagrahi. However, it is far from infallible. Satyagraha is dangerous and serious and should only be used when there are no other avenues of redress.

In the following, Gandhi addresses the women of India. He is excited that women want to join the good fight and thinks that it is a healthy sign. Their contribution will be greater than men's because men are more wont to harm women than other men. Gandhi has thought on the matter for years and he now will allow it. He also argues that women should engage in bringing about the prohibition of intoxicating liquor and drugs and boycotting foreign cloth. Women should take up these activities. While women complain that there is no excitement in these activities, they should not be involved for excitement.

Subsequently, Gandhi discusses the conference of women in Gujarat and the women resolve to engage in Satyagraha in the ways proscribed by Gandhi. Gandhi thinks this movement of great importance. Gandhi then claims that men should not interfere with women picketing liquor and foreign cloth shops. Women should manufacture khadi, or clothes, within the home.

Gandhi turns to various notes. He mentions the importance of the frontier provinces and discusses the bartering of cloth within the Satyagrahi. He then advises his followers on the proper method of women picketing. They are similar to the principles of Satyagraha civil disobedience. He reproves foreign cloth sellers in a later sub-section and argues

that picketing is not coercive in another one. Picketing should be peaceful and can be done out of love.

In the third collection of notes, Gandhi discusses the role of Satyagraha in social reform. He argues that students can engage in noble Satyagraha. He encourages these students to engage in non-cooperation with their families if they engage in caste behavior. Gandhi is excited about the enthusiasm of the students.

In a further sub-section, Gandhi argues that Satyagraha should not be used to stop marrying young girls to older men because this will push the weddings into secrecy. However, it can be used to fight apartheid in Africa. Gandhi believes that the German persecution of the Jews is the worst in history. He is worried that the Jews cannot fight the persecution or maintain their self-respect. Gandhi encourages the Jews to not lose hope and to employ Satyagraha.

Gandhi must address how Satyagraha is supposed to deal with crime, as it seems difficult to apply to individuals. He argues that criminals should be cured and no one should bear ill-will towards them. The Satyagrahi should teach him a vocation and help him make an honest living. In these cases, criminals could not engage in crime. Finally, Gandhi argues that truth and ahimsa must generate socialism but that the voting public must have a living faith in God. Socialism can only be reached in this way.





# Section Tenth: Questions and Answers

## Section Tenth: Questions and Answers Summary and Analysis

Section Ten consists of interviews with Gandhi. In one interview, Gandhi discusses criticism of civil disobedience that he thinks need answering. He defends unity between religious peoples and does not want to raise a group hostile to the British. In a second interview, Gandhi discusses non-violence in Paris and Geneva. His pacifism is also criticized.

In a third interview, Gandhi covers the basic assumptions of his movement, which are the complete unity of the people in their demand for freedom, the appreciation of the doctrine's implications to the people as a whole and the embracing of Satyagraha, and an implicit belief that if the masses see suffering that the aggressors' hearts will be melted. A fourth interview discusses the importance of belief in God but is asked about atheist Socialists and Communists and whether they can become Satyagrahis. Gandhi thinks that this is impossible; he also believes that Satyagrahis should clothe themselves in cloth weaved by their own people.

In a fifth discussion, Gandhi argues that Satyagraha can be separated from his particular social program. Nonetheless, its principles must remain the same at a general level. Next various short question and answer pieces are reproduced. A sixth interview has Gandhi defending the actions of individual, lone Satyagrahis. This person must consider the difficulty of what she embarks upon. A seventh interview continues to press Gandhi on non-violence and whether it applies to war between nations. Gandhi thinks only if the entire populace can be coordinated in non-violence.

Gandhi claims that destruction of government property is violence and that Satyagrahis can use Satyagraha to stop looters. They can also use Satyagraha to impel the rich to give to the poor.

# Section Eleventh: Conclusion

## Section Eleventh: Conclusion Summary and Analysis

The final section discusses Gandhi's faith in non-violence. It is given in a talk on a ship in the Suez on the way to London for a round table conference. Gandhi argues that his method can be defended by looking to its successes. He argues that the law of love will work in any event. In another talk, he answers questions from an American about the future of his movement; he is unsure but he wishes to secure independence for India. Gandhi believes that States can be administered on non-violent bases if the vast majority of people are non-violent. He understands that non-violence is a difficult creed but Gandhi thinks that the people can be converted by reaching out to friendly critics.



# Characters

## Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

The Satyagraha is a compilation of Gandhi's writings and interviews, along with a few pieces about him. Thus, he is the book's most important person. Satyagraha is a non-fiction book; these writings are genuine and have been widely circulated for some time.

Gandhi lived from 1869 to 1948, dying at the hands of a Hindu Nationalist assassin. He is the most important modern political and spiritual leader of India, most especially during the movement for Indian independence. Gandhi pioneered a unique social, spiritual and political philosophy: Satyagraha, literally "holding firmly to truth." Satyagraha involves non-violence civil disobedience along with stringent codes of behavior to purify the soul and body. Satyagraha aims only at love and truth, to convert one's opponent, and never at coercion, control, anger, hate, jealousy, and selfishness.

Gandhi followed the philosophy of ahimsa or total nonviolence and led India against British imposed taxes and British rule. His methods spread across the world and helped civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. fight for justice in their own countries.

Gandhi began using satyagraha in the early 1910s in South Africa when Indians were fighting for civil rights there. When he returned to India, he organized the poor through non-violence to protest excessive land-taxes and discrimination. This landed Gandhi in jail but usually resulted in success, despite a few tragedies. It also arguably produced Indian independence from Britain as well.

## The Satyagrahis

The Satyagrahis are those who practice Satyagraha. Gandhi had numerous followers, many of whom gave their lives for the particular Satyagrahas they were involved in. For instance, in the Vykom Satyagraha, which occurred in Travancore, India, Satyagrahis fought centuries old stigmas against the "untouchables," the lowest social caste in Hindu society. The Vykom Satyagraha sought to allow untouchables freedom of movement through all public roads leading to the Sri Mahadevar Temple at Vykom.

A more famous Satyagraha was the Salt Satyagraha. This was a campaign Gandhi led against a British salt tax imposed on India. This began with the Salt March to Dandi in 1930. The Indian National Congress had already declared its independence from Britain but this was not to be recognized for over a decade. The Salt Satyagraha was the first Satyagraha to follow this declaration. Gandhi's breaking the salt laws spurred massive civil disobedience by millions of Indians. Gandhi was arrested during the Satyagraha but the Satyagrahis brought worldwide attention to the treatment of the poor by the British.



Over 80,000 people, many of whom were full-fledged Satyagrahis, were jailed during the incident, but due to their efforts, world opinion changed towards the Satyagrahis fighting for independence.

Not anyone could be a Satyagrahi, for he had to willingly submit himself to a stringent regimen of fasting, chastity and poverty, along with wearing traditional Indian garb and spinning it himself. Satyagrahis also had to be willing to go their deaths for peace and love of the enemy.

## **Violent Protestors**

Often protestors would erupt into violence, disrupting Gandhi's causes and embarrassing his movement.

## **State Officials**

State officials often behaved responsibly toward the Gandhi and the Satyagrahis, but in other cases they committed terrible crimes, even massacres.

## **The British**

The British ruled India throughout most of Gandhi's lifetime. Later Satyagrahas aimed at Indian independence through changing British public opinion.

## **Viceroy Lord Irwin**

Edward Frederick Lindley Wood was the first Earl of Halifax and ruled India from 1926 to 1931. Many of the important Satyagrahas occurred during his tenure as Indian Viceroy. He also engaged in some famous negotiations with Gandhi.

## **The Indian National Congress**

Gandhi's political party which declared independence from Britain as early as 1930 (seventeen years before independence). It also ruled India for many decades following independence.

## **Ashram Satyagrahis**

The Ashrams are, more or less, Hindu monasteries. The Ashram Satyagrahis were the Satyagrahis that lived in these ashrams.



## Christians

Gandhi often reached out to British Christians and Indian Christians, drawing similarities between his religion and theirs, and between Satyagraha and the teachings of Jesus.

## Muslims

Muslim-Hindu tensions have often run high in India; Gandhi fought for interfaith peace between the two groups.

## Hindus

Gandhi was Hindu and primarily concerned himself with the Hindu people despite always emphasizing that each religion had equal validity.

## God

Gandhi often described his philosophy as "God" although it is not clear the extent to which his conception of God is related to any orthodox monotheistic tradition.



# Objects/Places

## India

Gandhi's home and the land he freed from British rule.

## South Africa

Gandhi began his practice of non-violence in South Africa to secure civil rights for Indians there.

## Gujarat

The westernmost state in India and Gandhi's home state.

## Vykom

The capital of the Indian state of Kerala and the site of the Vykom Satyagraha.

## Britain

The country that ruled India for much of Gandhi's life.

## Kheda, Bardoli, Rajkot

Names of three areas that saw Satyagrahas.

## Satyagraha

Gandhi's spiritual philosophy of love, truth and non-violence.

## Ahimsa

The belief in total nonviolence.

## Fasting and Asceticism

Gandhi encourages the Satyagrahis to engage in various ascetic practices that he used to purify his own spirit and body.



## **The Salt Tax**

The salt tax was a punitive tax on salt imposed by the British; Gandhi led a revolt against this tax.

## **British Rule**

The British ruled India during Gandhi's life, but through his efforts, India became independent.

## **Nonviolence**

Gandhi was a believer in total nonviolence.

## **Women**

Gandhi was one of the first men to fight for women's rights and included women in his Satyagrahis, although confining them to less dangerous situations.

## **Satyagrahs (Vykom, Kheda, Bardoli, Salt)**

The mass practice of Satyagraha used in order to achieve some objective. Various Satyagrahas are described throughout the book.



# Themes

## Satyagraha

Satyagraha literally means "holding firmly to the truth" in Sanskrit. It is the philosophy and practice of nonviolent resistance that Gandhi developed throughout his social activism. Satyagraha was used by Gandhi in fights against the injustices perpetrated on the Indian people by the British government and to fight for Indian independence from Britain.

For Gandhi, Satyagraha is the force of the truth; it is a form of active resistance that seeks not to get what one wants for oneself but to convert the opponent into another being of love. Gandhi does not think that the idea of Civil Disobedience fully expresses the idea of Satyagraha. It is the pursuit of truth that lies at the heart of Satyagraha and it also prevents inflicting violence. Satyagraha requires convincing the other of the truth through non-coercive means and self-suffering. One inflicts the suffering of falsehood on oneself to show the truth.

Gandhi's understanding of Satyagraha required various spiritual disciplines in order to purify the heart. All followers of Satyagraha, the Satyagrahis, must always obey the laws of the State, unless they are deeply unjust, even when they are inconvenient. Satyagrahis must always be willing to pay the penalty for breaking the law and be willing to suffer, lose property and endure allowing family and friends to struggle. Obedience must be done out of love, not out of grudging hatred.

Further, Satyagrahis must be totally non-violent, be honest, never steal, be chaste, possess very little, engage in bodily labor, control one's desire for food, be fearless, respect all religions equally, use boycotts and eliminate untouchability. Satyagrahis must also have a genuine faith in God and must wear the traditional khadi. They must abstain from all alcohol and drugs and must obey the rules of prison when they are imprisoned.

## Ahimsa

Ahimsa, in Sanskrit, means "to avoid violence." It is a concept often found in the religions originating in ancient India. Ahimsa condemns the killing or injuring of all living beings and is tied to the idea that using violence produces bad karma. Many practitioners of ahimsa differ as to how far it should be carried. Sometimes it applies to only humans, sometimes to animals and sometimes to all beings.

Gandhi applies ahimsa to political and spiritual action. Gandhi saw injustice all around him throughout most of his adult life. He understood that many people have different responses to injustice and wondered what his must be. Gandhi chose to practice Satyagraha by means of ahimsa. If Satyagraha is holding firmly to the truth and practicing total love for the other and unselfishness, then ahimsa is an interpretation of





Satyagraha. It argues that the implication of holding firmly to truth and practicing total love for the other absolutely requires non-violence against any and all human beings.

Ahimsa deeply informs Gandhi's practices of civil disobedience. Ahimsa is the method of expressing Satyagraha and as a result, all civil disobedience must be done with the spirit of ahimsa and Satyagraha. Civil disobedience cannot be enacted for personal gain or out of anger, hatred or jealousy. Instead, it must be enacted to convert the opponent and to show him the way of love. Ahimsa demonstrates love because it refuses to use violence even in defense of one's own person.

## **Social Justice**

Satyagraha and ahimsa are philosophies and practices for a whole life. However, they came to be known most clearly when Gandhi employed them in fights for social justice. The term "social justice" has varied meanings, but we can understand it as fighting for fair treatment of social groups. For instance, Hindu society notoriously orders persons according to caste.

The lowest caste, the untouchables or Dalits, are not distinguished by genes or phenotype yet they have been historically treated horrifically in Indian society. Gandhi fought to ensure that the Dalits would be treated equally by all and revolted against the caste system generally. This is a prime example of fighting for social justice. In other cases, Gandhi fought against excessive taxes, particularly on products used by the poor, such as salt. Thus, the Salt Satyagraha aimed to secure relief from taxation for the poor in their use of salt but was intended to symbolize a broader struggle for just treatment of the poor generally.

For Gandhi, the fight for social justice most clearly brings out the goodness in the practice of Satyagraha and ahimsa. This is because the fight for social justice is not only noble but brings great suffering on behalf of others. It is thereby an opportunity to show one's love and care for others and an opportunity to purify the soul through self-sacrifice. Thus, social justice is not only something fought for in the book but an opportunity to demonstrate the philosophy that the book was written to explain.



# Style

## Perspective

Satyagraha has an editor, Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai, who compiles Gandhi's writings and writes a brief preface. However, his main goal is to faithfully reproduce Gandhi's writings and thoughts and get out of the way, as he makes clear in his introduction. Thus, the primary perspective is that of Gandhi (1869 - 1948). Gandhi was the pre-eminent leader of the Indian people, playing a decisive role in the spiritual development of his people and freeing India from British rule.

Gandhi's primary philosophy is the same as the title of the book: Satyagraha. Satyagraha is the social and spiritual philosophy of "holding firmly to truth." It requires a complete abdication of all violent methods of social change and instead employs civil disobedience. Gandhi argues that the soul must be pure and unselfish in order for a person to become a true Satyagrahi and so Gandhi prescribes spiritual disciplines and ascetic practices in order to achieve a state of total love and truth aimed at the conversion of one's opponent. Gandhi is also a proponent of ahimsa, or total nonviolence. Ahimsa is the method of implementing Satyagraha and in Gandhi's view is entailed by a devotion to Satyagraha.

Gandhi is widely known for his intense and extreme ascetic practices, his willingness to be imprisoned, his radical pacifism (he even encouraged Jews under Hitler to avoid violence entirely) and his fight for social justice. He was a cosmopolitan, seeing all persons as equal and a devoted follower of God, which may or may not be similar to the God of Judeo-Christian theism. Gandhi's perspective is reflected ubiquitously throughout the book.

## Tone

Gandhi's tone combines the best elements of a spiritual leader and shrewd social activist. First, in the early chapters where Gandhi elaborates his understanding of Satyagraha and ahimsa, his tone is that of a spiritual leader. He gives arguments for Satyagraha and waxes mystical about its importance and centrality to a good and pure human life. He also makes the sort of extreme and other-worldly claims about the human good typical of mystics from many different religions. He expresses a radical commitment to loving the other and pushes it to an outpouring of exhortations to love all people.

Gandhi has something of an argumentative streak when defending his philosophy of life. He is more than willing to entertain objections and attempts to provide striking answers to his interlocutors. Some spiritual leaders might avoid theological and philosophical argumentation, but Gandhi does no such thing, giving the Satyagraha not only a spiritual feel but an ideological, embattled tone as well.



Gandhi is also a shrewd political activist. He discusses the choice of place for Satyagrahas and reasons strategically in very clear ways throughout these sections of the book. Despite his spiritual commitments, he accepts a compromise during the Salt Satyagraha with the Viceroy to end civil disobedience in exchange for a reduction in burdens on the poor. He also must think about how to organize and marshal his forces in the most effective ways. Thus, he often outlines strategies in a clever fashion, defends his political choices and positions and discusses important organizational tactics. The tone of these passages is passionate but practical.

## Structure

Satyagraha has a brief preface written by the editor, but it is almost entirely composed of the writings of Mahatma Gandhi and transcripts of speeches and interviews he gave. The book is structured into eleven "sections" which mostly correspond to chapters. The sections are then composed of a long string of documents relevant to the subject matter of the section. Some sections are purely philosophical and contain excerpts and short essays expanding on Gandhi's philosophy. However, other sections are structured chronologically so as to outline a narrative during a particular struggle or Satyagraha. This comes out most clearly in the various Satyagraha related chapters.

While the book contains many sub-sections, it has eleven broad sections which cover the following subjects. The first chapter, Section First: What Satyagraha is, is the most theological and philosophical of the chapters and contains Gandhi's most detailed and abstract discussions of the ideology and spirituality of Satyagraha. Section Second: Discipline for Satyagraha outlines Gandhi's incredibly stringent principles for putting Satyagraha into practice and the rationale for associating Satyagraha with these disciplines. Section Third: Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience explains the actual social practice of Satyagraha and how it manifests in social action.

Section Fourth: Vykom Satyagraha covers the details and events of the Vykom Satyagraha. Section Fifth: Kheda and Bardoli Satyagrahas covers the details and events of the Kheda and Bardoli Satyagrahas. Section Sixth: Salt Satyagraha contains sub-sections which deal with the events and reasons for the Salt Satyagraha. Section Seventh: Indian States Satyagraha covers other Satyagrahas like the Rajkot Satyagraha. Finally, Section Eighth: Individual Satyagraha against War covers anti-war Satyagrahas. Thus, Sections Fourth through Eighth are all "action" chapters which are more pragmatic in nature.

Section Ninth: Miscellaneous reviews Gandhi's views on fasting, women Satyagrahis, and the role of Satyagraha in social reform. Section Tenth: Questions and Answers is a compilation of interviews with Gandhi, along with Q & A periods after his lectures. Finally, Section Eleventh: Conclusion contains some of Gandhi's final reflections on his movement.



## Quotes

"Satyagraha is literally holding on to Truth and it means, therefore, True-force. ... It excludes the use of violence ...." (Section First: What Satyagraha Is, 3)

"Only those who realize that there is something in man which is superior to the brute nature in him and that the latter always yields to it, can effectively be Satyagrahis." (Section First: What Satyagraha Is, 35)

"Satyagraha excludes the use of violence in any shape or form, whether in thought, speech, or deed. Given a just cause, capacity for endless suffering and avoidance of violence, victory is certainty." (Second Section: Discipline for Satyagraha, 56)

"No country has ever risen without being purified through the fire of suffering." (Third Section: Non-Co-Operation and Civil Disobedience, 112)

"Untouchability is the sin of the Hindus." (Fourth Section: Vykom Satyagraha, 180)

"The lesson that they have to learn is that so long as they remain united in non-violence they have nothing to fear, not even unwilling officials." (Fifth Section: Kheda and Bardoli Satyagrahas, 218)

"Hate dissolves in the presence of Love." (Sixth Section: Salt Satyagraha, 220)

"Wherever there is a violent eruption, volunteers are expected to die in the attempt to quell violence." (Sixth Section: Salt Satyagraha, 250)

"Freedom is a fruit of suffering, license is born of violence." (Sixth Section: Salt Satyagraha, 269)

"Swift, silent secrecy. No trial, no justice." (Sixth Section: Salt Satyagraha, 277)

"I am no example of perfect ahimsa. I am evolving." (Seventh Section: Indian States Satyagraha, 297)

"Satyagraha can never be resorted to for personal gain." (Ninth Section: Miscellaneous, 313)

"I believe that a State can be administered in a non-violent basis if the vast majority of the people are non-violent." (Eleventh Section: Conclusion, 386)



# Topics for Discussion

What is Satyagraha?

What is Ahimsa?

What are some criticisms of Gandhi's approach to social reforms? What are his replies? Are they convincing?

Do you think Gandhi's practice of Satyagraha is too extreme?

What causes the Salt Satyagraha? How does it end?

Why does Gandhi tie the philosophy of Satyagraha so closely to his ascetic practices?

Explain Gandhi's conception of God. How similar is it to the conceptions of God found in Judaism, Christianity or Islam?