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## The Satyagraha Of Gandhiji: A Critical Study With Ethical Aspects

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### Abstract:

In Indian Politics, the word satyagraha is closely associated with the name. Gandhi. The Idea of satyagraha with in Gandhi was present in a family environment but it is being explored in south Africa. Satyagraha is composed with main element of truth, non-violence and self suffering. Satyagraha is holding on truth. Gandhi viewed-truth as Produce a goal and viewed non-violence as a way. Truth is closely related with non-violence in Satyagraha, Self-Suffering in Satyagraha is intended Primarily for the conversion and moral pursuit of one's opponent. Gandhi considered satyagraha as Means Justify the ends. Immoral methods can never a moral or just result. His philosophy was achieving your goal by love and just way, who are strong minded not afraid, they are eligible for satyagraha. He avoids violence and hatred because violence increases violence and love defeats hatred. As a satyagrahi, one should leave Selfishness behind and welcome the wellbeing of other. Satyagrahi wants to solve any conflict in a Peaceful process with his opponent. He believed that changing the heart of an opponent can change his behaviour. Satyagraha is a mixture of morality and reality.

**Key words:** Satyagraha, Truth, non-violence, self-suffering, Justice, Avoidance of hatred, Peace, morality.

### **Introduction:**

'Father of Nation' Mahatma Gandhi's political Philosophy is a significant Part of Indian political thought and is also identified as Gandhivad. He was born in Porbandar, Gujarat, on October 2, 1869. He went to South Africa to study Law and returned to country 1915. Studying life in South Africa is an important Period in his Political. Philosophy. There, He first applied his non-violent Satyagraha method. Satyagraha is the centre of Gandhiji's political philosophy. In his long political career, he used the method of nonviolence satyagraha, which was based on truth, after returning to the country. The term Satyagraha is an amalgam of two Sanskrit words Satya, meaning " Truth" and "Agraha" meaning Persistence. According to this philosophy, Satyagrahis-Practitioners of Satyagraha, achieve correct insight into the real nature of an evil situation by observing a nonviolence of the mind, by seeking truth in a spirit of peace and love and by undergoing a rigorous process of self-scrutiny. He was the first Political leader to invent a new way in the Indian Political movement through satyagraha. He has given an idea about satyagraha in his book Hind swaraj (1910).

**Origin of Satyagraha** – The concept of Satyagraha existed before the name was invented in Mahatma Gandhi's mind. Before the invention of Satyagraha, the concept was described as 'passive resistance'. Gandhi stated in his autobiography that "in Gujarati also we used the English phrase passive resistance" to describe it. When in a meeting of Europeans I found that the term passive resistance was too narrowly constructed, that it was supposed to be a weapon of the weak, that it could be characterized by hatred, and that it could finally manifest itself as violence, I had to demur to all these statements and explain the real nature of the Indian movement. It was clear that a new word must be coined by the Indians to designate their struggle."<sup>1</sup> Gandhi was in search of a new name for his principle and proposed a prize to the winner. As a result, Maganlal Gandhi coined

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the term 'Sadagraha' (sat – truth, agraha – firmness). In his own words, "But in order to make it clearer I changed this word to 'Satyagraha' which has since become current in Gujarati as a designation for the struggle."<sup>2</sup> It is largely motivated by his struggles and experiments in South Africa. He mentioned that "I would recommend a perusal of my history of Satyagraha in South Africa to such readers as have not seen it already."<sup>3</sup>

The pacifist philosopher Tolstoy was a significant influence on Gandhi. Gandhi came to understand that nonviolence is an element of Satyagraha because he was devoted to the Vaishnava religion that emphasizes the killing of a living creature is considered to be violence in Vaishnava religion. So all types of torture should be considered as violence. For Gandhi, though a Vaishnava, he accepted the nonviolence principle in political thought. Gandhi rejected the idea of becoming a doctor due to nonviolence Issue. He was a vegetarian and avoided violence because of his family tradition.

Self-suffering is also a component of Satyagraha, which came from self-restraint and self-control. Brahmacharya was the source of it, as Gandhi was a brahmachari. Brahmacharya roughly means to stay true to one's self or one's own Atma, and control of anger. In his (Gandhi) own words – "I was anxious to observe brahmacharya in thought, word, and deed, and equally anxious to devote the maximum of time to the satyagraha struggle and fit myself for it by cultivating purity."<sup>4</sup> His restrictions and fasting started with his meal. Gandhi mentioned that it was his first experience of jail life was in 1908. I saw that some of the regulations that the prisoners had to observe were such as should be voluntarily observed by a brahmachari that is, one desiring to practise self-restraint. Such, for instance, was the regulation requiring the last meal to be finished before sunset.<sup>5</sup> From religious book such as the Bhagavad Gita and the Old Testament, Gandhi gained inspiration for satyagraha and nonviolence. He realized from these book that achieving a goal through violence and brutal force is not possible. During Gandhi's time in South Africa, black people protested against the strong white authority as they opponents for illegal and unethical actions through passive resistance techniques. Gandhi recognized satyagraha as his life philosophy, focusing not only on truth but also on the power of truth.

**Truth and Justice:** The literal meaning of Satyagraha is to force people to accept the truth. Gandhi considered truth to be a form of justice. He is deeply attached to truth, which is, as sometime called justice. In order to establish truth and justice, he also agreed to devote his life. He said that satyagrahi would not be worried to establish the truth. Satyagraha is founded on a strong faith in the truth. Gandhi considered truth to be a synonym for God. According to him "God is truth." Truth is the soul force, while untruth is

brute force, which can create violence, selfishness, hatred etc. Truth and justice principles can not only prevent unethical and unjust sides but also bring about a fundamental change in heart and society. The fundamental meaning of Satyagraha is holding on truth" which is also called the love-force by Gandhi. According to Professor Buddhadeb Bhattacharyya, "Gandhi's enunciation of the doctrine shows that a few tenets are basic to satyagraha. Truth, non-violence and self-suffering are the principles on which this technique is based".<sup>6</sup> After understanding the actual situation, Gandhi expressed relative truth instead of absolute truth. According to him God and absolute truth are Synonymous. In his own words – "But as long as I have not realized the absolute truth so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it".<sup>7</sup> Gandhi believed that truth was present in the minds of every person. According to Gandhi – "..... no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of truth."

Satyagraha is the act of searching for truth and justice in an ethical manner. If the government or authority behaves in an unjust manner it should be disobedient. Professor V. P. Varma explained that – "It signifies a genuine, intense and sincere love for truth which is God. It means an assertion of the power of human soul against political and economic domination. Satyagraha is the vindication of the glory of the human conscience." Satyagraha is based on the invincible belief in the ultimate triumph of divine justice and right.<sup>8</sup>

**Non-violence:** Non-violence and satyagraha have a strong connection. Non-violence is a great virtue. Gandhi viewed non-violence as a positive aspect of satyagraha rather than a negative concept. Non-violence was viewed by him as love, affection and kindness. Non-violence does not lead to revenge. For this reason, any satyagrahi does not want to follow violence but accept love towards the anti-party. Satyagrahi is aware that torturing others with violence is a violation of their rights. Rather, it is wrong to torture oneself so that he can rise to conscience against an oppressive or opposing person. Gandhi believed that in the principle of satyagraha, truth is the aim of life and to achieve that goal by means or a process that is non-violent. His objective was to create a society without violence that would eradicate all forms of oppression, exploitation and torture. Professor Niranjana Kumar Bose remarked about Gandhi's satyagraha that – "a way of conducting war by means of non-violence." Krishnadas Shridharani described satyagraha as "a non-violent direct action".<sup>9</sup>

Gandhi suggests that if satyagrahi protest for truth and justice, the opposition party can use violence to suppress them. In this situation, satyagrahi should remain focused and restrain from reacting even if there is a life crisis. So denying violence is important for Satyagrahi. Gandhi fell into violent situations many times. While protesting using non-violent measures, he persevered in violence using

merit and bravery. This such happened while he was in South Africa when he protested against the white-colored government for being unjust, he was tortured but faced it with smiling face. Even though he was afraid of being murdered by the government, he said that he was not afraid of dying for the truth. He determined that he would continue to use non-violent method to achieve his objective, even in a negative situation.

From a close study of the history of nations, Gandhi was convinced that fighting evil with evil would multiply evil. In other words, fighting violence with violence would multiply violence. A fire cannot be extinguished with fire; it can be extinguished only with water. So violence can be effectively contained by non-violence, and the brute force of evil can be contained only by an effective use of soul-force or truth force.<sup>10</sup>

Gandhi said in front of the disorder inquiry committee in 1920 that “It is a movement intended to replace methods of violence and a movement based entirely upon truth. It is a I have conceived of, an extension of the domestic law in the political field and my experience has led me to the conclusion that power and that alone can lead India of the possibility of violence. Spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land, for the redress of grievances.” According to Gandhi truth and non-violence are two sides of the same coin. As a context for the connection of non-violence with satyagraha, Gandhi wrote that – “In its positive form ahimsa means the largest love, greatest charity. If I am a follower of ahimsa, I must love my enemy. I must apply the same rules to the wrongdoer who is my enemy.... This active ahimsa necessarily includes truth and fearlessness”.<sup>11</sup>

Gandhi used the non-cooperation movement as an instrument to defy violence in the satyagraha. Administration depends on cooperation between the government and the public, but if the public refuses to cooperate with government, then administration would not be possible. As tools for non-cooperation with authority, strikes were used in satyagraha. The use of strike by Ahmedabad textile workers was led by Gandhi. In this condition, as workers who engage in strikes, they do not take shelter under violence. He understood that it is impossible to fight against the powerful British government with instrument and as a result, struggle means violence, so he wanted to deadlock the British administration by a measure of non-cooperation.

**Self-suffering:** Gandhi mentioned self-suffering as an element of satyagraha along with truth and non-violence. So satyagraha is completed with three main elements – truth, nonviolence and self-suffering. In own words of Gandhi – “The satyagrahi seems convert his opponent by sheer force of character and suffering. The purer he is and the more he suffers, the quicker the progresses”.<sup>12</sup> By self-suffering, it is possible to detect wrong consciousness in heart of wrong doers. Thus projecting ethical

consciousness that changes the opponent party is the main aim of satyagrahi. In own words of Gandhi – “Self-suffering in satyagraha is directed first of all towards the conversion and moral persuasion of his opponent”.<sup>13</sup> According to him, self-suffering would secure a change of heart from the opponent and remove him from injustice activities. Gandhi conceived satyagraha as a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When it refused to do a thing that is repugnant to own conscience, it uses soul force. It involves sacrifice of self”.<sup>14</sup>

When satyagrahi fail to gain favour from their opponents, they attempt to create sympathy in the hearts of the opponent by self-suffering. As an example, this type of fact was held in Travancore (South Kerala) during the middle period of the second decade of the twenty century. Once upon a time, higher caste brahmans did not allow the untouchable community to walk on roads and enter temples. The lower cast peoples (Gandhi’s called Harijan) protested against higher cast peoples, but failed to solve the problem. They protested by sitting on the road, under the open sky, even when it was raining. Their protest was still going on, water that was upto waist depth. A large number of them suffered from severe illness but were unable to leave their condition. The Brahman people saw their self-suffering and were compelled to agree to their demands. Gandhi has often said that the purpose of Satyagraha is not only to establish justice and truth, but also to change the heart of opposition and win their sympathy. The Satyagraha, guided by Gandhi, helped people achieve success through self-suffering in various spheres. The experience of self-suffering by the Harijan community, has proved to be a powerful weapon. For Gandhi, truth + non-violence + self-suffering = satyagraha. In the words of Gandhi “Satyagraha means the exercise of the purest soul-force against injustice, oppression and exploitation.” Sufferings are one of the attributes of soul force. The active non-violent resistance of the heroic meek makes an immediate appeal to the heart. It wants not endanger the opponent but overwhelm him by the overflowing power of innocence”.<sup>15</sup> He also mentioned that “not but one who wants to vindicate his right should be prepared to bear all kinds of suffering.”

Fasting is also an important peaceful weapon of self-suffering in satyagraha which means do not consuming any food. Satyagrahi wants to create pressure on the opponent party by fasting and trying to focus on their demands in eye of the opponent authorities. Those who protest through fasting, tortures themselves and goes on to extreme condition, which can lead to death. Gandhi regarded fasting as his final weapon, because fasting pushes towards death. As before deciding to fast, a strong mental preparation is necessary. As satyagrahi is prepared to destroy himself, which step stop any revenge by putting

may generate sympathy in the heart of others. As a result, authority would be mentally weak for satyagrahi. If satyagrahi ends their fasting after one or two day, it would be a joke and the opposition authority may increase the pressure.

Gandhiji fasted many times in his life. If the British government does not leave India, he will call for Satyagraha movement throughout the country and decide on fasting. Gandhiji undertook a 21-day hunger strike from February 10 to March 3, 1943, while imprisoned at the Aga Khan Palace in Pune. This fast unto death was non-violent protest against the British government's allegations blaming him for the violence during the 1942 Quit India Movement, aiming to shake the conscience of the ruling authorities.

#### **Means justify the ends:**

Gandhiji stated in his book 'Hind Swaraj' that there are two methods for achieving a goal, good or bad. "Means justify the ends" emphasizes that immoral or violent methods (means) can never produce a moral or just result (end). He argued that means and ends are inseparable like seed and tree. Here the means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree. It implies that only truthful method and non-violence can a righteous goal be achieved. Gandhiji's core philosophy means justifying the ends is reflected in satyagraha. As per him, a good method should not involve violence, which is known as satyagraha. This satyagraha wants to torture himself to create knowledge in others, but does not want to torture others. By using violent methods, one can achieve great goal and self interest but it is not proper or ethical. In his view, satyagraha is not only a good way but also a way of love. He claimed that by using violence, it is impossible to win others; violence create more violence. According to satyagraha, it is possible to win others and achieve your goal by demonstrating love and sympathy.

**Strong mentality:** According to Gandhiji, those who are afraid and weak-minded are not eligible to be satyagrahi. Gandhiji had a misconception about satyagraha before. People who are weak for struggle only consider themselves to be satyagrahi. After that, this misconception was removed from his thinking. A weak-minded person can not be a satyagrahi, because satyagrahi means to keep on struggling until they reach their goal or complete their demands by the opponent authority. Satyagrahi would refuse to surrender to greed if it is given by authority. In this situation if there is no strong mind of Satyagrahi; it is impossible to establish truth and justice. So, it is not advisable for weak minded people to join Satyagraha. To prevent Satyagrahi, the opponent party can use violence to break down the morale. For a struggle against organized powerful opponent authority, it would be necessary to have more morale and bravery. As Satyagrahi gradually leads to death, strong morale is essential for this activity. It is an in-

depth moral analysis of Gandhiji's Satyagraha which indicates his bravery and refusal to fear death.

#### **Avoidance of selfishness and self service:**

As a satyagrahi it is necessary to devote himself. The satyagrahi does not give priority to personal profit, family interest, and self interest. Because Satyagraha implies fighting against injustice. This protest is in response to the dishonesty and authority's misuse of their arbitrary power and illegal activities. Satyagrahi are protesting so that welfare of the public in society may be assured, and it should not be considered for personal welfare. In this situation, the authority may take punitive action for revenge, but as a Satyagrahi he would agree it with smiling face without thinking about its personal harm. For this it is essential to have good morale and mental condition to admit the harm.

**Avoidance of hatred:** Gandhiji viewed Satyagrahi as two-edged sword: one side should have a strong mind, and the other side should have generosity of mind. Satyagrahi would not show hatred towards his opponent. Even though his opponent is doing injustice, Satyagrahi will not hate them. Satyagrahi wants to rectify this injustice and raise awareness in the opponent's mind, but does not hate. They make themselves glorious by supporting this generosity. Satyagrahi does not want any analysis of crimes committed by the opponent party; rather wants to convince the opponent's mistake to establish the truth. Like count Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), Gandhi believed in arousing the conscience of the evil-doer; so he endorsed this motto "Hate the sin, and not the sinner".<sup>16</sup> According to Gandhi Satyagraha is not against any person but against the narrow and negative principles and methods of the opponent. So, there is no place of hatred.

**Resolution by Peaceful Process** – Satyagraha wants to solve the problem through peaceful mediation between satyagrahi and the opposing authority. Satyagraha implies a para-legal method of registering a peaceful protest against the laws, the customs and the practices which one strongly feels his conscience.<sup>17</sup> Satyagraha mobilized masses through peaceful defiance, protest, and negotiations, leading to concessions without resentment. Successful comes in case of conflict through conversion where the opponent internally changes, fostering lasting harmony over win-lose outcomes. Satyagraha believes in entering into a dialogue with his opponent from arriving at the "mutually acceptable solution". It also has a salutary effect on the onlookers who learn to appreciate the merits and demerits of the respective claims of the conflicting parties. They also contribute to clarify the climate of peaceful resolution of conflict.<sup>18</sup>

**Moral and Ideal Principles** : Though in a superficial view, the individuals, institutions, or organizations associated with Satyagraha are sub-targets. Actually these are ethics and idealism. Satyagrahi are agitating against the ethical and ideal principle of their opponent. They want to

protest for justice and truths that they consider to be right, against the opponent's principles. So satyagraha means a non-violent protest for a principle against another principle, who are protestor and against whom is not a factor. Ideals and moral principles are the driving source behind satyagraha. It is showed the way to oppressed people to hold their moral rights for fighting against a mighty opponent.<sup>19</sup>

It is right to say that the force used in satyagraha is not physical strength but rather moral strength. According to Satyagraha, fostering ethics in other can prevent unjust work. Professor Buddhadeb Bhattacharya stated that "As a technique of action, satyagraha employs force. But the force employed in satyagraha is not physical but moral ... From the point of view of the satyagrahi, the technique is adopt to persuade the opponent and to wean him from error".<sup>20</sup>

**Creative method:** Gandhiji viewed satyagraha as a creative method. Satyagraha may seem like it is trying to fulfil demands, the main goal is to correct one's mind or heart. Satyagraha warns that anyone who are not in the correct method, principle, or activity are not eligible to support. So he warned others should refrain from unjust activity. Thus it is possible to change a person's behaviour and attitude. Satyagrahi enables his opponent to put forward his point of view. The opponent is allowed to prove himself to be right. Satyagraha takes the form of a fight between the evils who are given a fair chance to understand each other's view and to discover the truthful belief would be readily accepted by both parties. Once they reach agreement, enemy ceases to be an enemy. He becomes a friend and a co-worker in the pursuit of truth. Satyagrahi believes in the principle of "Live and let live".<sup>21</sup>

**Conclusion:** Gandhiji did not limit his satyagraha philosophy to theory only, but also to practical implementation. He first used satyagraha in 1906 against a discriminatory Transvaal law targeting Asians, organising peaceful protests. Gandhiji's first major protest was Champaran Satyagraha (1917), which was against forced indigo farming by British, and leading to reliefs for exploited farmers. Kheda Satyagraha (1918), and Salt March (Dandi Abhiyan) respectively in 1928 non-cooperation and nationwide civil disobedience also burring example of his pragmatic satyagraha. In the context of Indian politics, there is a distinct value of Satyagraha. The merits of Gandhian method of satyagraha lies in introducing a new method of conflict-resolution which was found in many parts of the world. The American civil rights movement under leadership of Martin Luther King was inspired by the Gandhian technique of Satyagraha. In recent times, there have been many examples of the use of Satyagraha in many spheres of movement such as politics, economics and social life, to free man from exploitation. So satyagraha philosophy is still relevant and eternal. In

language of Professor Radhakrishnan: "Satyagraha shall remain 'eternal' until the message of resistance is last upon mankind".

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