Satyagraha is a humane way of winning justice in the face of evils. It stems from the fact that in every human heart resides a conscience that gets pricked by pathetic state of one’s victim, if not immediately, later at some point in time. And Satyagraha in practice, takes upon itself pains inflicted by the opponent, all the while endeavours to appeal a ‘change of heart’ from wrong-doer. Devoid of arms, coercion or violence the opponent is made to see the larger truth and later feels remorse, ending in deliverance of the delayed justice.

Mahatma Gandhi championed this philosophy at the time he practised law in South Africa. There, people in thousands of Asian origin, suffered inhuman discrimination and were deprived of basic civil rights. They joined him in Satyagraha, underwent sufferings willingly, and persevered painfully to finally win their goal.

In India, Gandhi initiated Satyagraha to restore rights and dignity to unspeakably oppressed sections of the society. The Satyagraha at Champaran, Kheda and in Ahmedabad were instances of this struggle. The agitations here for social reforms gradually transformed into mass
movements and spread nationwide finding mass following across the country.

In Vaikam, Gandhi employed Satyagraha to avail the simple right to walk public roads there. The right to tread paths was basic to any human society like access to salt was. In Guruvayur, people rose in revolt against the derogatory ban on lower castes, who had to keep out of temples. These renowned Sataygrahas and its success opened new horizons for the ideology.

The analysis of a tool so potent, calls for a careful study. Hence the researcher has structured his analysis into three segments.

Segment - A

Kerala, a pristine state at the southernmost tip of the Indian Peninsula, is known much for its scenic splendour as it is for literary and cultural heritage. Highest literacy rate in the country prevails here and the land is noteworthy for harmony even while it harbours country’s most diverse religious and political sects.

However, the past was not so perfect. The nineteenth century Kerala society was notoriously caste-ridden. The castes were broadly divided into two, the savarna (caste-Hindus) and the avarna (non-caste-Hindus). The
steeply graded caste hierarchy had *Malayali* Brahmins or Nambudiris at the helm and the untouchables at the bottom. The other castes layered the rungs in between. *Acharams* or customs presided the institutional workings and social relations. The caste-laden *acharams* reigned so supreme that even Governmental interference dared not come in the way.

Kerala for long fostered caste system in its most oppressive form. ‘*ThendaV* i.e. untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability imposed on lower castes or the human ‘pollutants’. Untouchability, a grounded practice of Kerala stung through social groups of all kinds without exception. It made deep divisions within divisions. It is only understandable why Swami Vivekananda likened Kerala to a lunatic asylum. Practices here seemed to suggest that those born to certain castes emit ‘human pollution’ and that such contamination is conveyed even from a considerable distance.

And this notion gave rise to cruel prohibitions. Ban on the use of public utilities like roads, wells, *dharmasalas*, markets, schools and hospitals and conveyance like ferry - boats and railway carriages, motor -buses, hotels, were among such. The lower castes were disallowed entry into religious buildings and places like temples, *madoms* etc. Even *theendal* signboards on Governmental buildings and public places proclaimed such prohibitions.
As we all know, education is a universally accepted solution to implement social justice. It melts down inequalities and makes way for a social order based on freedom, equality and fairness. This is why from vedic times; education has been emphasized as a pathway to enlightenment, enrichment and elevated status. The priestly or ruling classes knew this very well. Thus they strategically prohibited education to the underprivileged ensuring that the centuries old exploitive order continued transcending generations. So vehement were they in guarding the source to education that anyone attempting access to the disallowed paid with their limbs and sometimes lives.

The coming of British upturned this proposition. Education in English was now available to anyone inclined. New thinking awakened. Newer horizons opened up. There was change in the air.

Thanks to English education, the universal outlook and world vision ruffled the thinking of the educated elites in all castes. The ideas of human rights and human dignity hounded their conscience. Irrespective of religion and caste radical changes were visible. A number of caste associations were formed.

The caste association empowered its members in so many ways. Such
social empowerment resulted in the demand of social legislations to greater
devs. Self-vitalizing programmes were well-received and attained
remarkable success. The associations made all efforts to eliminate
untouchability. All castes made these moves. In Travancore, they drew
attention of the provincial administration to the sad state of social affairs.
Sree Moolam Popular Assembly of Travancore too was presented with the
case. Unfortunately the social emancipation movements initiated by the
caste associations went on parallel and mutually contradictory.

T.K. Madhavan demanded in 1919, and again in 1921 in the
Assembly the freedom of movement through the public roads by removing
theendal-palakas. T.K. Madhavan leader of the S.N.D.P. yogam, was
forbidden permission even to raise the matter in the Assembly. This was an
eye opener. The disgusted T.K Madhavan realized the situation and called
for greater pressure that only charisma of a widely acknowledged leader
could bring. T. K. Madhavan proceeded to meet Mahatma Gandhi.

A triumphant Mahatma Gandhi had returned from South Africa,
wielding a new lantern, a unique light. And in its transforming rays, the
Indian National Congress got a new dimension and momentum. His
passionate urges to freedom movement echoed in the elite echelons and
under-privileged populace with equal fervour. And from the strength of his
aura, sprouted hopes for others to break free from the fetters that shackled
their limbs and lives.

Mahatma Gandhi saw the once vedic land now teeming with helpless
ignorant masses simply because of their colour. From the day he plunged
into the vortex of the racial politics of Natal, Gandhi blamed race
discrimination. He blamed untouchability as a heinous crime against
humanity. He included the abolition of untouchability as an integral part of
the freedom movement. Independence of India would be worthless if the
evil of untouchability remained, he said. As a true *sanatani* he didn’t admit
untouchability as part of Hinduism. He substantiated his argument through
enormous ancient scripts and proved that Hinduism is built upon a solid
ground of human compassion and equality.

Satyagraha, the cynosure of Gandhian thought provided a new mode
of agitation, without causing bitterness or enmity, which provided an
opportunity to the weak and strong alike to fight injustice and get back their
legitimate rights. Satyagraha was successfully used by Mahatma Gandhi in
many parts of South Africa. The validity of Gandhi’s philosophy stemmed
from the presence of goodness of man. At a period in India’s history when
violent struggle seemed inevitable, Gandhi showed that it was possible to
use another kind of force - the soul-force. He proved that a resolution can
be feasible through truth, love and non-violence. By violence nobody wins but everybody loses everything. Gandhi took efforts to convert the people to the path of love instead of hate. Satyagraha replaces violence with self-abnegation. Through heart-felt prayers, self-sacrifice; it brings forth a ‘change of heart’ in the individuals which leads to social change.

T.K. Madhavan met Gandhi at Tirunelveli and solicited his support for resolving the age-old problem. Gandhi’s inspiring message had an electrifying effect not only on Madhavan but the entire population of Kerala. The savarna Hindus walked to the forefront of the social emancipation and criticized the anachronistic distinctions that offended the dignity of man in our land.

The Vaikam Satyagraha, targeted to secure the civil rights for the depressed classes, was a well-organized movement. It captured nation-wide attention in the 1920s. The freedom to walk through public roads around the Shiva temple at Vaikam had been long denied to avarnas. Christians and Muslims did not face the ban.

At the Kokanada A.I.C.C. meeting (1923), T.K. Madhavan along with Sardar K.M. Panikkar and K.P. Kesava Menon succeeded in convincing the urgency to eradicate untouchability. Consequently, Congress
included this in its constructive programmes and empowered the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee (K.P.C.C.) to take up the task. Enthusiastic support reached Vaikam from across the country. The Akalis of Punjab opened a free kitchen for the satyagrahis at Vaikam. E.V Ramaswami Naicker came from Tamil Nadu with his followers to offer Satyagraha. Sree Narayana Guru, who showed little interest in Indian National Congress, came forward to support the Vaikam Satyagraha. Gandhi monitored Satyagraha at its every stage.

In the Vaikam Satyagraha, barriers broke-down and the savarnas joined hands with avarnas. All parallel social emancipation movements merged into one main stream. Since Satyagraha succeeds only on spiritual conversion, Gandhi believed a ‘change of heart’ among orthodoxy would eventually happen. He contended that ‘change of heart’ is not instilled by arguments but by opening of mind to other’s suffering. On the advice of Gandhi the K.P.C.C. decided to organize a savarna jatha from Vaikam to Thiruvananthapuram and another from Suchindram to Thiruvananthapuram. Subsequently, it was decided to entrust Mannathu Padmanabhan, the General Secretary of the Nair Service Society to lead the savarna jatha from Vaikam to Thiruvananthapuram. The other jatha from Suchindram to Thiruvananthapuram was led by Emperumal Naidu.
The *savarna jatha* under the leadership of Mannathu Padmanabhan received overwhelming response in the *savarna* citadels and created favourable opinion on the anti-untouchability movement. And this paved the way for entitlement to travel along public roads and enter the temple.

During Satyagraha, Vaikam had to combat monsoon flooding too. Flood water on roads reached waist-high drenching the satyagrahis. The Government got Police to moor boats across the road and stand guard. The plight of the satyagrhaies was truly pathetic but they endured hardships bravely and persisted.

Mahatma Gandhi’s visit to Vaikam elevated Satyagraha to new heights. It imparted a greater confidence in them. Gandhi met the leaders and finally visited the Travancore Regent Maharani. The year long non-violent Vaikam Satyagraha agitation came to a close on 9 March 1925. Then, Gandhi entered into a formal agreement with the Travancore administration and roads used by the non-Hindus around Vaikam temple were thrown open to the *avarnas* as well. Gandhi described the settlement as a ‘bedrock of freedom’.

The famous Sree Krishna temple situated at Guruvayur in the Malabar District served as the second stage where removal of
untouchability unfurled. Since the roads leading to the temple were prohibited to *avarnas*, it seemed far-fetched for the social reformers to demand Temple Entry. The success of Vaikam Satyagraha encouraged these activists more.

The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee passed a resolution for Temple Entry on 2 August 1931. This irked Zamorin of Calicut, the trustee of the Guruvayur temple. K. Kelappan inaugurated the Temple Entry Satyagraha at Guruvayur temple premises on 1 November 1931. Gandhi watched the Guruvayur Satyagraha with keen interest and tried to persuade orthodoxy by truth and rationale. But all the reasoning fell on deaf ears. When situation seemed impossible, Kelappan initiated a fast unto death to seek justice. Arrests and maltreatment of the satyagrahis failed to hush the situation; the fervour of agitation only rose with passing moments.

Women are a great source of strength in any culture. An important feature of the Vaikam and the Guruvayur Satyagrahas was the huge involvement of women and children. They took part in the *jathas, bhajans*, etc. to conscientise the people. Women too offered Satyagraha. Thus Satyagraha brought about a common platform where men and women stood equal.
On Mahatma Gandhi’s advice Kelappan withdrew the fast. In November 1932, Gandhi advised the leaders to conduct a public opinion poll. As expected, the majority savarnas of the region recorded their opinion in favour of Temple Entry.

The press rendered inestimable support to Satyagraha. They elevated the Satyagraha on nationwide coverage which invoked favourable mood all over the country and played a great role in conscientising the people at grass root level.

Guruvayur Satyagraha also opened a new chapter by inaugurating Satyagraha at individual level. It inspired individuals to initiate actions for ‘change of heart’ in their immediate surroundings.

Segment - B

Satyagraha revolves around the basic good that lingers inside every human being - the essence of existence of this very universe. It is the law of nature. But for this truth, life on this planet would have long ceased to exist.

Satyagraha came to be globally accepted as the only means to fight for the millions of the oppressed - to find help, to win equality and legitimate rights. It provided foot-hold to the ones who could afford no capital or muscle power but possessed soul-force and determined courage.
Thus Mahatma Gandhi’s Satyagraha emerged as hope for all those who lost or risked their pride, self respect and rights. A salient feature of this weapon was its ability to establish peaceful co-existence and tolerance in the social milieu.

To measure success or defeat of an ideology, it should be reviewed against its historical background - the milestones that moulded it. Satyagraha sprouted in an environment of resent, in protest against the mighty imperialism that sought to bring the whole world under its governance. And everywhere they created divisions in the society. In South Africa, the racially prejudiced British rulers discriminated the blacks and alienated them from the mainstream. Satyagraha emerged as a ray of hope to these long sufferers of hurts and humility. Satyagraha served as a shield and sword for the poor.

The relevance of Satyagraha in the social renaissance movement of Kerala bears significance in this regard. For greater understanding, the social and political history of ancient Kerala is to be reckoned with.

One side of the society represented by the ruling class, who prioritised keeping obnoxious practices as law of the land. On the receiving end stood, a suppressed, fatalistic, poor class who were not only ignorant of
their rights, but lived with a manacled mindset and fear complex. They resigned themselves to their fate and accepted abysmal penury and neglect.

First of all social-reform movements in Kerala aimed at winning fundamental rights for these unfortunate brethren. Like in South Africa, the Kerala struggles too targeted the ruling class that denied the basic rights to the backward. Gandhi unified various strata of society to form a common platform against the oppressors. This merging of divisive factions was a turning point.

**Satyagraha - an educational tool**

Satyagraha served to be an educative force. Let us examine how Satyagraha systematically charts at first to bring about a change of social attitudes, culturally defined role expectations and behavioral patterns of people. This then gives a direction, a direction to set objective. Such moulding is achieved through persistent persuasion and education. Awakened and intelligent subjects are the cutting-edge of the satyagraha weapon.

In Kerala, Satyagraha eliminated fear from the minds of the oppressed replacing it with realization that they were not an accursed lot but lovable creations of the divine power. Gandhi’s unique success lay in
mustering support of the upper stratum too in this direction. The belief that all human beings are but manifestations of the same divine power gained acceptance. Gandhi created a new mind-set, the preparedness to dine and co-exist peacefully. Hence Satyagraha transformed Kerala into a harmonious land.

**The Satyagrahis and their Principles**

Let us find out how far the satyagrahis actually imbibed the principles in letter and spirit. It is clear from the study of Vaikam and Guruvayur Satyagrahas that the satyagrahis exercised restraint. They waited for the spiritual and ethical transformation of the high-caste superiors, patiently and prayfully ignoring the obstacles on the way. They upheld patience as a means to persevere.

The genesis of the word Satyagraha is metaphysical. The first lessons of Satyagraha is to impart training for the mind, attaining absolute conquest of mind. Satyagraha triumphs when physical body absorbs the power of the soul. The body together with soul forms a single entity. On this level, there is no pain and afflictions. Thus Satyagraha provided transcendental powers to man to rise above trials and tribulations, comforts and sorrow. Hence, the satyagrahis surged ahead irrespective of sun or shower, flood or drought.
This affirms the theory of modern science which explains the phenomenon that how mental-power can enable a man to walk over burning embers.

The satyagrahis imbibed the spiritual principle that the God alone can transform hearts. The faith that there exists a God to put an end to their travails lend moral courage to persevere even in the toughest situations. They carried out Satyagraha like a religious sacrament performed before God. As a consequence, their body and mind also were hallowed. The satyagrahis fervently observed the code of conduct Gandhi enunciated for them.

**Satyagraha and Soul-force**

Satyagraha postulates that the veins carry a stream of morality that runs through each human. So when soul-force confronts, even the worst of the lot will at some point encounter that morality and the person transforms. Gandhi asserted great faith in love as a potent weapon of social transformation. Love enables one to overcome all the divisive and destructive emotions in the society. It transforms the most hard-hearted and intransigent persons. Indeed such love for fellow-men disarmed a formidable section of high society in Kerala which once held that armament was their birth right and privilege.
Satyagraha pitches on voluntary change like the ‘change of heart’ among high castes for the well-being of the downtrodden. These privileged oppressors, when confronted with ‘truth’ of the situation, took upon themselves the social upliftment of the oppressed. The Gandhian doctrine that social reform can only be founded on pillars of truth and non-violence became a reality in Kerala.

**Satyagraha as a religious obligation**

It was a master-stroke of genius on the part of Gandhi that he confined the Satyagraha to the religious structure of Hinduism exclusively and it effected a purge in the society. He looked forward to the future. Though there appears no direct link between religion and protection of human rights, a careful analysis of the situation indicates how social malaise was indeed rooted in religious superstitions. Hence, a religious purge was essential to unknot the problem. However, it did not lead to a conflict between faith and its negation, since the conservatives did not find any support in the emerging scenario, thanks to Gandhi’s insight.

**Satyagraha- a glorious unifier**

Satyagraha can be evaluated as an all-pervasive and comprehensive agitational method involving entire population - young and old. Women too
are Important participants and practitioners of this ideology. Often, women were victims of violent crimes and aggression. Satyagraha empowers women with collective support to take up their cause. Satyagraha lends dignity to women. It entrusts them with responsibilities. Mahatma Gandhi elevated the women folk from kitchen to the centre-stage in the renaissance of Kerala. Satyagraha turned out to be a platform for women empowerment. Indeed women occupying positions of pride in modern Kerala owe a debt of gratitude to Mahatma Gandhi for the possibility they enjoy today.

**Satyagraha involved luminaries**

Vaikam and Guruvayur Satyagrahas caught national limelight and great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Kasturba Gandhi, C. Rajagopalachary, Mahadeva Desai and Ramaswamy Naicker came to Kerala to offer Satyagraha. Their presence and participation gave added strength to the oppressed to secure their legitimate rights.

**Satyagraha, the violence-repellant**

Satyagrahas in Kerala proved that stable and perpetual peace is impossible through violence and hatred. It achieved social agreements without humiliating social groups on either side. It worked towards the transformation of minds to transform social relations. Change had to
originates first from within. Thus Satyagraha sought to change hearts at individual level to attain a changed social order in the larger context.

**Segment - C**

Memories enliven human life. Only a nation which cherishes its past memories can maintain its history, heritage and national culture. The interpretation and recollection of memories lend the study of history its unique character and distinction.

Research studies of history should be able to interpret past events to suit the situations, needs and aspirations of the present. The knowledge and experience of the antiquity give power and energy to us and the lessons we derive from the past form the fuel for the present life. Therefore dumping the past events in the darkness of oblivion will impede the onward march of human society. Research studies should, therefore awaken past memories.

We should evaluate contemporary state of affairs of Kerala society against the backdrop of these ideas. A society which was liberated from the bondage of thousands of years should derive lessons from experiences. But unfortunately, the present society of Kerala which revels in the illusionary glory and fantasy of the present conveniently forgets these principles which sustained life through ages.
The contemporary society nestles with adoration many of the old beliefs and practices discarded by Kerala during the refinement period. Many values which stood the test of time are uprooted. The society does not exercise its intellectual abilities, but evinces its intellectual bankruptcy. The analytical ability of the intelligentsia is not utilized properly. The sense of equality which the society won through hectic struggles gives in to narrow racialism and communalism. Antiquated religious rites and rituals and communalism raise their ugly heads again. Superstitions and god men rule the roost in the society. Research studies should aim at regaining and bringing to a sharp focus the renaissance values.

Hence the study is relevant for the following facts:

(i) In Kerala, even though the Satyagrahis and philanthropists won the battle for social justice, the social reformers failed to remove the debris of the old social order. The once abandoned orthodox thinking is sneaking in steadily. Casteism is returning and thriving once again. The different caste groups are building isolated strongholds.

(ii) Religious fundamentalism is back. Political and social wisdom is neglected. There are subtle fears and strife everywhere. Peace is longed for. A free and equal society is elusive. Scientific approaches
and rational thinking are taking a back seat in modern Kerala, recalling the times before the Satyagrahas.

(iii) When inequalities polarize, the society is in crisis and it is time to adopt the Gandhian methodology to overcome the crisis.