Emancipation of the majority of Kerala populace from the evils of an ancient but inhuman social order speaks volumes on the power of *ahimsa*. Gandhi, embraced a strictly non-violent, people-centred strategy, in full conformity with the values of Satyagraha.

The rare insight into the roots of societal evils makes Gandhi different. He aimed at the liberation of the downtrodden giving them a decent existence, equal opportunities and justice.

Sensitive to the social scenario of Kerala, he never tried to alienate any dominant group. Instead, he solicited their co-operation and ‘change of heart’ through a unique approach, the Satyagraha. Consequently, the *savarna* minds were purified.

Through Vaikam and Guruvayur Satyagrahas, the conservatives were awakened to facts of their inhuman attitudes that required correction. For this Gandhi worked a consensus without sacrificing principles.

The prayers and self-sacrifice of the satyagrahis persuaded the conservatives to realize the basic justice in their demands. Since the law of human species is to live and let live, a congenial atmosphere in the social
environment of Kerala was created. This enabled the society to live without any mutual distrust in the post-Satyagraha period.

The monster of untouchability was ousted first from the minds of individuals and then from, the society itself. An amicable social habitat was created by removing the remotest possibility of humiliation amid savarnas. Satyagraha that strived for ‘change of heart’ alone can achieve this miracle.

‘Change of heart’ can work miracles in any society. It can be applied universally from families to the entire world. It can even remedy the risk of nuclear holocaust in a global context. It can also stall the increasing cleavage of economic disparities. A situation where the oppressor and oppressed join together is still a distant dream. But it is feasible through the Satyagraha.

Findings of the Study

Satyagraha the unique way of protest and moral purification proved its potential in resolving the social conflicts during the last century. In distant South Africa, the African National Congress and its leader Nelson Mandela practised Gandhian way of politics to end apartheid and in the United States of America, Dr.Martin Luther King Jr., fought for equal civic liberties in a non-violent manner.
This method of agitation served as a catalyst for the social transformation of Kerala society in the twentieth century. In a society consisting of divergent social groups, Satyagraha served as a platform for unity. It enabled rival social groups to assemble together for a common cause under the aura of Mahatma Gandhi.

With the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi in the social emancipation movement, the entire Kerala society at all rungs, rallied behind him for the genuine cause. The savarnas held deep admiration for Gandhi. So at his call, they came to the fore-front of the reform movement instantly to undo what their ancestors had handed down. Satyagraha thus harmonized the divergent caste groups within the fold of Hindu society for a new social order.

After Indian independence the Satyagraha became the theory, practice and moral force of liberation. By eschewing violence and adhering to ahimsa, the Satyagraha has provided the suitable climate for the growth of parliamentary democracy in India.

Testing of Hypotheses

The study highlights Satyagraha as the sole potent peaceful method for resolving social conflicts. Since Satyagraha aimed at moral persuasion,
it is feasible to convert the brute nature of the individual souls and harmonise the conflicting minds in the society.

In order to verify this, six hypotheses mentioned in the introductory chapter was formulated and verified. These hypotheses nos. 2, 3, 4 were analysed and validated in the second chapter. Hypothesis no. 1 is examined in chapter three. Hypothesis no. 5 is analysed in chapter four and five and found to be true. Hypothesis no. 6 is analysed in chapter six.

On the one hand the Satyagraha promoted the self-respect and confidence of the lower classes. On the other, it caused a transformation of mindsets of the upper classes. They repented centuries of old sinful customs providing solace and sanctuary for the downtrodden. Thus the lower classes were purgated physically and the upper classes mentally. Though this enlightenment came in late and after thousands of years, peace and fellow-feeling became the norm through the propagation of Gandhian thoughts.

**Suggestions and Recommendations**

Studies like this are imperative when the great pillars of stability and human dignity are jolted by the perversities of divisive forces, be it in the name of caste, religion or race. The researcher perceives a need for such
studies to promote fellow feeling among all classes of men. In this context the following suggestions are made for future studies:

1. Studies pointing at the meaninglessness of caste divisions which are merely the handy work of a few men - and not of God.

2. The central force that paved the way for the reformation in society was of course, the initiative of the lower classes, but even more, was the commitment of the upper classes. In-depth studies may be initiated about the contribution made by the so called higher castes in the making of modern Kerala.

3. Further, studies may be encouraged on Gandhian precepts which offer panacea to the ills of modern world.

_Mahatmas_ are great shady trees sprouted by the almighty in times of crisis - when the world is stormed by materialistic whirlwinds. They stand as Lord’s protectors of the earth. Thus we have had Buddha, Mahavira, Jesus Christ, Mohammed Nabi and the like as trees that provided shade and solace and saved the earth from ruin. On similar note, nature blessed us with Mahatma Gandhi who victoriously struggled for equality of his countrymen with his campaign of love and self sacrifice. After all, earth would have long ceased to exist but for the shades of trees that shelter and nourish it.