CHAPTER – IV

SATYAGRAHA:
NON-VIOLENCE IN ACTION
The Concept of Satyagraha

Gandhi applied the principle of non-violence in his struggle against political and social injustice. Gandhi developed a unique method of non-violent revolution primarily to fight against political and social evils. He preferred the Sanskrit word "Satyagraha" to describe his method. Satyagraha is a combination of two Sanskrit words "satya" meaning truth and "agraha" meaning devotion or pursuit. Thus, "Satyagraha" means the "Pursuit of Truth" or “Devotion to Truth”. A person practising satyagraha is a satyagrahi, a seeker of truth. Satyagraha is a pursuit of truth as different from possession of truth. Gandhi reasoned that one who claims to possess the truth would be dogmatic and intolerant of opposing viewpoints. A seeker of truth, on the contrary, will be tolerant and open-minded. Gandhi emphasized that Truth and non-violence constitute the essence of satyagraha. A satyagrahi strives to achieve correct insight into the real nature of the situation by ascertaining the facts and principles involved. Further, a satyagrahi is required to target his fight against the evil and not against the evil-doer, the person who happens to be his opponent. Beck elucidates the point as follows:
We may hate an injustice for the harm that it brings to people, but we must always love all the people involved out of respect for human dignity. *Satyagraha* attempts to awaken an awareness of the truth about the injustice in the perpetrators, and by *ahimsa* this is done without hurting them. Since humans are subject to error and we cannot be sure we are judging accurately. We must refrain from punishing. Thus *ahimsa* is an essential safeguard in the quest for truth and justice.¹

A *satyagrahi* seeks to fight in a spirit of peace and love, by observing non-violence of the mind. Gandhi brought the two ideas i.e. ‘firmness in truth’ and ‘resisting evil with good’ into a coherent system and named it as *Satyagraha*. By his refusal to submit to the wrong or to cooperate with it in any way, the *satyagrahi* asserts this truth. Throughout his confrontation with the evil, he must adhere to non-violence, for to employ violence would be to lose the correct insight. A *satyagrahi* always warns his opponents of his intentions; *satyagraha* forbids any tactic suggesting the use of secrecy to one’s advantage.

The ‘terms *Satyagraha* and non-violent action’ though often used synonymously, do not actually refer to the exact same thing. *Satyagraha* is really one special form of non-violent action. Non-violent action is a broader concept and *satyagraha* is a form of non-violent action. Much of what is called non-violent action would not qualify as *Satyagraha*.

¹ S. Beck, *The Way To Peace: Mahatma Gandhi’s Non-violent Revolution*  
http://www.san.beck.org/index.html
When Gandhi was formulating the principles of his non-violent movement, two phrases "Passive Resistance" and "Civil Disobedience" were already in currency. But these nomenclatures did not appeal to Gandhi. He said that there was nothing passive or disobedient about the movement. Satyagraha involves more than civil disobedience both in its range of application and its depth of commitments. Satyagraha seeks to conquer through conversion, not through coercion. In a non-violent struggle, there is no defeat and no victory but rather a new harmony. Gandhi clearly distinguishes satyagraha from passive resistance as follows:

I have drawn the distinction between passive resistance as understood and practised in the West and satyagraha before I had evolved the doctrine of the latter to its full logical and spiritual extent. I often used 'passive resistance' and 'satyagraha' as synonymous terms: but as the doctrine of satyagraha developed, the expression 'passive resistance' ceases even to be synonymous, as passive resistance has admitted of violence as in the case of suffragettes and has been universally acknowledged to be a weapon of the weak. Moreover passive resistance does not necessarily involve complete adherence to truth under every circumstance. Therefore it is different from satyagraha in three essentials: Satyagraha is a weapon of the strong; it admits of no violence under
any circumstance whatever; and it ever insists upon truth. I think I have now made the distinction perfectly clear.\footnote{From a letter, 25.1.1920}

Gandhi makes it clear that \textit{Satyagraha} is not a method of the weak, but a weapon of the strong and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form. Gandhi elucidates three necessary conditions for its success:

1) The \textit{Satyagrahi} should not have any hatred in his heart against the opponent.

2) The issue must be true and substantial.

3) The \textit{Satyagrahi} must be prepared to suffer till the end for his cause.

Gandhi emphasized self-suffering rather than inflicting suffering on others. By undergoing suffering to reveal the injustice the \textit{Satyagrahi} strives to reach the conscience of people. \textit{Satyagraha} does not try to coerce anyone but rather to convert by persuasion, to reach the reason through the heart. \textit{Satyagraha} appeals to informed public opinion for reform. In the political field the struggle, on behalf of the people, often leads to challenging the unjust government or its laws by taking resort to non-cooperation or civil disobedience. When petitions and other modes of persuasion fail, then a \textit{Satyagrahi} may break an unjust law and willingly suffer the penalty in order to call attention to the injustice. However, a true \textit{satyagrahi} should not hide or try to escape from the law like a criminal, rather he or she openly and publicly disobeys the law as a protest, fully expecting to be punished. In Hind
Swaraj Gandhi wrote, "It is contrary to our manhood if we obey laws repugnant to our conscience." Satyagraha requires self-discipline, self-control, and self-purification, and Satyagrahis must always make the distinction between the evil and the evildoer. They must overcome evil with good, hatred with love, anger with patience, untruth with truth, and violence with ahimsa.

Satyagraha is often translated as "soul force". Gandhi’s basic assumption is that man is essentially a spirit. One must strive to know one’s true spiritual nature. The spirit is the principle of unification as matter is the principle of division. While our egoistic tendencies are based on our bodily identity, our altruistic motivations come from identification with the spirit within. So one who knows what the spirit is, knows what truth is. According to Gandhi, the truth is that all men are brothers. The same divinity, the same spirit is present in every human being. Human beings differ from one another in their physical compositions. The spirit within remains the same. Realization of this truth is the ideal of self-realization. Both men and women, and even children, may participate in satyagraha movement provided they have realized this eternal spiritual truth. The satyagraha movement demands exceptional courage that can come only from spiritual strength and the power of love. Gandhi realized that it takes more courage to face the weapons of death without fighting than it does to fight and kill. From his experience Gandhi believed that those who wished to serve their country through Satyagraha should "observe perfect chastity, adopt poverty, follow truth, and cultivate fearlessness." It is through fearlessness that we can have the courage to renounce all harmful
weapons, filling and surrounding ourselves with the spiritual protection of a loving and peaceful consciousness.\(^3\)

Gandhi elucidates specific guidelines for *Satyagraha* and civil disobedience. A *Satyagrahi* will not harbour anger but will suffer the opponent's anger and assaults without retaliation. However, he or she will not submit out of fear of punishment nor obey any order given in anger. *Satyagrahis* will voluntarily submit to arrest and will not resist confiscation of their property. *Satyagrahis* will not insult or curse their opponents nor participate in shouting slogans which are contrary to the spirit of love. One imperative is that only specific, unjust laws are to be broken. According to Gandhi, civil disobedience does not mean flouting all laws. According to Gandhi only people with a high regard for the law are qualified for civil disobedience. Only action by such people could convey the depth of their concern and win respect. Gandhi ruled out direct coercion, such as trying to physically block someone. Even use of hostile and abusive language is forbidden. Destroying property is unacceptable.

*Satyagraha* can take the shape of non-cooperation or civil disobedience or both. Non-cooperation is a method of registering protest when a person or a group can no longer, in good conscience, participate in or support a government that has become oppressive, unjust, and violent. Although *Satyagrahis* do not attack the wrongdoer, it is their responsibility not to promote or support the wrong actions. Thus a *satyagrahi* should withdraw from government positions, renounce

\(^3\) Beck, *op. cit.*
government programs and services, and refuse to pay taxes to the offending
government. While challenging the power of the state in this way satyagrahis have
the opportunity to learn greater self-reliance. Gandhi held that non-cooperation
with an unjust government was not only an inherent right but as much a duty as is cooperation with a just government.

Non-violent Commitment

Satyagraha prohibits violence, both physical and psychological violence. It is an attitude toward the opponent in which the opponent is seen not as an enemy. It is an active caring for the opponent, with their welfare considered. Intent of non-violent action is not to force the opponent to make changes against their will by coercion. It is an attempt to change the opponent's mind and win them over to the other side by conversion.

Some people adopt non-violence as a tactical move. They would apply it only in certain situations and occasions. But for Gandhi, satyagraha consists in unconditionally renouncing violence in all circumstances. The commitment to non-violence is sometimes based on expediency, such as superior force of the opponent and lack of weapons. Some argue for it on practical or humanitarian grounds -- saying that relative human costs and results of non-violent action make it a basically superior method. Adoption of non-violence as a tactical move has certain weaknesses: (i) it will be discarded at the first available opportunity, (ii) and it
places the authority in a more advantageous position to suppress a passive resister taking the advantage of his weakness. Gandhi does not approve any such move. For Gandhi, non-violent resistance is a commitment based on moral and religious principles. *Satyagraha* is a method of the strong, the spiritually enlightened person. It requires greater strength and courage than violent agitation. *Satyagraha* as a method has certain recompenses. It makes a *satyagrahi* stronger day by day and along with the increase of one’s strength, the method becomes more and more effective. The strength of *Satyagraha* lies not on the number of the *Satyagrahi* or on the possession of armed power. In fact, the strength of *satyagraha* depends on *Satyagrahi*’s firm faith on the ultimate victory of *Satya* and *Ahimsa*. “A *satyagrahi* depends only on truth and his capacity to suffer for truth”.\(^4\) It reflects the idea that *satyagraha* is not a weapon of the weak who will succumb to violence as he lacks the courage to stand against untruth with truth and non-violence. *Satyagraha*, being the method of soul-force or non-violence, can never be overpowered or suppressed by any other method or power.

From the fact that passive resistance does not, in principle, rule out the likelihood of violence, it can be inferred that passive resistance does not presuppose that it is necessary to love one’s opponent. The readiness to be violent, if required, against an opponent can give rise to hatred for the opponent. On the contrary, not only hatred has no place in *satyagraha*, in fact it will be a positive breach of its guiding principle. Practice of passive resistance in the political context shows us that even if a passive resister does abstain from using external

weapons, he or she, as such, is not free from internal violence i.e. violence in thought. A passive resister abstains from using arms against others not out of love for others, but due to the circumstantial disadvantages of using arms. Satyagraha, on the contrary, necessarily implies non-violence in thought, word and deed. An action will be mechanical and spiritless unless there is a harmony between one's thought and its expression in words and concrete action. Thus, Gandhi rightly emphasized on inner purity of mind as a precondition of launching satyagraha. In essence, it can be said that in passive resistance there is latitude of using arms when the suitable occasion arise, whereas in satyagraha, use of any coercive power is completely prohibited even in the most favourable circumstances. It will be a contradiction in terms for a Satyagrahi to call himself, on the one hand, a man of universal love and be willing, on the other hand, to use force at the most sympathetic conditions. In Satyagraha there should not be the remotest thought of injuring others in any form. Considering the fundamental differences between the two, Gandhi observed that, “Satyagraha differs from passive resistance as the North Pole from the South".  

In essence one can say that the doctrine of passive resistance is not based on the principle of ahimsa. As such, a passive resister lacks the character to stand and bear sufferings for the sake of a good cause non-violently without any malice towards anyone. On the other hand, Satyagraha is not a mere political policy but is a method of life as a whole, which is to be wielded by an individual. It is an active force to bring social, religious and political changes. In short, it is a method of

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5 M.K. Gandhi, Young India, Nov. 1919.
revitalizing the society through a process of transvaluation of life. In 1926, Gandhi wrote to W. Wilhelm Waterberg:

My non-violence resistance is a civilized resistance on a different plane. Non-violence resistance to evil does not mean absence of any resistance whatsoever but it means not to resist evil with evil but with good. Resistance, therefore, is transferred to a higher and absolutely effective plane.6

Consequently, a follower of such a resistance cannot afford to be a mere onlooker of evil or to ignore evil.

*Satyagraha* is sometimes confused with civil disobedience. On several occasions, Gandhi also used them interchangeably. However, a thorough study of both the methods reveals the fundamental difference. Gandhi, too, makes it clear that *satyagraha* is a separate doctrine. The term ‘civil disobedience’ was first coined by Thoreau. The doctrine of civil disobedience is therefore mainly associated with his name. Thoreau formulated the doctrine as a method of abolishing unjust laws. This idea of civil disobedience was based on the principle that individual is superior to any institution. Whereas the individual has a conscience the institution has no such corresponding thing. The presence of conscience makes a man, man first and subject later. The social institutions are built only when individuals choose to make themselves subject. Conscience about

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the rightness of laws is unchangeable and superior to the state or authority. He points out:

Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience? ...must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then? I think that we should be men first and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right ...  

From this it might appear that Thoreau’s idea is similar to that of Gandhi. Gandhi also maintained that man has conscience and the laws, which are repugnant to the individual conscience, should not be obeyed. Obedience to them is contrary to our human nature. However, a close look at Gandhi’s position will bring out an important difference between his position and Thoreau’s position. Conscience for Thoreau is a power of discerning right from wrong. Since institution cannot be said to have conscience, they are not capable of distinguishing right from wrong. It is only the privilege of man to be able to do so. For Gandhi, the presence of conscience is actually the presence of eternal moral law in the individual and as such conscience becomes moral in character. The voice of conscience, when heard becomes irresistible. Consequently even against all opposition man cannot help acting on the path discovered through conscience. It is through conscience that

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man realizes the organic unity of man and nature. Thus the voice of conscience becomes a matter of duty for man. The doctrine of Satyagraha is already rooted in such a kind of notion of the conscience. One of the significant implications of this concept is that Satyagraha does not remain confined to only political field, as is the case with civil disobedience. It extends to all human activities. When viewed in this manner, it is not difficult to think that Gandhi’s doctrine of Satyagraha is an development over Thoreau’s civil disobedience. Thoreau had limited concern, such as breach of some statutory laws and the revenue laws. Gandhi’s concern was more expansive and deeper.

Non-cooperation, like civil disobedience, is another aspect of Satyagraha. In the broader sense of the term, non-cooperation stands for withdrawal of cooperation from all evil practices in society as well as of government. Gandhi in this context made a distinction between civil disobedience in a narrower sense which has limited political implication i.e. individual’s right to resist unjust laws, and non-cooperation that presupposes the idea of duty of a social group to withdraw cooperation from unjust laws of the state or social institutions. Thus it bears the impression of social action. Non-cooperation is intended as a way of preventing the chain of action at all levels of society arising out of a basic evil action. Because each action performed by an individual is directly or indirectly linked with action of others, cooperation would mean keeping the chain of action and reaction going on. To non-cooperate is to bring a break in the chain. Specially when a chain reaction is taking place, because of initial mistaken action; the only way to prevent it from further growth is the non-participation with it, i.e. by non-cooperation.
When non-cooperation and civil disobedience are used in the Gandhian scheme of thought, both the methods of resisting evil should become free from the coercive element. Usually non-cooperation and civil disobedience are not always acts of non-violence. Since satyagraha necessarily implies non-violence, civil disobedience and non-cooperation as two branches of Satyagraha, are qualitatively different from the way they are traditionally conceived. In this context Vinit Haksar rightly observes:

Civil disobedience and non-cooperation, when conducted according to Gandhian principles, do not constitute a threat or coercion in any evil sense. Rather they involve a refusal to cooperate with or assist an evil policy, and an offer to cooperate on honourable and just terms …

From the above discussion, it can be assumed that it would be wrong to equate Gandhi’s Satyagraha with passive resistance, civil disobedience or non-cooperation. Satyagraha, as understood by Gandhi, is such a wider theory that it can accommodate all these as its branches.

Satyagraha understood in the sense of a non-violent mass action becomes a revolutionary doctrine. Prior to Gandhi, no one could think of applying the non-violent method of resistance in such a large scale. Gandhi, by his theory and practice, amply demonstrated that the most successful method in the field of socio-political change is satyagraha. Thus it became a unique contribution of Gandhi to

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moral and political thinking. Prior to Gandhi most of the thinkers, in the east and the west, argued for the necessity and justifiability of coercion by legitimizing it through different ideologies. In the process most of the political thinkers have legitimized the concept of ‘power’ and ‘authority’ through various systems in the name of individual rights, common good or self-preservation. Politics is generally understood as a “struggle for power”. In other words, the concept of power is closely linked with the concept of politics. Specially in the modern civilization, all political institutions have merely become the instruments for the pursuit of power, directly or indirectly. The coercive or violent power exercised by various governments is so much prevalent that no one could imagine that a non-violent movement would be able to match it. The competition among the different countries of the globe to be more and more powerful has made this world a miserable one. It is increasingly becoming unsuitable for human habitation. The show of strength has become the standard way of showing one’s superiority. In the international arena, the attempts to acquire nuclear power or to control the outer space are intended to dominate others with the lever of extra power. Gandhi’s doctrine of satyagraha becomes much more valuable and relevant today to counter the craze for acquiring more and more coercive power.

If the world is to be saved from mass violence and scientific destruction, if mankind is to be delivered from the menace of a third world war, and if our civilization is to survive and our culture to endure, we must be guided and governed by Gandhi’s politics,
which has its roots in ethics as also in truth and non-violence which are the two basic principles of morality.\(^9\)

In fact Gandhi created a new era by arguing for a moral framework to solve all socio-political problems. Thus he gave a new dimension to politics, by introducing *satyagraha* as a moral technique in the socio-political field. Louis Fischer rightly said, “Gandhi enriched politics with ethics”.\(^10\) In opposition to Gandhi, other political thinkers like Hobbes, Machiavelli, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel etc. argued and defended the necessity of state acquiring coercive power.

Tilak also did not rule out the possibility of using violence in the affairs of society and politics. Regarding Gandhi’s non-violent method he suspected:

... These means are of no use in politics, which is required to change its attitude from time to time. Exalted religious principles or abstract doctrines about truth are not of much value in the present political game. I do not think that *Satyagraha* and fasting will have the least effect upon the mind of our rulers who are adept in political warfare. We must use against them the same means as they use against us and as their tactics change, so must ours.\(^11\)

Thinkers who believed in the use of violence in political thought, considered violence as a necessary means to a noble end, viz., social welfare. It is clear that these thinkers maintain that end justifies the means. Hence, Hobbes,

Locke, Rousseau, Manu, Kautilaya, Tilak and other political thinkers recommended the use of violence as a means in the political field for the achievement of the higher goals.

The notion and use of political power is mostly justified on the ground that man is basically a power-seeking being. Gandhi also shared the idea that the pursuit of power is a basic human characteristic. However, Gandhi could not agree to the point that this basic characteristic is unalterable. The sincere attempts have to be made to alter it and proper methods have to be searched to eliminate this tendency as it is undesirable as well as its consequences are going to be detrimental for society. Once we take power-seeking tendency of man as our beginning, it will inevitably lead to a coercive political system. A coercive or violent political system is inevitably an immoral system. He was, therefore, in complete opposition to all those systems which support, defend and justify the centrality of power in politics. Gandhi advanced the doctrine of *Satyagraha* to replace coercive or violent power by the power of truth or moral power. He held the belief that by instituting the truths at the center of politics, we shall succeed in moralizing or spiritualizing politics.

Gandhi also did not maintain or approve the doctrine of “end justifies the means”. To him, sanctity of means was as valuable as the sanctity of ends. One has to pay greater attention to the desirability and justifiability of means, as it is only the means that will get us our end. Means and end are intimately connected in Gandhi’s thought. He says that, “it is absolutely wrong to say that if the motive is
pure, the means are justified whatever they be. For realizing pure end, means must be pure too”.\(^{12}\) Goodness of an act does not merely rest on motive of the agent, but also on the ways adopted by him to achieve it. A good end cannot justify a bad means. He believed that the relationship between an end and a means is an organic relationship and not merely a structural one. Thus adaptation of different means will result in altering the end. He said:

If I want to deprive you of your watch, I shall have to fight for it. If I want to buy your watch, I shall have to pay for it, and if I want it as a gift, shall have to plead for it, and according to the means I employ, the watch is stolen property, my own property or a donation. Thus we see different results from three different means.\(^{13}\)

Gandhi argues that there is an organic relationship between means and end. He maintained that in his thinking truth and \textit{ahimas} are organically related. Those who accept the end of social welfare cannot accept violence as a means to realize it without committing a contradiction in terms. In simple terms, for realizing a moral aim, the means have to be necessarily moral. The social welfare as an end of any socio-political theory has to be necessarily moral in Gandhi’s scheme and therefore, one is not permitted to use immoral or violent methods to achieve the moral end. Rather, the use of immoral methods will never produce the desired end. \textit{Satyagraha}, therefore, was invented by Gandhi as a means of socio-political change. It rules out the use of violence in any form. It is the unwavering faith in

\(^{13}\) M.K. Gandhi, \textit{Hind Swaraj}, p. 72.
Truth, which finds manifestations in practice in the form of non-violent action, known as *Satyagraha*.

Many people think that ethics is secondary to political power or it is a product whose nature and place is determined by political power. It is undeniable that the use of power generates certain normative rules. Gandhi, however, thought otherwise. In his opinion, acceptance of moral values can also create power. Power, thus created, will be good for individual as well as collective survival. The difference in both kinds of genesis is enormous. In the first case, power as external coercion, is justified to regulate human behaviour in society. In the later case the willing acceptance of moral values builds the moral character of individuals. They, by virtue of their basic commitment to moral values, both in theory and practice, command respect of masses. Masses develop full faith in their leadership. Power, in this sense, is far more desirable than coercion. The obedience to external coercion will last as long as coercion lasts. It is proportionate to the power of man's or the organization's ability to cause fear. It is hoped that what initially is coercion, in due course of time, obedience to power would become a habit. In either case, whether obedience to power is based on fear or habit, it is kept outside the boundaries of human reasoning. It eventually leads us to say that people should not be rationally allowed to raise such questions as “Why should they obey?” and “Whom are they obliged to obey?” In Gandhian sense, there is no necessity to keep human beings under fear or to create psychological compulsions. They should raise queries, think carefully and choose their leaders after a thorough scrutiny. The Gandhian system could be said to be more enduring one as it is based on solid
foundations of reason and morality. Gandhi in the heart of heart wanted to replace the system of coercion by a system of mutual love. Satyagraha was thought to be an ideal method to achieve this end. Gandhi’s success in various movements based on the principles of satyagraha speaks for the efficacy of satyagraha.

Satyagraha depends on one’s knowledge of truth. The knowledge of truth has to be obtained by each individual. Gandhi does not accept the idea of collective knowledge of truth. It leads us to say that satyagraha eventually has to be individualistic in character. The firm belief in the victory of truth and ability to suffer are basic requirements for anyone to be a satyagrahi. Deliberate acceptance of suffering is possible only when there is a complete harmony in thought, speech and action. A complete harmony is established when one’s brute nature is controlled and gradually replaced by ‘soul force’ or ‘love’. It amounts to saying that one has to undergo a process of self-discipline and self-purification. It will make possible for a man to act consciously and non-violently for the sake of truth. Gandhi worked out a detailed programme of practices in order to purify oneself and to inculcate discipline in oneself. The discipline implies becoming the master of one’s self rather than being the slave of one’s habits of tendencies, desires and prejudices. Gandhi was thus making room for the concept of tapas in his theory, as understood in the Indian culture. The ideal person for him must have the qualifications as enunciated in the second chapter of the Gita. A person having thus attained self-control and freed himself from worldly desires is ideally suited for launching satyagraha. One can talk about discipline in various aspects of life. However, the discipline of satyagrahi essentially consists in making oneself
always act in accordance with the moral values of truth and non-violence. The essential vows implied in *Satyagraha* are likely to make a *Satyagrahi* fit to act truthfully and non-violently in any field of the human activity. The training of *Satyagraha* is not based on any external factors. In other words, caste, creed, sex, race, or physical strength—nothing can act as a hindrance in one’s becoming a *satyagrahi*. It is essentially an inner training. A *satyagrahi* willingly internalizes moral values and therefore there is no holidaying from moral values for him. They shape their lifestyle by giving a meaning to life.

Gandhi strongly recommends the necessity of daily practising of all the vows. Regular observance of vows is not to be mistaken for a mechanical performance of it. It is to be understood as a conscious, intelligent practice for achieving moral growth. Vows are necessary to build a moral character of firmness to stand for vindication of moral values in all circumstances in life. “Moral power comes to a man only when he has complied with certain principles.”¹⁴ So vows are not to be taken as a sign of weakness. They are rather the sign of one’s moral strength. As one grows more and more in moral strength by observing vows, his adherence to truth and non-violence becomes more and more steadfast. Gandhi, therefore, gave much importance to the observance of vows. The following are the eleven vows: Truth (*Satya*), Non-violence (*Ahimsa*), Chastity (*Brahmacharya*), Non-possession (*Aparigraha*), Non-stealing (*Asteya*), Bread-labour (*Sharirashrama*), Control of the palate (*Asteya*), Fearlessness (*Sarvatrabhayavarjana*), Equality of all religion (*Sarvadharma Samanatva*), Discarding

untouchability (Sparshabhavana) and Swadeshi. A careful look into the above list will give the idea that these vows constitute not merely a physical and psychical training but leads to a moral discipline in action. A conscious and deliberate cultivation of these virtues will lead to a harmonious and just society. One may disagree with the number of vows or reduce the list by one or two, but the necessity of those vows which lead to a moral growth is integral to the concept of Satyagraha. A Satyagrahi would be successful in obtaining the desired results only if he has trained himself in the prescribed manner. This, in the opinion of Gandhi, is the most meaningful way of bringing a desirable as well as lasting social change. The change in the person brings with him or her the desired social change. A changed person acts like a magnet and thereby, he is capable of influencing several others. The change has to originate from within and create a climate of just society outside. Gandhi could not accept those theories which recommend the change to be brought by external coercion. If each and every man will observe vows consciously and intelligently, then a society consisting of these people will be very close to the ideal society i.e. ‘Ram Rajya’.

An ideal society, in Gandhian sense, would be free from any kind of economic exploitation as the individuals comprising the society would have learnt to sacrifice all their interests for the sake of their brethren. Satyagraha aims to bring about this kind of society into existence through the genuinely trained Satyagrahis. Thus Satyagraha, on the one hand, takes up the wider and central issues of society and politics and on the other hand, begins by affecting a desirable change in individual life.
Gandhi did not strongly support the idea of mass Satyagraha as long as all the people participating in it are not thoroughly trained Satyagrahis. The dangers of its failure are more. Although, theoretically one could conceive the possibility of mass Satyagraha yet in practice, according to Gandhi, extreme precautions must be taken. As long as an individual is not firm in his convictions, he is not fit for mass Satyagraha. In mass Satyagraha slightest deviation from the declared policy by anyone may revive the brute in man. Hence, Gandhi was quite suspicious about the success of mass Satyagraha. Consequently he laid down very stringent conditions for its practice. Satyagraha, when practised at individual level, not only presupposes an enlightened individual but also acts as a magnetic power to create a public sense. The people are drawn to the fact that a Satyagrahi is willing to sacrifice his life to remove injustice or evil practises without any sense of reward, fame or gain for his own. This kind of situation is bound to affect masses. A thinking or consideration of this issue itself will show the beginning of a conversion of people. Satyagraha, in essence is a method of change by conversion, and conversion not by force but by displaying the virtue of self-sacrifice in the cause of social upliftment.

The efficacy of satyagraha in all situations is often questioned. Critics argue that Satyagraha will work provided the opponent also adheres to a certain level of morality. Gandhi however maintained that satyagraha could prevail anywhere because it could convert anyone.

Gandhi first developed his method of non-violent action in South Africa. When he came to South Africa he saw the harsh treatment to which Asians were
subjected. The indentured workers were so harshly treated that they chose to run away from their contracts or commit suicide as a result of the harsh treatment meted out to them by their employers. In 1906 he started the satyagraha movement against the discriminatory laws that were passed by the colonial government of the Transvaal in South Africa. These laws were discriminatory against the Asians. In India the poor farm workers suffered similar treatment. In 1917 the first satyagraha campaign in India was mounted in the indigo-growing district of Champaran. Gandhi instilled in them dignity and a sense of direction. He raised their consciousness about their rights and aroused in them a will to resist the oppression they suffered. Over the following years, fasting and economic boycotts were employed as methods of satyagraha. Satyagraha thus became the guiding philosophy for the Indian people in their fight against British imperialism.

Gandhi challenged the institutional violence of the modern state. He not only recommended refusing military service but also refusing to pay taxes. In addition to citizens' non-cooperating with an evil government, a neutral country also has the obligation to refuse to support or assist a military state or aggressor. Gandhi suggested a non-violent army that could engage in constructive activities, lessen tensions, and even sacrifice their lives to calm mobs and end riots. The qualifications for such a peace brigade would be complete faith in and adherence to non-violence, equal respect for all religions, personal service and good human relations with the community, integrity and impartiality, and anticipation of brooding conflicts. The cost of training and equipping such a peace brigade would be practically nothing compared to the expenses of the modern military
establishment. Gandhi envisioned that a non-violent state would protect itself by not cooperating with any aggressor. Gandhi was concerned that the democracies would adopt the forceful methods; but true democracy must ultimately be non-violent, for violence is an obvious restriction of liberty. Gandhi advises, "Democracy, to be true, should cease to rely upon the army for anything whatsoever. It will be a poor democracy that depends for its existence on military assistance. Military force interferes with the free growth of the mind. It smothers the soul of man." Gandhi observed that armaments are used for greedy exploitation and that the competition and desire for material possessions and the Great Power's imperialistic designs are the biggest blocks to world peace. According to Gandhi, only by disarmament peace can be attained. Gandhi warned, "If the mad race for armaments continues, it is bound to result in a slaughter such as has never occurred in history. If there is a victor left, the very victory will be a living death for the nation that emerges victorious. There is no escape from the impending doom save through a bold and unconditional acceptance of the non-violent method with all its glorious implications." Gandhi urged us to go beyond family and country to consider the good of the world, and he recommended a world governing body, which would recognize the equal independence of each nation. He once said, "The golden way is to be friends with the world and to regard the whole human family as one."