

Mahatma Gandhi articles on Satyagraha

Compiled by Holger Terp

Based upon Satyagraha [non-violent resistance], 1951, 1958

Foreword

1 Satyagraha, civil disobedience, passive resistance, non-co-operation. *Young India*, March 23, 1921

It is often my lot to answer knotty questions on all sorts of topics arising out of this great movement of national purification. A company of collegiate non-co-operators asked me to define for them the terms which I have used as heading for this note. And even at this late day, I was seriously asked whether satyagraha did not at times warrant resistance by violence, as for instance in the case of a sister whose virtue might be in danger from a desperado. I ventured to suggest that it was the completest defence without irritation, without being ruffled, to interpose oneself between the victim and the victimizer, and to face death. I added that this (for the assailant) novel method of defence would, in all probability, exhaust his passion and he would no longer want to ravish an innocent woman, but would want to flee from her presence for very shame, and that, if he did not, the act of personal bravery on the part of her brother would steel her heart for putting up an equally brave defence and resisting the lust of a man turned brute for the while. And I thought I clinched my argument by saying that if, in spite of all the defence, the unexpected happened, and the physical force of the tyrant overpowered his victim, the disgrace would not be that of the woman but of her assailant and that both she and her brother, who died in the attempt to defend her virtue, would stand well before the Throne of Judgment. I do not warrant that my argument convinced my listener or that it would convince the reader. The world I know will go on as before. But it is well at this moment of self examination to understand and appreciate the implications of the powerful movement of non-violence. All religions have emphasized the highest ideal, but all have more or less permitted departures as so many concessions to human weaknesses.

I now proceed to summarize the explanations I gave of the various terms. It is beyond my capacity to give accurate and terse definitions.

Satyagraha, then, is literally holding on to Truth and it means, therefore, Truth-force. Truth is soul or spirit. It is, therefore, known as soul-force. It excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and, therefore, not competent to punish.

The word was coined in South Africa to distinguish the non-violent resistance of the Indians of South Africa from the contemporary 'passive resistance' of the suffragettes and others. It is not conceived as a weapon of the weak.

Passive resistance is used in the orthodox English sense and covers the suffragette movement as well as the resistance of the nonconformists. Passive resistance has been conceived and is regarded as a weapon of the weak. Whilst it avoids violence, being not open to the weak, it does not exclude its use if, in the opinion of a passive resister, the occasion demands it. However, it has always been distinguished from armed resistance and its application was at one time confined to Christian martyrs.

Civil disobedience is civil breach of unmoral statutory enactments. The expression was, so far as I am aware, coined by Thoreau to signify his own resistance to the laws of a slave state. He has left a masterly treatise² on the duty of civil disobedience. But Thoreau was not perhaps an out-and-out champion of non-violence. Probably, also, Thoreau limited his breach of statutory laws to the revenue law, i.e., payment of taxes, whereas the term "civil disobedience"

as practiced in 1919 covered a breach of any statutory and unmoral law. It signified the resister's outlawry in a civil, i.e., non-violent manner. He invoked the sanctions of the law and cheerfully suffered imprisonment. It is a branch of satyagraha.

Non-co-operation predominantly implies withdrawing of cooperation from the state that in the non-co-operator's view has become corrupt and excludes civil disobedience of the fierce type described above. By its very nature, non-co-operation is even open to children of understanding and can be safely practiced by the masses.

Civil disobedience presupposes the habit of willing obedience to laws without fear of their sanctions. It can therefore be practiced only as a last resort and by a select few in the first instance at any rate.

Non-co-operation, too, like civil disobedience is a branch of satyagraha which includes all non-violent resistance for the vindication of Truth.

Definition of satyagraha

2 Domestic satyagraha. *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*, part IV, chapter XXIX

3 Satyagraha. *Young India*, January 14, 1920

4 Means and ends. *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, chapter XVI

5 Satyagraha or passive resistance. *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, chapter XVII

6 Evidence before the Hunter committee¹. *Young India*, February, 4, 1920

7 The theory and practice of satyagraha. *Indian Opinion* 1914; *Young India*, February 4, 1920

Discipline for satyagraha

8 satyagraha ashram vows. *Indian Opinion* 1914; *Young India*, November 3, 1927
i Truth. *Yeravda Mandir*², chapter I.

ii Ahimsa or love. *Yeravda Mandir*, chapter II.

iii Brahmacharya or chastity. *Yeravda Mandir*, chapter III.

iv Non-possession. *Yeravda Mandir*, chapter IV.

9 Yajna or sacrifice. *Yeravda Mandir*, chapter XI-XV.

10 Protecting Hinduism. *Young India*, July 19, 1924

11 Moral requirements for satyagraha. *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, chapter XVII

12 Conditions for successful satyagraha. *Young India*, April 27, 1921

13 Non-retallation. *Young India*, August 25, 1921

14 Courage and discipline necessary. *Young India*, October 20, 1921

15 The need for humility. *Young India*, January 12, 1921

16 Work in jails. *Young India*, December 15, 1921

17 A model prisoner. *Young India*, December 29, 1921

18 Satyagrahi prisoner's conduct. *Young India*, June 5, 1924

1 One of the primary sources to early satyagraha documents is *Punjab unrest before & after being a comprehensive account of the late agitation over the Rowlatt Acts and the riots which followed in the Punjab and elsewhere* by H N Mitra, with Mahatma Gandhi's Evidence pp. 140-146.

This volume includes Extracts from evidence before the Hunter Committee, The Amritsar debate in the House of Commons, The Dyer debate in the House of Lords, and other documents.

<http://www.archive.org/details/punjabunrestbefo029550mbp>

2 Gandhi, Mahatma: From Yeravda Mandir (Ashram Observances). 1932

<http://www.mkgandhi.org/yeravda/yeravda.htm>

- 19 Pre-requisites for satyagraha. *Young India*, January 8, 1925
- 20 My political programme. *Young India*, April 1, 1926
- 21 Limitations of satyagraha. *Young India*, July, 14, 1927
- 22 A great satyagrahi. *Young India*, September 22, 1927
- 23 Neill statue satyagraha. *Young India*, October 13, 1927
- 24 A Himalayan miscalculation. *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*, part V, chapter XXXIII
- 25 Qualifications for satyagraha. *Young India*, August 8, 1929
- 26 Some rules of satyagraha. *Young India*, February 27, 1930
- 27 Full surrender. *Young India*, April 30, 1931
- 28 To weaken communalism. *Young India*, July 2, 1931
- 29 Political power v. satyagraha. *Young India*, July 2, 1931
- 30 For 'followers'. *Young India*, May 7, 1931
- 31 Maintenance allowance. *Young India*, April 30, 1931
- 32 A non-violent army. *Harijan*, March 26, 1938
- 33 To volunteers. *Harijan*, April 23, 1938
- 34 Requisite qualifications. *Harijan*, March 25, 1939
- 35 Qualifications of a peace brigade. *Harijan*, July 18, 1938
- 36 The necessity of training. *Harijan*, June 10, 1939
- 37 Physical training for the satyagrahi. *Harijan*, October 13, 1940
- 38 Brahmacharya for satyagraha. *Harijan*, July 23, 1938
- 39 Discipline - satyagrahi and military. *Harijan*, June 10, 1939
- 40 Scorched earth. *Harijan*, April 12, 1942
- 41 Training for a non-violent army. *Harijan*, May 12, 1946
- 42 Constructive preparation. *Harijan*, June 10, 1939

Non-co-operation and civil disobedience

- 43 The national week. *Young India*, March 10, 1920; March 30, 1922
- 44 The satyagraha week. *Young India*, March 30, 1922
- 45 Jalianwala Bagh. *Young India*, February 18, 1920
- 46 Neither a saint nor a politician. *Young India*, May 12, 1920
- 47 The law of suffering. *Young India*, June 16, 1920
- 48 How to work non-co-operation. *Young India*, May 5, 1920
- 49 How and when to act. *Young India*, July 7, 1920
- 50 At the call of the country. *Young India*, July 21, 1920
- 51 The first of august. *Young India*, July 28, 1920
- 52 Who is disloyal? *Young India*, August 4, 1920
- 53 Non-violence and swadeshi. *Young India*, August 4, 1920
- 54 Programme for satyagraha. *Young India*, March 15, 1922
- 55 The doctrine of the sword. *Young India*, August 11, 1920
- 56 Renunciation of medals. *Young India*, August 4, 1920
- 57 Non-payment of fines. *Young India*, July 7, 1920
- 58 Non-payment of taxes. *Young India*, January 19, 1922
- 59 Non-payment of taxes. *Young India*, January 26, 1922
- 60 Boycott of courts and schools. *Young India*, August 11, 1920
- 61 Empire goods boycott. *Young India*, May 15, 1924
- 62 Social boycott. *Young India*, December 8, 1920

- 63 Social boycott. *Young India*, February 16, 1921
- 64 Sympathetic strikes. *Young India*, September 22, 1921
- 65 More objections answered. *Young India*, August 18, 1920
- 66 Answers to questions. *Young India*, June 2, 1920
- 67 Non-co-operation explained. *Young India*, August 18, 1920
- 68 Love. *Young India*, August 25, 1920
- 69 The poet's anxiety. *Young India*, June 1, 1921
- 70 What it is not. *Young India*, April 10, 1924
- 71 The non-co-operation of a satyagrahi. *Young India*, May 27, 1926
- 72 Civil disobedience. *Young India*, August 4, 1921
- 73 Civil disobedience. *Young India*, January 5, 1922
- 74 The right of civil disobedience. *Young India*, January 5, 1922
- 75 Aggressive v. defensive. *Young India*, February 9, 1922
- 76 My faith. *Young India*, December 26, 1924

Campaigns:

Vykom satyagraha

- 77 Vykom. *Young India*, April 24, 1924
- 78 Vykom satyagraha. *Young India*, May 1, 1924
- 79 Vykom satyagraha. *Young India*, June 19, 1924
- 80 Vykom. *Young India*, July 3, 1924
- 81 Vykom satyagraha. *Young India*, September 18, 1924
- 82 Vykom satyagraha. *Young India*, February 19, 1925
- 82 Vykom satyagraha. *Young India*, March 19, 1925
- 84 Satyagrahi's duty. *Young India*, March 19, 1925
- 85 Vykom. *Young India*, June 4, 1925
- 86 True satyagraha. *Young India*, September 24, 1925
- 87 Vykom satyagraha. *Young India*, January 14, 1926
- 88 Satyagraha v. compulsion. *Harijan*, April 4, 1933
- 89 Religious satyagraha. *Harijan*, May 27, 1939

Kheda and Bardoli satyagrahas

- 90 The Kheda satyagraha. *Young India*, September 20, 1928, September 27, 1928, *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*, part V, chapter XXIII-XXIV
- 91 Bardoli's decision. *Young India*, February 2, 1922
- 92 Bardoli on trial. *Young India*, May 31, 1928
- 93 Non-co-operation or civil resistance? *Young India*, July 19, 1928
- 94 Limitations of satyagraha. *Young India*, August 2, 1928
- 95 All's well. *Young India*, August 9, 1928
- 96 A sign of the times. *Young India*, August 16, 1928

Salt satyagraha

- 97 "Never faileth". *Young India*, February 20, 1930
 98 To English friends. *Young India*, January 23, 1930
 99 When I am arrested. *Young India*, February 27, 1930
 100 Letter to the viceroy. *Young India*, March 12, 1930
 101 Some questions and answers. *Young India*, March 20, 1930
 102 On the eve of the march. *Young India*, March 20, 1930
 103 Ashram discipline during the march. *Young India*, March 20, 1930
 104 Duty of disloyalty. *Young India*, March 27, 1930
 105 Some suggestions. *Young India*, March 27, 1930
 106 Turning the searchlight inward. *Young India*, April 3, 1930
 107 Notes on the way to Dandi. *Young India*, April 3, 1930
 108 Remember 6th April. *Young India*, April 3, 1930
 109 Hindu-Muslim question. *Young India*, April 3, 1930
 110 Barbarous. *Young India*, April 10, 1930
 111 The inhuman tax. *Young India*, April 17, 1930
 112 A survey. *Young India*, April 17, 1930
 113 The black regime. *Young India*, April 24, 1930
 114 Purity in account-keeping. *Young India*, April 24, 1930
 115 Calm heroism. *Young India*, April 24, 1930
 116 Mahadev Desai and his successor. *Young India*, May 1, 1930
 117 Goonda Raj. *Young India*, May 1, 1930
 118 Message to the nation. *Young India*, May 8, 1930
 119 The second letter. *Young India*, May 8, 1930
 120 The great arrest. *Young India*, May 8, 1930
 121 More about the settlement. *Young India*, March 19, 1931
 122 The Congress. *Young India*, March 19, 1931
 123 Let us repent. *Young India*, April 2, 1931
 124 Power of ahimsa. *Young India*, May 7, 1931
 125 Goondaism within the Congress. *Young India*, May 7, 1931
 126 Conquest over body. *Young India*, May 21, 1931

Local satyagraha

- 127 Suspend civil disobedience. *Harijan*, April 1, 1939
 128 Rajkot satyagraha. *Harijan*, May 20, 1939
 129 About the Rajkot award. *Harijan*, June 3, 1939
 130 Suspension of civil disobedience. *Harijan*, June 3, 1939
 131 Its implications. *Harijan*, June 24, 1939
 132 Non-violence v. violence. *Harijan*, July 8, 1939

Individual satyagraha against war

- 133 No suppression. *Harijan*, January 20, 1940
 134 Every congress committee a satyagraha committee. *Harijan*, March 30, 1940
 135 The charkha³ and satyagraha. *Harijan*, March 30, 1940

³ *Charkha*: Spinning wheel.

- 136 Civil disobedience. *Harijan*, April 27, 1940
- 137 Not yet. *Harijan*, June 1, 1940
- 138 To the reader. *Harijan*, November 10, 1940

Miscellaneous

i. Fast as an element in satyagraha

- 139 Fasting as penance. *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*, part IV, chapter XXXVI
- 140 The satyagraha way with children. *Young India*, December 3, 1925
- 141 Satyagraha-true and false. *Young India*, September 30, 1926
- 142 Fast as an element in satyagraha. *Harijan*, February 18, 1933
- 143 Fast as prayer. *Harijan*, July 8, 1933
- 144 Is fast coercion? *Harijan*, February 11, 1933
- 145 Fast as the last resort. *Harijan*, March 4, 1933
- 146 Fast as self-surrender. *Harijan*, April 15, 1933
- 147 Requirements for satyagraha fast. *Harijan*, May 6, 1933
- 148 Coercive fasts. *Harijan*, May 6, 1933
- 149 Fasting. *Harijan*, March 8, 1939
- 150 Fasting in satyagraha. *Harijan*, October 13, 1940
- 151 Fasting in the air. *Harijan*, April 21, 1946

ii. Women and picketing

- 152 To the women of India. *Young India*, April 10, 1930
- 153 Women in conference. *Young India*, April 17, 1930
- 154 Men's part. *Young India*, April 17, 1930
- 155 Notes. *Young India*, May 1, 1930
- 156 How to do the picketing. *Young India*, April 24, 1930
- 157 Some picketing rules. *Young India*, March 19, 1931
- 158 A stern reproof. *Young India*, March 19, 1931
- 159 Picketing. *Harijan*, August 27, 1938
- 160 When is picketing peaceful? *Harijan*, December 2, 1939
- 161 Picketing and love. *Young India*, September 22, 1921

iii. Satyagraha in social reform

- 162 Students' noble satyagraha. *Young India*, March 1, 1928
- 163 Limits of satyagraha. *Young India*, September 6, 1928
- 164 Satyagraha against the colour bar bill. *Young India*, February 18, 1926
- 165 The Jews. *Harijan*, November 26, 1938
- 166 The satyagraha way with crime. *Harijan*, August 11, 1940
- 167 Socialism and satyagraha. *Harijan*, July 20, 1947

Questions and answers

- 168 Some questions. *Young India*, February 20, 1930

- 169 On non-violence. *Young India*, December 31, 1931
170 What are basic assumptions. *Harijan*, October 22, 1938
171 Belief in god. *Harijan*, June 3, 1939
172 Not guilty. *Harijan*, July 29, 1939
173 Question box. *Harijan*, April 13, 1940
174 Question box. *Harijan*, May 25, 1940
175 Five questions. *Harijan*, May 25, 1940
176 The sermon on the mount. *Harijan*, July 13, 1940
177 What can a solitary satyagrahi do? *Harijan*, August 4, 1940
178 Non-violent non-co-operation. *Harijan*, May 24, 1942
179 Sabotage and secrecy. *Harijan*, February 10, 1946
180 Satyagraha in face of hooliganism. *Harijan*, March 17, 1946
181 The non-violent sanction. *Harijan*, March 31, 1946

Conclusion

- 182 My faith in non-violence. *The Nations Voice*, part II pp 109-110
183 The future. *Harijan*, April 13, 1940