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 treatise 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 committee. 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, 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-retaliation. 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

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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.
2 Gandhi, Mahatma: From Yeravda Mandir (Ashram Observances). 1932
3 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

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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:

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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

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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, 1028
96 A sign of the times. *Young India*, August 16, 1928
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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
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105 Some suggestions. *Young India*, March 27, 1930
106 Turning the searchlight inward. *Young India*, April 3, 1930
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115 Calm heroism. *Young India*, April 24, 1930
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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
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123 Let us repent. *Young India*, April 2, 1931
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125 Goondaism within the Congress. *Young India*, May 7, 1931
126 Conquest over body. *Young India*, May 21, 1931

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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

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133 No suppression. *Harijan*, January 20, 1940
134 Every congress committee a satyagraha committee. *Harijan*, March 30, 1940
135 The charkha\(^3\) and satyagraha. *Harijan*, March 30, 1940

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3 Charkha: Spinning wheel.
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
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150 Fasting in satyagraha. Harijan, October 13, 1940
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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

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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
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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

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183 The future. *Harijan*, April 13, 1940

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