

# Satyagraha

Mahatma Gandhi

The term 'Satyagraha' was coined by me in South Africa to express the force that the Indians there used for full eight years and it was coined in order to distinguish it from the movement then going on in the United Kingdom and South Africa under the name of 'passive resistance.'

Its root meaning is holding on to truth, hence truth-force. I have also called it love-force or soul-force. In the application of Satyagraha, I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears to be truth to the one may appear to be error to the other. And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on one's own self.

But in the political field, the struggle on behalf of the people mostly consists in opposing error in the shape of unjust laws. When you have failed to bring the error home to the lawgiver by way of petitions and the like, the only remedy open to you, if you do not wish to submit to error, is to compel him by physical force to yield to you or by suffering in your own person by inviting the penalty for the breach of the law. Hence, Satyagraha largely appears to the public as civil disobedience or civil resistance. It is civil in the sense that it is not criminal. It applies to the breach of only those laws that have no moral background.

The law-breaker breaks the law surreptitiously and tries to avoid the penalty; not so the civil resister. He ever obeys the laws of the State to which he belongs not out of fear of the sanctions but because he considers them to be good for the welfare of society. But there come occasions, generally rare, when he considers certain laws to be so unjust as to regard it as disgraceful to render obedience to them. He then openly and civilly breaks them and quietly suffers the penalty for their breach. And in order to register his protest against the action of the lawgivers, it is open to him to withdraw his co-operation from the State by disobeying such other laws whose breach does not involve moral turpitude.

1. Unhappy with the description of his movement as “*passive* resistance”, Gandhi describes it as *satyagraha* which he translates as “truth force” or “love force”. Why do you think Gandhi understands *truth* and *love* as forceful and active?
2. Why do you think Gandhi believes truth is more powerfully demonstrated through nonviolence and self-suffering?
3. Gandhi distinguishes between moral and immoral laws. How should one respond to immoral laws?
4. Why is it important to openly break unjust laws?

1. Unhappy with the description of his movement as “*passive resistance*”, Gandhi describes it as *satyagraha* which he translates as “truth force” or “love force”. Why do you think Gandhi understands *truth* and *love* as forceful and active?

Truth has a power to confront and challenge people’s thinking and understanding of the world. While we think of power most often as power over someone (political power) or maybe even power to control resources (economic power), the most powerful force people experience is love (relational power). Relational bonds are a kind of “power with” others—family, friends, romantic relationships.

2. Why do you think Gandhi believes truth is more powerfully demonstrated through nonviolence and self-suffering?

Using the power of truth and love are damaged by the use of violence. If the power of love is to connect with others, violence is inherently damaging to those relationships. It inflicts hurt and pain instead of affirmation and empowerment. Likewise people are less likely to hear the truth when violence is involved. Violence creates fear, which blinds us to the truth that needs to be spoken.

3. Gandhi distinguishes between moral and immoral laws. How should one respond to immoral laws?

Gandhi believes we should first attempt to communicate how laws are immoral and dehumanizing. If that doesn’t work then the next step is to disobey the law.

4. Why is it important to openly break unjust laws?

By disobeying the law you are registering your protest against the law and how it is immoral and unjust. The open defiance of a law makes others aware of the truth and declares to others that it breaks relationship rather than empowering our common humanity.

# Six Principles of Nonviolence

<b>1</b>	Nonviolence is not passive, but requires courage	
<b>2</b>	Nonviolence seeks reconciliation, not defeat of an adversary	
<b>3</b>	Nonviolent action is directed at eliminating evil, not destroying an evil-doer	
<b>4</b>	A willingness to accept suffering for the cause, if necessary, but never to inflict it	
<b>5</b>	A rejection of hatred, animosity or violence of the spirit, as well as refusal to commit physical violence	
<b>6</b>	Faith that justice will prevail	

# Six Principles of Nonviolence

		Rowlatt Act	Burning of British Clothes	Salt March
<b>1</b>	Nonviolence is not passive, but requires courage	Threat of imprisonment	Threat of violent crackdown by the British after the Amritsar Massacre.	Threat of imprisonment
<b>2</b>	Nonviolence seeks reconciliation, not defeat of an adversary	The day of prayer and fasting is directed at the repeal of the unjust law.	It seeks the removal of British economic exploitation of India, particularly in how the British deindustrialized the once thriving clothing industry.	The action is directed at demonstrating the foreign rule of the British is one of exploitation. The Indian leaders are constantly communicating with the British.
<b>3</b>	Nonviolent action is directed at eliminating evil, not destroying an evil-doer	The action is directed at the treatment of Indians as second-class citizens in their own land.	The action is directed at the symbolic value of British clothes.	The act of civil disobedience (breaking a law) is directed at the British monopoly on salt, which is easily gotten from the Indian ocean.
<b>4</b>	A willingness to accept suffering for the cause, if necessary, but never to inflict it	Willingness to go to prison	They are willing to burn the clothes they have bought.	Willingness to march and produce salt under threat of imprisonment and violence.
<b>5</b>	A rejection of hatred, animosity or violence of the spirit, as well as refusal to commit physical violence	A day of prayer and fasting shapes the nonviolent action as a personal discipline	The anger is directed not toward hatred of the British but the source of their exploitation.	The leaders used the nonviolent form of marching and standing before the salt works to receive their blows.
<b>6</b>	Faith that justice will prevail	Gandhi has had success before.	The Amritsar Massacre was devastating and it would be hard to keep faith that justice will prevail.	The determination to keep going after years of inaction.