



## Prophet of Pacifism.

By

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Revolutionary thinkers believe in incessant revolution. They see constant change as a way of life. Initially, Mahatma Gandhi was concerned about creating an environment hospitable to change within a relatively stable political system of colonialism. He wanted a political system in which healthy unrest would work for continuous renewal. Freedom would be continually enlarged and extended, resulting in the upward evolution of a society towards a *higher and different power* as he described it. This process would start when a political system is created, where people respect minorities. The sense of freedom would then become a national and individual pride. Freedom is gained by vigilance and struggle; it can, however, be lost if society remains indifferent and supine. One has to fight for freedom with the right weapons, though not with guns. The sense of freedom should be from within and not brought about by an outer force.

However controversial it sounds, Gandhiji demonstrated this principle in his lifetime. He went behind bars to gain that freedom. He preferred to be behind walls than to suppress his struggle for freedom. When jailed for refusing to pay the salt tax at the end of the Dandi March, he observed that even behind walls of stone and mortar he was freer than those who had jailed him. Gandhiji practised the struggle with his soul spirit and gave the world the principle of Satyagraha. The Encyclopaedia Britannica describes Satyagraha as *truth force*. I would call it *soul force*. It is a principle that encourages you not to submit to wrong or to co-operate with it in any way. It includes civil disobedience to correct political wrongs.

Satyagraha remains the most recognised tenet for influencing unusual freedom movements all over the world. With this powerful philosophy, conceived in the twentieth century, Gandhiji's ideology of Satyagraha fuelled international freedom movements, first by gaining recognition of the rights of Indians living in South Africa and later achieving India's freedom from British colonialism. It has become the basis of the covenant of freedom fighters. Martin Luther King Junior, Lech Walesa, Nelson Mandela, Julius Nyerere and many others drew inspiration from Gandhiji and from his concept of Satyagraha. In a period encompassing only my own lifetime, India has risen to become one of the world's great powers. Satyagraha, the revolutionary principle introduced by Gandhiji, was the source of India's freedom.

In the West, at times Satyagraha is misunderstood by being described as *passive resistance*, a term that Gandhiji disowned. Satyagraha is not a submissive principle; passive resistance suggests weakness, or *non-violence*. Non-violence is no doubt one of its components, forceful and powerful, but not its only component. It has been at times wrongfully written off as cowardice. Gandhiji said, "*Where there is only a choice between cowardice and non-violence, I advise violence.*" Timothy Flinders, a great admirer of Gandhiji said, "*To call Satyagraha passive*

*resistance is like calling light non-darkness. It totally fails to describe the positive energy in the principle.*” Satyagraha is, in fact, a very active and involving movement.

One needs to redefine Satyagraha at present. On 14 February, 2019, a convoy of vehicles carrying security personnel on the Jammu Srinagar National Highway was attacked by a suicide bomber in a car laden with high explosives at Lethpora (near Awantipora) in the Pulwama district, Jammu and Kashmir, India. The attack resulted in the deaths of more than 40 Indian soldiers of the Central Reserve Paramilitary Force. The responsibility for the attack was avowedly claimed by the Pakistan-based Islamist militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed. In retaliation, on 26<sup>th</sup> of February, 2019, when many of us were fast asleep India attacked **terrorist camps** at Muzufferabad, Chakoti and Balakot in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. All these camps were on hill-tops and extreme care was taken that no innocent civilian or child was killed. This goal was achieved and is what may be called as Gandhiji’s code. It is completely in accord with Bhagwad Gita, Gandhiji’s most favourite book. We are not cowards but we are moral. We have to fight the evil and above all protect the innocent.

Satyagraha derives its powers from two attributes. It effectively says, we will not coerce you. Neither will we let you coerce us. If you act with discrimination, we will combat you by truth force — the integrity of love until you feel humiliated and find yourself defeated. We will not co-operate with you. He said, “... *my integrity is evident in my willingness to suffer, to endanger myself, to go to prison, even to die if necessary. But I refuse to co-operate with injustice. Seeing my intention, sensing my compassion and my openness to your needs, you will respond in ways I could never manage by threats, bargaining, pleading, or body force. I make no hobgoblin of consistency. If I am true to myself from moment to moment, I do not mind all the inconsistencies that may be flung on my face.*”

Satyagraha is the strategy of those who reject temporary and superficial solutions that are compromised at the cost of real freedom. This cannot solve the problems of the world. The Mahatma always said that Satyagraha is a weapon of the strong. It requires heroic restraint and Himalayan courage, first to forgive the follies of others and then not to accept anything other than the truth. It upsets deep-rooted concepts to overpower others by use of arms. Gandhiji, with his Satyagraha turned the dominant Roman concept of domination through power, upside down. Once, when he visited the radical armed freedom fighters of the Congress Party, he said you must be very frightened. Satyagraha, as given by the Mahatma, is an attitude that removes politics from confrontation, deal making from negotiation, game playing from party interests. It seeks to conquer through conversion. It emphasises humaneness and the search for understanding. It transforms violence into harmony. In the end, there is no triumph and there is no defeat; it is a feeling of victory in which no one loses. It can be described as Sun Tzu's Art of War. It leads us into a new corner of candour. Those who use it must be fearless, vigilant and still not ambitious.

It is the dream of millions of Indians, including a commitment by India’s former President late Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and our present Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi to make India the leading developed nation of the world. This will enable India to spread its message of world peace as was done in the times of the great emperor Ashoka. This dream has already begun to take shape. India’s spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever-increasing measure. This momentum will grow even more amid the disasters of the time. More and more eyes will turn towards India with greater hope and there will be an increasing resort to India’s spiritual teachings. This is in line with Gandhiji’s vision. The universal urge NOT to co-operate with evil is greater at present. Gandhiji’s ideals are more alive today than ever before.