

- ii) The passive resisters, unlike the Satyagrahis, may harass and injure their opponents.
  - iii) Satyagraha, unlike passive resistance, can be offered even to one's nearest and dearest ones.
  - iv) Passive resistance is a resistance by the weak and helpless, and it does not exclude the use of violence, whereas Satyagraha is a moral-political action by the strong, and it excludes the use of violence. Believing themselves to be weak, the passive resisters would tend to give up the struggle at the earliest opportunity.
- “On the other hand,” Gandhi wrote, “if we offer Satyagrah believing ourselves to be strong, two clear consequences follow. Fostering the idea of strength, we grow stronger and stronger every day. With the increase in our strength, our Satyagraha too becomes more effective and we would never be casting about for an opportunity to give it up.”

### Principles and Methods of Satyagraha

- Satyagraha is based on the principles of satya (truth), ahimsa (non-violence) and tapas (self-suffering). Gandhi believed in the Dharmashastras tradition according to which dharma, derived from ‘dhr’ (to be firm, to sustain or uphold) refers to the moral law governing the cosmos. Its essence is satya (truth), the root of which is sat (being, reality, right, what is and what will be). Gandhi writes: The word satya (truth) is derived from sat, which means being. And nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why sat or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God.
- Gandhi's Satyagraha is an experiment for the introduction of truth and non-violence into political conduct. According to Gandhi, although Truth is absolute, our knowledge and experience of it is relative and partial. What we take to be truth may be untruth for others. In fact, the satyagrahi assumes that his opponents or oppressors are also truth-seekers, acting on the basis of what they perceive to be the truth. It is for this reason that ahimsa (non-violence) is the means of discovery of truth. Acting on the basis of relative truths, the Satyagrahis seek to resolve basic conflicts and ensure social harmony through the non-violent path of vindicating the validity of rival truth claims. Gandhi writes: Satyagrahis use truth-force or love-force not to eliminate the opponents or oppressors, but to bring about a restructuring of the total conflictual or oppressive relationship so that both parties to the initial conflict can realize a heightened mutuality or moral interdependence. Through Satyagraha, the victims of oppression seek to liberate themselves by aiding in the emancipation of their oppressors from their self-deceptive truth-denying beliefs and actions. Gandhi writes: In its negative form it (ahimsa) means not injuring any living being whether in body or mind. I may not, therefore, hurt the person of any wrong-doer or bear any ill-will to him and so cause him mental suffering. In its positive form, ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of ahimsa, I must love my enemy or a stranger to me as I would my wrong doing father or son. This active ahimsa necessarily includes truth and fearlessness. Its positive test is action meant to promote the welfare of others.
- We have so far considered two elements of Satyagraha, namely, satya (truth) and ahimsa (non-violence). A third element is Tapas (self-suffering). Action based on love toward others, we saw earlier, is a positive test of truth. From this Gandhi goes on to say that tapas or self-suffering is the test of such love. Self-suffering by Satyagrahis, it must be understood, is not out of their cowardice or weakness; it is based on a higher form of courage than that of those who resort to violence and it is meant to aid in the moral persuasion of one's opponents or oppressors. He writes: Since Satyagraha is one of the most powerful methods of direct action, a satyagrahi exhausts all other means before he resorts to Satyagraha. He will, therefore, constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody who wants to listen to him; and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to Satyagrah. In a Satyagraha campaign, the Satyagrahis seek to validate the truth of contested social “system” or norms through (i) reasoning, i.e.,