



Abant Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi

Journal of Abant Social Sciences

2025, 25(1): 679-695, doi: 10.11616/asbi.1586005



Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy of Nonviolence and Its Impact on India's Struggle for Independence

Mahatma Gandhi'nin Şiddetsizlik Felsefesi ve Hindistan'ın Bağımsızlık Mücadelesi Üzerindeki Etkisi

Aytaç ODACILAR¹ 

Geliş Tarihi (Received): 15.11.2024

Kabul Tarihi (Accepted): 21.02.2025

Yayın Tarihi (Published): 25.03.2025

Abstract: The aim of this study is to examine the influence of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence on India's struggle for independence. The study first focuses on Gandhi's core principles of *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), *Satyagraha* (Truth Force), and *Tapas* (Redemptive Suffering); then moves on to analyze key historical events in that light, including (1) the 1919 Amritsar Massacre, (2) the 1920-1922 Non-Cooperation Movement, (3) the 1930 Salt March, and (4) the 1942 Quit India Movement. These events demonstrate how Gandhi's nonviolent resistance strategies mobilized the masses and effectively challenged British colonial rule. The findings indicate that Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence was not merely a strategic tool but also a profound moral and spiritual doctrine, playing a crucial role in shaping India's path to independence.

Keywords: Nonviolence Philosophy, Ahimsa, Satyagraha, India, Gandhi

&

Öz: Bu çalışma, Mahatma Gandhi'nin şiddetsizlik felsefesinin Hindistan'ın bağımsızlık mücadelesi üzerindeki etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmada, Gandhi'nin Ahimsa (Şiddet Dışılık), Satyagraha (Hakikat Gücü) ve Tapas (İfta Edici Acı) kavramlarına odaklanılmıştır. Yöntem olarak, nitel bir yaklaşım benimsenmiş ve 1919 Amritsar Katliamı, 1920-1922 İş-birliği Yapmama Hareketi, 1930 Tuz Yürüyüşü ve 1942 Hindistan'dan Çık Hareketi gibi tarihsel olaylar vaka çalışması yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir. Bu olaylar, Gandhi'nin şiddetsiz direniş stratejilerinin toplumsal hareketleri nasıl şekillendirdiğini ve İngiliz yönetimiyle mücadelede nasıl etkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak, Gandhi'nin şiddetsizlik felsefesinin hem manevi hem de stratejik bir yaklaşım olarak Hindistan'ın bağımsızlığındaki en belirleyici faktörlerden biri olduğu ortaya konmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Şiddetsizlik Felsefesi, Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Hindistan, Gandhi

Atıf/Cite as: Odacılar, A., (2025). Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy of Nonviolence and Its Impact on India's Struggle for Independence. *Abant Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 25(1), 679-695. doi: 10.11616/asbi.1586005

İntihal-Plagiarism/Etik-Ethic: Bu makale, en az iki hakem tarafından incelenmiş ve intihal içermediği, araştırma ve yayın etiğine uyulduğu teyit edilmiştir. / This article has been reviewed by at least two referees and it has been confirmed that it is plagiarism-free and complies with research and publication ethics. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/asbi/policy>

Copyright © Published by Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University, Since 2000 – Bolu

¹ Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Aytaç Odacılar, İzmir Kâtip Çelebi Üniversitesi, aytac.odacilar@ikc.edu.tr.

1. Introduction

The philosophy of nonviolence articulated by Mahatma Gandhi represents not only a strategic framework for India's struggle for independence but also a profound moral and spiritual doctrine with universal implications. Grounded in principles such as *Ahimsa* (nonviolence), *Satyagraha* (the power of truth), and *Tapas* (Redemptive Suffering), Gandhi's approach redefined the dynamics of resistance and the legitimacy of power in colonial and postcolonial contexts. By integrating ethical convictions with political praxis, this philosophy transcended mere tactics, shaping the collective consciousness of a nation and offering a paradigmatic shift in the global understanding of nonviolent resistance.

Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence has been examined from various perspectives by different authors, both due to its political success in achieving India's independence and its emergence as an alternative to the concept of 'hard power' in political theory. Although there is an extensive body of literature on this subject, it is evident that certain foundational texts have played a pivotal role in shaping this discourse. For instance, Louis Fischer's comprehensive biographical work, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (1950), while not directly addressing the philosophy of nonviolence, remains a significant resource in the literature for its detailed portrayal of the interconnectedness between Gandhi's life and his philosophical outlook. The political implications of Gandhi's philosophy also occupy a substantial space in the literature. In this regard, Joan V. Bondurant's *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (1965) stands out as a seminal text. Although the work establishes a connection between Gandhi's philosophy and his life (Bondurant, 1965: 67), it primarily focuses on the practical dimensions of nonviolence in confronting injustice. This text can be regarded as one of the key sources that has nourished the literature examining the practical applications of nonviolence. The exploration of the Western and Eastern roots of nonviolence philosophy also constitutes a visible strand within the literature. In this context, Bhikhu Parekh's *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination* (1989) emerges as a notable work, as it interprets Gandhi's philosophy as a synthesis, thereby bridging diverse perspectives within the literature. Additionally, there exists a body of work that situates Gandhi's philosophy within its historical context. Judith M. Brown's *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (1989) is particularly noteworthy in this regard, as it offers a broad perspective on the historical development of nonviolence philosophy, incorporating historical sociology into its analysis. Furthermore, Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence has been examined through the lens of psychology. Erik H. Erikson's *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (1969) is a distinctive contribution to the literature, as it explores the relationship between Gandhi's sense of self and his quest for justice, offering a unique psychological perspective.

Within this broad and diverse literature, the present study aims to fill a distinct gap by focusing on the significant historical events during India's struggle for independence, analyzed through the lens of philosophy of nonviolence. This approach seeks to contribute a fresh perspective to the existing discourse on Gandhi's philosophy and its historical impact. Within this framework, the research question guiding this study is formulated as follows: "What are the ethical, strategic, and ontological foundations of Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence, and how has it shaped the key historical turning points in India's struggle for independence?" Accordingly, this study aims to critically analyze the influence of Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence on the key historical milestones of India's independence movement. It begins by elucidating the foundational principles of Gandhi's thought under the concepts of *ahimsa* (nonviolence), *satyagraha* (the power of truth) and *tapas* (redemptive suffering) along with and their ontological underpinnings. This part is, then, followed by an examination of their practical applications in pivotal events including (1) the 1919 Amritsar Massacre, (2) the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920–1922, (3) the 1930 Salt March, and (4) the 1942 Quit India Movement. Through these historical events, the study underscores the interplay between Gandhi's ethical commitments and his strategic innovations, highlighting the transformative potential of nonviolence in mobilizing mass resistance and confronting colonial authority.

By situating Gandhi's philosophy within a broader theoretical and historical framework, this article endeavors to move beyond a simplistic narrative of its political efficacy. It seeks to demonstrate that

Gandhi's conception of nonviolence is rooted in an ontological vision of human existence, wherein the rejection of violence is intrinsically linked to the pursuit of truth and justice. In doing so, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the relevance of Gandhian principles in addressing contemporary global challenges and advancing sustainable social change.

2. Gandhi's Philosophy of Nonviolence

The concept of nonviolence can be fundamentally understood as a philosophical and ethical principle that advocates for the avoidance or rejection of violence and aggression. It is a concept that has found its place in both Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. For instance, nonviolence is easily identifiable within Eastern thoughts and belief systems such as Hinduism (Rambachan, 2003), Buddhism (King, 2009), and Jainism (Dugar, 2013). Similarly, in Western philosophy, thinkers like Leo Tolstoy and Henry David Thoreau have also championed the principle of nonviolence. While the historical roots of the concept can be traced back centuries due to its presence in long-standing Eastern beliefs, its use as a political tool in the public sphere is relatively recent. This distinction can be explained through the problematization of the legitimacy of power in modern politics. Nonviolent action, at its core, can be seen as a challenge to the legitimacy of its opposition. In this context, it is possible to argue that in the 21st century—when the legitimacy of power is increasingly questioned—nonviolent political actions have gained more prominence in the political arena². However, different interpretations of nonviolence have emerged in this era. For example, in some cases, nonviolence is emphasized as an ethical or religious principle, presented as an intrinsic concept related to personal belief. In contrast, in certain political movements, nonviolence is used as a practical tool aimed at achieving specific outcomes. Compared to its historical roots, where figures like Gandhi, Tolstoy, and Thoreau saw nonviolence as an ethical principle permeating all aspects of an individual's life, contemporary usage of the concept tends to focus more on achieving political results and represent a more limited phenomenon.

Considering the belief-based and outcome-oriented contexts mentioned above, it can be argued that Gandhi's use of the concept of nonviolence represents an intersection between his personal beliefs and its effectiveness in addressing political issues. In this regard, Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence can be seen as fundamentally built upon the belief that purging violence from one's actions brings individuals closer to absolute goodness, and that nonviolence is the only way to overcome oppression and establish peace (Ulafor, 2020). Analyzing this construction reveals that Gandhi's philosophy rests on specific assumptions about human nature and purpose. Understanding these assumptions on a belief level is crucial in demonstrating that Gandhi did not use nonviolence merely as a practical tool. In this context, it can be argued that the foundation of Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence is an ontological perspective rooted in a particular view of humanity. Therefore, Gandhi's nonviolence emerges not only as a way to break free from the inherent dominance of violence but also as a path consistent with human existence and a guarantor of a sustainable social life. In this regard, it can be suggested that scholars who frame Gandhi's nonviolence as a paradigm for breaking down domination (Bondurant, 1965; Hazama, 2022) may overlook Gandhi's deeper reflections on "what it means to be human". While this view is understandable due to the perceived success of nonviolence in achieving certain political outcomes, it can be argued that the belief dimension of Gandhi's nonviolence will become more apparent when considering thoughts about building a sustainable society. Thus, while our study focuses on the impact of Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence on India's independence movement, it also points to a framework for understanding the conflicts within

² Although non-violence is not a mainstream philosophy, it is an increasingly influential idea, especially in the 21st century. Considering examples such as the beginning of the Arab Spring (especially non-violent protests in Tunisia and Egypt), the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong in 2019, the peaceful demonstrations during the George Floyd protests in the USA in 2020, the Fridays for Future movement led by Greta Thunberg, etc., this interpretation does not seem to be an extreme interpretation. It is also observed that there is an increase in this issue in the literature. For examples, see: Schock, K. (2005). *Unarmed insurrections: People power movements in nondemocracies* (Vol. 22). U of Minnesota Press; Chenoweth, E., & Stephan, M. J. (2011). *Why civil resistance works: The strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. Columbia University Press; Vinthagen, S. (2015). *A theory of nonviolent action: How civil resistance works*. Bloomsbury Publishing; Popovic, S., & Miller, M. (2015). *Blueprint for revolution: How to use Rice pudding, Lego men, and other nonviolent techniques to galvanize communities, overthrow dictators, or simply change the world*. Random House; Routledge, P. (2017). *Space invaders: Radical geographies of protest*. Pluto Press.

India's political history that have arisen due to overlooking the belief-based assumptions underlying Gandhi's philosophy³.

Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence, like any system of thought, can be understood as the manifestation of certain concepts and the relationships between them. To uncover Gandhi's philosophy, it is essential to explain these underlying concepts. In this context, the study will first outline the key principles and concepts that form the foundation of Gandhi's nonviolent philosophy. Following this, the paper will demonstrate how these principles and concepts influenced significant events during India's struggle for independence.

2.1. Ahimsa (Non-Violence)

The concept of *Ahimsa*, rooted in ancient Sanskrit, is based on principles such as nonviolence and the avoidance of harm (Chandel, 2014: 135-136). Given its association with key terms in Indian philosophy, *Ahimsa* holds significant importance in everyday life. At its core, *Ahimsa* encourages individuals to refrain from causing physical or mental harm to others. It can be argued that this principle is applicable to all interactions, emphasizing compassion, empathy, and understanding in every relationship. In this sense, *Ahimsa* is fundamentally a practice-oriented concept in human interactions, but it extends beyond interpersonal relationships. Thus, the practice of *Ahimsa* can be understood as an effort to live harmoniously not only with other humans but also with all living beings and the environment (Gier, 1995). As a principle, *Ahimsa* serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness of all beings and the responsibility one holds toward them. This broad interpretation elevates *Ahimsa* from a mere concept to a way of life, guiding individuals towards nonviolence and compassion. Consequently, *Ahimsa* is less of a tool and more of an ethos to be adopted. For someone who embraces *Ahimsa*, all living beings hold intrinsic value, fostering a mindset of empathy and tolerance. It is also important to note that the application of *Ahimsa* is not limited to the external world. The concept extends to self-awareness, guiding individuals to apply the principle of non-harm to themselves. Thus, someone who embraces *Ahimsa* positions themselves in the world as a person who believes in creating a compassionate and harmonious environment where all beings can coexist peacefully. For this reason, *Ahimsa* has served as a fundamental moral principle in shaping the ethical fabric of societies within traditions such as Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism (Gier, 1995).

In Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence, it is clear that the concept of *Ahimsa* serves as a foundational element. In other words, the principle of nonviolence, deeply rooted in the beliefs of the land where he lived, forms the core of Gandhi's own philosophy of nonviolence. Similar to its role in the aforementioned belief systems, *Ahimsa* can be considered an intrinsic quality that must be embedded in one's actions. It is crucial to understand that, due to its close connection to belief, *Ahimsa* should not be viewed merely as a causal factor. Perceiving the concept solely through its practical outcomes could hinder a proper grasp of its essence. Nevertheless, referring to *Ahimsa* in nonviolent actions undeniably highlights its practical dimension. However, it is important to remember that Gandhi regarded this concept not merely as a practical tool but also as an overarching goal, which is vital for understanding his philosophy of nonviolence.

To better comprehend the concept, we must acknowledge that while it has an outward-facing, practical content, it also holds inherent significance in shaping an individual's understanding of existence. In Gandhi's practical applications, *Ahimsa* is frequently associated with God (in Hinduism and Jainism), symbolizing "the greatest love" (Puri, 2009:34) and reflecting a divine reference (Gandhi, 2012:40-42). Thus, separating the concept from its religious dimension would lead to a contradiction in its true meaning. In Gandhi's usage, *Ahimsa* is primarily employed as a means of connecting humans with the divine. This is most clearly demonstrated through the connection he draws between *Ahimsa* and the concept of *Truth*.

³ Since the problems of post-Gandhi India exceed the limits of this study, it is thought that an approach can be developed through this deficiency.

Gandhi sees *Truth* and *Ahimsa* as inseparable, two sides of the same coin (Gajraj and Shajapur, 2022:11). From his perspective, *Truth* represents God, the ultimate reality, while *Ahimsa* is the path to realizing that reality. This relationship is evident in Gandhi's statement (1969:565): "There is nothing apart from God and Truth... and the only way to realize Truth is through *Ahimsa*... A perfect vision of Truth is only possible through a complete understanding of *Ahimsa*." In this respect, it can be argued that Gandhi associated *Ahimsa* with the search for divine truth, making it a philosophical and spiritual practice that integrates with the essence of existence.

In Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence, *Ahimsa* can also be seen as a political tool aimed at fostering a strong, harmonious society. Given that Gandhi's understanding of *Ahimsa* is closely connected with virtues such as love, tolerance, honesty, and justice, it is not surprising that he viewed this concept as a guiding principle for social transformation. In this context, it can be asserted that in Gandhi's philosophy and actions, *Ahimsa* serves as an effective and admirable instrument for societal transformation towards goodness and beauty. It can be argued that Gandhi's lifelong belief in *Ahimsa* as a principle that gives meaning to human existence and exemplifies an intrinsic purpose played a significant role in shaping this perspective.

Gandhi's application of *Ahimsa*—rooted in internal foundations—distinguishes his approach from modern political nonviolent movements that are often motivated by concerns solely focused on political outcomes. When assessing political nonviolent actions based on their intentions (internal dynamics), it is clear that *Ahimsa* offers a perspective that encompasses both internal and external concerns. Therefore, Gandhi's impact on India's struggle for independence was not limited to political achievements; it also had a profound effect on the broader fabric of society and the nation. The transformation of the colonial issue into a matter of legitimacy through nonviolent forms of action derived from Gandhi's belief in *Ahimsa* can be explained by this impact (Kişi, 2024: 73). Upon his return to India, he successfully applied this belief in the Champaran (1917) and Kaira (1918) *satyagrahas*, achieving tangible results (Kişi, 2024: 71). Through these movements, he mobilized mass support for the independence struggle, solidifying *Ahimsa* as a central principle of his movement. From this viewpoint, one could contend that *ahimsa* in Gandhi's philosophy transcends a simple political tactic and evolves into a holistic approach to existence, seeking to elevate both individuals and societies through moral and ethical metamorphosis.

2.2. Satyagraha (the Power of Truth)

Satyagraha, while closely related to *Ahimsa* in Gandhi's philosophy, represents a distinct conceptual framework. *Ahimsa* denotes an ethical commitment to nonviolence in thought, speech, and action, extending beyond political resistance to encompass a broader moral and spiritual discipline. In contrast, *Satyagraha* is an active method of nonviolent resistance developed by Gandhi as a strategic tool for social and political change. In this sense, while *Ahimsa* serves as a fundamental moral principle guiding individual conduct, *Satyagraha* operationalizes this principle in the realm of collective action, incorporating civil disobedience, non-cooperation, and moral persuasion to achieve justice and social transformation. *Satyagraha*, derived from Sanskrit, can be translated as "devotion to truth" or "the force of truth" (Gandhi, 2012:3). Similar to the principle of 'Ahimsa,' this concept was used by Gandhi both to signify the spiritual dimension of human existence and to serve as a guide for worldly actions. When the term 'truth' used in its definition is interpreted as a reference to the ultimate truth of all things, it can be said that *Satyagraha*, or "the force of truth," represents the power of this all-encompassing ultimate truth, as expressed by Gandhi (2012:3). The assumption of an ultimate truth for everything can be seen as providing individuals with an Archimedean point, from which they can orient their actions in the world. Due to its dual nature, it can be argued that the concept not only gave form but also imbued the actions of the nation with spirit, becoming a foundational principle in shaping the course of India's independence movement.

Gandhi's use of *Satyagraha* can be seen as a comprehensive philosophical framework that encompasses both theoretical principles and practical applications. This philosophy, characterized by nonviolent but

effective resistance due to its foundation in the assumption of truth, not only serves as a guiding principle for individual personal development but also manifests as a mode of action for developing strategies to achieve justice and freedom within the belief in ultimate truth. In this regard, Gandhi's practice of Satyagraha can be viewed as a strategic method aimed at replacing physical aggression with one's inner strength, with the ultimate goal of establishing lasting peace. It can be argued that this strategy was profoundly influenced by the connection Gandhi made between his ideas of God and Love. For Gandhi, God is something approached through the presence of love, while the greatest obstacles to this approach are lovelessness and the acts of violence that such lovelessness fosters. In other words, acts of violence and a lack of love create barriers between individuals and God, thereby worsening worldly conditions. When considering this relationship between God and love, Gandhi's nonviolent actions can be seen as a way to forge a closer relationship with God for both himself and his opponent. From this perspective, Satyagraha can be understood as a principle and approach based on the assumption that violence breeds more violence, aiming to extinguish the enemy's hostility with love and awaken their potential for love. Indeed, when we consider the principles of Satyagraha, such as 'Harbour no anger', 'Suffer the anger of the opponent', 'Never retaliate to assaults or punishment', 'Do not curse or swear', 'Do not insult the opponent', 'Neither salute nor insult the flag of your opponent or your opponent's leaders', 'If anyone attempts to insult or assault your opponent, defend your opponent with your life'⁴ (Shabnam, 2015:408), we can clearly see how this approach shapes both the individual's spiritual assumptions and the outward actions corresponding to those beliefs. In this respect, it should be noted that Satyagraha is not driven by a concern for prioritizing political outcomes. As Nimbalkar (2013) emphasizes, Satyagraha is a profound spiritual practice aimed at creating transformation within the individuals involved in a conflict, with the ultimate goal of resolving that conflict.

When Gandhi's teachings are interpreted within the framework of the aforementioned principles, it can be said that Satyagraha is employed as a moral tool applicable to both personal and political conflicts. At this point, it is crucial to note that the principles do not form a unified application in practice. This is because political conflicts, and specifically the complexity of colonial exploitation in India, are of a multifaceted nature. Given the intricacy of these issues, the lack of uniformity in practice does not create a contradiction that undermines the morality of the principles. In this context, it is possible to argue that the practical use of the concept inherently implies a dynamic process based on certain rules (Madhu, 2016). In other words, Satyagraha, as a moral principle, consists of rules that practitioners must adhere to, but its application can vary depending on the specific challenges faced. These rules can be seen as ends in themselves within Satyagraha. Consequently, any action performed in accordance with the concept can be presented both as a means and an end in itself. Due to this moral foundation, it appears that Satyagraha differs from the nonviolent political actions of the 21st century, which are more focused on political outcomes. Considering the assumptions about humanity and the moral values inherent in the concept, it is arguable that Satyagraha occupies a position beyond the general norms of politics. Although *Satyagraha* has been employed to address political issues, it transcends practical outcomes by approaching the resolution of political conflicts from a faith-based perspective, thereby aiming for more sustainable solutions. In this regard, Satyagraha can be understood as offering a constructive solution to conflicts wherever violence, and the oppression and fear it generates, exists (Nimbalkar, 2013).

2.3. Tapas (Redemptive Suffering)

The term tapas (Sanskrit: तपस) originates from Sanskrit and translates to 'warming', 'burning', or 'purifying effort'. It is a central concept in Indian philosophical and religious traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Tapas signifies a process of spiritual purification through disciplined control over

⁴ It can be said that the principles of *Satyagraha* are derived from the principle of *Ahimsa* through one of the sacred texts of the Hindus, the *Bhagavad Gita*, see: Kayalı, Y. (2018). Hint kurtuluş mücadelesinin lideri Mohandas Karamçad Gandhi: Bhagavadgita ve ahimsa. *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 11(57), 40-49.

one's physical and mental desires. It is not merely a physical effort but also a process of mental and spiritual transformation. For instance, in the Bhagavad Gita, which is one of the sacred texts of Hinduism, tapas is described as the attainment of inner peace through devotion and detachment from desires (Easwaran, 2007: 243-251). Similarly, in the Upanishads, another sacred text for Hindus, tapas is depicted as an inner fire necessary for attaining universal knowledge (Radhakrishnan, 1968). Additionally, Tapas represents the dedication and sacrifice required to achieve any chosen goal. In this context, it is not only a religious practice but also a symbol of determination and perseverance⁵.

It can be argued that the difference between Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence and nonviolent political actions inclined toward achieving political outcomes becomes clear when we examine the perspective on suffering that may arise as a result of the action. In other words, the distinction between whether a nonviolent political action emerges as a principle-based or belief-driven endeavor, or as a pragmatic (outcome-oriented) political act, lies in the way the potential consequences and harms of such actions are viewed. Practitioners of principled nonviolence voluntarily accept potential outcomes, such as arrest, injury, or even death, when carrying out their actions. At the heart of this acceptance of consequences in principled actions is the problematization of the existing order or the framework within which issues are addressed. In this sense, it is possible to see such actions as the result of a noetic form of reasoning. For this same reason, these actions can also be described as the dismantling of the "cooperation" process, which is the *raison d'être* of the political sphere. Implicit in this definition is the acknowledgment, through the aforementioned reasoning, that the foundation of any possible cooperation is inherently "evil." Therefore, accepting any form of suffering in nonviolent political action can be seen as an ethical revolt that cuts off all cooperation with "evil". Forms of this idea can also be seen in Tolstoy and Henry David Thoreau, two thinkers who influenced Gandhi. Presenting the views of these two thinkers in this context can be helpful in understanding Gandhi's ideas. Leo Tolstoy's (1967:15) quotation from Henry David Thoreau clearly illustrates this idea:

"What, then, is the meaning of non-co-operation in terms of the Law of Suffering? We must voluntarily put up with the losses and inconveniences that arise from having to withdraw our support from a government that is ruling against our will. Possession of power and riches is a crime under an unjust government ... says Thoreau. We must not, for fear of ourselves or others having to suffer, remain participators in it. But we must combat the wrong by ceasing to assist the wrong-doer directly or indirectly."

To understand the subject, it may be useful to highlight the difference between armed resistance and nonviolent actions. In armed resistance, individuals engage in action using violent means to protect themselves from negative consequences, whereas in nonviolent action, participants accept such consequences in advance. A prime example of this is Gandhi's famous Salt March. Before beginning the march, Gandhi wrote a letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin, in which he expressed his willingness to endure any consequence (Gandhi, 2023). Based on Gandhi's stance in this letter, it is possible to analyze the limitation of nonviolence in morally grounded actions and the reasoning behind why such actions are often termed as "passive resistance." Nonviolent political actions are frequently labeled as passive resistance because the participants intentionally confine potential negative outcomes to themselves. The use of the term "passive" in this context refers to the idea that the activism remains self-contained, where the public engagement begins and ends with the individual's own acceptance of harm. In this sense, it can be argued that the prior acceptance of harm imbues the action with a moral dimension.

It can be argued that another significant implication of the concept of Redemptive Suffering becomes evident in the context of how the human being, as a conscious entity, engages in the struggle for existence and defines itself within the public order. In this regard, Brock (1988:87) states, "*passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms.*" The concept of redemptive suffering can be seen as providing an epistemological dimension for advocates of nonviolence on an ethical level. According to Atack (2012:18), Gandhi's perspective on redemptive suffering can be described as an

⁵ The concept is thoroughly examined in *The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (pp. 147-335) and *The Chandogya Upanishad* (pp. 335-513) sections of Radhakrishnan's *The Principal Upanishads*.

expression of epistemic humility. This interpretation relates to the absence of criteria that would provide certainty regarding the moral righteousness of individuals or the moral wrongness of the opposing party. As Tolstoy emphasized (1967b:20), this lack of certainty stems from the impossibility of anyone being entirely justified. As a consequence of this epistemological reasoning, as Ceadel (1989:147) notes, the practitioner of nonviolent action is fully responsible for their actions based solely on their own principles and must bear the potential negative consequences.

Gandhi's various instances of fasting unto death can be evaluated within the framework of redemptive suffering. The 1918 Ahmedabad Mill Workers' Strike Fast marks Gandhi's first such fast. Initiated to advocate for the rights of textile workers in Ahmedabad and to prevent violence during the strike, this fast concluded with an agreement reached between the workers and the employers (Brown, 1989, pp. 123-125). Similarly, in 1924, Gandhi undertook a 21-day fast unto death to protest the escalating Hindu-Muslim conflicts in India and to promote communal harmony (Wolpert, 2006, pp. 178-180). Likewise, his fast in protest against the British "Communal Award" led to the signing of the Poona Pact, which safeguarded the political rights of the Dalits, the lower castes in India (Pyarelal, 1932, p.149). During the independence movement, Gandhi also embarked on a 21-day fast to protest Britain's policy of involving India in World War II, a fast that became a significant symbol in India's struggle for independence (Fischer, 1950, pp. 412-415).

3. Mahatma Gandhi's Nonviolent Actions in India's Struggle for Independence

Mahatma Gandhi was undeniably the central figure in India's transformation from a British colony to an independent state. His centrality in this process can be attributed to his ability to unite various groups within India, despite their differing sensitivities. What underpinned this ability to rally the masses, regardless of their differences, was his use of nonviolence as the primary weapon in the struggle for freedom. Nonviolence, in this context, can be seen as a tool that eliminated the visibility of potential conflicts among these diverse groups, allowing them to coexist and focus their efforts on the common goal of resisting the colonial state. Thus, by uniting the various groups in India around the principles of nonviolence, Gandhi was able to direct their focus toward the British regime, solidifying his role as the central figure in India's transformation into an independent nation.

While his principles may have been abstract, Gandhi was highly successful in transforming these ideals into concrete strategies. He employed a variety of tactics to break the hold of British rule over his country, including event-based nonviolent resistance, acts of civil disobedience, social boycotts, efforts to seek compromise while maintaining moral superiority, public education campaigns, prayer and meditation, as well as fasting on specific issues. These actions, rooted in nonviolence and grounded in ethical principles, allowed Gandhi to transcend traditional political struggles. This section will explore the effectiveness of Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence in India's quest for independence through significant events including the Amritsar Massacre (Jallianwala Bagh Massacre), the 1920-1922 Non-Cooperation Movement, the 1930 Salt Satyagraha (Salt March), and the 1942 Quit India Movement.

3.1. Amritsar Massacre (Jallianwala Bagh Massacre) (1919)

After Gandhi returned to India from South Africa, he began to nullify colonial laws by organising satyagrahas, or collective actions, on specific issues (see the Champaran (1917) and Kaira (1918) satyagrahas). Although Gandhi's recognition increased with these satyagrahas, The Amritsar Massacre marks a significant turning point in the elevation of his actions and methods to a national level. In other words, it can be said that the Amritsar Massacre and its consequences played a crucial role in Gandhi's transition to national-scale activism.

The Amritsar Massacre, also known as the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, took place on April 13, 1919, in the city of Amritsar in Punjab, and was a direct consequence of the repressive Rowlatt Act, which had been passed just a month earlier in March 1919. The Rowlatt Act granted the British colonial government sweeping powers to arrest and detain individuals without trial, censor the press, and suppress political

dissent, leading Gandhi to refer to it as the “Black Act” and call for a nationwide *hartal* (strike) to protest its implementation (Kohn, 2006, p. 32; Rowlatt, 2019, p. 296). This draconian law was seen as a direct attack on civil liberties and fueled growing discontent among Indians, sparking widespread protests and civil disobedience. In response to these protests, British troops, under the command of General Reginald Dyer, opened fire on a peaceful gathering of unarmed civilians who had assembled at Jallianwala Bagh to protest the Act. Official reports state that 379 citizens were killed, though independent estimates suggest the death toll was much higher, with thousands wounded (Wagner, 2019). The massacre occurred in an enclosed garden with only one narrow exit, leaving the crowd trapped and unable to escape the gunfire. This brutal act of violence shocked the nation and became a turning point in India's struggle for independence, galvanizing widespread resistance against British rule and uniting Indians across religious, regional, and social divides in their demand for freedom.

The Amritsar Massacre, widely regarded as the beginning of India's independence movement, not only intensified public anger against British rule but also played a significant role in shaping Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence. Although Gandhi was not physically present at the massacre site, he closely followed the event, actively participated in parliamentary activities addressing the massacre, and prepared an official report on the incident for the Congress Party (McCutcheon, 1989:66). As part of his nonviolent philosophy, Gandhi wrote open letters to the British governor and the public, seeking to resolve the situation peacefully and demonstrating his willingness to negotiate. Faced with the British administration's uncompromising stance, Gandhi established the ‘Satyagraha Sabha’⁶ to practically implement the principle of Satyagraha, declaring (McCutcheon, 1989:90):

"We solemnly affirm that, in the event of these Bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such laws as a committee to be hereafter appointed may think fit. And we further affirm that in this struggle, we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person, or property."

Gandhi's statement reflects the fundamental principles of the Satyagraha (truth-force) philosophy and his commitment to nonviolent resistance as a means of achieving political and social change. By declaring his intention to engage in civil disobedience against unjust laws such as the Rowlatt Acts, Gandhi emphasizes the moral duty of individuals to resist oppression through peaceful means. His assertion of "adhering to truth and avoiding violence" underscores the ethical foundation of Satyagraha, which seeks to confront injustice without perpetuating hatred or harm. Gandhi's establishment of the Satyagraha Sabha can be seen both as a strategic move to organize and mobilize the public in a disciplined manner and as a demonstration of the movement's commitment to nonviolence, focusing on moral persuasion rather than coercion. This approach not only aimed to challenge specific repressive laws but also sought to awaken the conscience of oppressors and illustrate the power of collective, principled action. Ultimately, through this declaration, Gandhi sought to inspire a transformative movement rooted in truth, justice, and nonviolence—one that would eventually contribute to India's struggle for independence (McCutcheon, 1989, p. 90).

Satyagraha Sabha refers to communities formed by individuals or groups who embrace the philosophy of Satyagraha. These groups not only acted as catalysts for nonviolent resistance but also contributed to the global resonance of this principle. During the independence movement, Satyagraha Sabha fostered unity and solidarity among the public (Fazal & Fazl, 2002) and brought together individuals committed to the principle of civil disobedience (Tuteja, 1997). Ultimately, these communities played a pioneering role in the nonviolent resistance movement during India's struggle for independence. In this context, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre can be regarded as a pivotal event, as it laid the groundwork for the emergence of the nonviolence philosophy that would shape independent India's future.

⁶ The Satyagraha Sabha was founded by Gandhi in 1919 to resist the Rowlatt Act and to raise public awareness about nonviolent resistance. The term *Sabha* means "community" or "association." This organization was established to encourage the public to engage in passive resistance within the framework of satyagraha and ahimsa against repressive laws such as the Rowlatt Act and to organize civil disobedience campaigns.

For further details, see: Brown, J. M. (1989). *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 123.

3.2. Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922)

The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–1922) stands out as one of the most transformative campaigns in India's long and arduous journey toward independence from British colonial rule. Led by Mahatma Gandhi, this movement marked a departure from previous forms of political protest, as it sought to mobilize the masses through nonviolent resistance and collective action (Gandhi, 2007, p. 198). Emerging in the wake of the Rowlatt Act (1919) and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre (1919), the movement aimed to dismantle the foundations of colonial authority by encouraging Indians to withdraw their cooperation from British institutions (Desai, 1946, pp. 281–343). In this context, schools, courts, and government offices were boycotted, while Indians were urged to rely on themselves and embrace swadeshi (indigenous goods) instead of British products.

The most distinguishing feature of the Non-Cooperation Movement, in contrast to previous protests, can be assessed through its emphasis on unity. By bringing together Hindus, Muslims, and other communities under a common banner of resistance, the movement sought to bridge deep divisions within Indian society (Talbot, 2017, p. 114). In this regard, it can be argued that the movement not only challenged the economic and administrative mechanisms of the British Empire but also laid the foundation for a new political consciousness based on nonviolence, self-determination, and national pride (Gopal, 1968, pp. 52–53). As the first nationwide campaign of its kind, the Non-Cooperation Movement can thus be regarded as one of the turning points in India's struggle for independence and a movement that paved the way for future mass mobilizations.

To understand the Non-Cooperation Movement, it is essential to recognize that one of the greatest obstacles to India becoming an independent state under colonial rule was its fragmented societal structure, composed of communities with diverse allegiances. In this context, the significance of the Non-Cooperation Movement can be understood through its crucial role in overcoming this fragmentation on the path to Indian independence. The movement is often cited as one of the key events that united the divided Indian society against British rule. To grasp the importance of this unity, it is enlightening to examine the political groups of the period and their relationships with the colonial authority. Prior to this movement, it is evident that nearly all political groups in India demonstrated loyalty to both the British colonial government and the Crown. For instance, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, regarded as the Father of the Indian National Movement, described himself as a loyal servant of the East India Company, while also being known for his deep admiration of liberal democratic culture, freedom of thought, and social and religious reforms (Desai, 1946). Similarly, Syed Ahmad Khan, a leading figure in the revival of the Muslim community in India, viewed the British government as one that brought legal and material progress, frequently praising the British for introducing industry, commerce, transportation systems, and modern education (Dar, 2020, p. 92). Alongside the admiration these groups held for the British, it should also be noted that, as a result of the colonial government's approach to institutional politics, Hindu politicians focused their efforts on the upper classes and neglected to include the broader masses in their reform plans (Dar, Khan, et al., 2021, p. 15). Considering that the Indian National Congress itself was founded by the British (1885), the intricate relationship between India's institutional politics and colonial rule becomes even clearer; in such an environment, the importance of uniting fragmented communities toward a common goal becomes even more evident. Throughout this process, Gandhi, drawing strength from the newly formed political public, profoundly transformed India's political culture in two significant ways. First, he elevated the political organization, previously limited to representing specific groups and dependent on the British, to a national level. Second, he expanded the understanding of politics, which had previously been confined to constitutional work or the concerns of urban elites, to include the entire population within India's borders (Gandhi, 2007:198).

When examining Gandhi's strategy to unite the people of India under a common cause in the struggle for independence, it becomes evident that he did not remain indifferent to the unique challenges faced by different communities. As part of his efforts to bring together various groups living in India, Gandhi

provided different forms of support and cooperation to address their specific concerns. For instance, approximately 80 million Muslims in India believed that the British had betrayed them through the issue of the Caliphate, given their allegiance to the Ottoman Empire. In response, Gandhi acknowledged the significance of the Caliphate for Muslims, participated in the Khilafat Conferences, and supported their struggle (Talbot, 2017, p. 114). He advocated for the concerns of Indian Muslims to be embraced by all Indians and shared these concerns through a sense of belonging to a single nation. As a result, he gained significant support from Muslims—who had previously been hesitant about the Indian national movement—regarding the future of India (Desai, 1946, pp. 314–324) and encouraged them to adopt some of the demands and strategies of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Ultimately, during Gandhi's visits to various regions of India, Muslims actively participated in the expansion of the Civil Disobedience Movement (Gopal, 1968, pp. 52–53).

The Non-Cooperation Movement, which began in the summer of 1920, can be regarded as a significant movement in India's independence process, particularly in fostering a sense of national unity. Initially launched as a completely nonviolent campaign, the movement was brought to an end by Gandhi in 1922 following the outbreak of violent incidents, most notably the Chauri Chaura incident⁷. Gandhi believed that violence betrayed the moral and ethical foundations of the independence struggle and that continuing the movement would compromise the integrity of nonviolent resistance (Chandra, 1989, s. 178-179). Although the movement had garnered widespread support, Gandhi's decision to end it in response to the eruption of violence demonstrates his unwavering commitment to the philosophy of nonviolence in India's struggle for independence.

3.3. The Salt March (1930)

Gandhi's leadership of the Salt March, also known as the Dandi March, in 1930 is regarded as one of the most significant acts of civil disobedience against British rule. The march commenced on March 12, 1930, and lasted for 24 days, culminating on April 6, 1930, when Gandhi and his followers reached the coastal village of Dandi. This meticulously planned act of defiance was carried out as a direct response to the British Salt Act of 1882, which prohibited Indians from collecting or selling salt and compelled them to purchase heavily taxed salt from British authorities. However, the march can be interpreted not only as a protest against the salt tax but also as a symbolic challenge to the broader economic exploitation and oppressive policies of colonial rule. Accompanied by 78 trusted volunteers, Gandhi walked 240 miles from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi, gathering thousands of supporters along the way. His act of producing salt from seawater in Dandi became a powerful symbol of self-sufficiency and resistance, deeply resonating with the Indian populace and drawing international attention to the Indian independence movement (Sellars & Kristóf, 2016; Rao, 2013).

The Salt March was a transformative event that galvanized the Indian independence movement. It demonstrated the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance as a tool for social and political change, inspiring millions to join the struggle for freedom. The march's success lay in its ability to unify people across caste, class, and religious lines, creating a sense of shared purpose and collective identity. As the march progressed, it became a symbol of hope and defiance, with thousands of Indians breaking the salt laws in acts of civil disobedience across the country. The British response, characterized by mass arrests and violent repression, only served to strengthen the resolve of the protesters and garner global sympathy for the Indian cause (Decourcy, 2010). Gandhi's philosophy of satyagraha (truth force) and ahimsa (non-violence) was vividly embodied in the Salt March, leaving an indelible mark on India's struggle for independence and influencing countless movements for justice and equality worldwide (Rosselli, 1974).

⁷ The Chauri Chaura incident, which occurred on February 4, 1922, marked a critical turning point in the Non-Cooperation Movement and highlighted the challenges of maintaining nonviolence in mass protests. The incident took place in the village of Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh, where an unarmed group of protesters demonstrating against high food prices and colonial oppression faced police gunfire, resulting in the deaths of several protesters. In retaliation, an enraged crowd set fire to the police station, killing 22 police officers (Brown, 1972, p. 256).

The Salt March can be regarded not only as a unifying event for the Indian people but also as a powerful symbol of resistance against British oppression and a march that reinforced national unity. The magnitude of its impact can also be associated with its ability to attract international attention and prompt a more critical examination of British colonial policies. Initially underestimating the march, British officials eventually sought to suppress the growing movement by arresting Gandhi and other prominent leaders. However, these repressive measures only strengthened the determination of the Indian people and demonstrated that peaceful resistance remained resilient even in the face of harsh colonial policies. The mass mobilization during the Salt March revealed that nonviolent resistance could effectively challenge even the most powerful colonial authorities. Consequently, it can be argued that the global perception of British colonial rule shifted, increasing the pressure on the British government to acknowledge India's demands for independence. Therefore, this march can be seen as a significant turning point in India's struggle for self-determination, as it made the Indian people's aspiration for freedom more visible on the international stage (Johnson, 2006).

The Salt March is widely regarded as one of the most significant events demonstrating the influence of Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence on India's independence movement. The success of the march, along with Gandhi's unwavering commitment to the principles of nonviolent resistance, garnered widespread attention and admiration. In retrospect, *The Economist* (1999) described the march as one of the most defining actions in India's freedom struggle under Gandhi's leadership. Since salt was a commodity that affected all segments of Indian society, from the poorest to the wealthiest, Gandhi's decision to center the protest around salt can be seen as a strategic move aimed at fostering national unity. Thus, it can be argued that by framing the protest around such a universal issue, Gandhi ensured that the march became a unifying force for the entire Indian population (Sellars & Kristóf, 2016).

In this context, the Salt Satyagraha had a unique impact in fostering the social cohesion necessary for India's independence. While other *satyagraha* movements were often focused on specific issues and yielded limited outcomes, the Salt March resonated deeply across all segments of society. The timing of Gandhi's action is also noteworthy. The issue of the salt tax was not a new concern for Gandhi (Bhattacharyya, 2021). However, by 1930, it had become a matter capable of mobilizing the nation and worth taking significant risks for. By that time, Gandhi believed that India was moving steadily towards national unity, and he launched the protest with the conviction that the Salt March would accelerate this process. Considering its outcomes, it can be argued that he was successful in this regard.

3.4. The Quit India Movement (1942)

The "Quit India" Movement, initiated on August 8, 1942, represents the pinnacle of India's struggle for independence. Although the movement officially began in 1942, its intellectual origins can be traced back to September 3, 1939, with the outbreak of World War II. Understanding the movement's roots in this historical context is crucial for grasping both Gandhi's steadfast commitment to the principle of nonviolence and the extent of his influence over the Indian populace.

It should be noted that a movement similar to the Quit India Movement was initially proposed in 1939 by Subhas Chandra Bose, the nationalist president of the Indian National Congress at the time. After being re-elected as president in 1939, Bose suggested at the Congress session in Tripuri, in March 1939, that the Congress should issue a six-month ultimatum to the British government, demanding India's independence. If the demand was not met, he advocated for launching a comprehensive struggle to expel the British from India. However, this proposal was rejected by Gandhi, who believed that such an uprising was not appropriate while Britain was engaged in war. He expressed his disapproval, saying, "We do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin. That is not the way of non-violence" (Ramanjineyulu, 2023:6). Moreover, he publicly vowed not to disgrace the British government and initially opposed any movement or resistance against Britain during the war.

Gandhi's initial stance, which deemed direct confrontation with Britain during the war as inappropriate, evolved in the later years of the conflict due to Britain's persistent insensitivity toward India's demands

and the growing desire for freedom among the Indian populace. This shift in perspective was significantly influenced by Britain's exploitation of India's resources during the war without granting political autonomy to its people. Gandhi came to believe that Britain's intention to maintain India as a colony remained unchanged and that India's independence could only be achieved through a mass movement. This realization marked a turning point in his approach, leading him to advocate for more assertive measures in the struggle for independence (Brown, 1989; Chandra, 1989; Wolpert, 2006). Ultimately, the Indian National Congress convened in Bombay and, on August 8, 1942, passed a resolution authorizing the launch of a mass movement based on non-violent principles on the broadest possible scale, under Gandhi's leadership. On this occasion, Gandhi's speech, which passionately conveyed his determination to achieve freedom, not only inspired the movement's spirit (Sahoo, 2017:28) but also provided the masses with a powerful motivational slogan that galvanized them toward the ultimate goal of independence (Muni, 1997): *"Here is a Mantra – that I give you – The Mantra is 'Do or Die.' We shall either free India or die in the attempt. Freedom is not for the coward or the faint-hearted"* (Ramanjineyulu, 2023:5).

Gandhi's slogan (Do or Die) and the absence of prior negotiation efforts before this uprising have led some to interpret that Gandhi had abandoned his principle of non-violence (Ramanjineyulu, 2023). One reason for this interpretation is the inclusion of the verb "Die", which could be associated with violence, in the movement's slogan, "Do or Die." However, to claim that Gandhi abandoned his principles of non-violence based solely on this motto appears to be an overstatement. The term "die" in this context does not invoke killing but rather points to the application of Gandhi's philosophy of Redemptive Suffering, extending it to its ultimate limit. Another factor often cited, the absence of negotiations before the Congress resolution, can also be understood as a strategic choice. Given that the ultimate goal was complete independence, it could be argued that the idea of negotiation seemed irrelevant. Additionally, it is plausible that the previous failures of negotiations led to the realization that the strategy of "openness to dialogue", in line with non-violence principles, was no longer suitable. In fact, just hours after the Congress passed the resolution, Gandhi was arrested. The lack of preparation for a violent uprising before the resolution suggests that Gandhi intended to guide the movement with non-violent methods and perhaps even keep the door open for negotiations with the colonial government. After his arrest, the uprising sparked a significant wave of unity across the country.

Although Gandhi was not at the forefront due to his imprisonment, non-violent actions such as peaceful protests, administrative boycotts, the rejection of British laws, non-cooperation, tax resistance, and the boycott of British goods were occasionally accompanied by incidents of violence. Despite Gandhi's imprisonment, the independence movement's adherence to the philosophy of non-violence demonstrates the influence of his ideology on India's struggle for independence. For instance, during the movement, peasants in rural India refused to pay taxes to the British administration as part of their non-violent resistance (Hutchins, 1973). Additionally, students and workers in major cities actively participated in large-scale strikes and boycotts in a non-violent manner (Chandra, 1989). In Bombay, one of India's largest cities, thousands of people took to the streets and engaged in demonstrations entirely devoid of violence (Hutchins, 1973), which can be considered evidence of how deeply Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence was internalized.

It can be argued that both Gandhi's arrest and his lack of conciliatory rhetoric and actions while in prison (such as the hunger strikes he had previously undertaken to stop violence) played a significant role in the movement ultimately leading to India's independence. As Ramanjineyulu (2023:6) notes: *"By an irony of history, both Gandhi and the Government had as if conspired to bring about this violent revolution."* After Gandhi withdrew from the field of struggle following his call to "do or die," a scenario emerged where a government that used violence as a tool was left to contend with a united populace, who, having received the mantra of sacrifice from their leader, were ready to face any challenge. As a result, as Gandhi had predicted, the Indian people, despite mass arrests and widespread violence, ultimately achieved the independence they sought (Sahoo, 2017:34).

It can be argued that while India's independence can be attributed to the Labour Party's victory in the 1945 United Kingdom elections and the party's promise of independence to India, the Quit India Movement

was the most significant factor behind this decision. Moreover, it would not be accurate to explain the achievement of independence solely through adherence to the principles of non-violence. Rather, it can be argued that independence was the result of a combination of various internal and external factors. For instance, World War II depleted the economic and military resources of the British Empire, significantly weakening the colonial administration's ability to maintain control over India. Additionally, the armed struggle led by the Indian National Army (INA) and leaders such as Subhas Chandra Bose was an undeniable reality on the path to independence. Furthermore, the acceleration of the decolonization process in the international arena and the opposition of global powers, such as the United States, to British colonial rule clearly contributed to an environment supportive of India's independence. However, in order to establish a justifiable foundation for all internal and external factors, it is an undeniable fact that Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence played a critical role in maintaining the moral superiority of the Indian people and in strengthening India's legitimate cause in the eyes of the international community.

4. Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence transformed India's struggle for independence from a mere political movement into a form of resistance rooted in profound moral and ontological foundations. Centered around the principles of *Ahimsa*, *Satyagraha*, and *Tapas*, this approach proved instrumental not only in countering British rule but also in fostering unity and cohesion within Indian society. From a historical perspective, Gandhi's methods played a crucial role in mobilizing the masses and shaping political consciousness, as evidenced in key events from the 1919 Amritsar Massacre to the 1942 Quit India Movement. Symbolic actions such as the Salt March not only galvanized domestic support but also drew international attention to India's independence struggle, demonstrating that nonviolent resistance was not merely a strategic tool but an ethical imperative. While Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence was central to India's independence, it is essential to acknowledge that other factors—including global political developments, post-war power shifts, and diverse forms of resistance within India—also contributed to the eventual success of the independence movement. Nevertheless, Gandhi's ideas provided the ethical foundation that legitimized the struggle and reinforced its moral standing on the global stage.

In conclusion, Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence extends beyond the historical context of India's independence and remains a guiding framework for contemporary struggles for justice and freedom. His perspective on nonviolent resistance continues to offer valuable insights into modern social and political movements, highlighting its enduring relevance in addressing oppression and advocating for systemic change.

Finansman/ Grant Support

Yazar(lar) bu çalışma için finansal destek almadığını beyan etmiştir.

The author(s) declared that this study has received no financial support.

Çıkar Çatışması/ Conflict of Interest

Yazar(lar) çıkar çatışması bildirmemiştir.

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

Açık Erişim Lisansı/ Open Access License

This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY NC).

Bu makale, Creative Commons Atıf-GayriTicari 4.0 Uluslararası Lisansı (CC BY NC) ile lisanslanmıştır.

References

- Atack, I. (2012), *Nonviolence in Political Theory*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bhattacharyya, A. (2021), *Salt March: A Perspective*, Convercity, 09.02.2021. Erişim tarihi: 20.11.2023. <https://www.convercity.com/education/indian-history/salt-march-a-perspective/>
- Bondurant, J. V. (1965). *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, California: University of California Press.

- Brown, J. M. (1972). *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915-1922*, The UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, J. M. (1989). *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Brock, P. (1988), *Varieties of Pacifism: A Survey from Antiquity to the Outset of the Twentieth Century*, Syracuse/ NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Ceadel, M. (1989), *Thinking about Peace and War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chandel, B. (2014), Gandhi on Non-Violence (Ahimsa), *Diogenes*, 61(3-4), p. 135-142.
- Chandra, B. (1989), *India's Struggle for Independence: 1857-1947*, Penguin Books. [https://www.aspireias.com/uploads/mains/syllabus/India's%20Struggle%20for%20Independence%20\(Bipan%20Chandra\).pdf](https://www.aspireias.com/uploads/mains/syllabus/India's%20Struggle%20for%20Independence%20(Bipan%20Chandra).pdf)
- Chenoweth, E., & Stephan, M. J. (2011). *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Dar, F. A. (2020), Strategy of Loyalism: A Case Study of Syed Ahmad Khan's Relations with the British, *Journal of Political Studies*, 27(1), p. 91-105.
- Dar, F., Khan, M., Zahoor, M. (2021), Mass Mobilization in Indian Politics: A Case Study of Non-Cooperation Movement, *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 10(2), p. 13-25.
- Decourcy, E. (2010), Just a Grain of Salt?: Symbolic Construction During The Indian Nationalist Movement, *Melbourne Historical Journal*, 38, p. 57-73.
- Desai, A. R. (1946), *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay: Oxford University Press. <https://indianculture.gov.in/system/files/digitalFilesICWeb/ICrarebooks/cslrepository/3732/RB718.pdf>
- Dugar, B. R. (2013), Gandhi And Jainism, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 74(2), p. 319-322.
- Easwaran, E. (2007). *The Bhagavad Gita: Classics of Indian Spirituality*, California: Nilgiri Press.
- Erikson, E. H. (1969). *Gandhi's Truth: On The Origins of Militant Nonviolence*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- The Economist, (1999, Aralık 23), "The Decline of Empire: Gandhi, Salt, and Freedom".
- Fazal, D. A., Fazl, A. (2002), *Muslims And The Rowlatt Act Satyagraha*, In Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 63, p. 733-740.
- Fischer, L. (1950). *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*, New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Gajraj, S. R., Shajapur, M.P. (2022), Gandhi's My Experiments with Truth: Cultural and Social Expression of an Indian, *Smart Moves Journal*, 10(11), p. 7-13.
- Gandhi, M. K. (1969), *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House.
- Gandhi, M. K. (2012), *Non-Violent Resistance*, New York: Dover Publications.
- Gandhi, M. K. (2023), Gandhi's 'Ultimatum' to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin. Erişim tarihi: 10.12.2023. <https://www.gandhisaltmarch90.com/exhibition-archive/gandhi-ultimatum#:~:text=I%20cannot%20intentionally%20hurt%20anything,he%20may%20have%20in>
- Gandhi, R. (2007), *Mohandas: A True Story of a Man, His People and an Empire*, New Delhi: Penguin Books.
- Gier, N. F. (1995), Ahimsa, the Self, and Postmodernism: Jain, Vedantist, and Buddhist Perspectives, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 35(1), p. 71-86.
- Gopal, K. (1968), The Khilafat Movement in India: The First Phase (September 1919-August 1920), *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1(2), p. 37-53.

- Hazama, E. (2022), Unravelling the Myth of Gandhian Non-violence: Why Did Gandhi Connect His Principle of Satyāgraha with the “Hindu” Notion of Ahimsā?, *Modern Intellectual History*, 20(1), p. 116–140.
- Hutchins, F. G. (1973), *India's Revolution: Gandhi and the Quit India Movement*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Johnson, R. L. (2006), Return to India, (Ed. R. L. Johnson) *Gandhi's Experiments with Truth: Essential Writings by and about Mahatma Gandhi*, (s. 17-49), Oxford: Lexington Books.
- Kayalı, Y. (2018). Hint kurtuluş mücadelesinin lideri Mohandas Karamçad Gandhi: Bhagavadgita ve Ahimsa, *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 11(57), 40-49.
- King, S. B. (2009), Buddhism, Nonviolence, and Power, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 16, p. 103-136.
- Kişi, E. (2024). Siyasi Ve Teolojik Yönleri İle 20. Yüzyılda Hindistan'da Mahatma Gandhi Ve Gandizm, *Karabük Üniversitesi İktisadi Ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 4(1), 66-77.
- Kohn, G. C. (2006), *Savaş Sözlüğü*, (Çev. B. Kara), Ankara: Doruk Yayıncılık.
- Madhu, P. (2016), Satyagraha a Study in Gandhian Dialectics, *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 3(12), p. 645-650.
- Mccutcheon, R. (1989), *The Impact of The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre On Gandhi*, Master of Arts Thesis in McMaster University.
- Muni, S. D. (1977), The Quit India Movement, *International Studies*, 16(1), p. 157-168.
- Nimbalkar, N. (2013), An Approach to Peace: Gandhi on Conflict Resolution through Satyagraha, *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 31(2), p. 130–138.
- Parekh, B. (1989). *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination*, London: Macmillan.
- Popovic, S.; Miller, M. (2015). *Blueprint for Revolution* (American ed.), United States of America: Spiegel & Grau Trade.
- Puri, B. (2009) Interpreting Gandhi's Non-violence: A Study of the Influence of Buddhist Philosophy, *Journal of Peace Studies*, 16(1), p. 33-44.
- Pyarelal, N. (1932), *The Epic Fast*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House.
https://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/epic_fast.pdf
- Radhakrishnan, S. (1968). *The Principal Upaniṣads*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Ramanjineyulu, D. (2023), Mahatma Gandhi and the Quit India Movement: A study of Gandhian Strategy and Dynamics, *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*, 5(2), p. 5-10.
- Rambachan, A. (2003), The Co-Existence of Violence and Non-violence in Hinduism, *The Ecumenical Review*, 55(2), p. 115–121.
- Rao, K. R. (2013), The Economic Philosophy of Gandhi and Economic 4-Model, *The Indian Economic Journal*, 61(1), p. 56–69.
- Rosselli, J. (1974), India's Revolution: Gandhi and the Quit India Movement, *International Affairs*, 50(4), p. 672–672.
- Routledge, P. (2017). *Space invaders: Radical geographies of protest*, London: Pluto Press.
- Rowlatt, J. (2019), The Sins Of The Great-Grandfather: The Rowlatt Act And The Amritsar Massacre, *Asian Affairs*, 50(3), p. 296-304.

- Sahoo, S. C. (2017), Mahatma Gandhi and the Quit India Movement-A Study of Gandhian Strategy and Dynamics, *Odisha Review* (August, 2017), p. 28-35. Erişim tarihi: 29.12.2023. <http://magazines.odisha.gov.in/Orissareview/2017/August/engpdf/28-35.pdf>
- Schock, K. (2005). *Unarmed insurrections: People power movements in nondemocracies* (Vol. 22), Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Sellars, M., Kristóf, O. (2016), The Salt March Today: Gandhian Lessons for Social Media Activism, *Denison Journal of Religion*, 15 (1), p. 1-6.
- Shabnam, B. (2015), Mahatma Gandhi and Satyagraha, *International Journal in Management and Social Science*, 3(12), p. 407-412.
- Talbot, I. (2017), *A History of Modern South Asia: Politics, States, Diasporas*, Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Tolstoy, L. (1967), The Beginning of the End, in *Tolstoy's Writings on Civil Disobedience and Non-Violence*, (p. 9-17), New York: The New American Library.
- Tolstoy, L. (1967b), Two Wars, in *Tolstoy's Writings on Civil Disobedience and Non-Violence*, (p. 20-29), New York: The New American Library.
- Tuteja, K. L. (1997) Jallianwala Bagh: A Critical Juncture in the Indian National Movement, *Social Scientist*, 25(1/2), p. 25-61.
- Ulafor, O. J. (2020), Gandhi's Philosophy of Non-Violence: towards Conflict Resolution and Peace in Africa, *International Journal of Humanities and Innovation*, 3(2), p. 60-66.
- Vinthaghen, S. (2015). *A Theory of Nonviolent Action: How Civil Resistance Works*, London: Zed Books.
- Wagner, K. A. (2019). *Amritsar 1919: An Empire of Fear and the Making of a Massacre*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Wolpert, S. (2006), *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of British Empire in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.