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**FROM SATYAGRAHA TO FREEDOM: PRINCIPLES OF THE  
INDIAN NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT**

*Abstract*

The article is devoted to the study of the basic principles that formed the basis of the Indian national independence movement – satyagraha. It is shown how these ideas, proposed and implemented by Mahatma Gandhi, helped to unite Indian society and laid the foundation for the national revival of India in the twentieth century. The article emphasizes that satyagraha was not only a political strategy, but also had an important cultural and spiritual meaning. This movement helped restore the self-respect of Indians and encouraged the revival of traditional Indian values and culture. The desire for independence from colonial structures was not limited to political demands, but also included the rejection of British goods, a return to Indian customs, and the promotion of national culture. Gandhi and his followers viewed satyagraha as a process that should free India from external oppression and give the people spiritual freedom. The influence of satyagraha on the contemporary socio-philosophical discourse of India is investigated. India's independence, gained in 1947, was the result of many years of non-violent struggle. The ideas of satyagraha and hymns continue to influence the contemporary socio-philosophical discourse in India, becoming an integral part of the national identity. Nowadays, the principles of satyagraha are applied in social movements aimed at fighting for human rights, social justice, environmental awareness, and peace in international relations. India preserves Gandhi's legacy by honoring his ideas in politics, education, and civic initiatives.

**Keywords:** Indian national independence movement, satyagraha, ahimsa, Mahatma Gandhi.

## *Introduction*

National liberation movements in India emerged due to a set of reasons related to the economic, political and social oppression of British colonial rule. The British colonial policy led to profound changes in Indian society, disrupted the traditional way of life and put the country in a subordinate position, creating all the conditions for the struggle for independence.

One of the reasons for deployment of the National Liberation Movement in India was economic exploitation. The British colonial authorities in fact deprived India of its economic sovereignty. The policy of «resource drainage» was to use most of India's wealth and income for the needs of Britain. At the same time, the local economy deteriorated, agriculture declined, and traditional crafts were replaced by British goods, which were upsold to Indians at high prices. This led to poverty and mass famines, such as the Great Bengal Famine of 1943.

Political oppression was expressed in the fact that Indians were forbidden to participate in their own political governance, and all key positions were held by the British. The policy of the colonial government was aimed at suppressing the Indian elite and promoting the interests of the Empire, which contributed to emergence of a strong desire for political autonomy. The first uprisings began long before Gandhi, Nehru and other ideologists of the National Liberation. Although not very successful, the Rebellion of 1857 was the first mass attempt by the Indians to throw off the British shackles. The rebellion awakened the national consciousness and reminded the Indians of the need to unite for a common goal. Thus, the ground was laid for the emergence of several pro-Indian organizations.

Along with the rise of political oppression, disapproval of Anglicization spread. Knowledge of the English language and culture separated the educated Indian elite from traditional culture and Varna society, but at the same time allowed them to understand the concepts of democracy, freedom and human rights that they wanted to apply to their own people. The story of such a social crisis was shown in the work «Mountain» by Rabindranath Tagore. The heroes of the story face the problem of choice between traditional cultural values and new ideas that come from the West. This reflects the identity crisis experienced by a society that is trying to adapt to modernity while preserving its roots [1]. This plot illustrates another reason for the growth of liberation movements in India – social and cultural change. The British rule tried to impose European values on the Indians and conquer the local culture. This caused outrage among the population, which valued its religious, cultural and traditional values. The Indian cultural leaders such as Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Vivekananda actively advocated for revival of the Indian culture and spirituality, which was an important factor in development of the nationalist movement.

Purpose of the study is to analyze what principles were the basis for deployment of the political and cultural movement of the national revival in

India and what impact they have on the Indian socio-philosophical discourse at present.

### *Research Methods*

The study employs a comprehensive approach that combines methods of historical-political, philosophical, comparative, and hermeneutic analysis. The historical-philosophical method made it possible to reveal how Gandhi's moral and philosophical principles were transformed into instruments of political action, and how political struggle became a form of spiritual practice. The hermeneutic method was applied to interpret Gandhi's texts (in particular *Hind Swaraj*, *Collected Works*, letters, and speeches), as well as to comprehend cultural symbols (the spinning wheel, salt, simplicity of clothing, etc.) within the context of the anti-colonial narrative. This helped to uncover the value-based essence of satyagraha – not as an ideology, but as a way of being and thinking. The socio-cultural method contributed to the study of satyagraha's influence on the revival of national identity, traditional culture, and Indian self-awareness. It enabled the demonstration of how a political idea evolved into a mass socio-cultural movement that shaped a new type of civic solidarity. The comparative-political method made it possible to compare satyagraha with other models of anti-colonial movements (particularly African and American) and to identify the distinctiveness of the Indian path to independence – through non-violence (*ahimsa*) and moral discipline, rather than armed resistance. This method highlighted the uniqueness of the Gandhian path within the broader context of global liberation processes of the twentieth century.

The historical-chronological method was employed to trace the evolution of satyagraha ideas – from Gandhi's first experiments in South Africa to the mass campaigns of civil disobedience in India (1906 – 1947). This method made it possible to reconstruct the sequence of events and reveal the connections between the stages of the national liberation movement and its ideological foundations.

The combination of these methods ensures a holistic understanding of satyagraha as a multidimensional phenomenon – historical, political, cultural, and spiritual. They make it possible to demonstrate that the path from satyagraha to freedom was not only a struggle against colonialism but also a process of moral and spiritual emancipation of the individual, which remains relevant to contemporary movements for peace, human rights, and ecological responsibility.

### *Research results*

The struggle for Indian independence was not only a political, but also a philosophical revolution that combined the desire for freedom with deeply rooted moral, religious and ethical values. That is why the principles of the

resistance movement are expressed in Sanskrit concepts such as Ahimsa (non-violence), Dharma (law), Sathya (truth) or Karuna (compassion, mercy). This was precisely the appeal to historical authenticity, affirmation of the continuity of the original Indian culture and postulation of the right to self-expression and self-development of India. It was led by prominent leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose and others, each with their own unique philosophy.

Satyagraha (the power of truth) is a concept of non-violent struggle developed by Gandhi. This principle was based on such typical resistance that was intended to awaken the moral conscience of the British authorities and the world community. Gandhi believed that non-violence was the greatest power of humanity, and that through spiritual devotion to the truth, change could be achieved without physical struggle. «...in the Indian movement, brute force had absolutely no place under any circumstances... no matter how much the Satyagrahas suffered, they never resorted to physical force, although there were times when they were able to use it effectively. In addition, although the Indians had no voting rights and were weak, these considerations did not affect the organization of Satyagraha in any way. This does not mean that the Indians would resort to Satyagraha, even if they had weapons or the right to vote. Perhaps Satyagraha would not have had scope if they had the voting rights. If they had weapons, the opponents would think twice before turning them against themselves. Therefore, it can be understood that people with weapons would have fewer opportunities to perform Satyagraha. I'm trying to say that I can assert with confidence that when planning the Indian movement, there was never the slightest thought about the possibility or impossibility of armed resistance. Satyagraha is an internal strength in its pure and simple form, and the possibilities for spiritual strength are much less when and in so far as there is room for the use of weapons, physical force, or gross violence. In my opinion, these are completely opposite forces, and I was fully aware of this opposition even at the time of Satyagraha's emergence» [2].

In his search for the ideological basis of a new fair Indian society, Mahatma Gandhi turns to the philosophy of non-violence (ahimsa). This principle has deep roots in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain philosophies. Gandhi believed that freedom and social justice could only be achieved through non-violent methods. Ahimsa meant not only rejection of physical violence, but also exclusion of resentment, hatred and anger, calling for love and understanding even in conflicts. Ahimsa does not involve giving up the action, but on the contrary, it provides for spiritual work on oneself, that is not passive resistance, but spiritual activity that requires effort. Speaking of ahimsa, Gandhi himself put it as follows: «Non-violence does not consist in renouncing any real struggle against evil. Non-violence, as I conceive it, undertakes a more active campaign

against evil than the Law of Talion, whose very nature results in the development of I lift up the sword of the tyrant by not crossing it with a steel of better quality, but by defrauding his hope by offering no physical resistance, he will find in me the resistance of the soul that had fled from its attack. This resistance will first blind it and then force it to bend. And the fact of folding will not humiliate the aggressor but dignify it... There is no weapon more powerful than the well channeled!» [3, p. 316]. Moreover, the principle of ahimsa is considered more broadly than just in a political, civil context. While still in Africa, Gandhi realized that the restructuring of society should begin with the restructuring of oneself. Therefore, his social work went along with individual work on himself — ahimsa as non-violence in the political struggle and ahimsa as non-violence in everyday things. For example, Gandhi was a vegetarian and took a vow of brahmacharya (sexual abstinence).

Ahimsa and truth are two sides of the same coin in Gandhi's philosophy, they are inseparable. Truth is the first thing to look for. Those who believe in non-violence believe in the living God. «Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which the reverse? Ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later» [4, p. 13-14].

Researchers from Raiganj University — Anil Bhuimali and Jumu Saha emphasize that for Gandhi, ahimsa is a way of treating the world and other living things that requires self-cultivation. «The law of ahimsa makes life worth-living or meaningful. Ahimsa not only develops man's moral dignity and personality, but it also makes possible an ideal state or society. Thus, for the construction of well-developed as well as well-ordered human society ahimsa is crucial. Ahimsa, therefore, plays an important role to build up peaceful society. Ahimsa means the largest love or greatest love as the term ahimsa indicates harmlessness or non-violence» [5, p. 1].

Satyagraha was not only aimed at gaining freedom. Gandhi saw independence as not just a separation from colonial rule, but as an internal self-government that included personal and spiritual responsibility. Swaraj is another brick of the ideological foundation, along with ahimsa. It meant not only political freedom, but also economic, social and moral autonomy, when every Indian recognizes himself as an active participant and master of his land. In his work «Hind Swaraj or Indian Self-Government», he advocates for a return to authentic Indian values and social structure based on non-violence, morality and simplicity. He criticized colonial and Western approaches to development, preferring a simple, balanced life that, in his opinion, was closer to traditional

Indian culture. His vision of India as an independent state was based on the idea of moral and spiritual self-sufficiency, where economic equality and social harmony came first. Gandhi also sought to create a just society based on traditional Indian values. This ideal provided for fair governance that would ensure well-being and equal opportunities for all citizens.

Freedom is not only about getting rid of shackles, but also about being able to achieve true development. This idea is often found in Rabindranath Tagore's public speeches. He stressed that Swaraj was aimed at gaining true freedom, spiritual growth and opportunities for the people to realize their potential.

For the full implementation of Indian Swaraj, economic independence was necessary. Gandhi and other leaders of the movement called for a revival of traditional Indian crafts, such as spinning Khadi cloth, which became a symbol of economic self-sufficiency and abandonment of the British industrial products. This approach emphasized the importance of an independent economy that met India's needs and culture.

The result was non-violent campaigns such as the boycott of British goods, the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930), and the Quit India Movement (1942) aimed at achieving Swaraj through personal responsibility and self-organization.

The next component of Swaraj was social equality. Gandhi and his followers saw Swaraj as a way to eliminate social inequality and overcome the Varna system as well as to provide opportunities for all citizens regardless of their social background. Despite the different Varnas, religions, and languages that divided Indian society, the philosophy of the struggle for independence called for unity and brotherhood. Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Bal Gangadhar Tilak wrote and spoke about the components of a national identity that would unite all Indians for a common goal of independence. The Indian National Congress and numerous movements promoted the idea of national unity, where every citizen, regardless of ethnic or religious origin, could find their place in new India.

The pursuance of equality had a deep philosophical meaning, especially for leaders such as Bhimrao Ambedkar, who advocated for the rights of the untouchable (Dalits) and equality for all Varnas and religions. He argued that true independence was impossible without social justice and overcoming internal discrimination [6].

Among the ideologists of the Indian national movement, the understanding of Swaraj differed by a degree of radicalism. Gandhi's position was noted for its moderation and his Satyagraha with the leading principle of ahimsa described above had many supporters in the Indian National Congress. However, this was not the only point of view.

Subhas Chandra Bose was a prominent Indian nationalist, who supported the idea of Swaraj, but unlike Mahatma Gandhi, had a more radical approach to achieving independence. Bose believed that India should adopt a more militaristic approach to the struggle for freedom from the British colonial rule. His most significant contribution in this context was creation of the Indian National Army (INA), which fought alongside the Japanese against the British during the World War II.

The Bose's ideology was based on the belief that India should use active resistance, but not a passive disobedience to achieve independence. His famous slogan «Give me blood and I will give you freedom» became a symbol of his call for armed struggle. Bose was profoundly affected by the ideas of European fascist and nationalist movements but always stressed that the goal was to liberate India from the British colonial rule and not to introduce foreign ideologies [7].

While in stark contrast to Gandhi's philosophy, Bose's views and methods gained considerable popularity among those who were disappointed by the slow progress in the struggle for independence and the British government's refusal to grant India full independence. His efforts and the role of the Indian National Army during the final years of the World War II became an important part of the Indian liberation movement.

However, it was Satyagraha, developed by Gandhi, that was a more successful and large-scale project. It became a form of response to colonial oppression that took into account India's deeply rooted religious and cultural traditions. It was more universal than just a political movement and sought to create a new spirit that would unite the Indians regardless of Varna, religion, or social status.

The openness and accessibility of this method of resistance for broad segments of population — from peasants to intellectuals, women and representatives of various social strata — unlike armed struggle, participation in non-violent resistance was possible for everyone, and this made the movement nationwide. The first and second waves of Satyagraha in India had different reasons and motives. However, in both cases Gandhi believed that Satyagraha could change not only the Indians but also affect the conscience of the British. He did not seek to physically overcome the enemy but to convince it of the moral injustice of its actions.

Based on the principles of non-violence, Satyagraha was different from many other liberation movements that often resorted to violence. Gandhi saw peaceful resistance as a means to achieve true independence without leaving a trace of hostility or revenge. The 1919 protests in India were accompanied by terrorist attacks. In that regard Gandhi noted that violence was not a legitimate means. If it was possible to gain self-government and achieve the elimination of offenses only through violence against the British and through murder, then

he would prefer to stay without self-government and without elimination of offenses [3].

The following forms of non-violent struggle of Satyagraha became an alternative to terrorism and armed resistance:

1. Non-violent disobedience expressed in marches, strikes, and demonstrations. For example, the Ahmedabad Mill Strike of 1918, when Gandhi helped textile workers achieve higher wages through a peaceful protest. The Salt March of 1930 is one of the most famous examples of Satyagraha. Mahatma Gandhi and his supporters marched more than 380 km from Sabarmati Ashram to the seashore in Dandi to protest against the British salt monopoly. Having broken the law, they independently extracted salt from seawater, symbolically violating British laws.

Other peaceful marches and demonstrations were in support of various campaigns such as calls for the abolition of unfair taxes, laws restricting press freedom and civil rights. For example, hunger strikes have become an important tool of Satyagraha as a way of non-violent pressure on the authorities. Gandhi and other activists often starved, drawing attention to unfair policies and demanding change.

The Indians massively refused to comply with the laws that they considered unfair. For example, farmers in various regions of India protested against strict taxes and laws restricting their activities.

As part of the civil rights movement, many activists refused to pay taxes and participated in «open disobedience».

2. Boycott of British goods and institutions

The Indians massively abandoned British goods, especially textiles, and instead began to produce and wear domestic textiles. This had an economic impact on the colonial economy, which was heavily dependent on the Indian market.

The rejection of British education, legal system, positions and political bodies became a form of resistance that undermined the authority of the British administration.

Gandhi founded ashrams (communities, schools) that taught the principles of non-violence, truth, and self-sufficiency. In ashrams, participants learned economic independence, self-reliance in the manufacture of clothing and food. Public education programs taught people the principles of Satyagraha and prepared them for peaceful resistance.

Thus, the national liberation movements in India began as a reaction to colonial exploitation and oppression. Satyagraha was a natural response that considered cultural and moral values of the Indians and offered a unique, non-violent path to independence. This allowed the movement to gain large-scale

involvement and moral superiority, making it a defining force in India's struggle for freedom.

A modern view on Satyagraha in India is quite multi-vector and multi-faceted. Many Indian researchers, philosophers, sociologists and historians analyze this movement as a source of moral, ethical and political lessons that remain relevant in the modern world. Let's take a look at some of the main views on Satyagraha that researchers in India cover in their papers.

Satyagraha as an ethical and spiritual ideal in modern society appears as a universal way of resolving conflicts, where truth and non-violence come first. In particular, Gandhi Research Foundation posts articles and annual reviews covering various aspects of Gandhi's philosophy, including ethical and political contexts of Satyagraha. The ethical context includes such topics as an application of Satyagraha as a strategy of non-violence and its use in conflict situations. In particular, in his article «Satyagraha: Gandhi's Approach to Conflict Resolution», Jai Narain Sharma describes how Satyagraha's principles, such as dialogue and forgiveness, remain relevant in resolving contemporary political and social conflicts [8].

Political scientists such as Ashis Nandy and Rajni Kothari study the impact of Satyagraha on modern politics. In other words, the political context of Satyagraha is mentioned here. They argue that while non-violent resistance has its limits in the world where politics often resorts to force, Gandhi's example demonstrates that even nowadays political power can be found in non-violence. For example, peaceful protests against corruption and environmental disasters in modern India often draw inspiration from the principles of non-violent resistance.

In modern studies, Satyagraha has ecological potential. Indian environmentalists such as Vandana Shiva emphasize that principles of non-violence and truth can inspire movements for environmental justice, such as protests against deforestation, river pollution, and environmentally harmful projects. The Satyagraha principle promotes environmental awareness by offering alternatives based on harmony with nature and responsibility to it. The researcher puts Satyagraha's ideas into practice. For example, her the «Seed Satyagraha» campaign aims to preserve biodiversity and counteract corporations that monopolize seeds and violate farmers' rights. The organization «Navdanya» is creating seed banks to preserve local varieties, particularly in the face of growing impact of globalization on agriculture. Shiva is also a founder of Bija Vidyapeeth – a training center for the study of sustainable farming methods, which teaches an environmentally conscious approach to agriculture and increasing environmental responsibility through methods based on Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence. She believes that Satyagraha can be a powerful tool

for protecting natural resources, such as water and soil, which are under threat due to globalization and large-scale commercial projects.

The global significance of Satyagraha is another area of current relevant studies. They refer to how Gandhi's ideas resonated with world leaders such as Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. Subrat Kumar and Rajendra Gandhi mention the universality of Satyagraha. It is not only an Indian phenomenon, but also an example of how to achieve change in society through non-violent resistance and moral pressure [9]. Through its focus on various spheres of life and involvement of the general population in the ideology of non-violent movement, Satyagraha inspired leaders to fight racial, religious and economic injustice. This is exactly the method that can be adapted by different cultures and societies.

It is worth noting that the ideas of non-violent resistance were not unanimously positively received. Along with the above-mentioned studies, which continue the line of Gandhi's approach, expanding the scope of its application, there are studies devoted to criticism and reinterpretation of Satyagraha. An Indian ecofeminist and writer Arundhati Roy questions the relevance of Satyagraha in the current political context. She emphasizes that non-violent resistance may not be sufficient in situations of extreme violence and aggression by the state or other forces. She draws attention to the need for flexibility and adaptation of Satyagraha to modern challenges, in particular to human rights and social justice in the context of globalization [10].

### *Conclusions.*

Thus, Indian researchers see Satyagraha not just as a historical phenomenon, but as a multidimensional ideal that can be adapted to various aspects of modern life — from social and environmental justice to politics and ethics. This shows that Satyagraha is a living tradition that continues to inspire and give meaning to the struggle for truth and justice in the modern world. The philosophy of struggle for independence continues to influence India. The principles of non-violence, social justice and economic independence remain relevant, and the desire for harmony and unity in diversity is a fundamental element of Indian statehood. These ideas made the struggle for independence not just a liberation movement, but a profound cultural and spiritual revival that had a huge impact on the political, economic and social structure of modern India. The matter is open to debate whether the position of India's «official» neutrality nowadays, especially when it comes to current political discourse, is a consequence of Satyagraha and its main principle — ahimsa.

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## **ВІД САТЪЯГРАХИ ДО СВОБОДИ: ПРИНЦИПИ ІНДІЙСЬКОГО НАЦІОНАЛЬНО-ВИЗВОЛЬНОГО РУХУ**

### *Резюме*

Стаття присвячена дослідженню основних принципів, які лягли в основу Індійського національно-визвольного руху — сатъяграхи. Показано як ці ідеї, запропоновані та втілені Магатмою Ганді, допомогли об'єднати індійське суспільство та заклали основу для національного відродження Індії у ХХ столітті. В статті наголошено на тому, що сатъяграха не тільки була політичною стратегією, але й мала важливий культурний і духовний зміст. Цей рух сприяв відновленню самоповаги індійців, спонукав до відродження традиційних індійських цінностей та культури. Прагнення до незалежності від колоніальних структур не обмежувалося політичними вимогами, а включало також відмову від британських товарів, повернення до індійських звичаїв та промоцію національної культури. Ганді та його послідовники розглядали сатъяграху як процес, що має вивільнити Індію від зовнішнього гніту й надати народу духовну свободу. Досліджено вплив сатъяграхи на сучасний соціально-філософський дискурс Індії. Незалежність Індії, здобута в 1947 році, стала результатом багаторічної ненасильницької боротьби. Ідеї сатъяграхи та агімси продовжують впливати на сучасний соціально-філософський дискурс в Індії, закріпившись як невід'ємна частина національної ідентичності. На сучасному етапі принципи сатъяграхи застосовуються в соціальних рухах, спрямованих на боротьбу за права людини, соціальну справедливість, екологічну свідомість та мир у міжнаціональних відносинах. Індія зберігає спадщину Ганді, вшановуючи його ідеї у сфері політики, освіти та громадських ініціатив.

**Ключові слова:** національно-визвольний рух Індії, сатъяграха, агімса, Магатма Ганді.

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