

# COURAGEOUS COMPASSION

## Quotes from Gandhi about the fundamental principles of nonviolent advocacy/resistance

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With explanatory notes and minor, gender-inclusive updates, shown in brackets []. Compiled by Dennis Rivers, MA / [www.PeaceWorkersUS.org](http://www.PeaceWorkersUS.org)

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**Satyagraha:** [holding on to (being guided by) deeply true principles and feelings of compassion for all in the face of injustice and violent oppression <sup>1</sup>]

“[The path of Satyagraha is to] hold on to the truth [as you know it in the depths of your soul] and stand up for it through one’s own suffering. . .”

“Nonviolence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evildoer, but it means the pitting of one’s whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save [their] honour, [their] religion, [their] soul and lay the foundation for that empire’s fall or regeneration.”

“Truth resides in every human heart, and one has to search for it there, and to be guided by truth as one sees it. But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to [their] own view of truth.”

“Non-violence is the greatest force [we have] been endowed with. Truth is the only goal [we have.] For God is none other than Truth. But Truth cannot be, never will be, reached except through non-violence. . .”

**Love and Ahimsa (non-injury, including not demeaning opponents):**

“Where there is love, there is life.”

“Whenever you are confronted with an opponent, conquer [that opponent] with love.”

“Whenever you have truth it must be given with love, or the message and the messenger will be rejected.”

“Nonviolence is based on the assumption that human nature ... unfailingly responds to the advances of love.”

**Civil Disobedience:**

“Civil disobedience becomes a sacred duty when the state becomes lawless or corrupt.”

“Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good.”

**Living Simply as an Act of Compassion:**

“The earth provides enough to satisfy every [person’s] needs, but not every [person’s] greed.”

“Live simply that others may simply live.”

**Personal Embodiment of Principles and Ideals:**

“We must become the change we want to see in the world.”

“[Our own personal] Practice is the best speech and the best propaganda.”

“My life is my message.”

**Listening (especially to our opponents):**

“Three quarters of all disagreement and misunderstandings would disappear from the world, were we able to put ourselves in the shoes of our opponents and understand their views. Either we would come to an agreement with them or we would think charitably of them.”

“The evolution of democracy is not possible if we are not prepared to hear the other side.”

“It is good to see ourselves as others see us. Try as we may, we are never able to know ourselves fully as we are, especially the evil side of us. This we can do only if we are not angry with our critics but will take in good heart whatever they might have to say.”

**The Futility of Violence:**

“An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.”

“To answer brutality with brutality is to admit one’s moral and intellectual bankruptcy.”

**Consistency of Ends and Means: [bad means create bad ends]**

“However much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes.”

“The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree.”

**Power:**

“Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment.”

**Selfless Service to All as a Spiritual Offering**

“‘*Yajña*’ [sacrifice] means an act directed to the welfare of others, done without desiring any return for it, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature. ‘Act’ here must be taken in its widest sense, and includes thoughts and word, as well as deed. ‘Others’ embraces not only humanity, but all life.”

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From the following web sources:

<http://library.thinkquest.org/26523/mainfiles/influences.htm>

<http://www.ieer.org/latest/oct2quot.html>

<http://www.sfheart.com/Ghandi.html>

<http://www.dadalos.org/int/Vorbilder/vorbilder/Gandhi/zitate.htm>

<http://www.dadalos.org/int/Vorbilder/vorbilder/gandhi/satyagraha.htm>

<http://bahai-library.org/books/gandhi/node9.html>

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<sup>1</sup> “Sat” in Hindu spirituality has several exalted and interwoven meanings: “true,” “truth,” and “Ultimate Being” (an aspect of the Divine Essence -- Brahman -- which is also the source of each person’s soul.) “Graha” is a Sanskrit word meaning to grasp or hold on to.