

from
On Nonviolent Resistance

by **Mohandas K. Gandhi**

Read with a Purpose

Read to see how Gandhi plans to fight injustice with *satyagraha*, or noncooperation.

Build Background

When Gandhi was working for Indian rights in South Africa, he edited and published a newspaper, *Indian Opinion*. He had read Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience," which made a "deep

impression" on him. As he wrote years later, he "translated a portion for the readers of *Indian Opinion* [and] made copious extracts for the English part of the paper." Gandhi included a short biography of Thoreau and five columns of excerpts from "Civil Disobedience" that contained the essence of Thoreau's argument. Gandhi emphasized that Thoreau's "incisive logic is unanswerable" and that he "taught nothing he was not prepared to practice in himself."

There are two ways of countering injustice. One way is to smash the head of the man who perpetrates injustice and to get your own head smashed in the process. All strong people in the world adopt this course. Everywhere wars are fought and millions of people are killed. The consequence is not the progress of a nation but its decline. . . . Pride makes a victorious nation bad-tempered. It falls into luxurious ways of living. Then for a time, it may be conceded, peace prevails. But after a short while, it comes more and more to be realized that the seeds of war have not been destroyed but have become a thousand times more nourished and mighty. No country has ever become, or will ever become, happy through victory in war. A nation does not rise that way; it only falls further. In fact, what comes to it is defeat, not victory. And if, perchance, either our act or our purpose was ill-conceived, it brings disaster to both belligerents. **A**

A Reading Focus Persuasive Techniques What is Gandhi's principal argument against active, violent resistance to injustice? Is this argument a logical, ethical, or emotional appeal? Explain your answer.

Vocabulary conceded (kuhn SEE dih) *v.*: admitted; acknowledged.

belligerents (buh LIHJ uhr uhnts) *n.*: nations, states, or their citizens at war.