I have therefore ventured to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice. For *satyagraha* and its offshoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering. The *risbis*, who discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence, were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known use of arms, they realized their uselessness, and taught a weary world that its salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence.

Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, 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 his honour, his religion, his soul, and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration.

INTERPRETING THE READING

Directions *Use the information from the reading to answer the following questions. If necessary, use a separate sheet of paper.*

1. Under what circumstances did Gandhi believe that violence is a justifiable choice?

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2. Did Gandhi see nonviolence as a method to be used by the weak or the strong? Give quotations to support your answer.

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3. How, according to Gandhi, did India's state of mind explain why people still wanted revenge for Amritsar? What was his reaction to their anger?

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4. How does "passive resistance" differ from simply giving in?

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Critical Thinking

5. **Making Inferences** Gandhi described himself as a "practical idealist." From what you know of his work, how did he turn his ideals into practice?

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Gandhi on Nonviolent Protest

Mohandas K. Gandhi, called the Mahatma, or "Great Soul," by his followers, was the leading figure in India's independence movement for 30 years. His simple, quiet, persistent efforts gained the respect and admiration of people around the world and became the model for other protest movements, including the fight for racial equality in the United States led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This excerpt from Gandhi's writings dates from 1919, the year of the Amritsar Massacre. In it, he also refers to the time he spent as a lawyer (1893–1915) in South Africa, where he led a protest movement against the discrimination that South African laws and officials imposed on Indian residents as well as on Black South Africans.

Guided Reading *In this selection, read to learn Gandhi's opinion of nonviolence and when he thinks it should be practiced.*

Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. Thus when my eldest son asked me what he should have done, had he been present when I was almost fatally assaulted in 1908, whether he should have run away and seen me killed or whether he should have used his physical force which he could and wanted to use, and defended me, I told him that it was his duty to defend me even by using violence. Hence it was that I took part in the Boer War, the so-called Zulu Rebellion, and [World War I]. Hence also do I advocate training in arms for those who believe in the method of violence. I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should, in a cowardly manner, become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour.

But I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment. Forgiveness adorns a soldier. But abstinence [from violence] is forgiveness only when there is the power to punish; it is meaningless when it pretends to proceed from a helpless creature. A mouse hardly forgives a cat when it allows itself to be torn to pieces by her. I therefore appreciate the sentiment of those who cry out for the condign [deserved] punishment of General Dyer [British commander at Amritsar] and his ilk. They would tear him to pieces, if they could. But I do not believe India to be helpless. I do not believe myself to be a helpless creature. Only I want to use India's and my strength for a better purpose. Let me not be misunderstood. Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will. An average Zulu is any way more than a match for an average Englishman in bodily capacity. But he flees from an English boy, because he fears the boy's revolver or those who will use it for him. He fears death and is nervous in spite of his burly figure. We in India may in a moment realize that 100,000 Englishmen need not frighten 300 million human beings. A definite forgiveness would, therefore, mean a definite recognition of our strength. With enlightened forgiveness must come a mighty wave of strength in us, which would make it impossible for a Dyer . . . to heap affront [insult] on India's devoted head. It matters little to me that for the moment I do not drive my point home. We feel too downtrodden not to be angry and revengeful. But I must not refrain from saying that India can gain more by waiving the right of punishment. We have better work to do, a better mission to deliver to the world.

I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not merely for the *risbis* [holy people] and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute, and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law—to the strength of the spirit.

I have therefore ventured to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice. For *satyagraha* and its offshoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering. The *risbis*, who discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence, were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known use of arms, they realized their uselessness, and taught a weary world that its salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence.

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