



THE STORY OF MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH BY MAHATMA GANDHI:AN EPITOME OF TRUTH

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Abstract

Gandhi is not only a name but it is a thought that will be never ended because it is based on truth and truth is the soul of Gandhian philosophy of life. Truth is very much connected with God and God is Omnipresent, Omniscient and Omnipotent so how can this thought be ended. Gandhi was a great supporter, follower and worshipper of truth and Ahimsa. Whole life he was the seeker of truth and tried his best to follow the path of truth. He not only himself followed the path of truth but shows others the path of truth. Truth became the summum bonum of the philosophy of his life and it seems that every aspects of his life whether it is political, social, personal or professional it became the central point around which all his decisions of his life decided and based. He identified truth with God so in his philosophy of life a concept evolved i.e. Truth is God and called truth the end (goal) that can be achieved through Ahimsa.

Key Words: *Truth, Truth is God, Ahimsa, Morality.*

Although Gandhi's philosophy was not much systematic but we can assume and have an idea of his philosophy through his thoughts of truth, thought of morality, thought of God, thought of Ahimsa and so on. We can visualize the implications of his idea and actions. In all his thoughts the concepts of truth had been the central point and whole life he was the seeker of truth as he wrote, "I am but a seeker after truth. I claim to have found away to it. I claim to be making a ceaseless effort to find it. but about that I have not get found it. To find truth completely is to realize one self and one's dusting, i.e. to become perfect. I am painfully conscious of my imperfections, and therein lies all the strength I possess, because it is a rare thing for a man to know his own limitations."¹

Truth always remain the central to his philosophical, spiritual and political thought and it is one of these profound concepts which reflect the essence of Gandhian thought. Gandhi was very much influenced by the religions especially Hinduism, Janism and Buddhism and all these religions have a common thing that is truth. So the concept of truth had been very charming to Gandhi. Around this concept he woven all his thoughts. According to Gandhi, "The word *Satya* (Truth) is derived from *sat* which means being. Nothing is or exists in reality except truth. That is why sat or truth is perhaps the most important name of god. Infact it is more correct to say that truth is God, than to say that God is truth. But as we cannot do without a rules or a general, such names of God as 'king of kings' or 'The Almighty' are and will remain generally current. On deeper thinking, how it will be realized, that sat or Satya is the only correct and fully significant name for God."²

Gandhi was a great theist and staunch believer of God. According to him God is the supreme creator of this world so he is the necessity of human being and "There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it through I do not see it. It is this unseen power which made itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my sense. It transcends the senses."³ Once he said that he can live without air and water but could not live if he did not believe in God. He wrote, "I worship God as truth only. I have not yet found him, but I am seekers after Him. I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in pursuit of this quest"⁴

So he identified truth with God. For him God is truth and love, God is ethics and morality, God is Fearlessness, God is Source of Light and life and yet he is above beyond all these. In his earlier views about truth he revealed that God is Truth is God. The distinction of his two Statements, viz. that God is Truth and Truth is God is the result of his search after truth and his continuous experiments with truth in his life. He revealed the reason of this changing as – "We believe – and I think it is the truth –that God has as many names as there are creatures and,



therefore we also say that God is nameless and since God has many forms we also consider Him formless, and since He speaks to us through many tongues we never found a double meaning in connection with Truth and even atheists had not demurred to the necessity or power of truth, and it was because of this reasoning that I saw that rather than say that God is Truth I should say that Truth is God.”⁵

Truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute truth, the eternal principal that is God" thus truth was the severing principle for him. Gandhi takes truth as the highest ideal or *sommum bonum* of life. *Sommum bonum* is the perfection that an individual can aim to achieve. In traditional practice of some moral conduct is it prescribed for the attainment of perfection. One is truthful if one scrupulously follows the moral ideals. Truth can be translated into action by adhering to the values in all walks of life. That if in a situation one has to choose between life or truth, Gandhi would prefer truth. He wrote, “Let hundreds like me perish, but let truth prevail.”⁶

Gandhi sometimes identifies truth with inner voice. As he writes "For me the voice of God, of conscience, of truth or the inner voice or 'the still small voice' mean one and the same thing. I saw no form I have never tried, for I have always believe God to be without fear. But what I did hear was like a voice from a far and yet quite now."⁷ He also believes in the efficacy of conscience. He took both of them - conscience and inner voice are synonymous. Although he never gave any systematic philosophy about conscience and inner voice but he always said that the voice that comes out from our inner core is our conscience and inner voice and what our soul tells us is inner voice. For him inner voice cannot be fully defined in words. However, he attempted to describe the inner voice in order that our understanding of it may be somewhat enacted. It is not as a message but rather a compulsive self manifestation of truth which has to be obeyed. Thus one becomes impelled to action by the inner voice rather than compelled to action as a response to one's external environment.

Gandhi feels that intuition is the heart of reason, however, can become the crowning glory of the inner voice; for Gandhi advocates that one check (by means of reason) the actual result that are accomplished. He would however have given primary attention to the means (a non-violent response led by the inner voice as "the mystery of all mysterious"). Gandhi says that inner voice does not suppress reason but rather sanctify reason. He described the inner voice as follows:

"Even as the bestirring of true love necessarily expresses itself in many (sometimes unconscious and effortless) ways, so too a person who has heard even a whisper of the inner voice cannot but follow it."⁸

Gandhi also identifies truth with morality. He assumes some ultimate values and wants society to approximate these values and truth is taken as the supreme principle of moral life. Since it is the law that regulates all human actions. All actions are judged as morally good if they are based on truth is never wrong. Since truth is the basis of all moral principles and actions, it is the supreme law and higher than any man-made law. Moral law based on truth is never wrong. He wrote. "To me God is truth and love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness, God is the source of light and life and yet he is above and beyond all these God is conscience and atheism of atheist."⁹ He interconnected truth with God, morality or ethics and love. Truth is multi-dimensional in his views.

Gandhi said that God appears not in person but in action. He advocates truth in thought, truth in speech and truth in action. Truth for him was not merely a philosophical concept, it was the basis of moral life and acted as a link between moral principles and our actions so that moral life can be attained in practice. His quest for truth involved not only bhakti yoga that is the discipline of prayer and devotion, but also karma yoga that is, the discipline of action. The primacy of putting moral principles into practice is to derive home the facts that truth as the moral law is to adhered not in thought alone but that it has to be trusted into action. Only then one can say that one has tried to live a moral life.



Gandhi adhered to truth in his everyday life and involved other people in his experiments and these experiments are revealed in his autobiography named *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* very honestly and truthfully accepting his mistakes. His experiments with truth were in his personal style and not to meant to be inward looking exercise in search of God, as was often the case with religious people in India. His search was conducted in the public domain, practiced in community living, and was a connected to the world outside as to beliefs within him. Society and he himself was laboratory where he could do his experiments with truth. According to him truth must be adhered to in one's thought, speech and action. Gandhi was moved towards truth after seeing a play mainly in his childhood and he depicted in his autobiography that how much he inspired and motivated seeing the play of Harishchandra and pondered Why should not all be truthful like Harishchandra ? To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal that inspired in me. Further he wrote "I literally believed in the story of Harishchandra. The thought of it all after made me weak. My commonsense tells me today that Harishchandra could not have been a historical character. Still both Harishchandra and Shrivana are living realities for me, and I am sure I should be moved as before it I were to read those play again today."¹⁰

One of the incidents of his childhood leaves an impression on Gandhi's mind when he wrote about his school days memories-he was called 'stupid' by his mates and by the teachers, for he could not understand the fact that his presentation of misspelt word 'kettle' would spoil the inspection report of his school due to him. His stupidity of not copying the correct answer arouse a good amount of debate in school and at home but Mohandas Gandhi did not get confused nor he lost any respect for his teachers, because he was, by nature, blind to the faults of the elders.

In his autobiography Gandhi revealed the truth of his marital life when he was too pre-occupied with the carnal desires of marriage. He wrote. "I was devoted to my parents. But no less was I devoted to the passions that flash is heir to. Further he said that: "I had to make good my authority as a husband!" He wanted to control his wife in every aspect of his life. Although he wanted her to get educated but he himself was so fond of her that he was in tight corner between his passion and duty. He confesses din his autobiography that "I am sure that, had my love for her been absolutely untrained with lust. She would be a learned lady today."¹¹

The statements are appropriate example of his dare of revealing truth honestly. He wrote, "I am but a poor stragglng soul yearning to be wholly good-wholly truthful and wholly non-violent in thought, word and deed, but every failing to reach the ideal which I know to be true. It is a painful climb, but the pain of it is a positive pleasure to me. Each step upwards makes me feel stronger and fit for the next."¹² Throughout his life he adhered to truth and his experiments with truth only related to his style. His Search for truth became the means of his self-purification and he gained the ability of discriminate the good activity and bad activity. He became able to be analytical. Instead of being frustrated, depressed he sought the path of bliss, learning, wisdom and restated himself to renounce desires so that it might not being satiety and astray him from the path of 'Svadharmā; and on account of the practice of his vision.

Thus Gandhi Identified truth with religion without any theological implication, he equated truth with morality (not only in thought but also in action), love, satyagrah , God and Ahimsa. His concept of truth is multidimensional or we can say that his search for truth is his journey from his earlier concept i.e 'God is truth' to 'truth is God' and finally truth has become the means of the purgation of his mind and soul.

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