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**THE PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE
IN GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY**

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Introduction

Among many social reformers, Gandhi played an important role to reform every layer in the society. Being a social reformer, he mainly focuses on the societal problems and he took many weapons to recover the societal problems. At once upon a time Gandhi went to South Africa and where he showed that there so many racial discriminations. He started his moral experiments of trying to conquer evil by love. Gandhi uses Truth and non-violence as a weapon and these weapons take an important part in M. K. Gandhi's life. He used these weapons to serve the reformation of the inequality, blemish and corruption in the society. According to him, truth and non-violence is the main feature of a pious person and makes him as sympathetic and cooperative. These are the moral side of a human being. He made several experiments with them with great keenness and applied them in original way practically in every aspect of human life especially in socio-political fields. He said that, the social order should be established on the dependent upon the concept of truth and non-violence. Gandhi's non-violence society would be a perfect democratic society where each part of a village even was to be self-sufficient, independent and free. If there is necessity of the state at all, it should be non-violence in its own nature. Conflicts are inherent in the society, economic position of the society or political situations; the non-violence technique is one of the important techniques that help to solve all the societal as well as communal problems. Truth is another important way as admitted by Gandhi that used not only to solve the national problems but it also helps to solve the international problems at all. In South Africa this weapon the same was employed by Gandhi against the cruel and injustice policies of the movement. Indians in South Africa were harassed, excluded from all rights. According to him, war is made because of misunderstanding between nations. Gandhi believed that "war can be abolished and peace and harmony can be established between nations through the principle of non-violence."¹ Gandhi was influenced by the Vaiṣṇava thinkers and he believed in the thought of Śaṅkara's Advaita concept of God. Vaiṣṇava thinkers believed God in a theistic manner and admit that God is personal. So, Gandhi believed that Truth is the ultimate goal. That's why Gandhi said that Truth is identified with God. According to Gandhi, both are the highest reality or the ultimate reality. For him, God can

¹ Gaur, V.P. (1977). Mahatma Gandhi: A Study of his message of Non-Violence. New Delhi: Starling Publishers. Pvt. Ltd.

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be denied because the atheist not believed in God. But the atheist can never be denied the power of Truth. So, for him, God is identified with truth.

Purpose of the Study

There are so many purposes associated with this paper. Some of these are as follows:

1. This paper is focusing on to make the relation between Truth and God.
2. This paper would help us to know how Truth and Non-violence are trying to solve the social and political problems.
3. This paper also highlighted that how Gandhi influenced by Śāṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, Bhaktī-cult and Satyāgraha.
4. This paper is focused on that non-violence is a means and Truth is an end.

It is true to say that; Truth and non-violence is the core essence of Gandhi's socio-political Philosophy. Gandhi said that, 'Truth' stands for 'reality'. According to him, 'Truth' does not mean a characteristic of a proposition that indicate the truth value, i.e., either true or false. Rather Gandhi opines that truth as existence, consciousness and bliss (*sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*). At the earlier time Gandhi believes that, God is Truth but later on his opinion was changed and believed that Truth is God. So, according to Gandhi, Truth is God and '*satyāgraha*' is '*āgraha*' of and thus, it means holding fast to truth. Gandhi explained the term '*satyāgraha*' from various viewpoints. '*Satyāgraha*' is not a weapon of the weak, the coward, the unarmed and the helpless. "It is a weapon of the morally vigilant and the active. *Satyāgraha* is not the traditional resistance of evil by evil. It is a resistance of evil by its opposite term i.e., by good."²

At the earlier time Gandhi thinks that 'God is Truth' but later on, he realizes by heart that 'Truth is God'. As a student of philosophy, we are generally thinking that 'truth' means the truth value of a proposition and we know that a proposition has a truth value that is either true or false. But Gandhi's view is distinct from this. For him, Truth means ultimate reality. God is an ultimate reality but everybody doesn't believe on it. An atheist does not admit the existence of God but he does not deny the existence of the Truth. So, according to Gandhi, Truth is identical with God. Gandhi is made the relation between God and Truth in following manner.

God and Truth

² Lal, B. K. (2010). Contemporary Indian Philosophy. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. Pvt. Ltd, Delhi.

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Since the idea of God is metaphysical, as a philosophy student, we cannot ignore Gandhi's philosophical views on the subject. Gandhi was not a philosopher in reality, but other philosophers discovered numerous philosophical ideas in his writings, such as the idea of God and Truth, therefore he was regarded as such. Gandhi believes that there is no difference between theism and pantheism because both 'isms' share the belief in God. Gandhi's theistic beliefs were similar to those of Vaiṣṇava. The foundations of the concept of a theistic God were ingrained in his mind by his early entrance into the Vaiṣṇava cult and the impact of the familial environment in which he was raised. Though their ideas and beliefs diverge from Advaitins doctrine, followers of the Vaiṣṇava cult are always recognized by the authorities of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. Śaṅkara's, Advaita Vedānta, acknowledges the existence of Nirguṇa Brahman and believes that the world, which appears to be real, is actually only an illusion brought about by people's ignorance. As a result, the Advaitins never saw the necessity for a God or a creator. Advaitins believes that both creation and the creator become unreal if reality is fundamentally one and the perception of the many is the result of ignorance that creates illusions.

The Vaiṣṇavas had faith in God, acknowledged the world's existence, and saw God as the world's creator and protector. Another distinction between Vaiṣṇavas and Advaitins is this. According to Advaitins, salvation is made possible by knowledge of reality, which is an attribute-less, indeterminate Brahman. Being Nirguṇa, reality cannot be approached in a devotional way since devotion requires interpersonal relationships. Consequently, the Advaitins advise that the path of knowledge is the only path to emancipation. God becomes a personal God in the theistic view held by Vaiṣṇavas philosophers. Gandhi feels that God is needed not merely for the satisfaction of reason or intellectual curiosity, but also for providing strength, solace and happiness in the mind. To believe in God must enable an individual to be in peace in the world. He says, "... He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if He ever does. God to be God. must rule the heart and transform it."³ Only when God is conceived as a person and an interpersonal interaction between God and Individual is possible will this be possible. Gandhi had little trouble coming up with the idea of a personal God since he was so greatly influenced by the lives and customs of the saints of the *Bhaktī*-cult. Gandhi was reading the Bible and the Quran, which is how he came to believe in his own personal God.

Although the relationship between God and Truth is a complex one, Gandhi believed that God and Truth were one and the same. He acknowledged that God is a personal concept, while Truth is an impersonal ideal. This raises the question, though: how can the two be distinguished from one another?

³ Gandhi, M. K. (1931). Young India.

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Truth is God

It is crucial to examine Gandhi's philosophy in order to solve the aforementioned issue. Gandhi frequently attempted to clarify his position since he understood how difficult it was. He says, "In his early age he believed that in Hindu scriptures God has thousands of names. But these one thousand names of God were by no means exhaustive and Gandhi thinks that truth is another name of God. God has as many names as creatures have but we say that God is nameless, and since God has many forms we also consider Him as formless, and since He speaks to us in many tongue, we consider Him to be speechless and so on...if it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God and come to take the conclusion that God is Truth."⁴

Gandhi's assertion that God is Truth will become clearer when this passage is interpreted. First of all, this claim is the outcome of an attempt to give a label or a classification to the all-encompassing reality that is God, which seems to defy explanation. Second, since only God is actual, God is referred to as Truth. Gandhi believed that God is Truth and that Truth is not a quality of God. He claims that the word 'truth' comes from the word 'sat', which meaning 'is'. Therefore, to claim that God is Truth is to imply that God is the same as Truth, not that Truth is God's property.

Gandhi later came to declare that 'Truth is God' rather than the earlier assertion that 'God is Truth'. In this case, the conversion may raise logical issues. For instance, the claim that 'Allmen are mortal' cannot be inferred from this, and its occurrence is a challenge or error. When a statement's subject and predicate are identified with one another, these challenges are essentially eliminated. Thus, it may be said that changing the focus from 'God is Truth' to 'Truth is God' is neither unusual nor exceptional. Gandhi, however, had more complicated motivations for enacting this transformation. He says, "But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be God, God is Truth above all...But two years ago I went a step further and said Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz. that God is Truth and Truth is God. And I came to the conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth..."⁵

Gandhi argued that the phrase 'God is Truth' should be changed to 'Truth is God'. According to him, there are a lot of people who have varied explanations for why God exists. A person may be theistic, pantheistic, or polytheistic depending on how they approach their belief in God. Therefore, Gandhi argues that while there are numerous arguments in favor of acknowledging God's existence,

⁴ Gandhi, M. K. (1928). Young India. p.310

⁵ Ibid.

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there are none in favor of proving the existence of Truth because Truth's importance is obvious. Denying the truth is self-contradictory.

The question now becomes: What is Truth? Although the term 'Truth' is seen as a quality of judgment in the logical sense, it is viewed differently in the metaphysical meaning as knowledge that is correct and in accordance with reality. Truth is sometimes thought of in Indian philosophy as self-illuminating and revealing itself. Gandhi somehow blends all of these definitions of 'truth' and ultimately comes to identify God with truth.

***Ahimsā* or Non-Violence**

Gandhi's philosophy was centered on the idea of *Ahimsā*, or non-violence. Gandhi believed that truth and non-violence were inextricably linked and could not be separated. Gandhi asserts that there are two meanings of *Ahimsā*, or non-violence: a negative meaning and a positive meaning. According to Gandhi, Truth is the 'end' while *Ahimsā* is the 'means.' *Ahimsā* is our utmost duty. We will eventually arrive at the end or ultimate objective if we take care of our means. *Ahimsā* often means 'non-killing' or 'non-injury'. We sometimes assume that *himsā* means the opposite of *Ahimsā*. Gandhi defined *himsā* as the act of causing pain or taking a life with the intent to harm it, out of anger, or out of selfishness. Gandhi was also influenced by Jaina thought. The practice of *ahimsā* is encouraged by Jaina philosophy not only in mind but also in speech and actions. According to Jainism, you cannot think badly of other people or use slang language with them. If you hurt someone with your words, actions, or speech, it is *himsā*, and you cannot do anything that could cause them to have problems in their lives.

Non-violence is a positive definition of 'love'. It denotes affection for all living things. The idea of non-violence is expanded to include love for all sentient beings on the planet, not just for humans. This implies that one should love all living things, including animals, rather than only people. Gandhi, I believe, adopted the ideas *himsā* from Jaina philosophy. According to Gandhi, abstaining from all of these is known as *ahimsā*. However, Gandhi's definition of *ahimsā* is not inflexible, in contrast to the Jaina philosophy's concept of *ahimsā*. Gandhi claimed that there are situations in which *himsā* cannot be avoided, such as when one's body cannot be sustained without harming other bodies while eating, drinking, walking, breathing, etc. Gandhi occasionally suggested that in some situations, killing might be acceptable or even possible. He said that- "Taking life may be a duty. We do destroy as much life as we think necessary for sustaining our body. Thus, for food we take life, vegetable and

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other and for health we destroy mosquitoes and like by the use of disinfectants etc...⁶ Gandhi therefore believed that murdering or injuring someone can be considered an act of violence in specific situations, and his definition of violence is not strict but rather flexible. Anger, pride, wrath, selfishness, malice, and similar factors are examples of these states. Any harm done to life for these reasons is *himsā*. So according to Gandhi, the negative meaning of *Ahimsā* is 'non-killing or non-injury', but this presupposes that "a non-violent act is free from hatred, anger, malice and the like."⁷ When a person claims to be non-violent, he is expected not to be angry with one who has injured him. He will not wish him harm; he will wish him well.

Gandhi, however, acknowledges the advantages of *Ahimsā* as well. He believes that the fundamental characteristics of humanity are *Ahimsā*. For humans, *Ahimsā* comes naturally. The spiritual parts of man comprise his true nature. In essence, man is a non-violent spirit. Gandhi asserted that while the body or senses may sustain harm, the soul is impervious to harm. He believes that *himsā* is not a part of human nature. Thus, *Ahimsā* is used to remove all forms of *himsā*. Love is the good thing about *Ahimsā*. The feeling of oneness is what love is. According to Gandhi, *Ahimsā* refers to a serious attempt to rid the mind of emotions that obstruct love, such as anger, malice, hatred, envy, etc. Gandhi believes that love is energy. Gandhi genuinely aspires to create a peaceful society where neighbors can develop friendships and fraternity via the notion of love. The greatest quality, 'love', encompasses such noble emotions as benevolence, compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, generosity, kindness, sympathy, and so forth. Love is the ability to purify and uplift oneself. According to Gandhi, the foundation of his social and political philosophy is love, which he defines as the positive feeling of *Ahimsā*. He held that fearless love is the foundation of a fearless, truly democratic society. Gandhi's concept of Nonviolence has some important characteristics and features which are as followed:

- Non-Violence is not the same as non-killing; it has broad sense but non-killing is a simple part of *Ahimsā*. •
- Non-Violence is not non-resistance born out of cowardice.
- Non-Violence implies several positive values like- love, active resistance to injustice, courage in the face of violence, non-possession, truthfulness and *brahmachārya*.

⁶ Lal, B. K. (2010). Contemporary Indian Philosophy. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. Pvt. Ltd. Delh. P. 109

⁷ Ibid. p.110

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- Non-violence implies bread labor, which Gandhi derived from Ruskin and Tolstoy and ultimately from the Bible. Gandhi defines it as the 'Divine Law that man must earn his bread by laboring with his own hands.
- Non-Violence is the higher value than life. Gandhi regarded Non-violence to be an ultimate value on three grounds. First, "it has universal application. Secondly, it enhances all other values without detracting from any. Thirdly, it has unlimited applications."⁸

According to Gandhi Non-violence makes a perfect state. It is a goal towards which all mankind moves naturally though unconsciously. He says, 'If we can manage to apply Non-violence successfully at home, it will in its pure form become an irresistible power in the service of the state. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean humble submission to the will of the evil doer, but it means putting one's whole soul against the will of the oppressor. The Gandhian concept of non-violence is dharma in action, and truth translated. It is not a static code of morality ready for adoption. It evolves and is in essence 'creativity morality', in the language of Bergson. Non-violence is a dynamic and creative concept on Truth. Truth, the supreme Gandhian value, is the consummation of all that is spiritual in man. He regards violence as an evil in itself. But for Gandhi, the positive aspects of *Ahimsā* are much more basic than its negative characters. *Ahimsā* is not merely refraining from causing injures to creature; it stands for certain positive attitude towards other living beings that one must cultivate.

Gandhi felt that truth could not be achieved without the practice of non-violence. To prove this point, Gandhi used a curious argument. According to Gandhi, truth and God are the same thing. Gandhi simultaneously embraced a pantheistic view of God. He contends that all beings are infused with God. God has brought all beings together, and love or non-violence is what makes this possible. Therefore, non-violence, which has its roots in God or truth, is ultimately the binding force of the universe. Therefore, love is the primary means by which we can achieve the primary objective, which is to create a peaceful community.

Techniques of *Ahimsā* Gandhi is aware that a theoretical emphasis on the value and importance of Truth and Non-Violence would lead us nowhere unless a way is shown for the practice of *Ahimsā*. That takes him to develop a technique of *Ahimsā*, to which he gives the name of *satyāgrahā*, which is translated in English as; Truth force or soul force or love-force. The etymological meaning of

⁸ Ibid, p. 108

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Satyāgrahā is *satya* and *āgrahā*. *Satya* means truth; and *āgrahā* means to hold the Truth fast. It, therefore, demands a deep sincerity and a vigorous love for Truth. According to Gandhi there are so many requirements of a *satyāgrahi* which are as follows:

- Essentially, a *satyāgrahi* ought to be sincere and truthful. One quality of the *satyāgrahi* is honesty and sincerity.
- A *satyāgrahi* needs to be open-minded and free of mental reservations. A person with an open mind is able to communicate with everyone in the community.
- A *satyāgrahi* must be disciplined soldier. Truth alone should be his master and conscience his guide. He should be loving but firm.
- A *satyāgrahi* must be completely fearless. He must fear anything worldly even death. 8 • Gandhi asserts that “a *satyāgrahi* is required to practice truthfulness and non-violence not only in his actions but also in thought and speech.”⁹
- The *satyāgrahi* must also have tolerance in him. According to Gandhi, if he does not have tolerance, he will lose self-control, and thus, will upset the way of Love.
- The fundamental requirement of a *satyāgrahi* is that he must have a living faith in God. Gandhi thinks that the Divinity is present in every man. So, to believe on God means to believe on man. This is the best thinking to make a good society.

So, Gandhi’s aim is to make a completely clean and distinct society by these ways. He emphasized on to make a corruption free society and peaceful society where one loves other.

Conclusion

After the discussion of Gandhi’s philosophical concept of Truth and Non-Violence, it is clear that Gandhi used these two terms as weapons to mitigate any kind of social as well as political muddles or problems. Gandhi was influenced by Advaita Vedānta Philosophy where he learned the concept of monism. He also accepted the pantheistic view and he believed that by the concept of non-violence all types of social as well as religious problems will be solved. Gandhi was well-known as a father of nation, so his aims is that to make a new society which is corruption free and free from any inequalities, caste division, rather he wanted to introduce the concept of brotherhood and fraternity attitude among the Indians. Gandhi was a great philosopher, lover of truth and non-violence and says that self-realization cannot be attained without truth and non-violence. Gandhi used Truth and Non-violence as social and political weapons for fighting against social and political evils and injustice. Gandhi

⁹ Ibid.

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employed the moral weapons like truth and non-violence to destroy the domestic, social, political, economic, religious and cultural problems and conflicts and tries to remove any kind of social problems, like untouchability, communal harmony and gave solution of the unemployment and illiteracy. Economic and religious equality were the social, economic and political targets to be achieved through his great weapons Truth and Non-violence. His philosophy of truth and non-violence transcends all regional, religious and cultural barriers. It is global and it comprehends not only humanity but the whole living world.

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