

Ideology of Truth and Its Route ---- M.K. Gandhi (A Philosophical Analysis)

Dipanwita Chakraborty

*Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy
Government Degree College, Dharmanagar
North Tripura, Tripura*

ABSTRACT: Gandhi nursed his regard for truth from the days of his childhood and it was in the course of his pursuit of truth he discovered the doctrine of non-violence. Truth, according to Gandhi, is the ideal of life, the goal towards which we must strive and the way to approach the truth is Ahimsa. Thus, truth is the end and non-violence or Ahimsa is the means. Non-violence, according to Gandhi is natural corollary of truth. Both are so intertwined that it is impossible to separate them.

KEYWORDS: Truth, Non-violence, End, Means, Intertwined.

Date of Submission: 08-05-2021

Date of Acceptance: 22-05-2021

I. INTRODUCTION

Truth is the subject of investigation in philosophy for thousands of years. In the Upaniṣads, truth had been considered as the highest virtue. In Mundakopaniṣad, III 1.6, it is mentioned that in the end truth wins not falsehood and the highway to gods is paved with truth.

*“ Satyam eva jayate nāṅṛtam
Satyena panthā vitato deva-yānaḥ .”¹*

In the Vedas, truth is recognized as essence of divinity. Rig Veda VII, 57.2 calls deities the manifestations of truth. The Vedas and the Upaniṣads are the ground of Advaitism and the Advaitins make out the three grades of reality (Sattā-traividhya-vāda) – Prātibhāsika sattā or illusory reality, Vyavahārika sattā or empirical reality and Pāramārthika sattā or transcendental reality. Dream experiences and the objects that appear for the time being in our illusions, e.g. illusion of snake in a rope, come under Prātibhāsika sattā. These experiences are not universal and are contradicted by other experiences. The unreality of it can be realized only when Vyavahārika sattā is attained. Vyāvahārika sattā or the empirical reality is the world of our experiences which are contradicted by the dawn of intuitive knowledge of the Brahman. In other words, its unreality can be realized only when Pāramārthika sattā is attained. Pāramārthika sattā is the pure existence reveals itself through all experiences and is not contradicted. Saṅkara holds that the principle of non-contradiction is the test of truth. According to him, Brahman or Ātman is only the existence which is un-contradicted in all the states: awaking, dreaming, deep sleep and turiyā. Thus, Brahman or Ātman is the only ultimate reality. Furthermore, in the Shānti Parva of Mahābhārata we find that truth is considered as one of the most important virtues. Besides Hinduism, in religious tradition of ancient India, Buddhism and Jainism would eventually hold the concept of truth as the most important virtue. Abstain from lies is the one sīla in Pañca-sīla of Buddhism. Nāgārjuna, the founder of Mādhyamika school of Buddhism, holds that Buddha’s teaching of Dharma depends on two aspects of truth. The first is Samvṛti-satya or empirical truth and the second is Paramārtha-satya or transcendental or the Absolute truth. Samvṛti is for ordinary people. Paramārtha is called Śūnyarītattvam as we cannot say anything about this. The Paramārtha can be attained only through Samvṛti. Chandrakīrti fully supports Nāgārjuna by saying that the highest truth is silence for the high-level. In Jainism also the Satya Mahābrata is considered as the one among five Mahābratas. Moreover, in Patañjali’s ‘Yoga Sutra’ we find that Yamas which form the first part of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga are five in numbers and Satya is the second of these five.

Generally the word “true” means reverse of lies. The word is also used in many other senses. Sometimes it can be used in the sense of genuineness, sometimes as an intensive to emphasis assertion and sometimes as a property of propositions. Thus, “What is the nature of truth?” is central point of debate in the early part of 20th century. At that time, in the contemporary philosophy of literature, we cognize inception of various theories of truth with distinct opinions. According to coherence theory, truth is consistency between judgment in question and other relative judgments. In other words, truth is coherence of propositions with one another and the group of propositions are said to be coherent when they support each other. In fact, it is the systematic coherence which is the characteristic of significant whole. This theory seems to have close

resemblance with Mīmāṃsā theory of Svataḥ-prāmāṇyavāda or intrinsic validity of knowledge where it is mentioned that validity of knowledge is not due to extraneous condition, rather it arises from those very indispensable causes from which knowledge itself arises. Thus, coherence or self-consistency is the nature of valid knowledge. But here coherence is not used in the sense of characteristic of significant whole. At this juncture, reality is merely a concurrence of distinct independent atomic entities. Another theory known as correspondence theory holds that truth is correspondence with fact. A proposition is considered as true if it corresponds with fact. This theory may be compared to Nyāya theory of Parataḥ-prāmāṇyavāda or extrinsic validity of knowledge where it is mentioned that the nature of valid knowledge is its correspondence with the object. But at the same time the Nyāya theory accepts pragmatism also when it says that the test of truth is fruitful activity (Saṃvādi- pravṛtti). That means knowledge is valid if it leads to fruitful activity and invalid if not. The pragmatic theory of truth was associated with the work of Charles. S. Pierce, William James and John Dewey. According to this theory, truth is what works. William James holds that a judgment is true if works successfully in practices and leads to successful consequences. Again, the self-evidence theory of truth, close to Rene Descartes who accepts nothing as truth which is self-evident, accepts obviousness and indubitable as the sole test of truth. Thus for incalculable thousands of years philosophers and others have ventured on the road towards truth This present study is confined to make a conceptual analysis on M.K. Gandhi's philosophy of truth and the road towards it.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study is basically a conceptual one. The work is theory oriented and so no field work is necessary for the work. An attempt was made here to reach at the conclusive point through different texts, Journals and articles.

III. DISCUSSION

Gandhi's Ideology of Truth:

M. k. Gandhi, the famed contemporary Indian Philosopher of 20th century, tried to answer the difficult question "What is truth?" by saying that truth is what the voice inside tells us. But as the function and evolution of mind is not same for all human beings, every individual mind works in its own right. As a result different people think of different truths which may even be contrary to each other. Thus, what may be truth for one may be untruth for another. Gandhi solved it by saying that "..... it is not proper for everyone to claim to hear the voice of conscience,"². Only the person who has abundant sense of humility can get the truth. Moreover, the seeker after truth should be so humbler so that even the dust could crush him. In Gandhi's word:

*"If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of Truth you must reduce yourself to a zero."*³

Gandhi compared truth with a vast tree which yields more and more fruit when it is more and more nurtured. Nothing can exist except truth or Satya. As truth is the sole core of our existence, the devotion to truth should be summum bonum of our life. As was said by Gandhi:

*"All our activities should be centered in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life."*⁴

Truth, according to Gandhi is not attribute of God, rather God is truth. It may be said that God is love, but principally God is truth. Because the meaning of love is differ from person to person. Someone takes it in the sense of passion and someone in the sense of Ahimsā. But the meaning of truth is same to all. There is no double meaning of truth. Gandhi made this standpoint at a meeting in Switzerland on his way back from the round table conference in London, when by answering the question asked to him why he considers God is truth?, he said :

*"You have asked me why I consider that God is Truth. In my early youth I was thought to repeat what in Hindu scriptures are known as one thousand names of God. But these one thousand names of God were by no means exhaustive. 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 consider Him to be speechless and so on. And so when I came to study Islam I found that Islam too had many names for God. I would say with those who say God is Love, God is Love. But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be Love, God is Truth, above all"*⁵

It was also informed that why in later period, that means two years ago, he took a step further and instead of his previous statement "God is Truth" he asserts the statement that "Truth is God". The reason for bringing about this change is that the question may be raised by atheists regarding the existence of God. But "Satya", the Sanskrit word for Truth, means "which exists" and atheists even cannot ignore it. That is why Gandhi leads to assert the primacy of Truth by shifting emphasis from God to Truth. In his words:

*"But in their passion for discovering truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God -- from their own point of view rightly. 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."*⁶

Furthermore, we find that Gandhi identified Truth with God as was said by him: *“My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth ...”*⁷. According to Gandhi, the word “Satya” derived from “Sat” means being and thus is the only correct and full significant name of God. All knowledge is included in truth and that which is not included in truth is not true knowledge. Where there is true knowledge there is bliss. God, according to Gandhi is known as sat-cit-ānand who combined in himself truth, knowledge and bliss. Thus, truth is not only relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth---- the eternal principle, that is God as well. To Gandhi, we the finite human being cannot possess the Absolute Truth, We can know and follow the truth as we see it. Thus, what we all know is only Relative Truth. Moreover, truth, the sovereign principle, includes numerous other principles and not only means truthfulness in speech, but in thought and action as well. According to Gandhi, the seeker after truth must go through several disciplines or vows, Among those five vows are ---- (1) the vow of Truth, (2) the vow of Brahmachārya , (3) the vow of Non-violence, (4) the vow of Poverty, (5) the vow of Non-possession. Gandhi said: *“Unless you impose on yourselves the five vows you may not embark on experiment at all”*⁸

Truth resides in the mind of everyone. But we, the ordinary people, always run away from it when we cannot feel the magnificence in it. The search for truth involves tapas or self-suffering, sometimes even unto death. *“.... The pursuit of truth is true bhakti (devotion). It is the path that leads to God. There is no place in it for cowardice, no place for defeat. It is the talisman by which death itself becomes the portal to life eternal.”*⁹

The Road to Truth :

Gandhi in his philosophical doctrine recognized non-violence or Ahimsā as road to truth. Sometimes it can be possible to pursue truth without being non-violent as nations go to war believing truth is on their side and insist that it should be a just war. But the pursuit of truth without regard to Ahimsa could degenerate into a form of self-righteousness. In fact, truth on its own could run the risk of turning into absolutism. Moreover, there may be risk of cowardice being mistake for. Thus, Gandhi suggested people to follow the path of non-violence or Ahimsā as it is impossible to seek and find truth, the highest goal of life, without it. In his word:

*“Ahimsā and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth, unstamped, metallic disc. Who can say which is the obverse, and which is the reverse? Nevertheless ahimsa is the means; truth is the end”*¹⁰

To a greater extent, Gandhi believed that a spiritual end cannot be attained by non spiritual means. Thus to reach the highest goal, the adopted means should be pure. Thus, as far as truth as God the end, non violence or Ahimsā is the means.

IV. FINDINGS

From Gandhian perspective the ultimate goal as well as ideal of human life is truth and means to reach the goal is Ahimsā or Non-violence. According to Gandhi God is truth and we can remain firm to truth when our minds refrain from anger, hatred, jealousy, selfishness, all other kinds of wicked attitude and become full of love not only for nearest and dearest one, but for all others, even for our enemies too as oneself. Love is measured as positive aspect of non-violence in the philosophy of M.K Gandhi. Thus for realizing God it is necessary to choose the path of Ahimsā or non-violence. In a word, it seems that there is good reason for arguing truth as ideal of human life and Ahimsā or non-violence is the means to the ideal.

V. CONCLUSION

In summing up it can be said that Gandhi was firm believer of truth and his whole philosophy is centered in non-violence or Ahimsā through which one can reach truth. According to him, the religion of non-violence not only for saints and rishis, but for masses also. Moreover, he said that as the creator has given us the control over means and as non-violence is the law of human species, each and everyone in the universe should follow it.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Devi Chitrita: UPANISADAS FOR ALL, New Delhi, S.Chanda & Co. (Pvt.) Ltd., 1973, P. 182.
- [2]. Gandhi. M. K : TRUTH IS GOD, Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, May 1955. P.15
- [3]. Ibid, P.15.
- [4]. Ibid, P.19.
- [5]. Ibid, PP.12-13.
- [6]. Ibid, P.13.
- [7]. Ibid, P.32.
- [8]. Ibid, P.13.
- [9]. Ibid, PP.20-21.
- [10]. MIND OF MAHATMA GANDHI, Encyclopedia of Gandhi's Thoughts, Compiled & Edited by: Prabhu. R. K. & Rao U. R. Ahmedabad, Navajivan Mudranalaya, May1966, P.158.