

Truth and Self-Reflection in Mahatma Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*

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ABSTRACT

This paper reveals the Mahatma Gandhi life as a series of moral conduct experiment, presentation how truth and nonviolence became guiding ideology in both his personal as well as political life. Mahatma Gandhi portrays truth as the final goal, followed through persistent self-reflection, sincerity, honesty and self-purification, presentation his life's challenges and moral failings. This paper highlights the truth as God, self-disclosure, experiments with morality and self-purification. This paper provides a profoundly personal description of Gandhi's life and his philosophical and religious development.

Keywords: truth, God, self, experiments, morality religious, nonviolence and self-purification.

INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the most religious minded souls in the modern world. In every aspect he was no doubt primarily a man of God and in him was instilled the spirit of service to the whole human race, self sacrifice, self control, renunciation, infinite love for Truth and Ahimsa, and a strong and proactive desire for self-realization. He not only attained these high ideals, which elevated him to the sublime spiritual status of Mahatma, but he also practiced them in his own life time. His unique and unrivalled greatness lies in practicing these sublime ideals.

Mahatma Gandhiji was a unique phenomenon in entire human history He was considered as one of the greatest and sweet son of Adam. He is belonged to that race of great men who are great at many thing and whose greatness large areas of human experience. He identified himself with the lowest of the low, but even the tallest of the tow serve him and were at his beck and call. His greatness was an unusual greatness.

Gandhi was primarily a humanist and a man of religion more than a nationalist and patriot. He always identified himself with the lowest of the low and was a friend of the poor and the underdog. Although he worked for the freedom of India from the British rule, there was no hatred in his heart for the British. The proverb, 'Hate the sin, but love the Sinner' was applicable on him.

The degrading and inhuman condition of women and untouchables, whom he called *Harijans*, appalled him. He spent all of his energy for the emancipation of the untouchables and the downtrodden he believed in fundamental equality of all human beings. He condemned Hinduism induction of untouchability. He wrote, "It is sin to believe that anyone else is inferior or superior to ourselves. We are all equal. It is the touch of that pollutes us, and never that of a human being. None are high and none are low for one who would devote his life to service. The distinction between high and low is a blot on Hinduism, which we must obliterate" (*In Search of Supreme* by M K Gandhi)

Gandhiji laboured all through his life for the welfare of *Harijan*. He advocated that harijans should be granted religious, economic, social and educational equality. For him independence had no meaning if the *Harijans* were deprived of their essential rights.

The protection of cow was a subject as dear to Gandhi's heart as Ramanama. In his opinion cow protection included cattle-breeding improvement of the stock, humane treatment of bullocks and formation model dairies etc He condemned those so-called Hindus who made their bullocks work beyond their capacity and who cruelly belabours the poor animal, thus disgracing his religion. He defended cow-slaughter and wrote "The cow is the purest of sub-human life. She pleads before

us on behalf of the whole of the sub-human species for justice to it at the hands of man, the first among all that lives. She seems to speak to us through her eyes. You are not appointed over us to kill us and eat our flesh or otherwise ill treat us, but to be our friend and guardian. It (the cow) is for me a poem of pity. I worship it and I shall defend its worship against the whole world" (*Cow Protection by M K Gandhi*)

Truth was Gandhi's pole star. His life and his ideas are always died in haled falsehood. Like an ordinary boy, he did many wrong things on his relation to his religion of truth. From his early childhood beloved and love for truth made him always confess his mistakes. As he grew up, truth became his sole object and ultimately he became the apostle of truth Ahimsa and peace. New implications of Truth were revealed to him at every stage and he wrote in his famous autobiography, *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*, "Truth is like a vast tree, which yields more and more fruit, the more you nurture it. The deeper the search in the mine of Truth, the richer the discovery of the gems buried there, in the shape of openings for an ever greater variety of service" (*Quotes by Mahatma Gandhi*)

Physically Gandhiji did not have a very handsome personality, but due to his spiritual strength and 'Charisma' he charmed millions. He was one of the gentlest and sweetest sons of Adam. Winston Churchill once called him a naked fakir', but this naked fakir of India with his non-violent struggle shook the mighty British Empire to its root and freed the country from its powerful clutches. He was a friend of the poor and the underdog, humble and bold, sincere and frank, simple and austere, non-violent and truthful in thoughts, words and deeds, frail in body but mighty in spirit. With these weapons he shook the foundation of the mightiest British Empire, liberated India, introduced religion into politics, emancipated the untouchables, reformed the Indian village, regenerated the condition of women, gave the message of peace, love, brotherhood, truth and non-violence to the war-battered world and like Christ sacrificed himself at the altar of human welfare

Gandhiji firmly believed that there is no other God than Truth. The luster of Truth is million times more intense than that of the sun. To visualize the universal and all pervading spirit of Truth face to face, one must love the meanest of creation as oneself. A man who aspires after it cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. And due to this devotion to Truth he was drawn into the field of politics. As a student Gandhiji had heard that the lawyer's profession was a liar's profession. Gandhiji was never influenced by the above notion as he had no intention of earning position or money by lying. He never resorted to untruth in his profession. His principle of truth was put to test many a time in South Africa but he always resisted the temptation to win by lying. He was reputed as a true lawyer and thus no false cases came to him. Even some of his clients bought their clean cases for him and took the doubtful ones elsewhere.

Mahatma Gandhi discovered the law of Ahimsa, which had been submerged under conflicts, wars, dissensions and violence, and extended its and application to all spheres of life-political, economic, social, individual and collective. He was conscious of his role as a apostle of non-violence and peace. He once wrote, "God has chosen me his instrument for presenting non-violence to India for dealing with her faith in non-violence remains as strong as ever" (*Non-violence by Mahatma Gandhi*)

Mahatma Gandhi was a practical idealist. He practiced Ahimsa in his own life. He had his first object lesson in *Ahimsa* when he made a written confession to his father about his habit of stealing money for smoking. His father wept and forgave him. Recalling this incident Gandhiji writes. "This was, for me, an object-lesson in Ahimsa. Then I could read in it nothing more than a father's love, but to-day I know that it was pure Ahimsa. Gandhiji practiced non-violence in South Africa and in India in the political social, economic and all other walks of life. His non-violent agitation in Champaran 'was a bold experiment with Truth and Ahimsa'" (*Stealing And Atonement by Mahatma Gandhi*) With the weapon of Ahimsa he even made something possible, which was thought to be impossible-he freed India from the cruel clutches of British Rule.

Gandhiji became a political leader by necessity His devotion to Truth drew him into the field of politics. To him Truth, non-violence and righteousness were the supreme manifestation of religion and he wanted this religion to govern all spheres of life including politics. He believed that politics devoid of religion is immoral and wrote in his autobiography..... those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means" (*Religion And Politics by Mahatma Gandhi*).

Gandhiji was not only a politician, but he was also everybody's friend and mentor. His arrival on the Indian political scene was not only a displacement of one leader with the other, but the outlook of entire country seemed to undergo an extraordinary change. He was a man speaking to man. He asked not for votes, but for sacrifices. He asked his followers to give up everything and follow him. The Hindus and Muslims worked together as one band of noble brothers for a time. There was a stir of expectancy in the air in his leadership. Fear miraculously left the people and it was clear that freedom can be delayed but it cannot be withheld for ever. Gandhiji put forward his weapons of Satyagraha and Civil-disobedience. The country witnessed the first direct object-lesson of Civil-disobedience when Gandhiji disobeyed the order to leave

Champaran not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being the voice of conscience The Non-cooperation movement was first of all presented by Gandhiji, in the joint conference of Hindus and Musalmans, which was convened at Delhi to deliberate on the Khalifat question. Fasting and penance were also very dear to Gandhiji. He envisaged these techniques as a powerful means of national liberation and as an instrument for establishing a non-violent society.

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the most religious minded souls in the modern world. In every aspect he was no doubt primarily a man of God and in him was instilled the spirit of service to the whole human race, self sacrifice, self-control and a strong desire for self-realization. He was of religion more than a nationalist and patriot.

Although Mahatma Gandhi was a devout Hindu, he stood for religion homogeneity of mankind. He used the term 'religion' in its broadest sense, which meant 'self realization or knowledge of self. By religion, he did s mean formal or customary religion, 'but that religion which underlines all religions, which brings us face to face with our maker.

According to Gandhiji, prayer is the very soul and essence of religion. Prayer is the only means of bringing about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts. He was of the opinion that prayer is an unfailing means of cleansing the heart of passions, but prayer must be combined with the utmost humility.

Gandhij was endowed with the religious bent of mind. *The Ramayana* , the *Bhagavita Gita*, and the *Mahabharata* were the main foundation of his aspiration. He was profoundly influenced by these epics. Gandhi was a seeker after truth. From his childhood day he acquired faith in morality he was convinced that morality is the basis of things and that truth is the substance of all morality. To him, truth and non-violence were the two basis principle of morality. He believed that Ahimsa and truth are correlated and. can never be separated and Ahimsa is the means and truth is the end.

As a child, he was like any ordinary boy He was shy and a mediocre student. As a husband he was faithful, loving and responsible. As a father he loved his sons and was proud of his capacity of handling and educating them. As a practicing lawyer he put great premium on truth and honesty. Most of his legal work was done in the interest of public, for which be charged nothing beyond the fulfillment of his meager requirements. As a politician, he was a man-speaking to men. He was everybody's friend and mentor. He asked not for votes, but for sacrifices. His arrival on the Indian political scene brought a revolution in the ways of life and thoughts of the Indians. He became the liberator, the Messiah, the Great Soul-Mahatma.

CONCLUSION

Mahatma Gandhi's greatness was not sudden. He was a unique phenomenon. His greatness was an unusual greatness which beholds large areas of human experiences. His infinite love for Truth and Ahimsa made him an apostle of Truth and non-violence. He was looked upon as a moral leader and saint and the people of India had 'almost placed unlimited political authority in his hand His high ideals elevated him to the sublime spiritual status of Mahatma. His unique and unrivalled greatness lies not in these ideals but in practicing these sublime ideals in his daily life observing his uniqueness, it can be said that a man like Gandhi will not occur in thousand years.

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