

MK Gandhi's Concepts of Truth, God and Non violence

Whenever we think of Mahatma Gandhi, two words come to our mind - truth and non-violence as he was a loyal believer in these two ideals. Truth and non-violence were supreme to him, whatever the political and personal costs. Mahatma Gandhi used the ideals of truth and non-violence as his tools when he led India's freedom struggle against British colonial rule. 'Truthfulness' as the most essential feature of Gandhian thought and behaviour.

Gandhi says, "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. In fact, it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say God is truth. On deeper thinking, however it will be realized that Sat or Satya is the only correct and fully sign fact name for God."

Gandhi himself writes, "(And) where there is Truth, there is also is knowledge which is true. Where there is no Truth, there can be no true knowledge. That is why the word Chit or knowledge is associated with the name of God. And where there is true knowledge, there is always bliss, (Ananda). There sorrow has no place. And even as Truth is eternal, so is the bliss derived from it. Hence, we know God as Sat-Chit-Ananda, one who combines in Himself Truth, Knowledge and Bliss."

Truth and Non-Violence constitute the kernel of Gandhi's philosophy. He said that Truth stands for 'reality'. By Truth, according to Gandhi, we do not mean the character of proposition which is either true or false. According to Gandhi the word 'Satya' comes from the word 'Sat' which means 'to exist'. So, by the term 'Satya' Gandhi also means that which is not only existent but also true. Gandhi identifies Truth with God. At first Gandhi used to say God is Truth. But later on, he converted Truth is God. Gandhi says that there is nothing besides Truth. So, both Truth and God stands for the highest reality or the ultimate reality. And hence the two can be identified. He said that there is no person in earth who can deny Truth. God can be denied because the atheist does not believe in God. But the atheist cannot deny the power of Truth. Hence God is identified with Truth.

According to Gandhi, non-violence implies uttermost selflessness. It means, if anyone wants to realise himself, i.e., if he wants to search for the truth, he has to behave in such a way that others will think him entirely safe. To him, non-violence was not a negative concept but a positive sense of love. He talked of loving the wrong-doers, but not the wrong. He strongly opposed any sort of submission to wrongs and injustice in an indifferent manner. He thought that the wrong-doers can be resisted only through the severance of all relations with them.

Gandhi is called 'the apostle of nonviolence'. The word 'Non-violence' is a translation of the Sanskrit term 'Ahimsa'. He stated that in its positive form, 'Ahimsa' means 'The largest love, the greatest charity'. Gandhi said that Truth and Non-Violence are the two sides of a same coin. Ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. According to Gandhi, in the positive sense Non-Violence means 'love'. It means love towards all living creatures. The concept of non-violence is extended not only means to human love but love towards all sentient creatures of the world. That means one should not love only human being but every living being in the world. 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. He will not swear at him, and he will not cause him any physical hurt. He will put up with all the injury to which he is subjected by the

wrong-doer. Thus, Non-Violence is complete innocence. Complete Non-Violence is complete absence of ill-will against all that lives. Therefore, it embraces even sub-human life not excluding noxious insects or beats. Non-Violence is, therefore, in its active form goodwill towards all life. It is pure love. When the idea of Non-Violence in Gandhi's philosophy is analysed then a number of characteristics features stand out. In his book '**Social and Political Thought**' of Gandhi J. Bandyopadhyaya stated the following characteristics features of Gandhian Non-Violence.

1. Non-Violence is not the same as non-killing.
2. Non-Violence is not non-resistance born out of cowardice.
3. Non-Violence implies several positive values. These values include love, active, resistance to injustice, courage in the face of violence, non-possession, truthfulness and brahmacharya.
4. Non-Violence implies bread-labour, which Gandhi derived from Ruskin and Tolstoy and ultimately from the Bible. Gandhi defined it as the 'Divine Law that man must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands.'
5. Non-Violence is a higher value than life.

Gandhi regarded Non-Violence to be an ultimate value on three grounds. **First**, it is universally applicable. **Secondly**, it enhances all other values without detracting from any. **Thirdly**, it is unlimited in its application. Gandhi stated that the Divine Spark is present within man and we must constantly endeavour to keep alive that Divine Spark. Gandhi therefore regarded Non-Violence to be the law of our species. But at the same time Gandhi recognised the point that the practice of total Non-Violence in our life is not possible. Gandhi wrote, 'Man cannot for a moment live without consciously or unconsciously committing outward violence.' This violence is directed against life. According to Gandhi Non-Violence is 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 meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means putting one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant.'

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 centred 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. He does not consider it to be neutral. According to Gandhi 'Ahimsa or Non-Violence' is the means; Truth is the end. They are so intertwined that it is impossible to separate them. They are the two sides of a coin. Ahimsa or Non-Violence should practice in the mental level. It means barring no ill-will against others. So, Ahimsa or Non-Violence is non injury to others not only in the physical sense but of in the mental sense also. Hence the concept truth and non-violence according to Gandhi has a very wide application. Gandhi is of opinion that 'Killing or Injury to life can be an act of violence only under certain conditions. These conditions are anger, pride, hatred, selfish consideration, bad intention and similar other consideration. Any injury to life done under these motives is 'himsa'. Thus, the negative meaning of Ahimsa is 'non killing or non-injury,' but this

presupposes that a non-violent act is free from hatred, anger, malice and the like. For example, when an animal which is going to die is suffering from intense pain in that case, we may kill him to end his suffering or there may be cases when a woman has to save dignity or owner against the criminal. In that case she can use violence in order to save herself. So, there are certain exceptions according to Gandhi to the law of violence. But for Gandhi, the positive aspects of Ahimsa are much more basic than its negative characters. Ahimsa is not merely refraining from causing injuries to creature; it stands for certain positive attitude towards other living beings that one must cultivate. In its positive sense Gandhi said that Ahimsa represents one of the basic and essential qualities of mankind. That does not mean that violence does not have any place in life. In fact, even in preserving one's existence one has to commit himsa of one kind or the other, and yet Ahimsa is considered to be the law of our species.

Ahimsa is nothing but Love. Love is a kind of feeling of oneness. In an act of love, one identifies himself with the object of his love, and this cannot be possible unless there is an effort to free mind from every such disposition that prevents the spontaneous outflow of love. Therefore, Ahimsa demands a sincere effort to free mind from feelings like anger, malice, hatred, revenge, jealousy etc., because these create obstacle in the way of Love. According to Gandhi, love is the energy that cleanses one's inner life and uplifts him, and as such, love comprehends such noble feelings as benevolence, compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, generosity, kindness, sympathy etc.

Gandhi believed that without the practice of Non-Violence Truth cannot be realised. Gandhi employed a curious argument to establish this point. Gandhi stated that God and Truth are identical. At the same time Gandhi accepted a pantheistic conception of God. He argued that God pervades all beings. All beings are united by God and the act of unification is made possible through love or Non-Violence. So, Non-Violence is ultimately the cementing bond of the Universe that has its origin in God or Truth. Gandhi's ideals of truth and non-violence still remain relevant in the 21st century.