

Mahatma Gandhi

Nonviolence and Truth

God and Truth

➤ Gandhi's Theism

- *Nirguna* character of the God is real
- The academic distinction between 'saguna' and '*nirguna*' is irrelevant for the beliefs and practices of a true believer
- A faith in God must enable an individual to be peace with the world
- Personal God

He said, “I believe in Advaita, in the essential unity of man and for that matter, of all that lives.” His life revolved around his belief “in the oneness of God and, therefore, in the oneness of humanity.” His was a belief in the absolute oneness of all.

Gandhi emphasized that “Truth alone is eternal, everything else is momentary.” And the Vedas record the powerful and significant Advaitist revelation: “Ekam Sat” — “Truth is One.” It is the monistic philosophy that there is one Reality which pervades all. Gandhi’s commitment to Truth and Love (Satya and Ahimsa) is rooted in this ideal.

The ideal of Advaita is to realize that one's true Self is of identical nature with the God of the universe. It is the realization of the relationship of all beings to the one Reality... complete identification with that Reality or Truth. Gandhi believed and often articulated that “God is Truth.” He even turned it around and said: “Truth is God.” For Gandhi, Truth, Love, and God were interchangeable terms.

➤ Truth and God

- God is conceived by him as personal, Truth is impersonal

Question: How can the two be identified?

- God is described as Truth because God alone is real
- Truth is not an attribute of God, but God is Truth
- Truth is derived from the word '*sat*', and '*sat*' means 'is'
- God alone Is

- God is Truth
- Truth is God
- It is possible to rational doubt the- the existence of God, but it is self-contradictory to attempt to deny Truth
- God-fearing and truth-fearing
- He says,

“I don’t care for God if He is anything but Truth.”
- What is Truth?
- There is distinction between ‘*sat*’ and ‘*satya*’
- This leads him to identify *Satya* with reality

- How can the two be identified with each other?
- How can the picture of reality be identical with reality itself?
- The ‘knowledge of an object’, and ‘the object of knowledge’
- He is identifying with God and Truth
- Religious and pragmatic value
- ‘worship of truth’ will bring the idea of the Universal Religion

➤ Proofs for the existence of God

- The causal argument or cosmological proof
- The teleological proof
- The moral proof
- Pragmatic proof
- Rational proof

➤ Characters of God

- Truth is God
- All pervasive
- God is described as law
- God is 'love'

➤ Nature of the world

➤ Nature of man

➤ Karma and rebirth

➤ Non-violence

- Truth is necessarily related to non-violence
- *Ahimsa* and truth are intertwined
- Two sides of one coin
- *Ahimsa* is the means; truth is the end
- *Ahimsa* is the supreme duty
- *Ahimsa* is non-killing or non-injury
- It opposed to *Himsa*
- Injury to life done under these motives is *himsa*
- *Ahimsa* is considered to be the law of our species

- *Ahimsa* is natural to man
- Spiritual aspect of man
- *Ahimsa* is nothing but love
- Sacrifice and suffering is the necessary aspect of non-violence
- *Ahimsa* leads to self-transcendence
- Gandhi says, “Love never claims, it ever gives. Love ever suffers, never resents, never revenges it self.”

“The test of love is *Tapasya* and *tapasya* is self-suffering.”

➤ The Technique of *Ahimsa*-

- Satyagraha- Truth-force
- Physical force is violence
- Violence negates Truth-force
- The word 'satyagraha' is 'agraha' of 'satya'
- Thus, satyagraha means holding fast to truth
- It is a force against violence, tyranny and injustice
- If we start resisting evil with evil, violence with violence, anger with anger, then we are only adding fuel to fire

- *Ahimsa* is conscious suffering
- *Satyagraha* has been described as a method of *conversion* than a method of *coercion*
- Coercion implies violence, it may not be physical violence, but it is at least mental violence
- Satyagraha is different from passive resistance

Satyagraha

- More active
- No place for violence
- No place for mental harassment
- Great respect to law
- There is a place for conversion

Passive resistance

- Passive
- Place for violence
- Place for mental as well physical harassment
- Do not have respect for law
- There is a place for coercion

➤ Requirements of a *Satyagrahi*

- Honest and sincere
- Open-minded
- Disciplined soldier, truth and conscience must be his or guide
- Fearless and sacrifice
- Simplicity and humility
- Truthfulness and non-violence not only in actions, but also in thought and speech
- Resistant upon his or her own self. This he says in connection to *Fasting*

- Self control
- Faith in God

➤ Kinds of *Satyagraha*

- Negotiation
- Arbitration
- Agitation and Demonstration
- Economic Boycott
- Non-cooperation
- Civil Disobedience
- Direct Action

➤ Philosophy of End and Means

- The philosophy of end and means is very much related to 'right' and 'good'
- This notion is related to Gandhian notions of Truth and Non-violence
- The end is the 'goal', means is the 'way'
- They cannot be separated from each other
Example: seed and tree

- Does the end justify the means?
- Gandhi has given the metaphysical answer to this question
- A spiritual end cannot be attained by any non-spiritual means
- Gandhi has given much importance to 'means'
- Non-violence is the means to realization of *Swaraj*

Religion and Morality

- Philosophically, two concepts are different
 - Morality concern about this world, where as religion talk about 'beyond'
 - Gandhi says, both the term intertwined
 - As soon as we loose the moral basis, we cease to be religious
- What is religion?
- Religion is the permanent nature of man
 - Purify one's nature

- Realization of God
- Striving towards Truth
- Prayer
- Gita
- Self-sacrifice

➤ Attitude towards living religion

- All religions are true
- All religions have some errors in them
- All religions are dear to me

➤ Attitude towards Hinduism

➤ Morality

- Morality represents the essence of religion

➤ What is morality?

- Good or bad
- Voluntary actions
- Non-voluntary actions
- Amoral action
- Only good actions are moral
- Morality is nothing but satyagraha

➤ The cardinal virtues

- Non-violence- Ahimsa
- Truthfulness- Satya
- Non-stealing- Asteya
- Non-possession- Aparigraha
- Chastity- Brahmacharya

➤ Ahimsa

- Essential features of virtues
- Ahimsa is the highest virtue
- No virtue can be practised unless all beings are allowed to live
- Self-sacrifice

➤ Satya

- Truth is conceived as God
- Truthfulness is virtue
- Intrinsic value
- Pragmatic value
- Speak the truth, speak the pleasant

➤ Asteya

- Two sense
- (a) not taking away the belonging of anybody unless it is given by that person
- (b) religious means- it forbids the keeping in possession of such things that are not needed
- It creates himsa

➤ Aparigraha

- Non-stealing has negative import, non-acceptance has a positive significance
- Possessiveness will bring evil

➤ Brahmacharya

- Logically means 'living in the Brahman'
- Popularly means physical control over the organ of generation
- This is not only bodily control but also control over food

➤ Abhaya

➤ Faith in God

Advaita is the philosophy of the soul's realization of perfection. Gandhi's effort toward Swaraj ("Swa" means Self and "Raj" means Rule — Self-Rule) was not merely aimed at political and economic self-rule for India, but for a universal Swaraj of the individual self. Individual Swaraj or Self-Rule guides the individual toward a mastery of the Self that frees one from all limitation, from the bondage of negativity, fear, and attachment.