

TRUTH AND EDUCATION
Gandhian Concept of *Satya* for Philosophical Education

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

Gandhian Ideals and Goals of Education

Introduction

1.1 M. K. Gandhi

1.1.1 Important Works

1.1.2 M. K. Gandhi as a Philosopher of Education

1.2 Gandhian Education in Relation with his Ideals

1.2.1 Education and *Sarvodaya*

1.2.2 Education and *Swaraj*

1.2.3 Education and Religion

1.3 Gandhian Aims of Education

1.3.1 Education and Moral Development

1.3.2 Education and Spiritual Development

1.3.3 Education for Accumulation of Knowledge

1.3.4 Education and Social Development

1.3.5 Education and Self-Discovery

Conclusion

Chapter 2

Gandhian Concept of *Satya*

Introduction

2.1 *Satya* in Indian Scriptures and Its Influence on M. K. Gandhi

2.1.1 The Vedas

2.1.2 The Upanishads

2.1.3 Buddhist Influences

2.1.4 Jain Influences

2.2 M. K. Gandhi on *Satya*

2.2.1 God is Truth

2.2.2 Truth is God

2.2.3 Truth as Absolute and Relative

2.3 *Satya* in Relation with Morality

2.3.1 The vow of Truth

2.3.2 The Way to *Satya*

Conclusion

Chapter 3

***Satya* and Philosophical Education**

Introduction

3.1 Truth Applied to Fields of Action

3.1.1 Truth in Politics

3.1.2 Truth in Societal Affairs

3.1.3 Truth in Economics

3.1.4 Truth in Journalism

3.2 Gandhian Philosophical Trends

3.2.1 Naturalism

3.2.2 Idealism

3.2.3 Pragmatism

3.3 Truth and Philosophical Education

3.3.1 Education as a Humanizing Process

3.3.2 Education as a Civilizing Process

3.3.3 Education as a Philosophizing Process

3.3.4 Education and Religion

Conclusion

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Bibliography

INTRODUCTION

Man is a seeker by nature. He searches for truth. An ordinary man cannot be indifferent to truth because of the deep quest within him for truth. Gandhi lived his whole life in the perpetual quest for truth. He lived and moved in pursuit of this goal. This pursuit of seeking truth under the banner of philosophical education makes educational philosophizing moral.

Making truth as a propeller in the philosophizing of education has its significance in different schools of philosophical thinking. For an idealist, the ideal of education is the spiritual/intellectual development of the human person which leads to right realization. This is the message in Plato's allegory of cave where cave symbolizes the conventional world from where we need to be converted through education to the region of intelligible. For a naturalist, education is for the perfection of natural individual and his innate potentialities. Pragmatists' aim of education is the cultivation of mind in the student that is capable of problem-solving so that he is better suited to live in the ever changing and complex world. Finally, an existentialist sees education as a way of learning to cope with the contingencies of the individual existence.

One can perfect these ideologies of different schools and make philosophizing in education better by placing truth in their centre. Thus, an idealist can evolve a realization of truth, a naturalist can bring about the true nature and potentialities of individual, pragmatists can rejuvenate the minds with a truth oriented strategy and existential thinkers can invite truth into them so that they can avoid fear and dread. We do not forget the opposing views of postmodernist, sceptics and others who have a different versions as to the understanding of truth. For, a postmodern thinker, influenced by Rorty, will present the invitation that philosophy must stop the pursuit of truth. A sceptic will try to bring up that the communication of truth is irrelevant because no truth is

ascertainable. There are also thinkers who try to teach that the will to communicate truth is senseless since truth is an illusion. Our point is that none of these views helps us in the communication of truth. They do not satisfy the minds that search after truth.

We base our attempt to philosophize education from the concept of truth according to the teachings of Gandhi. Our inspiration in this regard is one of the recent ACPI meeting conducted in Bangalore which exhorted to take inspiration from Gandhian thoughts so that philosophizing may not engage itself in a hermeneutical violence to bring out the truth (of our making) but a hermeneutical *ahimsa* that lets the truth (*satya*) show itself. Truth for Gandhi was equal to one of his lungs. He spoke truth, he wrote on truth and exhorted people to be truthful. Gandhi made the concept of truth central to metaphysics, epistemology, morality and philosophy of religion. Truth was the guiding principle for Gandhi in all these disciplines.

Truth is a correspondence between reality and speech or thought. Truthfulness as a moral quality is the correspondence between what I know or think and what I express. Truth as a central value of oneself means that a person not only seeks to avoid what is erroneous and speaks the truth but he/she makes the pursuit of truth as the core value of one's self. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists the following different meanings of truth: agreeing with a standard, pattern, or rule; exact, accurate, precise, correct, right. There are four types of truths: scientific truth, truth proper to everyday life, philosophical truth and religious truth. Scientific truth is affirmed by experimentation. Truth proper to everyday life is based on the immediate evidences. While the philosophical truth is attained through speculation, the religious truths attempt to answer the ultimate questions.

In this research paper, I attempt to present M. K. Gandhi as an educationist giving emphasis only to his concept of truth. It is a limited

approach to Gandhian educational philosophy because when I attend only to the concept of truth I fail to include very many other aspects of his educational philosophy like craft centred education, teaching methods, education for different section of the society, etc. It also limits me to criticise Gandhian dislike for higher education system appropriately. However, the notion of truth is a common platform that could be shared by three important branches of philosophical education, namely the naturalistic, the idealistic and the pragmatic.

The first chapter introduce M. K. Gandhi as an educationist as it presents Gandhian educational goals and the relationship of the concept of truth with his major ideologies. The second chapter is an attempt to understand what exactly is truth, according to Gandhi, its basis in the Indian philosophical tradition, and the influence of the tradition on Gandhi in developing the concept. Finally, the third chapter presents how Gandhi applied truth in different disciplines and how we can make use of it to philosophize education.

Gandhi invites everyone to join him in his search for truth.

CHAPTER 1

GANDHIAN IDEALS AND GOALS OF EDUCATION

Introduction

M. K. Gandhi is more known in the domain of politics than in the field of education. Yet, he is one of the greatest teachers of humankind. Gandhi's thoughts on education form the dynamic side of his philosophy. He did present a clear methodology for education in an organized manner.

1.1 M. K. Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 in Porbander on the West coast of India. Karamchand, father of Mohandas, was a senior official of a small Indian state. Gandhi was married to Kasturbai Makanji at the age of 13. He left for England to study law and returned to India in 1891. Gandhi moved to South Africa in 1893 since he could not make a successful career as a lawyer in India. The humiliating experiences in South Africa turned him as a political activist. He launched struggles against the authorities with the unusual methods of non-violence, passive resistance and non-cooperation. He used the same strategies back in India to free India from British Empire. According to S. Radhakrishnan, "the greatness of Gandhi is more in his holy living than in his heroic struggles, in his insistence on the creative power of the soul and its life-giving quality at a time when the destructive forces seem to be in the ascendant."¹

Gandhi's life was rooted in India's religious tradition with its emphasis on passionate search for truth, a profound reverence for life,

¹ Radhakrishnan, *Mahatma Gandhi: Reflection on His Life and Work*, 1.

the ideal of non-attachment and the readiness to sacrifice all for the knowledge of God.

1.1.1 Important Works of M. K. Gandhi

Gandhi wrote extensively on various topics. His famous writings contain *An Autobiography: My Experiments with Truth*, *All Men are Brothers*, *Caste Must Go: The Sin of Untouchability*, *Discourse on the Gita*, *Ethical Religion*, *From Yeravda Mandir: Ashram Observances*, *In Search of the Supreme*, *Truth is God*, etc. The Government of India has collected all the works by Gandhi and has published them under the title of *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (70 Volumes).

1.1.2 M. K. Gandhi as a Philosopher of Education

Gandhi's aims of education are related to his ideals of life. When we study Gandhi as an educationist, we can say that Gandhian education had immediate and ultimate sets of goals.² Gandhi was upholding the ideal of self-supporting education for the purpose of bread and butter. Education has to be self-supporting now and later by recognizing the value of labor.³ He stressed the need for cultural education. Cultural education means that the knowledge one gets from Indian education system should be the knowledge of Indian culture.⁴ Thirdly, Gandhi aimed at the all-round development of the person through education with an emphasis on the moral development.⁵ Character formation and character development through the cultivation of virtues should be given priority in the education system, according to Gandhi. Though these are the immediate aims of education, according to Gandhi, the ultimate aim

² Biswal, *Philosophy of Education*, 282-83.

³ Gandhi, *My Views on Education*, 59.

⁴ Gandhi, *My Views on Education*, 107-108.

⁵ Gandhi, *My Views on Education*, 13-14

of education is the realization of the ultimate reality, knowledge of good and truth.⁶

Gandhi vehemently opposed the idea of industrialization and proposed the introduction of productive handicrafts into the school system with an aim of creating autonomous villages and self-supporting learning system. Gandhi wanted to free the Indian teacher from interference from outside, particularly from government or state bureaucracy. In the basic education system, Gandhi aimed at the emergence of industrious, self-respecting and generous citizens.

1.2 Gandhian Education in Relation with His Ideals

Gandhi was always a philosopher, a seeker after truth. He upheld certain value systems that gave significance to life. He had a certain view on the reality of the world, life, individual and society.

1.2.1 Education and *Sarvodaya*

Sarvodaya is coined from two Sanskrit words, namely, *sarva* and *udaya*. *Sarva* means “all” and “*udaya*” means “rise,” “uplift” or “prosperity.” So, the term literally means “the welfare of all.”⁷ By welfare of all, Gandhi means the all round growth of the total individual and of every individual in the context of the overall development of society. *Sarvodaya* aims at the greatest good for all living beings.⁸

Gandhi believed that one of the best ways to achieve the goal of *sarvodaya* is education. Education will help to improve the status of Harijans and women, the two important human categories that lost their

⁶ Gandhi, *My Views on Education*, 72.

⁷ Kavungal, *The Philosophical Foundation of Gandhi's Vision of Sarvodaya*, 55.

⁸ Gandhi's concept of *sarvodaya* is influenced by John Ruskin's *Unto This Last* that indicates the good of the individual is contained in the good of all and all people have the equal right to earn a living from the labour.

equality before others. India of Gandhi's time had badly neglected the enlightenment by education to the women and Harijans. Gandhi was an advocate for compulsory primary education. Equal opportunities will create a better platform to restore equal rights, according to Gandhi. Only by removing the exploitation of the weak by the strong, we can revise interpretation of the so-called doctrine of 'the survival of the fittest'.⁹

This is an ideal that is yet to be realized in Indian situation. The recent government programmes like *sarva shiksha abhiyan*¹⁰ do accelerate the realization of the *sarvodaya*¹¹ concept of Gandhi.

1.2.2 Education and Swaraj

The term *swaraj* comes from two words: *swa* (own or self) and *raj* (government). The meaning of the word *swaraj* is self-rule or self-control. *Swaraj* aims at freedom from all oppressive structures and home rule based on moral principles. It implies cultural and moral autonomy.¹² According to Gandhi, the word "*swaraj* is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule or self-restraint, and not freedom from all restraint, which independence often means."¹³

The role of *Swaraj*, in Gandhian educational philosophy, is clear when Gandhi insists that initial learning of a student should be in his

⁹ Iyer, *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, 387.

¹⁰ The '*Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*' (The '*Education for All*' Movement, sometimes referred to as "each one teach one") is a flagship program of the Government of India for achievement of universalization of elementary education in a time bound manner, as mandated by the 86th amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to children of ages 6-14 (estimated to be 205 million in number in 2001) a fundamental right. The program aims to achieve the goal of universalization of elementary education of satisfactory quality by 2010.

¹¹ In order to achieve the aims of Sarvodaya in India, Gandhi presented his plan of basic education and it is called *Nai Talim* (New Education) because it aims at building up a new society in the country.

¹² Kavungal, *The Philosophical Foundation of Gandhi's Vision of Sarvodaya*, 63.

¹³ Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, 349.

mother tongue. According to him, when one learns in his/her own vernacular, s/he will be able to share the knowledge gained with the neighbours which, in turn, will make a richer contribution to the service of masses.¹⁴ Gandhi also believed that the compulsory learning of English is a 'false de-Indianizing education'¹⁵ because the one who undergoes such an education system is not in a position to appreciate the richness of the language. It is also false de-Indianizing because the compulsory education is carried out at the expense of depreciating the value of the vernacular. Gandhi believed that self-respect and self-rule can only be achieved with a deep awareness of the cultural heritage of the nation and one of the main hindrances to achieve them was the compulsory learning of English.¹⁶

In contemporary Indian situations, we see two trends, one in complete support of compulsory English education and the other in support of education in vernacular. Though the people who are in support of education in vernacular have the support of Gandhian system, it might be a block for the able students to be in a better position in the contemporary scientific, economic and technological society.

1.2.3 Education and Religion

M. K. Gandhi was of the opinion that education has to have the religious and moral orientation.¹⁷ The concern of education is not merely training a person for a vocation. According to Gandhi, education has to

¹⁴ Gandhi, *My Views on Education*, 6.

¹⁵ Gandhi, *My Views on Education*, 108.

¹⁶ However, we have a broader view in the writings of Tagore. He believed that education correlated with culture can be effective and fruitful for man. To attain that aim he was not only interested in Indian culture but in other cultures too. According to him, "In our center of learning, we are providing for co-ordinate study of all these different cultures, the Vedic, the Pauranic, the Buddhist, the Jaina, the Islamic, the Sikha, the Zorostrain. The Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan have also been added, for in the past India did not remain isolated within her own boundaries." See Mukherjee, *The Social Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, 66.

¹⁷ Gandhi shares here the reflections of Plato that the aim of education is nurturing of the soul.

improve the quality of life by a deep understanding of the meaning and importance of life.

True education should involve knowing the Self, the Atman. When one recognizes the relationship that exists between the true self and God, he will understand the need for truth, and be liberated from darkness.¹⁸ Anybody who does not love truth and cannot recognize goodness or beauty lives in his own self-conceit and remains ignorant of spiritual joy. Similarly, he who has no hope, who has, in other words, no faith in divine justice, will never be cheerful in heart. According to Gandhi, "If India is not to declare spiritual bankruptcy, religious instruction of its youth must be held at least as necessary as secular instruction."¹⁹ Gandhi was also an advocate for empathetic and pluralistic religious education in India. This vision strengthens and preserves the faith of the believer in his own religion and does not condemn the other religions.²⁰

Gandhian religious vision for education is very much relevant in the Indian situation. There are a number of people in India who want to do away with everything connected with religion in the field of education under the banner of secularism. There are also a growing number of fundamentalists who cannot tolerate the presence of other religions. In this situation, Gandhian religious vision for education is an apt tool to help the individuals to make use of their own religion to know the ultimate purpose of their lives and to appreciate the believers in other religions.²¹

¹⁸ Gandhi, *God is Truth*, 22.

¹⁹ Gandhi, *My Views on Education*, 64.

²⁰ We have a different version of religion and education in the writings of Tagore, a contemporary of M. K. Gandhi. According to Tagore, there is only one religion and that is religion of man. This religion of man is the religion of service and service to man is the service to God. He believed that real education can give man this sense of purpose. See Mukherjee, *The Social Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, 55.

²¹ Maritain presents the importance of religion and spirituality in education from the perspective of freedom. According to him, diverse currents of knowledge and belief and the diverse vital energies at play in his mind, student will remain more a slave than a free man. In such situation it is possible that the student can turn out to be hopeless. To avoid such a situation, Maritain emphasizes the spiritual demand that can bring in great symphony and internal unity in the individual. See Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, 47.

1.3 Gandhian Aims of Education

John Dewey emphasizes the necessity of having goals in the educational field. For him having a goal means to do something and perceive the meaning of the things in the light of the intentions one holds. The goal as a foreseen end gives direction to the activity not as an automatic machine but it influences the steps taken to reach the end. Gandhi presents the aims of education from different perspectives. He views education from the perspective of the formation of the moral and spiritual man. Accumulation of knowledge, working for the welfare of the society and knowing the self in a better manner is also the professed strategies of Gandhian educational thought.

1.3.1 Education and Moral Development

Gandhian education aims at an ethically upright life as part of the formation of the spiritual personality of the individual.²² Emphasizing the moral aim of education Gandhi said, "The end of all knowledge must be building up of character."²³ Character building is the moral ideal of education. According to Gandhi, that is most important in man's life. The moral development through education is manifested in the Gandhian concepts of Ahimsa and Sarvodaya.²⁴

²² Maritain is also aware of the necessity of moral development in education. He says, "I am convinced that our present school and college education is too much taken up by theoretical knowledge and that the part of ethics and morality in it needs to be strongly developed and emphasized. It helps in the formation and enlightenment of practical reason" (Maritain, *Education of Man*, 114).

²³ Gandhi, *To the Students*, 107.

²⁴ Sri Aurobindo describes the moral development aspect presenting an ideal child who has the qualities of good temperament, truthfulness, patience, Enduring nature, poise ness, courage, cheerfulness, modesty, courtesy, obedience, fairness and straight forwardness (Sharma, *Textbook of Educational Philosophy*, 350).

1.3.2 Education and Spiritual Development

Gandhi advocates the formation of spiritual personalities as the result of the education one receives. For Gandhi, Truth which is the ultimate end which is all pervading can be realized only through a discipline of mind, body and spirit.²⁵ Brahman is truth embodiment and the realization of Truth through a life-long process of disciplining of the body, mind and spirit is the essence of education.²⁶ The maturation of the human soul and the practice of truth are intimately related.

The development of the spiritual personality includes the aspect of prayer. Education in the Gandhian sense remains no education if the individual is not trained to raise his thoughts in prayer to God.²⁷ The student is a traveler to Brahman he is constantly on the move on the path towards Him.²⁸ The progress of this path could be rightly called as education. Gandhi adds that the "life of the student who is a brahmachari has become contaminated at its very source."²⁹ Prayer is the heart and soul of religion. Therefore, prayer should be the core of human life and no one can live without religion. Through the process of intimate personal prayer education can train the individual to obtain for himself the richest personal experience. Education should pave the way for the practice of truth in every aspect of the individual's life.

1.3.3 Education and Accumulation of Knowledge

Education carries out individual and social functions by directing, guiding, and reshaping the innate potentials and impulses of the child, by helping the

²⁵ Maritain too presents the spiritual development perspective of education emphasizing the spiritual existence of human person. According to him, man does not merely exist as a physical being. There is in him a richer and nobler existence, spiritual existence. Education has the responsibility, according to him to respect this innermost essence and to attend with loving attention. (Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*, 9).

²⁶ This was in fact the essence of Vedic education.

²⁷ Mukalel, *Gandhian Education*, 64.

²⁸ Gandhi, *To the Students*,

²⁹ Gandhi, *To the Students*,

individual in the process of growth, unfolding what is within and preparing him to assume the responsibilities of adult life. Education carries out all these by introducing him to the total experiences of the human race classified into heads of knowledge.³⁰

Gandhi agrees that education should reflect the experience of the human race, and for us, Indians, the ancient culture and civilization that we have developed. He says, "Your only desire should be to enliven everything of our ancient culture that was great and enduring."³¹ A knowledge of our culture and civilization develops as part of our education a sense of commitment to the values this heritages has presented to us. Education has the function of helping the individual surroundings and of the environment in which one lives requires as much detailed knowledge of the events and objects there in as possible. Education for knowledge is also known as literary education. This would include the knowledge of languages, and of literature and a variety of other arts-oriented subjects.

1.3.4 Education and the Development of the Society

Gandhian education aims at the development of society. The individual requires training in order to cultivate the sense of commitment towards the welfare of the society. Educational institutions have to set for themselves the ideal of social service in all aspects of their educational activity. Gandhi says, "If your education is a substantial one, it should spread its odor in your surroundings. You should utilize a portion of your time everyday in the service of the people around you."³² Social services can be rendered in order to promote Hindu-Muslim unity, to root out untouchability from the society, to follow the path of ahimsa and truth, to develop a sense of cooperative service,

³⁰ Socrates too considers knowledge to be the Highest Good and therefore the true aim of life. According o him, in order to reach the truth, man must indeed be skeptical about all sorts of opinions entering his head. He should be able to cut through the false layers of prejudice and arbitrary assertion in order to pierce the truth. (Sharma, *Textbook of Educational Philosophy*, 418).

³¹ Gandhi, *To the Students*, 121.

³² Gandhi, *To the Students*, 173.

to wake up from the lethargy for involvement in constructive works and to teach literacy to their illiterate brothers.³³

1.3.5 Education for Self-discovery

Gandhi presents individual from the perspective of divine origin. For him, we were born men in order to realize God who dwells in us. That indeed is the privilege of man and it distinguishes him from the brute creation. This divine orientation makes great difference in the organization and conducting of the individual's life. The ultimate aim of the life of the individual is the realization of the Divine self: "what I want to achieve is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain moksha."³⁴ As physical training to be imparted through physical exercise, and intellectual training through intellectual exercise, even so the training of the spirit is possible only through exercise of the spirit. Experimentation with truth is the unique method for the self-discovery, according to Gandhi.

Conclusion

Gandhian educational principles explicitly plan out the aims and objectives of education. It has sufficient base on Gandhian philosophy and methodology. By education Gandhi means an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man. The best is nothing else but the inner voice or Truth. The aims of Gandhian education cover a wide spectrum of values that relate themselves to the total development of both the individual and society.

³³ Mukalel, *Gandhian Education*, 72.

³⁴ Gandhi, *My Experiments with Truth*, iii.

Chapter 2

GANDHIAN CONCEPT OF SATYA

Introduction

M. K. Gandhi was in search of truth throughout his life. He searched for truth not for himself alone. He wanted all others to participate in this search so that there may emerge a universal human brotherhood to the realization of the Absolute. We see a number of great personalities influencing Gandhi to stand for the highest ideal of truth in his life.³⁵ More over, Indian philosophical systems had a great role in shaping Gandhi's high ideal of truth.

2.1 *Satya* in Indian Scriptures and Its Influence on M. K. Gandhi

We see the concept of *satya* in Indian literature as an important theme. Gandhi as religious man knew the Indian religious literature well and it had an impact upon him, especially as he was presenting his reflections on Truth.

2.1.1 The Vedas

In the Vedas, Gods are the diverse manifestations of truths (*Satyasya Satyam*). The Vedas also exhort the reader to "Cross the passes so difficult to pass. Conquer wrath with peace; untruth with Truth" (*The Sama Veda, Aranya-Gana, Arka-Parva*). The Vedic concept of *Rta*³⁶ is also on par with the concept of *Satya*. *Rtam* represents the basic truth,

³⁵ His father Karam Chand Gandhi, Raychandbhai, an eminent jeweler, Harishchandra, an Indian Purana figure and Leo Tolstoy were the influential personalities who inspired Gandhi to shape the concept of truth.

³⁶ According to S. Radhakrishnan, *Rta* means the course of things and it denotes the order of the world. Everything that is ordered in the universe has *Rta* for its principle.

harmony and system, or eternal moral order of the entire universe.³⁷ The Vedic god Varuna is the upholder of *Rta*.

Gandhi speaks of the Absolute Truth and appealed to the preordained integrity of the cosmic order to protect the sanctity and integrity in human society in line with the Vedic teachings. According to Gandhi, "Truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles and it is also the Absolute Truth, the eternal principle that is God."³⁸ There is an unalterable law governing everything that exists or lives. It is not a blind law; for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings. That law, then, which governs all life is God. Law and the law-giver are one.

2.1.2 The Upanishads

The Upanishads do not aim at reaching philosophical truths but they attempt to bring freedom and peace to anxious human spirit by instructing the disciple/reader about the highest Reality that removes ignorance and doubts from him.

The *Mundaka Upanishad* (III-I-6) makes Truth an essential attribute of God and the *Taittiriya Upanishad* states that "Brhaman is Truth eternal, intelligence immeasurable" (II-I-I).

In *Chandogya Upanishad*, we read: "In the beginning, dear boy, this was Being alone, one only, without a second. Some say that, in the beginning, this was Non-being alone, one only, without a second. From that Non-Being arose Being" (Ch. Up. VI, 2,1). Again, we read: "That Being which is the subtle essence (cause) even that all this world has for its self. That is the true. That is the Atman. That thou art, O Svetaketu" (Ch. Up. VI. 8,7).

³⁷ Kim, *The Philosophical Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi*, 148.

³⁸ Gandhi, *God is Truth*, 2.

In the *Brahadaranyka Upanishad* we read: “As a spider moves along the thread (it produces), or as from a fire little sparks scatter, just so from this Self issue all organs, all worlds, all gods, and all living beings. Its secret name is the Truth of truth. The vital force is truth, and it is the Truth of that” (Br. Up. II.1.20).

Gandhi describes the ultimate Reality in terms of God and Truth in parallel with the Upanishadic Brahman and Atman. Gandhi says that often he had faint glimpses of the Absolute Truth, God, and his conviction is that He alone is real and all else is unreal.³⁹ He calls the ultimate Reality as Truth not as Brahman. According to Gandhi, *satya* derives from *sat* which means being. It also means abiding, actual, right, wise, self-existent essence, as anything really is, as anything ought to be, etc.⁴⁰ Following the *Brahadaranyka Upanisads* (1.4.14), Gandhi says that a man who speaks the truth, speaks *dharma* or a man who speaks *dharma* speaks of truth.

2.1.3 Buddhist Influences

One of the key contributions of Buddhism is the explanation of the concept of *Dharma*. *The Dhammapada* of Buddhism explains it in ethical and spiritual terms. In it, Buddha speaks: “Not by matted hair, not by lineage, not by caste does one become a Brahmin. He is a Brahmin in whom there are truth and *dhamma*. He is blessed.”⁴¹ Buddha instructs his followers to follow the *dharma*⁴² and then one will be true to him. *Dharma* of the Buddha means truth, that which really is and it also means the law that exists in the heart of man.

³⁹ Gandhi, *God is Truth*, 3.

⁴⁰ Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, 150.

⁴¹ *The Dhammapada*, 393.

⁴² *Dhamma* in Buddhist texts means law, rule, faith, religion, world, phenomena, thing, state, etc. According to an Indian philosopher P. T. Raju, *dharma* is to be understood as the ideal reality towards which the whole universe should move and ideal reality is the principle of righteousness which exists not only in man's heart and mind, but in the universe also. See Kim, *Philosophical Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi*, 154.

This Buddhistic concept is in equivalence with the Gandhian concept of *satya*. *Dharma* or *satya* is the governing principle of the universe and the true nature of things.

2.1.4 Jain Influences

Gandhi is influenced by the *anekantavada* concept of Jainism. Reality, according to *anekantavada*, is 'manyness' of truth and it has a complex structure. Every proposition is true, but only from a particular standpoint. Since the same thing may be regarded from different aspects or standpoints, what is true from one stand point may not be true from another. For example, lukewarm water is cold in relation to hot and hot in relation to cold water.

Jain influence is evident in Gandhian relative truth concept that speaks of truth being relative to our standpoints, to occupy one standpoint is not to deny other standpoints⁴³; reality, however, has to be comprehended and must be examined from various aspects to take up an integrated view.

2.2 Gandhi on *Satya*

For Gandhi, the concept of *satya* was an all-inclusive concept embracing every aspect of his life. According to him, "The more I search after Truth the more I feel it is all-inclusive. Truth is not covered by non-violence. But I often experience that non-violence is included in truth. What a pure

⁴³ Epistemological respect for the views of others is not relativism. It does not mean conceding that all arguments and all views are equal. It means that logic and evidence determine which views are true in what respect and to what extent. In fact, it allows Jain thinkers to maintain the correctness of their own view, to recognize the inferiority of other views, and to criticize both their own views and other views in terms of their weaknesses, but to do so respectfully, recognizing their partial correctness (Sethia, *Ahimsa, Anekanta and Jainism*, 89).

heart feels at a particular time is truth; by remaining firm on that, undiluted truth can be attained.”⁴⁴

2.2.1 God is Truth

Gandhi said: “My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth”⁴⁵ and added that Truth is perhaps the most important name of God.⁴⁶ His statement “God is truth” reflects the fact that Gandhi’s search in life started with God, whom he attempted to know and describe, use and enjoy.⁴⁷

Unfailing faith in God is the core of Gandhian philosophy. God is the central truth of man and integrating principle. Gandhi offered teleological argument for the proof of God’s existence. He was not worried over the definitions on God. God is the ultimate and practical reality.

From a metaphysical point of view God is impersonal for Gandhi, whereas he regards God as a concrete person for practical purposes. From the metaphysical point of view he observes that there is orderliness in the universe and an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists and lives. That Law which governs all life is God.⁴⁸ “If we exist, if our parents and their parents have existed, then it is proper to believe in the Parent of the whole creation. If He is not, we are nowhere.”⁴⁹

From the practical point of view, Gandhi writes that God is a personal God to those who need his personal presence. He embodies to

⁴⁴ Cited in Kachappilly, *Gandhi and Truth*, 92.

⁴⁵ Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 419.

⁴⁶ Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, 10.

⁴⁷ One of the medieval philosophers, Augustine of Hippo, shares the same view in his writings. According to Augustine, “This is truth, and God is either what is superior to this truth or is truth itself” (Fitzgerald, *Augustine Through Ages*, 853). And in *The Confessions*, he writes, “Wheresoever I found truth, there I found my God, truth itself, and since I first learned the truth I have not forgotten it” (Augustine, *The Confessions*, 253).

⁴⁸ Gandhi, *God is Truth*, 17.

⁴⁹ Gandhi, *God is Truth*, 10.

those who need his touch.⁵⁰ A devotee can, through prayer and purification, come in relationship with God. From this theistic viewpoint, God was the guide to Gandhi who enabled him to stand before the world and protected him from all harms.

2.2.2 Truth is God

“Truth is God” suggests that Truth should be worshipped.⁵¹ In a way, Gandhi was attempting to avoid narrow connotations given by religions by replacing God with Truth. Whatever may be the religions of human person, he is a worshipper of truth, Gandhi believed.⁵² Again, Truth is that which alone is, which constitutes the stuff of which all things are made, which subsists by virtue of its own power, which is not supported by anything else but supports everything that exists. Truth alone is eternal and everything else is momentary.

According to Gandhi, Truth alone exists and if there is God,⁵³ Truth must be God. Even if we do not wish to assume the existence of God, we must assume the existence of Truth if we are to evolve as human beings. God is difficult to define but the definition of Truth is there in every human heart. Truth, according to Gandhi, was equal to existence, existence of all that we know and of that we do not know.⁵⁴

The concepts of truth may differ but all admit and respect truth and that truth he calls God. Even the atheist, who pretends to disbelieve in God, has believed in Truth. The trick they played was giving God another name. God has numerous names and Truth is the crown of all.⁵⁵ One of the reasons of Gandhi for making Truth identical with God or the

⁵⁰ Kim, *Philosophical Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi*, 167.

⁵¹ Kim, *Philosophical Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi*, 170.

⁵² Augustine of Hippo shares the similar view. According to Augustine, “The happy life is joy based on truth. This joy grounded in You, O God, who are the Truth, my illumination, the salvation of my face my God” (Augustine, *The Confessions*, 252).

⁵³ Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, vol. II, 10.

⁵⁴ Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, 156.

⁵⁵ Gandhi, *God is Truth*, 1.

Divine Reality is that a mere mechanical adherence to truth and non-violence is likely to break down at the critical moment. Hence, Gandhi said that Truth is God.⁵⁶

Another reason for Gandhi equating Truth with God is that seeing God through Truth is a less dangerous way and promises complete knowledge of God.⁵⁷ For Gandhi, Seeing God is difficult to understand; but seeing Truth presents no such difficulty. Seeing Truth is indeed a hard task, but as we approach nearer and nearer to truth, we catch a glimpse of the God of Truth.

2.2.3 Truth as Absolute and Relative

Gandhi uses the term truth in three senses. First, God as the Absolute Truth is used as the Being or Reality in the metaphysical sense. Secondly, Gandhi uses truth in the epistemological sense, which we know through intellect and experience. Thirdly, truth is the norm of morality to be followed, according to Gandhi.⁵⁸ In his autobiography he says as follows: “For me Truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, not only the relative truth of our conception, but the absolute Truth, the eternal principle, that is God.”⁵⁹ Gandhi distinguished between relative truth as seen by the finite individuals in relation to their thoughts and circumstances and Truth as the Absolute Truth is identified with God.

Gandhi equated Truth with God. He wrote: “The word *Satya* is derived from *Sat*, which means being. Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth.”⁶⁰ *Satya* is the fully significant name for God and so Truth

⁵⁶ Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, 156.

⁵⁷ Kachappilly, *Gandhi and Truth*, 95.

⁵⁸ Kavungal, *The Philosophical Foundation of Mahatma Gandhi's Vision of Sarvodaya*, 206.

⁵⁹ Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, xi.

⁶⁰ Gandhi, *God is Truth*, 25.

becomes the basis of all rules in life. The only justification for our existence on earth, according to him, is devotion to Truth. All our activities and even the very breath of our life should be centered on Truth. Without Truth it is impossible to observe any principles or rules in life.⁶¹

Truth is the sum total of all that is true. But one cannot sum up all that is true. There are things that cannot be analyzed. Though the ultimate Reality is the Absolute Truth, relative truths are not unrealities. They are true in their own kind and true only as far as they go and for all practical purposes. When one believes in the Absolute Truth, which is God, it implies that every man embodies a portion of that truth. As truth is the substance of morality, man is a moral agent only to the extent that he embodies and seeks truth. Without truth it will be impossible to observe any rules in life.⁶²

Gandhi believed that a human being can never realize perfect truth so long as he is in the mortal frame. So, human being has to be content with the relative truth.⁶³ The relative truth that is within the grasp of human being is to be sought in one's conscience. When one receives an inspiration from within, it is a moment for him to act in the right track.⁶⁴ For Gandhi, "A person falsely claiming to act under Divine inspiration or the promptings of the inner voice, without having any such, will fare worse than the one falsely claiming to act under the authority of an earthly sovereign."⁶⁵ So, one has to beware of self-deception while talking to inner voice, and be humble in listening to the inner voice. Silence plays a good role in listening to the truth spoken by the inner voice and joy is the characteristic of the person who follows the inner

⁶¹ Kachappilly, *Gandhi and Truth*, 93.

⁶² Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, 157.

⁶³ We need to remember to think in line with the *Anekantavada* principle of Jainism that respects the partial truth in each view, and recognize that when seen as partial truths, these views can be combined so that the point of view from which each is true is preserved. Epistemological respect for the views of others is not relativism. (Sethia, *Ahimsa, Anekanta and Jainism*, 89).

⁶⁴ Gandhi, *God is Truth*, 35.

⁶⁵ Gandhi, *God is Truth*, 39.

voice. Gandhian understanding of relative truth does not lead to moral relativism. It escapes the difficulties of ethical relativism due to its interrelationships with non-violence as operative in *satyagraha*.

2.3 Satya in Relation with Morality

Satya in relation with morality could be simplified as Gandhi's view on *Ahimsa* (non-violence). For Gandhi, *satya* is the highest law and *ahimsa* is the highest duty. Gandhi himself said: "*Ahimsa* and Truth are my two lungs. I cannot live without them."⁶⁶ Gandhi applied the concept of *Ahimsa* to practical life identifying it with the truth of God. Gandhi believed that the fundamental oneness of Reality leads to the fellowship of all. All human beings are the manifestations of the one Reality. It helped him to preserve the human dignity and divinity.⁶⁷ The application of *ahimsa* to the individual, according to Gandhi, was God-realization, or getting nearer to the truth of God, who is the source of human spirit. The lover of truth is bound to make a discovery of non-violence sooner or later, according to Gandhi.⁶⁸

2.3.1 The Vow of Truth⁶⁹

A vow, according to Gandhi, means unflinching determination. It is not a sign of weakness but of strength and God is the very image of the vow.⁷⁰ The vow of truth does not consist merely in verbal truthfulness but in the constant keeping of truth in thought, speech and action. It is also not the abstract truth but the concrete truthfulness of the individual which constitutes the crucial criterion of value. The vow of truth means that

⁶⁶ Cited in Kachappilly, *God as Truth*, 113. *Young India*, 21-10-1926, 364.

⁶⁷ Kim, *The Philosophical Thoughts of Mahatama Gandhi*, 191-93.

⁶⁸ Augustine too connects the notion of truth with the moral life. For him, joy in the truth is the happy life. "This happy life all men desire; this life which alone is happy all men desire; all men desire joy in the truth" (Augustine, *The Confessions*, 252).

⁶⁹ Gandhi, *Young India*, 1919-1922, 1172.

⁷⁰ Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme*, 5.

there is no place for prejudice, evasion, deception, secretiveness, or distortion.⁷¹

The votary of truth must achieve a harmony among thought, word, and deed and, thus, one's life becomes a fulfilled oath, a constant vow, a perpetual pilgrimage, a continual sacrifice, and the means to salvation. It is true that malignant forces are in full activity in nature and society, and it is the prerogative of man to become superior by employing the truth force to the fullest extent.⁷²

2.3.2 The Way to *Satya*

Satyagraha (truth-force) is the way to *satya*. It literally means "holding on to truth."⁷³ The loyalty to truth implies two ideas: a) absolute sincerity to oneself, to one's own idea of truth, and b) putting this idea into practice. *Satyagraha* demands selfless and true pursuit of Truth without having any consideration of any advantage or any gain.⁷⁴ It is a force against tyranny and violence. The employment of *Satyagraha* against others must be preceded by its employment against oneself. For Gandhi, the law of *Satyagraha*, the law of love, is an eternal principle. I cooperate with all that is good. I desire to non-cooperate with all that is evil, whether it is associated with my wife, son or myself.

The *satyagrahi* loves the opponent as a human being and looks at him with a sense of equity to bring out the best in him. It implies that the opponent realizes the mistake. The *satyagrahi* avoids violence of all forms.

⁷¹ Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, 164.

⁷² Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, 167.

⁷³ Kim, *The Political Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi*, 178.

⁷⁴ We have different way to *Satya* in St. Augustine. For him, Christ the Teacher, is the way to *Satya* (Augustine, *The Confessions*, 283).

Conclusion

Satya is the active power of evolution in the universe, and it must be likewise in the society. Gandhi's equating of God with Truth and the subsequent reversal to 'Truth is God' made his conception of truth unique. His distinction between Absolute Truth and relative truth made his analysis of Truth very enriching. The value of truth is to be realized through the service to others. One needs to be careful in the way adopted to communicate truth. A violent approach to communicate truth cannot be adopted since non-violence and truth are inseparable. Truth excludes violence because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and, therefore, man is not competent to punish others because of his individual views. Everyone must be guided by the truth as he or she sees it but no one has the right to coerce another into his own truth. We are all seekers after truth. We must admit that we are imperfect and have not yet found the truth we seek. Truth is an ideal, not a possession. It cannot be conquered and imposed. Gandhi insisted that a person who claimed to possess the truth cannot be fraternal with another. Truth is truth only if non-violently communicated.

Chapter 3

SATYA AND PHILOSOPHICAL EDUCATION

Introduction

Truth, as an all-comprehensive concept, has its significance in all branches of human activity. Gandhi was a man who wants to see everything in the world with the eyes of truth. He judged everything from the perspective of an honest seeker of the truth.⁷⁵ In this chapter, we attempt to present how Gandhi applied his understanding of truth into various fields and a possible application for philosophical education.

3.1 Truth Applied to Fields of Action

Truth governs the universe and all it contains. Gandhi applies his notion of truth into the areas of political, social, economic, journalistic, and educational activities.

3.1.1 Truth in Politics

Gandhi gave a new outlook for what it means to be a politician by making use of truth as his priority. “If you recognize truth, naturally God regulates your activity”⁷⁶ was one of the dictums of Gandhi. Though power politics existed everywhere, non-violence and truth also existed in a measure much larger than that, Gandhi believed. The reason is that Truth, which is God, pervades everywhere.

⁷⁵ Kachappilly, *Gandhi and Truth*, 136.

⁷⁶ Kachappilly, *Gandhi and Truth*, 136.

3.1.2 Truth in Societal Affairs

In the societal affairs, Gandhi appealed for the stability of truth. Truth binds man to man in association. The measure of a man's greatness lies in his ability for courageous and open struggle against conventional falsehoods and sanctified untruth.⁷⁷ A man who has learned to respect the truth is entitled and required to uphold the truth against the very society which has taught him to respect it. He deserves to be respected by others due to his thirst for truth. Again, one must be satisfied with believing the truth as it appears to him at any given time in any particular situation.⁷⁸ Even if untruth seems to prevail over truth or good, Gandhi's belief in rebirth enabled him to retain his faith in the eventual triumph of truth.

3.1.3 Truth in Economics

According to Gandhi, "that economics is untrue which ignores or disregards moral values."⁷⁹ True economics never militates against the highest ethical standard. True economics stands for social justice and promotes the good of all equally including the weak and it is indispensable for decent life.⁸⁰ He was against class war concept but he expected transformation in the existing relationship between the capitalists and labourers.⁸¹ The propagation made by Gandhi on *charkha* and *khadi* stands in support of his active engagement in the economic activity.

⁷⁷ Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, 168.

⁷⁸ Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, 169.

⁷⁹ Gandhi, *All Men are Brothers*, 169.

⁸⁰ Gandhi, *All Men are Brothers*, 170-72.

⁸¹ Gandhi, *All Men are Brothers*, 178-79.

3.1.4 Truth in Journalism

Gandhian writings uphold the value of truth. He never wrote anything in order to incite anger or passion. He avoided one-sided and dishonest writings. He deplored the tendency of equivocation and the failure to cultivate the courage to speak the truth.⁸² He was against immoral advertisements appearing in newspapers. Newspaper is a respectable element and it should not contain malicious contents. This is to promote the Gandhian exhortation to treat the printed word in a book or newspaper as gospel of truth.

3.2 Gandhian Philosophical Trends

Gandhian educational plan has the major qualities of naturalism, idealism and pragmatism. We need to keep them in mind as we evaluate Gandhian educational philosophy

3.2.1 Naturalism

Naturalism is the philosophical position which has its fundamental tenet the preposition that the natural world is the whole of reality.⁸³ The term naturalism, by its ordinary meaning means the ism laying emphasis upon nature in every field of education. The naturalist philosopher derives the aims and ideals, the means, the methods of teaching and the principles of curriculum and school management from the nature.⁸⁴

Gandhi's educational philosophy gives due recognition to biological naturalism because it lays stress on man's complete development. He laid more stress on the environment of the child than

⁸² Kachappilly, *Gandhi and Truth*, 145.

⁸³ *Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1983 edition, s. v. "Naturalism."

⁸⁴ The most ancient form of naturalism was presented by Democritus (460-360 BC) in the form of atomistic naturalism. In Greece, Democritus explained the composition of universe in terms of innumerable, individual and indestructible atoms.

on books. His education is centred on the child by holding on to the principle of truth.

3.2.2 Idealism

Idealism is the theory that attaches greater importance to ideals than to facts in this world. The term idealism connotes different concepts when it placed in various contexts. The most important aim of education, according to the idealist thinkers, is the development of personality. Idealism also places greater emphasis upon more universal objects of education.⁸⁵

Gandhi was an idealist because he was a religious individual. In his educational philosophy he is attentive to the spiritual training of the individual. He aims at building up the moral character of the child. And Gandhi bases all these aims upon the idealistic notion of truth.

3.3.3 Pragmatism

The main principle of pragmatism is that the theories that work are true. According to the pragmatist philosophers, everyone should discover his truth according to his experience and commonsense. Humanistic pragmatism⁸⁶, Experimental pragmatism⁸⁷, Nominalistic pragmatism⁸⁸ and Biological pragmatism⁸⁹ are the four types of pragmatist thinking.

Gandhi always was attentive to the practical aspects of education. He was an experimenter, experimenter with truth, in every sphere of his

⁸⁵ Sharma, *Textbook of Educational Philosophy*, 310.

⁸⁶ According to it the satisfaction of human nature is the criterion of utility. F.C.S. Schiller, a British philosopher is a representative of humanistic pragmatism.

⁸⁷ It holds that the fact which can be ascertained by experiment is true. William James, an American philosopher is a representative of this view.

⁸⁸ According to nominalistic pragmatism, the results of an experiment are always particular and concrete, never general and abstract. E. S. Brightman is a representative of nominalistic pragmatism.

⁸⁹ John Dewey is considered as a biological pragmatist according to whom the ultimate aim of all knowledge is harmony of the man with the environment.

life. Gandhian notion of relative truth includes the pluralistic perspectives of the pragmatists and as the pragmatist give importance to the social aspects, he does present the importance of developing the social personality of individual based on the principle of truth.

3.2 Truth and Philosophical Education

Truth as an import concept in the entire philosophy of Gandhi has its predominance in the field of education. Learning from Gandhi, we can include truth as one of the highest priorities when we discuss philosophical education. In the contemporary period, philosophers attempt to combine connection between philosophy and education through various means. We make our attempt of combination by discussing them from the viewpoint of humanizing, civilizing and philosophizing. We do it with the help of Gandhian concept and application of truth.

3.2.1 Education as a Humanizing Process

Education helps in the humanizing process when it helps the individuals or society to attain values that help the person to understand one's inner self and development⁹⁰ so that he may contribute to himself and to the world the best that is in him.

But there is a great threat that we face in our daily existence towards achieving the value and development of one's own self. This threat revolves around the choice one makes when he has to make a choice between truth and lie. The choices regarding truthfulness and deceit are woven into all that human person does and speaks. Everyone knows the experience of being deceived by others, of doubting someone's word and being thought of a liar. Moreover, throughout our

⁹⁰ Chackalackal, "Integral Vision of Education for an Enhanced Humanity," 221.

lives no moral choice is common than that of whether to speak truthfully or lie. Every opportunity in which one decide for truth adds value to himself and it accelerates his inner development and every occasion in which one decides in favour of deceit is going to reduce his development as a human person and it affects his value system in a negative manner. In short, a human person who holds on to truth fulfils the humanizing process of education in his own life.

Gandhian understanding on truth considers the aspect of the humanizing process of education. When Gandhi aims at bringing out the best in child and man, the all-round development of the human person,⁹¹ through a proper harmonious combination of intellect, body and heart by education, the quest for truth has a role to play. It is the quest for truth that makes the seeker of truth be transformed in a better manner. This transformation is nothing but the courage one takes to form him. Gandhi believes that if a man fails to know himself and acquires the power to liberate himself from all bonds, his knowledge is useless.⁹²

3.2.2 Education as a Civilizing Process

Education has the power to make human civilization creative or destructive. If one were to adapt a subversive approach in education it would lead to destabilization of the culture while a creative approach can build up and transform the culture of humanity.⁹³ This civilizing process includes the integration of the richness of the past, creativity of the present and possibilities of the future. One of the Gandhian insistences in this regard is to know the cultural heritage and language of the community to which one belongs or the importance of an awareness of a dimension of the past. This was not for producing cultural exclusivists. Because Gandhi believed that “no culture can live, if it attempts to be

⁹¹ Gandhi, *My Views on Education*, 94-95.

⁹² Gandhi, *My Views on Education*, 12.

⁹³ Chackalackal, “Integral Vision of Education for an Enhanced Humanity” 222-23.

exclusive.”⁹⁴ Civilization or culture makes it possible for the life of the individual to be meaningful and it gives him a sense of identity. The alien elements have caused incalculable intellectual and moral injuries to the education system, according to Gandhi.⁹⁵ Damaging our own cultural heritage was a violation of Truth and grievous blow to the self-identity and national identity of India.

Civilizations can grow or destroy between the choices they make between truthfulness and deceit. No society or human relationship could survive without at least a degree of truthfulness in communications. We have seen how major Indian religions have stressed truthfulness as a trait to be followed. Truth is as necessary to their society as to all others.

If education has to promote the transformation of humanity and civilization, truth has to have its predominant role in education. However, while a degree of truthfulness has been recognized as necessary everywhere, the pull of lying has been ever present. It offers the simplest and most tempting way of trying to generate false beings in civilizations.

Gandhian insistence on truth will indeed help to promote the growth of the civilization. Truth and only truth can transform humanity and the adherents of truth are the makers of the cultured civilization. Gandhi seems to be thinking in lines of Immanuel Kant⁹⁶ who presents the idea that truthfulness is an unconditional duty which holds in all circumstances. All persons who lie, he claimed, there by repudiate their own human dignity and contribute to the undermining the precarious trust on which human society is based⁹⁷.

⁹⁴ Gandhi, *All Men are Brothers*, 202.

⁹⁵ Gandhi, *All Men are Brothers*, 198.

⁹⁶ Kant, “On a Supposed to Right to Lie from Philanthropy”, 611-15.

⁹⁷ However, Machiavelli, in *The Prince* argues that while high standards of honesty should be encouraged in most walks of life, there are special circumstances and pressures within ones profession that necessitates forgoing candor at times.

3.2.3 Education as a Philosophizing Process

When each member of the human race is enabled to think for himself/herself through the educational processes and institutions, education becomes philosophizing. There is a positive difference in the inner reality of the educated person. This process is done in the atmosphere of freedom and fearlessness.⁹⁸ Gandhian philosophizing based on truth ultimately leads the individual into the Upanishadic realization “Brahma is real, all else unreal.”⁹⁹ During this process the person becomes a source of non-violence. He works for the welfare of all. He ardently follows his inner voice of truth.

Gandhi applies his principles in relation to various disciplines in a coherent manner. Taking inspirations from Gandhi, we see how the principle of truth, in particular, and Gandhian teachings, in general, help the philosophizing, humanizing and civilizing factors in education. Gandhian principles applied in the philosophy of education will help the branch for the emergence of enlightened individuals who will actually strive for the transformation of the human beings and civilizations through their philosophical attempts.

3.2.4 Truth and Religious Education

Religion has an important place in the formation of a human person. Religious experiences offer possible ways of knowing the nature and doings of God. Gandhian concept of truth is a religious concept and it can help one in his attempt to pursue the religious education in a sincere manner. Religious education is based upon religious experiences. They are possible source of existence and nature of God. For Gandhi, the

⁹⁸ Chackalackal, “Integral Vision of Education for an Enhanced Humanity,” 224-25.

⁹⁹ Gandhi, *In Search for Truth*, 5.

religious experience of God is equal to the experience of Truth. He has the direct and perceptual awareness of God as he follows the path and voice of truth. Following the voice of truth helps one to be formed by religion or religious education. Can the experience of truth lead one to religious experience of knowing God?

The awareness of God is an experiential one. There is not much place for thinking of God, reasoning about God or asking questions about God. Truth is a concept that makes possible the experience of God.

Conclusion

Gandhian concept of truth bears the tunes of philosophy, religion and practical elements. This is an important aspect in line with different educational approaches. Usually there are many diverging trends among the idealist, pragmatist and naturalist educational thinkers. Gandhian *satya* could be used as a common point of convergence among these differing educational schools. *Satya* for Gandhi is not only an ideal to be reflected upon but it is also the foundation of every human activities.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Man cannot be indifferent to truth since there is a longing for truth in the heart of every human being. Hence the need to search for it with all one's might through success does not come everyone's way in the same measure. The reason for this is that there are certain factors which impede our search and they even distort our understanding. They are natural limitation of reason, inconsistency of the heart, worldly concerns, and fear of the demand that truth makes. Hence it is necessary to overcome these in the search for truth.

In the contemporary discussions on the notion of truth we can trace out four main trends. The first is a doubt as to the possibility of truth; the second is a confinement of truth to practice rather than theory; the third, a confinement of truth to theory than practice and the fourth promotes a fideistic affirmation of some religious truth or other.¹⁰⁰

The first position that denies the possibility of truth appears in different ways. Sometimes truth is regarded as an unnecessary term because it is held to denote an affirmation of what is the case. But if this 'what is the case' is not held to be true, and then it reduces to what appears to be the case, or is held to be the case for certain practical purposes. Sometimes, truth is regarded as strictly relative to a certain set of cultural assumptions, and where the latter is regarded as arbitrary, then relativism or conventionalism ensues, with the consequence that there is no truth in any absolute sense. If we follow the first position truth is inaccessible to us or reality is not amenable to notions of truth.

The second position holds that truth belongs more naturally to practical rather than theoretical activity. Sufficient truth for human purposes is available in the successful attainment of humanly sought ends. Such attainment reveals to us a certain reality outside of which

¹⁰⁰ Milbank & Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, xi.

lies only vain speculation. However, this attitude drains out truth of its connotations of the indefeasible, and of its sense of value. If human achievement provides us no clue as to what is ultimately the case, then it is no more than a contingent set of contrived circumstances. They may be true for a time, as truths of factual occurrence, but can in the end prove not true at all. Certainly, human access to truth can only be time-bound, if truth has no connotations of the eternal and abiding, then it is hard to see why it is called truth at all. Secondly, if the only measure of the truth of a practice is its success, then anything that works is regarded as good as long it works without any consideration to the inherent desirability of what has been constructed.

The third position possesses an unbounded confidence in the truth of natural science. It provides a true ontology rather than the limited disclosure of certain sides of reality. Truth here resides not in the success of its actions but rather in what those operations are held to reveal. Truth is considered here as a theoretical matter. Sometimes the modern natural science hold something to be true is remote from what people think to be the case and from what they are capable of understanding. This imposes a gulf between the everyday world and the insight of the scientific person. Truth, here becomes a property of the elite. When this truth is regarded as the only truth democratic society allows its guardians to take important decisions which the rest the society can scarcely understand.

The fourth position is a reaction against pragmatism, scepticism and positivism. Many people take refuge in the notion of truth as it is enshrined in certain texts, practices and traditions. These texts, practices and tradition acquire absolute authority outside the working of the human reason. This might pave the way for various types of fundamentalism.

Gandhian presentation of truth addresses the crisis of truth in a mature way. It doesn't fall into the nihilistic trends as of the first position.

It takes up the practical, theoretical and religious aspect of truth in a coherent manner. This coherent approach is the need of the hour especially in our search for knowledge based on truth. If the search for knowledge in the educational systems is based on nihilistic perspectives, it is a futile exercise.

Man as the seeker of truth is obliged to pursue the footsteps of truth bearing in mind the religious, practical and theoretical aspects in a harmonious way. Affiliation and affirmation of a single position brings in the dangers that can harm the system of education. When truth is presented as a norm in the practice of education it means that education needs to consider the naturalistic, idealistic, pragmatic and religious aspects in unity. Gandhian vision of *satya* offers us the key for integral education. Following the footprints of *satya* not only satisfies the Gandhian aims for education but it also helps the human person to continue his role on the earth as the seeker of truth.

In his dealings with others the human person wishes that the other may communicate him truth and only truth. Gandhian invitation is to be an experimenter with truth. Truth is that all seek and want above everything. No one wishes to compromise on that. When we bring in truth as the guiding principle in the philosophy of education we envisage an educational community of all truth seekers travelling together in freedom to come to an ever increasing approximation of truth. They are compelled to study and defend truth in a better way when they are confronted. They will be forced to discern the core of truth from its formulations. That is the role of experimenter with truth.

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