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# Gandhian Concept of Truth and Non-Violence

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**ABSTRACT**

Gandhi was a great supporter of Truth and Non-Violence. He had a great importance to the concept of Truth and Non-Violence. Truth or Satya, Ahimsa or Non-Violence are foundation of Gandhi's philosophy. 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'. Moreover he stated that Ahimsa binds us to one another and also to God. So it is a unifying agent. Gandhi wrote, 'Ahimsa and Love are one and the same thing'. 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 said that Truth and Non-Violence are the two sides of a same coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say which the obverse is and which is the reverse? Ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. I will discuss the Gandhian concept of Truth and Non-Violence elaborately in this paper.

**Key Words:** Gandhi, Truth, Non-violence, Peace, Philosophy, Challenges.

## INTRODUCTION

Truth and non-violence occupy an important place in the life of Mahatma Gandhi. These are the two main tools he used in his practical life as well. According to him truth and non-violence leads a person as pious, sympathetic and co-operative. He made several experiments with them with great zeal and applied them in original way practically in every aspect of human life especially in political and social fields. According to Gandhi in violence there is nothing invisible, but non-violence on the other hand is three-fourths invisible and hence the effect in the inverse ratio to its invisibility. he says that social order should be established on truth and non-violence, Gandhi's non-violent society would be a perfect democracy were each unit of a village

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even was to be self sufficient, independent and free. If there is necessity of the state at all, it should be non-violent in its nature. Conflicts are inherent in social, economic or political situations the non-violent technique claims creative and constructive results after creating a "crisis-packed" situation. Negotiations become imperative; the forces of understandings and cordiality are released. Truth is employed not only to solve the national problems but it also leads to solve the international problems. In South Africa this weapon the same was employed by Gandhi against the cruel and injustice policies of the government. Indians in South Africa were harassed, debarred from all rights. According to him war is the product of misunderstanding between nations. Gandhi believed that war can be abolished and peace and harmony can be established between nations through the principle of non-violence.

Gandhi was a great supporter of Truth and Non-violence. He had a great importance to the concept of Truth and Non-Violence. Truth or Satya, Ahimsa or Non-Violence are foundation of Gandhi's philosophy. 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'. 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 said that Truth and Non-Violence are the two sides of a same coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which the reverse? Ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Gandhi identifies Truth with God. According to many philosophers God is the highest reality. At the same time 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, 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. Gandhi sometimes described Truth as existence, consciousness and bliss (sat, cit, and ananda).At first Gandhi used to say God is Truth. But later on him converted Truth is God. Therefore, according to Gandhi Truth is God and 'Satyagraha' is 'agraha' of and thus, it means holding fast to truth. Gandhi explained the term 'Satyagraha' from

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various viewpoints. Satyagraha is not a weapon of the weak, the coward, the unarmed and the helpless. It is a weapon of the morally vigilant and the active. Satyagraha is not the traditional resistance of evil by evil. It is a resistance of evil by its opposite, i.e., by good. Satyagraha is essentially based on love. In fact, according to Gandhi, Satyagraha appears to be as a religious pursuit. It rests on a religious belief that there is one God behind everything and being, and as such the same God resides in every one of us. Gandhi also feels that a belief in rebirth is almost a pre-condition of Satyagraha. Satyagraha demands selfless and sincere pursuit of Truth without having any consideration of any advantage or gain, But, one will be able 'to walk on such a sharp 'razor's edge' only if he somehow believes that he will get the fruits of his good work, if not in this life, in subsequent life. Gandhi says, 'with the knowledge that the soul survives the body, he (the Satyagraha) is not impatient to see the triumph of in the present body.''

Gandhi demonstrated acts of truth and non-violence in South Africa. The non-violent protest of Gandhi got huge popularity. It was here that he cultivated in him the idea of „Satyagraha", which he was to put into practice afterwards, both in South Africa and India. In South Africa, Gandhi ji endeavored hard to secure for the colored people, including Indians who were domiciled there, equal rights with the White People. In this context he had to court imprisonment several times. After arriving India, Mahatma Gandhi joined the Indian National congress, which was at that time more or less a social institution. He made Congress an organization, which was to play its vital role in the winning of the country's independence. Before he joined the Congress and took its reins in his hands, it was predominantly an organization of the Upper Middle Class people. Mahatma Gandhi changed it into a mass-organization, in which the peasants began to take an active part. He firmly believed that freedom can be achieved in a peaceful manner. He wanted all his followers to always maintain truth and integrity. The principles of Ahimsa was practiced in all of the independence movements launched by Mahatma Gandhi .According to Gandhi, to move fearlessly into the dreadful jaws of violence is called non-violence. Thus, in Gandhi's concept of non-violence there was no place for timidity or cowardice. He considered violence to be preferable to cowardice. While commenting on this matter in his article entitled „The Doctrine of the Sword", he says that, given a choice between cowardice and violence, he would prefer violence. But he firmly believed that non-violence was certainly superior to violence and forgiveness was far manlier than punishment.

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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 safe dignity or owner against the criminal. In that case she can use violence in order to safe 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 injures 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. In fact 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, jealously 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

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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 realized. 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.

Throughout his career, Gandhiji championed the cause of Ahimsa or non-violence. By that he could easily disarm even a powerful enemy. His experience in South Africa had made him bold to use non-violence as a great weapon throughout his life.

**1. Non-violence is the basic nature of man:** Gandhi had studied very well the basic nature of man, according to him "Man as animal is violent, but in spirit he is non-violent." The moment he awakes to the spirit within, he cannot remain violent". Thus, violence is artificial to him whereas non-violence always triumphs aver violence.

**2**. **Non-violence, the godly quality within a man:** Gandhi had regarded God as truth and love. Love imamates from the heart of a man where God dwells. So, Gandhi envisaged God and love as one. To him, "When you want to find truth as God, the only inevitable means is love, that is, non-violence. And since believe that ultimately means and ends are convertible terms, I should not hesitate to say that God is love". Thus nonviolence is a godly quality which everyone should follow.

**3. Non-violence as self-suffering:** Gandhi put stress on self-suffering which is the other name of nonviolence. It is papaya which a Satyagrahi should practise. He told people to renounce everything and endure every pain. He cited the instance of sage Dadhichi and said that self-sacrifice is the basic principle of our culture.

**4**. **Non-violence as the weapon of the strong:** To Gandhi, non-violence is the weapon of the strong. One, who endures sufferings, is bold and he can only practice non-violence. Non-violence teaches people to be fearless. Violence is the resort of the weak. The followers of non-violence never become weak and succumb to the whims and caprices of others. According to

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him 'Non-violence does not mean weak submission to the will of the evil-doer. It means putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant."

**5. Non-violence prompting one to compromise:** Non-violence teaches to compromise with the opponent. One should not be obstinate; rather he should come forward to compromise with the opponent. Besides imposing one's idea upon others, he should be easy to accept other man's viewpoint. This attitude makes a Satyagrahi to achieve his goal.

**6**. **Non-violence fostering spiritual power:** A Satycgrahi derives his spiritual power from non-violence. That power illumines the dark corner of the mind of an individual and prompts him to fight against injustice, oppression and tyranny. In that fight, a Satyagrahi never turns back or becomes weak, rather success kisses his feet. Thus, non-violence enhances the spiritual power in man and prepares his path to achieve goal.

**7. High place of non-violence in ethics and religion:** Ahimsa has been attached high position in ethics and religion. Gandhiji cited the examples of Buddha, Mahavir and Christ before the people and convinced them that emphasis has been put upon Ahimsa in every religion. So, its highness is unquestionable.

Thus, Gandhiji inspired the mass and mobilised them through the principle of non-violence. This became a powerful arrow in his quiver which he used against the British authority in India and became successful. Gandhiji supports neither a blind rejection of the modern Western civilization nor a blind acceptance of classical Indian civilization. He writes: “There is nothing to prevent me from profiting by the light that may come from the West. Only I must take care that I am not overpowered by the glamour of the West. I must not mistake the glamour for the light.”

Since the basic values of all great religions are essentially the same, the rejection of the Gandhian alternative to modern western civilization essentially means the rejection of the basic values of all great religions. Today modern western civilization is spreading like wildfire throughout our country and the basic values of our classical Indian civilization, which is the only living great ancient civilization today, are disappearing fast from the core of our life. The temptation of the glamour of the modern western civilization is becoming too strong to resist. Let us make an in-depth critical study of the Gandhian alternative and initiate a national debate on it before it is too late. It will be a fitting tribute to the apostle of Truth and non-violence of our age.

**CONCLUSION**

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In conclusion we can say that both Truth and Non-Violence are closely interrelated. They are the same sides of a same coin. A critical account of the Gandhian concept of Non-Violence shows that Gandhi was not aware of the deep rooted aggressive instinct in man. Contemporary psychologist have pointed out that this instinct plays a major role in the human mental life. Gandhi did not play sufficient attention to it. His account of Non-Violence seems to be more dependent on his reading of religious texts than on psycho-social considerations. This is a major critical point that may be raised against the Gandhian conception of Non-Violence. If Non-Violence is the expression of the life-instinct within man then violence is the expression of the death-instinct.

So we can conclude and say that Gandhi was a great philosopher, lover of truth and non-violence and says that self realization cannot be attained without truth and non-violence. So if one wants to attain salvation one must be the lover of truth and non-violence. Gandhi uses truth and non-violence as social and political weapons in fighting against evils and injustice. Gandhi employed the moral weapons of truth and non-violence to end domestic , social , political , economical ,religious and cultural problems and conflicts removal of untouchabilily, communal harmony, solution to unemployment, illiteracy economic and religious equality were the social economic and political targets to be achieved through this great weapon. His philosophy of truth and non-violence transcends all regional, religious and cultural barriers. It is global and it comprehends not only humanity but the whole living world.

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