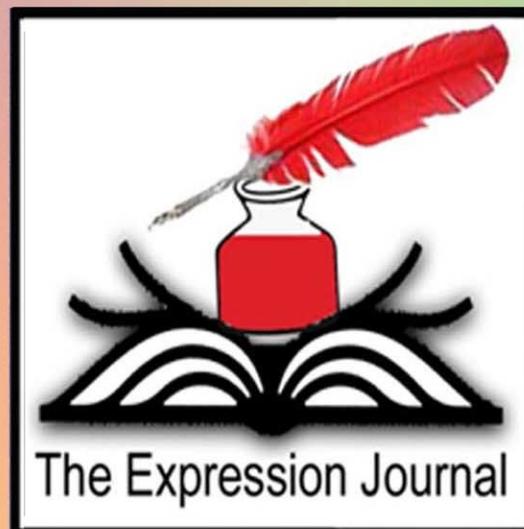


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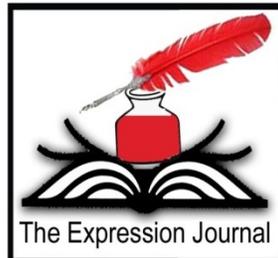
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THE STUDY OF GANDHI'S PHILOSOPHY OF TRUTH AND NON VIOLENCE

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Abstract

Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi known as Bapu, is universally recognized as a glorious symbol of truth and nonviolence. Gandhi, through his notion of Non violence attained a special status not only in India but in the entire world. He adopted non-violence as a philosophy & an ideal way of life. Famously called the Father of non- violence all over, Gandhi's non - violence is a philosophy & strategy for social change that rejects the use of violence. Gandhi believed that the one who possess non violence is blessed. He still remains an immortal spirit who guides through the path of peace & non - violence. Truth or Satya, Ahimsa or Non-Violence and love are foundation of Gandhi's philosophy. Ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end and that can be attained through love. The paper discusses the Gandhian concept of Truth, love and Non-Violence. It also discusses the relevance and need of non violence in the present scenario.

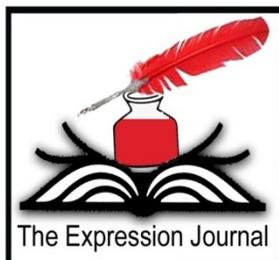
Keywords

Non-Violence or Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Truth, Love, Humanity and God

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Non violence or ahimsa has been a part of our Indian tradition and culture since ages but it was Gandhi who transformed it into a social and political tool. Gandhi's philosophy of non violence was an amalgamation of many features. One of the main features of Gandhi's nonviolence is the correlation between nonviolence and truth. According to Gandhi the jewel of ahimsa was discovered in the search for truth. He compared truth and nonviolence as to two sides of a metallic disc. For Gandhi truth was both relative and absolute. Gandhi believed absolute truth, was way beyond human comprehension, though human beings were endowed and gifted with the ability to seek and find truth.

Gandhi was of the opinion that one must be willing to take all the consequences of bearing witness to one's truth upon oneself. That is the way of nonviolence. Thus, for Gandhi nonviolence was the only justifiable way to truth; not only to progress towards truth but also to vindicate truth. That was why he gave the dictum: "Truth is the end and ahimsa the means thereto." (From Yeravda Mandir, p. 7).

He wrote: "Ahimsa is not merely a negative state of harmlessness, but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer" (Young India, August 25, 1920, p.2).

Emphasizing the aspect of love in ahimsa Gandhi wrote: Ahimsa means "love" in the Pauline sense, and yet something more than the "love" defined by Paul...Ahimsa includes the whole creation, and not only human. Besides, "Love" in the English language has other connotations too, and so I was compelled to use the negative word. But it does not, as I told you, express a negative force, but a force superior to all the forces put together. (Harijan, March 14, 1936, p. 39) In the actual sense Non- Violence means 'love'. It means love towards all living creatures irrespective of their caste color and creed. The concept of non- violence is extended not only to human love but love towards all living creatures of the world. When a person claims to be non-violent, he is

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expected not to be angry with one who has ever done him any harm or injured him. Complete Non-Violence is complete absence of ill-will without any grudge against anyone.

The second main feature of Gandhi's nonviolence is related to the word 'nonviolence'. Being a word with negative prefix nonviolence in the first glimpse suggests negative meanings which is meant to be understood as non-hurting, non-killing, etc. But this was not what Gandhi really meant by nonviolence. He explained: "Ahimsa is not the crude thing it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing is, no doubt, a part of ahimsa. But it is its least expression. The principle of ahimsa is hurt by every evil thought, undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody. It is also violated by our holding on to what the world needs."(From Yeravda Mandir, p. 7)

Gandhi writes that just as the soul does not depend on the physical body for its existence, "similarly, non-violence, or soul-force, too, does not need physical aid for its propagation or effect. It acts independently of them. It transcends time and space." His concept and methods are constructed on the basis of attributes and powers he believes to be inherent in that force, and he conceives his activities to be channels for it. Activities that Gandhi describes as "non-violent" are those whose effectiveness consists in displacing violence by means of soul-force, thus nullifying evil.(Borman)

The third feature was what Gandhi characterized ahimsa as "soul force". He wrote: "Nonviolence is soul force or the power of the Godhead within us. We become Godlike to the extent we realize nonviolence." (Harijan, March 14, 1936, p. 39). Gandhi added that "it is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man". According to Gandhi nonviolence had the power to win an enemy instead of destroying him .

Gandhi developed a well structured theory of non violence. He said that one might be carried away by the violence and destruction that one saw all around but then he could see life persisting in the midst of all these destructions. Gandhi wrote: Consciously or unconsciously, we are acting non-violently towards one another in our daily life. All well-constructed societies are based on the law of nonviolence. I have found that life persists in the midst of destruction and, therefore, there must be a higher law than that of destruction. Only under that law would a well-ordered society be intelligible and life worth living. And, if that is the Law of Life we have to work it out in daily life. (Young India., Oct. 10, 1931) Thus the conclusion Gandhi came to was "nonviolence or love is the law of our being" and this is the first major postulate of his theory of nonviolence. Burman writes: "Gandhi argues that violence is unjustifiable not only because it is prima facie evil, as all admit, but also because acknowledging claims that necessity can be substituted for moral legitimacy leads to self-deception; and this self-deception (essential untruth) strengthens the evil that was intended to be destroyed by the violence one had justified in the name of necessity".

The other feature of non violence is humanity and it is the law of love that binds humanity together and makes collective life possible and meaningful. He wanted humanity to accept nonviolence as an article of faith. According to him humanity is in a "now or never" situation. It is true that the facilities and use of lethal weapons and destructive power has almost mystified the

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world. But he said it would be too late if we do not act right now. And this must begin from one's own self and try to reach out. The need of the hour was non-violence.

According to Gandhi violence, is madness which cannot sustain. He was a great supporter of non violence or ahimsa. Nonviolence is the personal practice of being harmless to self and others under every condition. It comes from the belief that hurting people, animals or the environment is unnecessary to achieve an outcome and refers to a general philosophy of abstention from violence based on moral, religious or spiritual principles. He identifies Truth with God and he said there is nothing besides truth therefore both truth and God are the ultimate reality. The atheists can deny God as they do not believe in him but no one can deny the truth.

Ahimsa, in the Sanskrit language, literally means non-violence or more fully, loving one's enemy to the point of not wishing her or him any harm. Within the moral structure of Gandhi, there are two basic pillars: Truth and ahimsa (that is, non-violence or, as Gandhi calls it, love). Truth is the end; non-violence is the means. But the end and the means are irrevocably bound to each other. However, if at any time one is not sure which one to use, non-violence should reign supreme.

By Truth, Gandhi said, we do not mean the character of proposition which is either true or false. Gandhi described Truth as existence, consciousness and bliss. 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 various viewpoints. Satyagraha is not a weapon for the weak, the coward, or the helpless. It is a weapon of the morally vigilant and the active, for the educated and kind hearted. One who believes in the well being of mankind. Satyagraha is not the traditional resistance of evil by evil. It is a resistance of evil by its opposite, i.e., by good.

Truth and non-violence are the twin pillars on which the foundation of the magnificent edifice of Mahatma Gandhi's glorious life rested .For Gandhi, of course, truth and non-violence were the two sides of the same coin. Hence one can understand the importance of non-violence in the working of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of life. Non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment.

Satyagraha is essentially based on love and humanity. It is rather a religious pursuit. According to Gandhi Satyagraha 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 difficult path only if he 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 described Satyagraha as a force against violence, injustice and tyranny. Gandhi says that if we start resisting evil with evil, violence with violence, anger with anger, then we are only adding fuel to to violence. According to him the most effective force against these evils can be the one which would force them to change their attitude and mind, and that can be done only by Satyagraha. The aim of satyagraha is not to force the wrong-doer to accept the change but Its

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intention is to bring about, what Gandhi calls, a 'change of heart' so that he himself renounces the evil path.

Satyagraha is itself based on the pre-supposition that there are no 'enemies' or 'opponent', but that there are only wrong-doers who have been misguided by some external forces. Satyagraha is a movement which also demands extreme patience on the part of the Satyagrahi. Gandhi believed that a Satyagrahi must possess a number of qualities and characteristics. He said that apart from being honest and sincere, he should not have any mental reservations, which means he must be open-minded. Apart from leading a disciplined life, truth alone should be his master and conscience should be his guide. He should not only be loving, but also firm and be completely fearless. He must not even fear death. It is very important for him to possess the virtue of sacrifice. He must be prepared for the greatest possible sacrifice. A Satyagrahi is required to practice truthfulness and non-violence not only in his action, but also in thought and speech. He should be firm in his dealings and behavior.

Nonviolence is not just a philosophy it is a means of social, political and economic struggle which has its roots in history. From ancient times to the recent times, people have renounced violence as a means of resolving disputes. Nonviolence provides us with a powerful tool to oppose and stop wars, to resist violence and hatred against racial, sexual and economic oppression and discrimination and to seek social justice and genuine democracy for people throughout the world. Mahatma Gandhi is among those few great men in the history of mankind whose individual life, works acts and views, also known as Gandhism, not only proved to be great and exemplary during his own lifetime but they are relevant and significant even today, after his passing away. He became the ideal hero for millions around the world. He taught us the power of non violence. Propagation of non-violence was no novel or unprecedented act of the Mahatma. As he himself has rightly said, "I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could."

Non-violence today has become a more important need of the entire humanity than in any other phase of the human history. The tremendous technological advancement in the field of science has created such lethal weapons, that the extinction of the entire human civilization is a matter of a few seconds. Nations are always at loggerheads with each other. Earlier when science and technology were in their development stages, men did not have any access to science and latest technologies then they could afford to be violent. There were no nuclear powers and satellites but now, when the world has been divided into two warring camps and there is tremendous technological advancements in the form of nuclear weapons the very urge of self-preservation has made it imperative for us to embrace non-violence. Gandhi's philosophy is much needed in the current times. This spiritual awakening of non violence will help us live in complete harmony with our fellow humans and nature.

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