
TRUTH AND TRUTHS: EXPERIMENTS GANDHI MADE

KOUSHIK JOARDAR

The word “experiment” has an empirical tone. Dictionary meanings of “experiment” are “demonstration”, “investigation”, “practical”, “research”, “test”, “trial”, “try-out”, “examine”, “probe” etc. and that of “experimental” is “empirical”, “experiential” etc. It is not unexpected that the word “experiments” appears in the title of the autobiography of a *karmayogi* like Gandhi. The title “My Experiments with Truths” suggests that one is experimenting like a scientist with many alternatives or testing a hypothesis to reach the final truth or to confirm some assumption. Experiments start with assumption rather than conviction. Interestingly, it is “Truth” and not “truths” appear in the title of his autobiography. It suggests that Gandhi was not experimenting with many alternatives or truths but with one truth. Was he then testing a hypothesis?

Gandhi was certain of the Truth he was experimenting with from the very beginning of his experiments and this Truth was God. In his own words, “I think it is wrong to expect certainties in this world, where all else but God that is Truth is an uncertainty.”¹ The Sanskrit word for “truth” is “*satya*”. *Satya* means that which is or exists. According to Gandhi, nothing is or exists except Truth. This may mean that what really exists in the ultimate sense (i.e., not an illusion) is the Truth. That is why according to him *sat* or *satya* is the right name for God. Often Gandhi states that it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say God is Truth. But this is not a statement about the ontological priority of Truth over God because he also at times defines God as “God is Truth”.² The real significance of the above is that he identifies God with Truth and thinks that in so doing, the real nature of the ultimate is revealed with more clarity. The identification of Truth and God provides the ontological foundation of Gandhi’s ethical teachings. As Truth is one and “all knowledge is necessarily included in it”, one can do no harm to none. Thus, it becomes the philosophical foundation for *ahimsā*. Gandhi’s belief in God or Truth is not a result of his experiments. The strongest proof for the existence of God, Gandhi states, that “If living beings have existence, God is the sum total of all life....”³ In this proof, the existence of the subordinates becomes the antecedent of God’s existence where *ahimsā* demands that God should be the point of departure. In

¹ *My Experiments with Truth*, p 243

² *Essential Writings*, p 231

³ *Ibid*, p 156

his metaphysical speculations regarding God, Gandhi fails to remain consistent or sound because his God is neither the result of rationalism nor of empiricism. Faith is the basis of his belief in God. "I have not seen Him, neither have I know Him. I have made the world's faith in God my own." and this faith is ineffaceable.⁴ Again, "I have not seen face to face God who is Truth. I have had only a glimpse of Him. But my faith is unshakeable."⁵ This faith in God was inherited by him from his *Vaishnava* ancestry through his extremely religious parents. Gandhi suggests in his autobiography that he had "crossed the Sahara of atheism" but there is not much evidence in any form of this claim. Nevertheless, he was critical about many old traditions including *varnavyāvasthā*, child-marriage and some age-old conventions derived from *Manusmṛti*. With time, his concept of God evolved into a profound philosophical one but at no point of his life he was without the belief in one Supreme Being called God. In Gandhi's own words, "There was a time when I doubted the existence of God, but even then at that time I did not doubt the existence of Truth. This Truth is not a material quality but is pure consciousness. That alone holds the universe together. It is God because it rules the whole universe."⁶ Thus, the so called doubt may mean only a doubt in some anthropomorphic God, but his faith in God (or Truth) as the highest authority of the universe was continuous. The belief in this Truth which is God was not an outcome of experiments but handed down to him by tradition. Bhikhu Parekh rightly observes "... although Gandhi thought otherwise, he was not so much experimenting with truths as living according to already accepted truths, an important distinction blurred by the English expression "experiments with truth" as well as its Gujarati original (*satyana prayago*). He took a good deal of Hindu metaphysics and morality for granted. He accepted that Brahman alone was real, all life was one, selfhood was an illusion, and so on, none of which was a truth based on his own or anyone else's experiments."⁷

What then Gandhi was doing in the name of experiments? Is the title of the autobiography a misnomer? In the concluding chapter of *My Experiments with Truth*, he writes, "To describe truth, as it has appeared to me, and in the exact manner, in which I have arrived at it, has been my ceaseless effort." Effort, no doubt was there. But experiment? We already have seen that His Truth was not something to which he arrived at. But one must notice his use of the words "Truth" and "truth". Whatever the title of the autobiography may suggest, Gandhi was actually experimenting with truths ("truth" with small "t"). Indeed his faith in Truth was unshakeable; nevertheless, he also had tried to experience Truth. His desire to 'see' the Truth was no less strong than his belief in the same. His quest was in fact the means that would lead to that very experience of the already accepted Truth, the means that would face him God. These means are truths. For Gandhi, as it was for Aristotle, means are no less important than the end and it is only with respect to means that we are free. However, the means he adopted are again mostly the traditional Hindu ways or moral codes prescribed in *Śāstras* (Hindu Scriptures) although he was very critical about some of the codes and customs of Hindu tradition, especially of the caste system. Gandhi's experiments were really to live according to the

⁴ *My Experiments with Truth*, p 270

⁵ *Essential Writings*, p 234

⁶ *Ibid*, p 234

⁷ *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform*, p 84

means (truths) in order to achieve, to experience the end (Truth). Although he remained firm in his belief in Truth till his death, he never claimed to “know” the same. “Have you seen God?” young Vivekananda once asked Sri Ramakrishna. “Yes I have seen Her as I can see you.” replied Ramakrishna. Gandhi wished to have such a claim but all he could say that he had been able to have the little fleeting glimpses of Truth. More he became desperate to “know” the Truth, more his *āgraha* (firmness) in truths, i.e., in means increased and Truth and truths became closer and closer. *Ahimsā* is not just a way but Gandhi sometimes spoke of it as an end in itself. However, all the means Gandhi prescribed and adopted were guided by his concept of all embracing Truth. In his autobiography Gandhi mentions the following means he tried to live in accordance with: *ahimsā*, truthfulness, faithfulness, vegetarianism and other experiments in dietetics, *brahmacharya* or celibacy and various other self-restraints, non-possession, self-dependency, nature treatments, service to the nation (*satyāgraha*, non-cooperation, *khadi* movements and some other ways), etc. These means are also virtues. Here again like Aristotle Gandhi maintains that virtues are not innate but to be acquired by constant practice. These means are also called as *vrata* or vow in Gandhian philosophy. The original meaning of *vrata* was ‘the divine command’, but in due course of time it acquires the meaning of taking resolution and observance of some means like fasting etc., especially for religious purpose. In *Ashrama observance in Action* and *From Yeravda Mandir*, Gandhi mentions of eleven cardinal virtues which are to be observed by any *satyāgrahi* and these are: truth, non-violence, chastity, control of the palate, non-stealing, non-possession, physical labour, *swadeshi* (service to nation), fearlessness, removal of untouchability and Tolerance.⁸

Ahimsā is the fundamental principle behind all of Gandhi’s experiments. Search for Truth is vain unless it is founded on *ahimsā* as the basis, maintains Gandhi. “...if every page of these chapters [of *My Experiments with Truth*] does not proclaim to the reader that the only means for the realisation of Truth is *Ahimsā*, I shall deem all my labour in writing these chapters to have been in vain.”⁹ *Ahimsā* necessarily follows from Gandhi’s concept Truth. God is one, nothing can lie outside Him, and therefore, one can harm none. The word *ahimsā* (non-violence) has a negative import in Yoga system of philosophical tradition. In *Yoga* tradition, *ahimsā* means dissociation from things. Non-violence in that sense is passiveness. Gandhi took great care to distinguish his theory of non-violence from mere passiveness. A non-violent person in the sense that has been expressed in *Yoga* cannot love others. For Gandhi, love must express itself in action. X loves Y implies if Y is in distress then X will go out of his way to relieve Y. Someone is in distress means she is under violence. To love is to act against violence without doing harm to any person. Thus, although the word “*ahimsā*” is taken from Hindu philosophical schools, Christianity has considerable influence upon building the concept of *ahimsā* as active love. A. C. Bouquet observes “Gandhiji was nobly inconsistent when he made unselfish service of his fellowmen part of the discipline to which he subjected himself in order to free his soul from the bonds of the flesh, since self-forgetful service of others is a Christian, not a Hindu idea.”¹⁰ The impression behind such comment is that an ideal

⁸ *The Moral Philosophy of Gandhi*, p 198

⁹ *My Experiments with Truth*, p 490

¹⁰ *Comparative Religion*, p 150

Hindu is a world-renouncing ascetic seeking his own *moksā*. The observation is partially true.

Throughout his life Gandhi tried his best to live according to the ideal of *ahimsā*. All his actions, in family, social and political life were guided by the principle of non-violence. *Ahimsā* as a struggle, we have already seen, is to be distinguished from passive resistance. In order to signal the difference he coined the term *satyāgraha*. The word is constituted of two Sanskrit words, *satya* (= *sat*), meaning truth and *āgraha*, meaning firmness. Passive resistance was supposed to be a weapon of the weak, characterised by hatred and could finally manifest itself as violence. The term *satyāgraha* was coined to designate the political struggle of the South African-Indian and later on that of the People of the sub-continent under the leadership of Gandhi but gradually it acquired a greater connotation. In his speech “The secret of *satyāgraha* in South Africa”, Gandhi explains that there are two ways of combating injustice. One way is to smash the head of the wrong doer and even get one’s own head smashed in the process and the other method is *satyāgraha* in which one opposes the atrocious policies of Government without restoring to violence, although the activist himself might have to suffer pain and even death.¹¹ He further differentiates *satyāgraha* from passive resistance by mentioning three essentials of the former: *satyāgraha* is the weapon of the strong, it admits no violence under any circumstances and it always insists upon truth.¹² A violent method may bring a desired change but it cannot be done without hurting anybody which is contrary to Truth. Moreover, when change in any social, political, moral or any other field is brought under compulsion, it never lasts for long. Change under force vanishes when the force is withdrawn. *Satyāgraha* brings it desired change by changing the wrong doer’s mind. Justice that is done freely endures. Moreover, *satyāgraha* acts as a kind of catharsis in which the participants direct violence against themselves (by accepting violence from the other side.). *Satyāgraha* is also a force but a force devoid of violence. Gandhi explains – there is no religion other than truth (this “truth” relates religion with Truth) and religion is also love. As there is only one religion, it follows that truth (as means) and love are identical. He continues – conduct based on truth is impossible without love (we have seen earlier that *ahimsā* is action out of love and the only conduct consistent with Truth). “Truth-force [=truth force] is then love-force.”¹³ Civil disobedience and submission to the penalty of the disobedience, non-cooperation, boycott, labour and social service, *charkha*, hartal, fasting etc. are some of Gandhi’s weapon in experimenting *satyāgraha* in his political and social struggle. In its greater connotation, all sorts of struggle of a Truth-seeker in any field are *satyāgraha*. Gandhi’s experiments with *satyāgraha* faced much criticism from moral and philosophical point of view for his support to the British Empire in Boer war, Zulu rebellion and world wars. Even Mr. Pollock, his friend, co-worker and follower of ideals, the very person who gave him Ruskin’s *Unto This Last* to read that changed Gandhi’s life, questioned the very act of taking part in the war. The main point was that war is not consistent with *ahimsā*.

¹¹ *Essential Writings*, p 304-5

¹² *Ibid*, p 318

¹³ *Essential Writings*, p 316

One may not be satisfied but the justification of the above from Gandhi's point of view is as follows. Gandhi never concealed his 'genuine sense of loyalty' to the British Rule. Till the late twenties he was a believer in the Empire and was of the opinion that British Rule was over all good for India. What he wished was an equal status of the Indians with the British and that with the British help. In South Africa, he fought for the equal right and status of the Indians and not against the Rule. He knew that when two nations are at war, the primary duty of a votary of *ahimsā* is to stop it. But first of all he was in no position to persuade any side to stop the First World War. He has not become the great Mahatma Gandhi at that time and the war was already started. The only option left was, as a representative of an exploited nation who was enjoying the protection of the British Fleet and its armed might, and who also want to elevate his country men's status with British help, to take part in the war in favour of the Empire and combat the immediate danger. The logic is simple. If you expect something, something is also expected from you. Socrates was not against the State but only expected it to be a perfect one. So, as an obedient but critical citizen, he was subject to the laws of the state. He accepted the death-sentence given unto him by the court knowing that justice was not done; the very institution of State demands from its citizens to obey its laws. Socrates and Gandhi were not like us. We criticize and expect care and service from our State, municipalities, hospitals, railways and various other bodies without playing our part in those fields. As to the Second World War, Gandhi had tried to stop it. He himself wrote to Hitler regarding that but his effort ended up in smoke. The formula Hitler offered to the British for dealing with Indian National Congress during a meeting with Lord Halifax in 1938 was: kill Gandhi.¹⁴ In his letters to Hitler, Gandhi addressed him as "my friend". Gandhi wrote two letters to Hitler, one in 1939 and the other in 1940. In his letters Gandhi explained the value of non-violence and requested Hitler to stop the war because he was the only person who could do that. As it was quite Gandhian to try to sell non-violence to the merchant of violence, it was also quite Hitlerian to reject Gandhi's appeal for peace. Realising that preventing war was beyond his capacity and Adolf Hitler as a greater danger, Gandhi decided to support the British in the war. Complete *ahimsā* is not achievable in our mundane life. Gandhi maintains that in so far as one possesses a physical body, one has to consciously or unconsciously commit *himsā* (violence). The very act of living (eating, drinking and moving around) involves some *himsā*, destruction of life, be it ever so minute.

Gandhi's experiments with dietetics and his vegetarianism follow directly from his concept of *ahimsā*. Vegetarianism, to some extent he inherits from his *vaisnava* ancestry. *Vaisnavas* are worshiper of Lord Visnu, one of the deities of the famous trinity (Brahmā-Visnu-Maheśvara) and refrain from killing any animal as they see Him in all creatures. But when Gandhi was in high school he was persuaded by his friends to believe that English are mightier because they are meat-eater. Thus persuaded he started taking meat but soon gave it up for the sake of truthfulness to his parents. However, his vegetarianism had its moral basis only when he began to understand the principle of *ahimsā* with all its bearings. If Truth is one, how can one kill any animal just for one's own enjoyment? Moreover, as superior animal, humans should protect lower ones rather than causing harm to them. Gandhi seems to have become aware of the anti utilitarian

¹⁴ Dr. Koenraad ELST in "Mahatma Gandhi's letters to Hitler"

stand that humans take food primarily for the satisfaction of their instinct of hunger, not for enjoyment or pleasure. Thus, animal flesh neither could be a basic need for sustaining life. Gandhi often campaigned for vegetarianism for its being beneficial on hygienic, economic and other grounds but the main reason behind was ethical. He did not subscribe to doctor's advice for taking meat on health-ground even when his life was in danger. Only once he broke his vow. For him, milk taking was also *himsā* to cow and its calves. Cow-milk is not meant for men and so he took a vow to give up drinking milk. In 1919, when he was almost near death-door, doctors declared that he could not survive without at least milk. Gandhi succumbed to the advice and took goat's milk for recovery. He took goat-milk because, as he reasoned for himself, when he took the vow, only cows and buffaloes were in his mind. Gandhi himself was not so much convinced and satisfied with this argument because his experiments in dietetics were dear to him "as a part of his researches in *ahimsā*". He saw this compromise as a defeat of the truth but at that time his will to continue the *satyāgraha* against Rowlatt Bill was so strong that he had to make the compromise. Moreover, he already knew that complete *ahimsā* is unachievable in so far one dwells in a body.

Brahmacharya or celibacy along with fasting, simple living etc., constitute Gandhi's asceticism which is a part of his *satyāgraha*. "[M]orally I have no doubt that all self-denial is good for the soul", he writes.¹⁵ Why self-denial is good? In Indian tradition, what-questions rather than why-questions in morality are encouraged more. Nevertheless, we can have an answer by reflecting on the metaphysical and religious doctrines of India and world as a whole. Cartesian dualism can be traced back long before Descartes has offered it in his unique rationalistic presentation. A mind sits in an alien body. The ghost began to occupy the machine from the time of emergence of Spiritism out of mere Animism in the history of the human thought. Asceticism identifies self with mind or soul and holds that religious excellence can be achieved by extreme bodily mortification. West has a long tradition of asceticism from Pythagoreans to Kierkegaard through medieval Gnostics. It has a significant place in Christianity as well. In India too, rigourism has been a popular religious path to be followed by the aspirants. The land has always shown great reverence to *sanyasis* who have sacrificed bodily comfort for achieving spiritual excellence. It is animals who live just to satisfy their bodily instincts and are governed wholly by the laws of nature. But human laws cannot be the laws of body only. Body they all have. But soul? It resides only in the human body and is the essence of its being. So ignoring, denying, rejecting body has become a popular practice among philosophers and religious moral aspirants. Gandhi, who was influenced both by western and Indian religious traditions took asceticism for granted and tried to live according to that ideal. "The body exists because of our ego. The utter extinction of the body is *moksa*. He who has achieved such extinction of the ego becomes the very image of Truth; he may also be called the Brahman."¹⁶

Gandhi's asceticism can be looked upon from another stand point. Our relation with our body is ambiguous. I have body as well as I am a body. When I say that "I am thirsty", I do not really mean that only my body is thirsty. Thus, as sometimes I dissociate

¹⁵ *My Experiments with Truth*, p 317

¹⁶ *Essential Writings*, p 227

myself from my body, I also identify myself at times with my body. By identifying oneself with one's body one pains it to arouse pity and sympathy in others. Children and also adults sometimes refuse to take food for the same purpose. From religious point of view, the same is done to draw the attention of the God. Thus, from this point, self-mortification is a conspicuous act. Gandhi's religious asceticism can well be looked upon from this point. His political fasting was surely conspicuous and produced a hand full of positive results. Ethically, Gandhi was anti-utilitarian and was a critic of their 'greatest number' as well as 'pleasure' theory. Gandhi was convinced that our basic need is not pleasure but to sustain life. Thus, to Gandhi, a life of bodily pleasure could have justification from no point of view.

His *brahmacharya* has another moral significance. Kant has distinguished between pathological and moral love. Love is pathological when nature inclines one to do so. Pathological love is generally determined by biology, e.g. when mother loves her sibling. Pathological love is not morally valuable because the agent's action is determined by non-moral factors. Love is rational or moral when nature does not play any role and it springs from one's will only. Gandhi's celibacy was inspired by such kind of thought ignited him by his friend Raychandbhai. The devotion of the wife to her husband or vice versa is natural because of the (sexual) bond they have between them but it is not as worthy as the devotion of the servant to his master because the latter is unconditional. "What then, I asked myself, should be my relation with my wife? Did my faithfulness consist in making my wife the instrument of my lust? So long as I was the slave of lust, my faithfulness was worth nothing...It was therefore the easiest thing for me to take the vow of *brahmacharya*, if only I willed it."¹⁷ It is not clear however whether Gandhi would maintain that a Truth-seeker is better not to have a wife because in that case (if married), it would be difficult to answer what makes my wife *my* wife. She (or he) should not be an instrument of my celibacy either.

Let us now turn our attention from the discussion of asceticism to different meanings of truth. We have already seen that the Sanskrit counterpart of the word "truth" is "*satya*" that again comes from "*sat*", meaning to be or to exist or simply what *is*. What exists? Only God exists in the ultimate sense. Other senses of "truth" are accuracy, authenticity, correctness, exactness, factuality, genuineness, integrity, reliability, truthfulness, faithfulness, veracity etc. Gandhi was loyal to all the senses of "truth". All these senses of truth of course are related and what is common to them can be stated in the language of the logicians as "what is the case". Falsity is "what is not the case" or simply what *is* not. Truthfulness is must for a Truth-seeker. As a lawyer, he realised the paramount importance of facts. "Facts mean truth and once we adhere to truth, the law comes to our aid naturally."¹⁸ This is true for human (legal) as well as divine (moral) laws. True words were immensely important to him because these describe the fact or what is the case. That is why writing (autobiography) is itself one of the experiments with truth – says Gandhi.¹⁹ Confession of his stealing coppers from servant's pocket-money to satisfy his desire for smoking in his very early age before his father and the reader, stating his physical relationship with his wife when his father was in deathbed, statement

¹⁷ *My Experiments with Truth*, p 198

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p 128

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p 271

of his injustice that he made towards his wife etc. made him unique as a person and as an autobiographer. Throughout his life Gandhi tried to remain faithful to his parents, his wife and friends. His autobiography is also an experiment to state exactly what he is. He hated to deceive anybody.

Aparigraha (non-possession) is another ideal Gandhi tried to realise in its completeness. Two of Gandhi's allied ideals – non-possession and non-stealing (*asteya*), along with his study of English law ultimately give rise to his concept of trusteeship. Stealing means to deprive one of one's property and this causes harm to that person. Thus, non-stealing is an integral part of *ahimsā*. Again, to possess property what one does not need means somebody is deprived of what one needs. In that way, possessing property without needing it is also considered as stealing from the Gandhian point of view. Next, God is the sole proprietor of everything. How can one claim something to be his or her own when that something truly belongs to the God? “[A]ny claim to anything as our own property, according to Gandhi, is a violation of divine law.”²⁰ Moreover, property is possessed by people for future security which indicates lack of faith in God's grace and kindness. Is not the body itself possession enough? The *Gītā*, as Gandhi claims, with its teaching of non-attachment (*anāśakti*) also nourished the theory of trusteeship.

A trustee is a person who preserves and protects certain property for the welfare of others. Gandhi rejects ownership of property by individual human beings because all have come from God. A person who by some chance happens to inherit or acquire some amount of property should take for himself only enough to satisfy basic needs and spend the rest for social service – this was his moral as well as political prescription. The formula regarding trusteeship that has been approved by Gandhi is as follows:

- Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one.
- The right of private property is not recognised by it.
- It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.
- An individual is not free to use his wealth only for his own sake under state regulated trusteeship.
- A justified and reasonable minimum and maximum living wage should be fixed.
- The character of production will be determined by social necessity.

The significance of the theory of trusteeship is to be understood also from the socio-political scene of India at Gandhi's time. It is an appeal to the privileged classes (zaminders, ruling chiefs etc.) to come down to the level of those who earn their bread and butter by labour. In principle, Gandhi accepted the active part of the state in ending private ownership. But state is a soul-less machinery and depends on violence for bringing in any change. In the ultimate analysis, Gandhi was against the institution of state. State regulated trusteeship is thus only a step towards a trusteeship driven by conscience. The theory of trusteeship is very much akin to the socialistic rejection of private ownership of properties. In his answer to the question regarding the relation between trusteeship and non-violence²¹ Gandhi points out the difference between his theory and the theory of the socialists. As to the abolition of private properties, Gandhi

²⁰ *The Moral Philosophy of Gandhi*, p 230

²¹ *Essential Writings*, p 403-4

and the socialists were of the same opinion but unlike the latter, Gandhi was against using force in doing so because that would amount to violence. Any change brought by force from outside is only a temporary one. Trustees should be made from within the agents at their free will. Thus, a complete realisation of non-violence will lead to a stateless autonomous society in which the society itself will be the only trustee to protect the properties for the use of its members. Karl Marx also dreamt of a stateless society where all the humans will enjoy equal opportunity, right and honour but he admitted of violent method in bringing in the desired change. Gandhi hated to contradict his thought and speech by his deeds. As soon as he realised the moral significance of trusteeship in his mind, he stopped saving anything then after for himself and his family. He would not agree that he was escaping his responsibility to support his own family because the meaning of 'family' for him got widened after that realisation. If one ceases to be possessive, one makes no distinction between mine and others and acquires equability (*samabhāva*) towards others.²²

All of Gandhi's experiments were aimed at realising, contemplating and knowing Truth. That is why, all the truths, all his concepts follow from his concept of Truth and are internally related to each other. Fearlessness, for example, is a necessary condition for *ahimsā*. We have already seen that *ahimsā* is not passivity but an activity out of love. How can one act out of love and fight for justice if one is coward? Physical labour, even from moral point of view is valuable for it makes one independent. Dependency on others produces expectation and this again may give rise to *himsā* if not fulfilled. Tolerance is a virtue necessarily to be possessed by a votary of Truth. Truth can be looked at from different angles and represented in various ways. What he says about books is his general view about Truth and truths – "A writer almost always presents one aspect of a case, whereas every case can be seen from no less than seven points of view, all of which are probably correct by themselves, but not correct at the same time and in the same circumstances."²³ It is not a small thing that Gandhi, who is considered as not much modern in his mindset by many, is suggesting a postmodern concept of many possible interpretations of a text; although from a different agenda (the postmoderners of course would not admit of the ultimate one). Different religions have described the same Truth at different times and places. To think that only my religion is true is not only a failure to understand God but inevitably would amount to *himsā* and history proves this. *Swadeshi* is another Gandhian virtue which is not to be understood only as service to one's own country. If self-dependency is true for an individual, the same is also true for one's own country – this is the true sense of *swadeshi* in Gandhi's philosophy and *khadi* (home spinning and weaving industry) is the symbol of that vow. A country is not independent if all its members are not independent. So, besides pursuit of your own independence, you must support your own neighbours to earn their own livelihood. If I allow and support some trader from outside which ultimately will compel my neighbour to leave his or her place for earning, then it will be contrary to the ideal of *swadeshi*. In the same line, if I deprive my neighbour of the fruits of my trade, I violate the ideal. "I suggest to you we are departing from one of the sacred laws of being when we leave our neighbour and go

²² *My Experiments with Truth*, p 257

²³ *Ibid*, p 262

out somewhere else in order to satisfy our wants.”²⁴ This interpretation of *swadeshi* by Gandhi himself leaves an ample scope of criticism but the present incidents of violence in India resulting from sectarian agitations may suggest us to rethink over the matter from this point of view. Moreover, the point is not so much about allowing the outsider to trade in my place but to support the trader at my own door and see that he doesn't have to leave his own place for his livelihood.

Gandhi surely was a philosopher but of a different kind from what the word suggests. He has realised many deeper truths not by wide reading and just reasoning within himself but through his actions. He built his concepts and established their relations gradually in his experiments with truths. If *yogi* is a seeker of the truth then he has chosen the path of the *karmayogi* rather than that of the *bhaktiyogi* or *jñānayogi*. But the true spirit of Gandhi is not to be found in his philosophy. It is the fearless love for others that made him the *Mahatma*. There may be many greater philosophers in the world than Gandhi but only few lovers of mankind than him. No experiment can produce love but experiments without love are valueless.

REFERENCES:-

- Gandhi, M.K (2008), *My Experiments with Truth*, Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House
- Gandhi, M.K (2006), *The Essential Writings* (Ed, Raghavan Iyer), New Delhi: Oxford University Press
- Pal, Jaladhar (1998), *The Moral Philosophy of Gandhi*, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House
- Bouquet, A.C (1951), *Comparative Religion*, Middlesex: Penguin Books
- Parekh, Bhikhu (1989), *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform*, New Delhi: Sage Publications

²⁴ *Essential Writings*, p 288