



Gandhian ethics and education in human values

B.M.Chandrasekhara,
Dept of History, Sahyadri Arts College, Shivamogga.

Abstract: *"The moral principle on which the civilization rests is truth and love. If people everywhere respond to them truthfully, the world will be brought closer together and the darkness of violence which we see around us may be dispelled".* -Mahatma Gandhi. The history of mankind shows how great men have always struggled and fought against the prevailing social evils and human sufferings. Of such great men of modern times, Gandhi was one of the most outstanding personalities. Gandhi contributed a system of social thought while engaging him primarily in the national liberation movement. Truth and Non-violence are the two basic concepts on which he developed his entire Philosophy.

Key words: Non-violence, Philosophy, social thought

Introduction

Many people argue that life is a struggle or a challenge or a journey. In fact it is neither one nor the other but a sum total of all these three put together. Our bounden duty is to overcome the struggle, to face to challenge and to complete the journey to the best of our ability. " He allowed truth to lead him without a map. If it took him to an area where he had to discard some intellectual baggage or walk alone without past associates, he wants. He never impede his mind with STOP signs".¹ The social philosophy of Gandhi was closely bound up with religious and moral concepts. No other leader during India's struggle for independence understood the pulse of the Indian masses better than Gandhi and for this reason, he always preferred to convey his ideals to the people in traditional and religious terms. Gandhi repeatedly said that he has not invented any new thing, but "tried to restate old principles".² The present work is an attempt to make the basics of 'Gandhian Ethics' embodied in

the triple values of Truth, Love and Non-violence.

Gandhian Ethics and Life:

Many people argue that life is a struggle or a challenge or a journey. In fact it is neither one nor the other but a sum total of all these three put together. Our bounden duty is to overcome the struggle, to face to challenge and to complete the journey to the best of our ability. As a matter of fact, we came to know that Gandhi saw life not as a simple journey but as a pilgrimage, with all its ups and downs towards 'God' whom he called 'Truth'. In his own words, "God is ethics and morality, God is fearless. God is love and source of life and yet he is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He often stated that 'God is truth' and 'Truth is God'.³

Replying to a question at a meeting in Switzerland on his way back from the Round Table Conference in London, Gandhi said, " God is truth". But two years ago, I went a step further



and said that "Truth is God". You will see the fine distinction between the statements, viz. that god is truth and truth is god. And I came to that conclusion after continuous and relentless search for truth which began nearly fifty years ago".⁴

For Gandhi, the fundamental aspect of human life is the unending and continuous quest for truth. The difference between two persons is their relative advance towards truth which may be spoken of in terms of their levels of consciousness.⁵ Gandhi was synthesis of knowledge though he did not reject detailed knowledge as well as isolated facts. Also empirical knowledge and methods were accepted. The experimental method was extended to the social sciences as well as to the spiritual realm.⁶ Harmony was a major criterion in the Gandhian Conception of truth. He wanted harmony between thought, word and action. That means purity in these things.

Gandhiji's truth is based on the 'Inner Voice' as well as on Meta-physical realities. His vision of truth is holistic and complex.

The modern but weak argument is that it is impossible for someone in the material world to build his life on the triple human and ethical values advocated by Gandhi. It has been a common habit to add "Lust" to life with a big capital 'L' by making 'God' become 'gold' and here the modern person is enslaved. With all the benefits of science and technology, he or she is comfortably unhappy because desires pull or crush him or her down with no peace of mind. Gandhi brought real comfort to the modern person by saying that one should not be little

oneself by one's negative passion but must have a positive view of life.

His Categorical Declaration:

'Life is an aspiration. Its mission is to strive after perfection which is god and self realization. The deal must not be lowered because of one's weaknesses of imperfections. The silent cry daily goes to truth to help me to remove these weaknesses and imperfections"⁷. Gandhiji advocated that peace is the temple of truth and non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of human kind.

For better understanding, it is better to examine Gandhi's Quotation again. It reads "Truth in action in Ahimsa. Truth and love, Satya and Ahimsa, are like the two sides of a coin. All great religions enjoin the practice of love.....Non-violence is complete incense. Complete non-violence is complete absence of ill will against all that lives".⁸ It is pure love.....Hatred defects our thinking, endanger the very sense of humanity. This truth, love and non-violence are the pillars of his philosophy without which human development is impossible.

In order to educate the 'Voice Within' or the 'Conscience' or "The Inner Self" and to have a knowledge of 'God' as the universal and all pervading spirit of truth,⁹ Gandhiji had recourse to a special philosophy of education in human values based on 'Love' and 'Non-violence'. And to him, true education should be value-oriented and could not be divorced from ethics.

Gandhian Ethics and Education:

To make life productive, progressive and peaceful, Gandhiji saw education as a dynamic process of drawing out the



'Divinity Within' and providing for the development of all three faculties in a person: the body, the mind and the soul. Thus, he put emphasis on the cultures of the three H:hand, Head and Heart which symbolize the physical, intellectual and aspects of the self. He once clearly stated " True education is that which draws out and stimulates the physical, intellectual and spiritual faculties of the children"¹⁰.

Gandhiji was perfectly right in making such a bold statement. Generally speaking, if we are physically strong and intellectually sharp we are considered to be functional persons but many a time, we observe that people of such type are cunning and selfish as well. If the spiritual is not properly taken care of, a person's education might not be successful. Gandhiji's Philosophy is relevant even today because it can be argued in line with his ethical view-point, that if the main spiritual faculty remains undeveloped, it causes an imbalance in the person. In a good, cultured and educated person, the 'hear' must approve of the ideas emanating from the 'Head' to enable the 'Hand' to act in a righteous manner. This 3H philosophy of education is a 'Transformation-cum-communion' process involving Heart values, Head values and Hand values leading to 'Human excellence' which actually enlighten us in all walks of life.

When Gandhiji built up his philosophy of education based on the 3H, he did it by experience and experimentation in South Africa and India. He proved himself to be a practical educator par excellence who showed to the world at large that what is actually required in any good system of education is a fully integrated and harmonious individual with a sound character and ethical behaviour. During

the time he stayed in South Africa.¹¹ He observed that the only training given to children was in the '3R' Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic. This kind of approach could only enslave a person. Opportunity was not given to develop the self so as to acquire human skill, human sensitivity and human dignity, leading to the building and 'Formation', 'reformation' and 'transformation'. Every activity ought to have a spiritual foundation to form character. Consequently Gandhiji believed that "To develop the spirit is to build character and to enable one to work towards knowledge of god and self-realization".¹²

Of course, Gandhiji accepted that education is meant for 'earning a living' and for considering it as 'an insurance against unemployment' but he also stressed that 'learning to live and let live' should be the main purpose of education to build or form character for promoting an ethical behaviour- so as to lead an individual towards 'God and self-realization'.

Gandhiji was quite logical in expressing his views because in all religious and educational philosophies it is an undisputed fact that everyone ought to work on the basis of 'Truth'. which Gandhiji called 'god'-the almighty, unchangeable and cosmic Divine Love Energy- which pervades the universe. In any field of knowledge, such an attempt to honour 'truth' could only be successful if the whole 'self' is motivated and inspired by the 'Divine Love' energy, which never fails or goes on strike, even for a split of a second.

To support Gandhiji's ethical views, a researcher would also argue that his 3H philosophy could clarify the concept of



'Human Rights' for the modern world. Where people are fighting one another because of ignorance, "True Human Right could be pragmatic and made realistic only if people start to 'Feel Right', 'Think Right' and 'Act Right', without any selfishness, crookedness and pettiness, which usually create havoc in society. But doing so, 'Work' will become 'Worship' and 'Duty' will become 'God' or 'Divine' by allowing 'Self' to merge with the 'supreme self' for the welfare of 'Society' as has been expressed in the Bhagvad Gita- so dear to Gandhiji. True 'Human Rights' are therefore based on the triple human and ethical values of Truth, Love and Non-violence which correspond to WISDOM, WORSHIP and WORK emanating from the Head, Heart and Hand. It is the kind of harmonious development that actually leads to 'God and Self-Realization' which Gandhiji defined as the main purpose of education.

If we start to accept 'Human Rights' based on 'Human values' as seen by Gandhiji, it goes without saying that everyone of us will realize one's duties and responsibilities towards 'Self' and 'otherselves' by helping one another instead of hurting each other. Thus, our life will become a real pilgrimage towards 'Truth', using 'Love' and 'Non-violence' as the means.

Conclusion

Gandhiji's philosophy regarding life and education, which is based on the triple values of truth, love and non-violence, could therefore help us to minimize all sorts of strife, restlessness, violence and hatred in our modern society. He himself once stated that if his philosophy is well

understood and applied 'social evils could actually be driven away from our environment. He also added that "If we are to eliminate communal strife and international strife, we must start with foundations pure and strong by rearing our generations on the education I have adumbarated".¹³

The world society will therefore become a truthful, lovable, and non-violent place for us to live in, only if each one of us applies "Gandhian Ethics" based on the triple human values prescribes and practised by Gandhiji himself who acted as a guide and an example to all of us.

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