CHAPTER III

METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS OF GANDHI'S WORLD-VIEW - I

Article 1.

GROUNDINGS IN RELIGION

A weltanschauung, opines T.E. Hulme, is not consciously adopted like the categories of space and time, but is absorbed unconsciously from one's social and cultural environment (1). To a large extent this is true of Gandhi too (2). Gandhi is avowedly the creation of Indian culture, but he is not insular either in habits or in outlook. This has been admitted by almost all who have known him or written on him (3). Dr. S. Radhakrishnan points out that Gandhi's life and teachings are in consistency with the great spiritual tradition of Hinduism (4). Lin Yu-tang proclaims that such a phenomenon as Mahatma Gandhi could be possible only in a country like India and not possible in the Western world (5).

III.1.1. Rooted in Indian tradition.

Many a time Gandhi had acknowledged his immense indebtedness to Indian culture and Hindu tradition. Pointing to his ineffable feelings for Hinduism, he wrote:

I can no more describe my feelings for Hinduism than for my own wife. She moves me as no other woman in the world can. Not that she has no faults ... But the feelings of an indissoluble bond is there. Even so I feel for and about Hinduism with all its faults and limitations (6).

His admiration for Indian culture is expressed almost passionately in the Hind Swaraj (7). Thus, judging from his own admissions, we can conclude that the fundamental elements of his thought he has imbibed from Hinduism and Indian culture and that the assimilation was spontaneous and not laboured or imposed.
III. 1. 2 Western influences: an overview

Gandhi has admitted his great indebtedness to cultures and thinkers other than Indian. "Three moderns have left a deep impress on my life, and captivated me. Raychandbhai by his living conduct. Tolstoy by his book Kingdom of Heaven is Within You and Ruskin by his Unto this Last." (8). He has also acknowledged the influence of sages like Jesus, the Buddha and Mohammed and also of other religions. But one of the important features to be noted about these influences is that Gandhi used to be extremely discriminating in his acceptance of ideas from any source. His own famous words bear testimony to this:

I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people's houses as an interloper, a beggar or slave (9).

The so-called Western influences are there, but they are only confirmatory while the native influences are foundational (10). And most of what he assimilated from the West was done consciously and discreetly.

III. 1. 3. The religious atmosphere of the house-hold

The most fundamental and singular factor that influenced Gandhi in the formation of his world-view was his study of religions. Born and brought up in a household that throbbed with bhakti, devotion, it is but natural that religion exerted a decisive influence on him. His mother, a deeply religious woman, impressed him much. "The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness. She was deeply religious" (11). Acharya Vinoba underlines the significance of such devotion and piety and says: "We should not make light of the piety of women. Where these little drops of piety gather, illustrious
children are born... Among people who live such devoted lives great souls are born" (12).

More profound on Gandhi was the impact of the religious discussions his father had with friends from other religions. Jain monks, Parsi and Muslim friends would talk about their own religions. Being his father's nurse Gandhi often had the chance to be present at these talks. This helped in inculcating in him a toleration for all religions (13). Also it kindled his intellectual and spiritual curiosity. Thus, the impact of religion in shaping his views and attitudes during this formative period in his life was deep. It is summed up by Gandhi thus:

But one thing took deep root in me - the conviction that morality is the basis of things and that truth is the substance of all morality. Truth became my sole objective. It began to grow in magnitude everyday, and my definition of it also has been ever widening (14).

From this very revealing statement it is quite clear that for Gandhi the die was cast, his life was bound to be a search after truth, a religious pursuit.

III. 1. 4. The study of religions.

From then on what absorbed Gandhi's attention deeply was religion; be he in England or South Africa. As a student in London he studied the Gita, through its English translation The Song Celestial. The Light of Asia. Madam Blavatsky's Key to Theosophy. Carlyle's Heroes and Hero Worship. Annie Besant's How I became a Theosophist, etc. He also read The Bible, especially the New Testament (15). The result of the study of these religious books was the birth of an awareness in him that a mere knowledge of religion as distinguished from experience was useless in confronting the trials and tribulations of life (16), that it was God. His saving grace that leads one out of the trials unhurt and safe, that prayer is an unfailing means of cleansing the heart of passion.
He also learnt that prayer must be combined with utmost humility (17).

In South Africa too religion was the main subject of his study and he did it at real depth (18). His friends whetted his appetite for religious knowledge and kept alive his interest in religion. Whenever he was in doubt he sought clarifications from his guide and mentor Raychandbhai (19). The books he read or re-read during this period are worth noting. Dharma Vichar by Narmada Shankar, India—what can it teach us by Max Muller, the translation of the Upanishads by the Theosophical Society, Washington Irving's Life of Mahomet and his Successors, Carlyle's Panegyric on the Prophet, the book called The Saying of Zorathustra, Tolstoy's The Gospels in Brief, what to do?, Edwin Arnold's The Light of Asia, (re-reading) etc. The list is fairly long and it includes such other books like John Ruskin's Unto This Last which made an indelible impression on him and transformed his outlook and life entirely (20).

III. 1. 5. From piety to metaphysics

Back in India, Gandhi persevered in his religious studies and made an in depth exploration of the Hindu scriptures, especially the Upanishads and the Gita. That he wrote a commentary on the Gita which is unique in many respects testifies to the intense interest he took in the subject. An important point about Gandhi's study of religion is that it was not merely book based, but life-based in the sense that he tried to test the lessons that he learned from books in real life situations and he learned new spiritual lessons from his life experiences which could hardly be found on the pages of books on religions. Another point of far-reaching consequence is that his study of religions and books relating to religious and moral issues convinced Gandhi of
his earlier perception that there is a deeper moral and spiritual dimension to all existence. And thus he was naturally led to the consideration of metaphysical questions, for metaphysical questions are inseparable from religious and moral questions. In fact religion and ethics are founded upon metaphysics. Most of the studies on the metaphysical and ethical basis of Gandhian thinking have particularly underscored this point (21).

It is interesting to note Gandhi's evolution from the simple, artless piety of his boyhood days to the Upanishadic vision of his later days when his devotion and piety got grounded in metaphysics. But it was not the result of intense academic study as is the case with many conventional thinkers and philosophers. Gandhi's study and experiments were done with a purpose that was evidently pragmatic. For him life and its existential questions were greater and far more important than academic pursuits and therefore, his religious and metaphysical odyssey was directed explicitly towards the solution of the problems of life. Thus in keeping with the philosophic tradition of India, Gandhi put more emphasis on praxis (22) than on theory in his formulations.

With this brief exposition of Gandhi's evolution from simple piety to metaphysical concerns, it is proposed to proceed to an examination of the metaphysical presuppositions that underlie Gandhi's world-view. Gandhi seems to be fully aware of the serious nature of the metaphysical underpinnings of not only religion but every human activity, ranging from the little, nameless acts of daily life of the common folk to the exalted spiritual pursuit of the ascetic. So his world-view, too, naturally shares these metaphysical undertones. Because of this metaphysical implications of Gandhi's world-view we must explore the significance of his ontological triune, God.
Nature and Man (23).

It is to be noted here that Gandhi did not blow his metaphysical concerns out of proportion as he must have known very well that such an approach was fraught with ominous consequences. As we saw in the introductory chapter, what had really gone wrong with the religious world-view of the pre-enlightenment era was the result of this kind of misplaced overemphasis. So, Gandhi appears to take particular care to steer clear of extreme positions. This is quite evident from the way he states his views on spiritual and metaphysical matters. In spite of the predominantly religious overtones of his language and idiom, he never seems to have made any overstatement of used a hyperbole.

Article 2.

TOWARDS A GANDHIAN EPISTEMOLOGY

It has already been pointed out that Gandhi was not a systematic philosopher nor a system builder and that he did not work out explicitly any theory of Being or Knowing. This does not mean that there is no metaphysical basis for his beliefs. He had his ideas and views about life and its complex problems which are logically dealt with in systematic philosophy. This is clear from his well-known but modest statement: "I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal Truths to our daily life and problems" (24). So it is logical to presume that Gandhi has his own ideas and views on the question of Being and Knowing. And in this article an attempt is made to delineate Gandhi’s ideas on the problem of knowing. As he was not a theoretician he did not grapple with all the central epistemological problems like, How do we know? What is the nature of knowledge? What is its origin? How does it arise? What are its instruments? How is the sense
object related to the cognizer? What causes illusion? How is
non-existence known? What is the way to the knowledge of the
Ultimate Reality? (25). But he scrupulously confined his
exploration and exposition of epistemological questions to the
points that were relevant to his enquiry.

III. 2. 1. Some key issues

In order to appreciate Ganchi's epistemological
position it would be useful to recollect the various theories
of knowledge and bring to focus some of the key issues in
epistemology. General metaphysics is divided into the Theory
of Being and the Theory of Knowing (26). The aim of all
metaphysics is to arrive at a rational and systematic
comprehension of reality. While the understanding of reality,
of real being, is the ultimate aim of metaphysics, it is clear
that this understanding cannot be satisfactory without an
investigation into the nature of Knowing (27). We learn from
the history of philosophy that many have questioned the
capacity of the human mind to attain certitude about such
matters as the existence and nature of a Supreme Being, the
reality of a future life, the origin and binding force of moral
principles etc. Therefore, the question "Can the human mind
know for certain whether there is any reality other than the
material things of time and space revealed in our sense
experience" (28)? becomes a key question in any serious
discussion of reality. So, "to epistemology is assigned the
philosophical investigation of human knowledge itself from the
stand point of certitude, validity or truth value of this
knowledge" (29). While the aim of the various human sciences and
of the other departments of philosophy is to extend our knowledge
of the data of human experience, the aim of epistemology is not
exactly to extend our knowledge but rather to perfect our

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acquired knowledge by teaching what to know. The critical analysis of knowledge is as old as philosophy and so it is but natural that there are various theories of knowledge.

a) Sensualism and Intellectualism

According to some of these theories the senses are the only source of genuine knowledge, and the only knowable reality is that which reveals itself through the senses, i.e., the material universe. The supposed suprasensible world, which intellect with its reasoning process purports to reveal to us, is chimerical, or its reality at best problematical. Such theories of knowledge may be described as various forms of Sensualism, the corresponding theories of reality being Materialism. According to others, intellectual thought is the only source of genuine knowledge; reality is only as thought conceives it and not as senses present it. Such theories may be regarded as forms of Intellectualism the corresponding theories of reality being forms of Idealism or Spiritualism (30).

b) Scepticism and Dogmatism

Another class of theories arose, perhaps as a logical and natural outcome of the opposition between the two just mentioned, viz., Sceptical theories, forms of Scepticism i.e., of doubt about the existence of any reliable source of knowledge about the possibility of attaining to any justifiable certitude whatsoever. Other theories, again, have recognized both in the senses and in the intellect reliable sources of knowledge, but differ in the parts which they ascribe to each source, in their modes of effecting a harmony between these sources, and of removing apparent contradictions between their respective verdicts concerning the ultimate nature of reality in so far as reality falls within human experience. Such theories are generally described as dogmatic or as critical — as Dogmatism or as Criticism (31).
c) Intuition

Yet another theory known as Intuitive theory of knowledge emphasises knowledge by intuition i.e., what is directly apprehended by the Self or Inner Being or the consciousness of man. It springs from the vast and hidden reservoir of energy and power that man has in the depths of his inmost being. Intuition supplies that missing link in the chain of conceptual and perceptual knowledge (32).

It must be clear from this brief survey of the various theories of knowledge that each theory puts sole or undue emphasis on any one of the various instruments of cognition in man to the exclusion of others.

d) Epistemology Vs. Metaphysics

Another controversial issue in epistemology concerns the relation of epistemology to metaphysics. Which is primary, epistemology or metaphysics? Since the time of Descartes, the notion has been widely entertained that a critical investigation of the mind's capacity to reach certain knowledge ought properly to precede any attempt to investigate any of the fundamental problems of philosophy, that only when we have first discovered the scope and limits of this capacity are we in a position to carry on metaphysical research (33). This view is questioned by another school of thought which argues that the purpose of the investigations in epistemology is not to prepare the way for metaphysical investigation but rather to consolidate this latter. Its problems are not problems which must be solved as an antecedent condition to the attainment of truth about any other matter. Hence epistemology is not a preparatory or introductory study which must precede metaphysics and make the latter possible, it is a department of metaphysics, and not the first in order either (34).

The preceding survey has brought two important issues in epistemology into focus, one relating to the role of the different perceptive faculties in the process of cognition and the other relating to the primacy to be accorded to metaphysics.
or epistemology. Both these issues are as old as philosophy itself though it was only towards the end of the last century that they have been formulated explicitly. In the Indian philosophic tradition, especially in Advaita system, these questions had been examined and answered in a unique way. According to Advaita, "in the attainment of knowledge - perceptual, non-perceptual or transcendental - mind is the principal instrument. In every act of cognition there is a mental mode corresponding to the object. The more the mode correspond with the object the more correct and distinct is the knowledge" (35). So when the six methods of knowledge - perception, inference, comparison, postulation, non-apprehension, and verbal testimony - are examined it is clear that each has its own way and sphere of operation and therefore, has its limitations (36).

In Advaita this insufficiency and relative nature of the means of valid knowledge is accepted, paving the way for their transcendence in the unconditioned self which is pure knowledge (37). According to Advaita, fundamentally, knowledge is pure consciousness beyond the relativity of the knower and the known. Pure consciousness is the Ultimate Reality. Being is identical with pure consciousness. This is the ground of all knowledge. "Relational knowledge is an expression of non-relational Pure Consciousness through a mental mode of the cognizer, the knowing self . . . . So we see that in Advaita Vedanta epistemology is inseparable from metaphysics" (36).

This Advaitic position as to the inseparability of epistemology from metaphysics is being reiterated by D.M. Datta when he says: "... The final guarantee of epistemological theories would come from the truth of metaphysical assumptions", and therefore, "metaphysics and epistemology have to be considered in relation to each other" (39).
III. 2. 2. Characteristics of Gandhi's epistemology

Although Gandhi did not address himself directly to the questions of epistemology like the precedence of epistemology over metaphysics or vice-versa, or the relative nature of the means of valid knowledge, or the criteria of valid knowledge, we come across satisfactory answers to such questions in Gandhi's writings. In fact, it is possible to build up a full-fledged conceptual framework of Gandhi's epistemology, but it is beyond the scope of our study and so our enquiry will be limited to Gandhi's views on four important points viz. the relation between epistemology and metaphysics, the criteria of valid knowledge, the practical value of knowledge, and the nature and role of the means of valid knowledge. As a final point Gandhi's unique contribution to epistemology - the role of conscience in cognition - will be touched upon.

a) Complementarity of epistemology and metaphysics.

Gandhi gave his views on questions related to epistemology not in the context of any theoretical discussion or debate. Yet, the theoretical ramifications of his views cannot be ignored or overlooked. As is well known, Gandhi's main concern was how to realise God which he calls Ultimate Reality and Absolute Truth. Absolute Truth is a metaphysical presupposition for Gandhi. Gandhi believed that without such a presupposition no search for the Ultimate is possible. "If we grant nothing we find nothing" (40). It means that Truth as a metaphysical presupposition is an inevitable condition for epistemic pursuits. Thus, Absolute Truth serves as the foundation of both metaphysics and epistemology. This is a master stroke, indeed, for Truth has epistemological as well as ontological implications, and therefore, by placing Truth as the absolute presupposition Gandhi provides a solution to the dispute about the precedence of epistemology over metaphysics. The two are inseparable.
b) Truth as absolute standard and perfect knowledge

Being his absolute presupposition Truth becomes Gandhi’s criterion of knowledge. Knowledge, to be valid, must conform to Truth. It is his absolute standard. This naturally raises the question: What is Truth with the capital ‘T’ (41)? The Sanskrit word for Truth is Satya. Satya is derived from Sat which means 'being', 'that which exists'. Satya means that which is in accordance with Sat or being, that is 'truth'. Thus, that which is in accordance with what exists, correct knowledge of things as they are, is truth (42). To put it differently, the sum total of all existence is Truth. Perceiving a fact as it is, expressing one's perception according to the fact, and acting according to one’s perception together constitute what is known as being truthful in thought, word and deed, i.e., total fidelity to Truth (43). According to Gandhi Truth is complete knowledge and to a man who has realised this Truth in its fullness nothing remains to be known because all knowledge is necessarily included in it. What is not included in it is not truth and so not true knowledge (44). It is this Absolute Truth that is the goal of epistemology and it yields a unified view of the whole of reality, for Truth means Existence, the existence of that we know and that we do not know (45). But Absolute Truth is beyond human attainment given the limitations of the instruments of cognition as well as other human frailties. So what is possible is to accept the Absolute as the basis and hold by the relative truth as we conceive it (46).

c) Means of valid knowledge

Now arises the question of the means of valid knowledge. Truth being Absolute is incomprehensible. Are the ordinary means of knowledge like the senses, intellect or reason capable of comprehending the Reality? As we saw already, there are thinkers, the Empiricists especially, who hold that
that which reveals itself through the senses is the only reality. They reject all other cognitive faculties as unreliable. Berkeley, for example, argues that all the materials for knowledge is itself founded on sense perception (47). According to some other thinkers like Hegel and Bosauqut, the only source of genuine knowledge is reason or intellectual thought. According to them the real is rational (48). Yet another school of thinkers rejects both sense-perception and intellection and relies totally on intuition as the only valid means of grasping reality. For Gandhi sense-perception and reason are not the only sources of knowledge. Sense-perceptions, of course, are useful in their limited ways, but they can be, and of course are, false and deceptive, however real they may appear to be (49).

Reason too has its limitations, admits Gandhi, though he is a great admirer of the potency of reason as a faculty. His famous proclamation about the divinity of the Vedas: "My belief in the Hindu Scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired... I decline to be bound by an interpretation, however learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense" (50), shows how greatly he valued reason. But he adds: "Experience has humbled me enough to let me realise the specific limitations of reason. Just as matter misplaced becomes dirt, reason misused becomes lunacy" (51). But Gandhi was not pleading either for the rejection or suppression of reason; what he opposed was the attribution of omnipotence to reason... Attribution of omnipotence to reason is as bad a piece of idolatory as is worship of stock and stone believing it to be God" (52). Gandhi also says: "I plead not for the suppression of reason but for a due recognition of that in us which sanctifies reason itself" (53). Thus it can be seen that
Gandhi recognizes the due importance of sense-perception and logical reason in gaining knowledge of reality. But he is aware of their inherent limitations. So he underlines the need for transcending reason to some other means of valid knowledge which are free from the limitations of the senses and reason.

This means which is free from the inherent limitations of the other means is known in epistemology as "intuition" (54). "It is a mode of consciousness which is distinct from the perceptual, imaginative or intellectual and thus carries with it self-evidence and completeness. Religious men of all ages have won their certainty of God through this direct way of approach to the apprehension of reality" (55). Gandhi refers to it as faith. Just as intellect and reason are used synonymously in epistemology, intuition and faith can be used alternatively in Gandhi's case (56), says Gandhi:

There are subjects where reason cannot take us far and we have to accept things on faith. Faith then does not contradict reason but transcends it. Faith is a kind of sixth sense which works in cases which are without the purview of reason (57).

Gandhi's faith is not the blind faith propagated by revealed religions. On the contrary, it is the sum total of the experiences of enlightened individuals of several generations. "True faith is appropriation of the reasoned experience of people whom we believe to have lived a life purified by prayer and penance" (58).

The vedantic position on the limitations of reason and the role of faith in valid cognition is very similar to that of Gandhi. Note for instance, what Swami Vivekananda says on the vedantic view:

The field of reason on the conscious workings of the mind is narrow and limited. There is a little circle within which human reason must move. It cannot go beyond. Every attempt to go beyond is impossible, yet, it is beyond this circle of reason that there lies all that humanity holds most dear. All these questions, whether there is an immortal soul, whether
there is a God whether there is any supreme intelligence guiding this universe or not, are beyond the field of reason. Reason can never answer these questions (59).

Sri. Aurobindo also has underscored this point. According to Aurobindo,

Reason works with commendable facility and rapidity. But it lacks profundity and therefore, has to remain satisfied with what and how of the surface movements of society and cannot get to their whys. Reason is stated to be incapable of appropriately grasping and tackling the object of knowledge, for it is intrinsically differential while the object we seek in knowledge is integral ... The coils and zigzags of Nature are too deep to be fathomed by the plummet of reason” (60).

According to Vedanta, implicit belief or faith (Sraddha) is the acceptance of or the reliance on the words of the trustworthy, which need no verification. "... It is a canon of knowledge recognised by most Indian systems of thought that the words of such persons as are free from delusion, error, deceit, and defects of the senses and the mind are sources of valid cognition. Thus reason is implicit in faith and it is not unreasonable to rely on the reliable” (61).

d) 'Inner Voice', an epistemic tool

What is distinctive about Gandhi's epistemological position is that he accords due recognition to the different means of cognition viz., the senses, intellect or reason. He does not reject any of them as totally unreliable but understands their insufficiency and relative nature and therefore, seeks to transcend them and evolve a more valid means of knowing. While other epistemologists end up with faith or intuition, Gandhi goes one step further and places Inner Voice at the apex of the hierarchy of the means of cognition.

In fact, in Indian epistemological writing the word 'intuition' is used in a deeper sense than in western
epistemology (62). Religious traditions testify that saints and seers intuit truths that are beyond the range of the senses and out of the reach of reason in a superconscious state above reason. Patanjali calls this superconscious state Samadhi (63). It indicates that the concept of intuition in Indian epistemology is more comprehensive and incorporates certain mystic elements also in it. Dr. Radhakrishnan uses the word 'mystic intuition' (64). Thus it is clear that intuition links the cognitive process to intellect on the one hand, and on the other, leads it to a level that is well beyond the distinctions of the knower and the known where divine insight is possible. It is when thought becomes perfected in intuition that we catch the vision of the real. . . . Man has the faculty of divine insight or mystic intuition, by which he transcends the distinctions of intellect and solves the riddles of reason. The chosen spirits scale the highest peak of thought and intuit the reality (65).

e) 'Inner Voice', the final arbiter

That Gandhi also was conscious of such a mystic attribute inherent in intuition is clear from one of the definitions he gave to faith. Faith - intuition - is nothing but a living, wide awake consciousness of God within (66). It is this mystic element that Gandhi calls Inner Voice. And he raises Inner Voice to the status of an independent means of valid cognition. "For me", writes Gandhi, "the Voice of God, of conscience, of Truth, or the Inner Voice, or the Still Small Voice mean one and the same thing" (67). It is the final arbiter when one is in doubt or when there is a conflict of duty. This voice, being the voice of God, is within everyone, but one has to go through a fairly severe course of training in order to qualify oneself to hear it. Says Gandhi: "Having made a ceaseless effort to attain self purification, I have developed some little capacity to hear correctly and clearly 'the Still Small Voice within' " (68). For
Gandhi this was the least defective and most dependable means of attaining real knowledge, definite and final (69).

f) An audio-mystic

Based on this cautious but clear claim by Gandhi that he could hear 'the voice within', Dr. R.D. Ranade of Nimbal, called Gandhi an 'audio-mystic' (70). And R.R.Diwakar defines mystic apprehension as "the direct apprehension of Reality of one's totality of being in one's own consciousness without the need for any further epistemological proof" (71). He also endorses the designation conferred on Gandhi by Dr. R.D.Ranade by saying: "If at all we want to characterise Gandhi as a mystic, we have to say that he was an audio-mystic" (72).

g) Do it yourself - the test

Although immovably convinced of the efficiency and veracity of the Inner Voice Gandhi was also aware of the serious abuse to which it was likely to be put. For instance, abuse by false claimants. But Gandhi was against the suppression of the claims of Inner Voice for the sake of preventing false claimants, for he said: "virtue must not be suppressed because many will feign it" (73). The second probable abuse is hallucination - 'echo of heated imagination' - passing for genuine Inner Voice. To those who raise such doubts about the veracity of the Inner Voice Gandhi gives the following advice: "You have to believe no one but yourselves. You must try to listen to the inner voice . . ." (74). The message is clear, 'do it yourself and see'. To the dyed-in-the-wool sceptic Gandhi says that he has no proof to offer. Nevertheless, he proclaims that "not the unanimous verdict of the whole world against me could shake me from the belief that what I heard was the true Voice of God. . . ." (75).

h) Need for discipline

But developing this faculty requires discipline and training. "After all, like every other faculty, this faculty for
listening to the still small voice within requires previous effort and training, perhaps much greater than what is required for the acquisition of any other faculty", writes Gandhi (76). This brings us to another unique feature of Gandhi's epistemology and that concerns the identity of his epistemological position with ethics.

III. 2. 3. Epistemology and ethics

For Gandhi there persists an inviolable bond between epistemic pursuits and ethical discipline. Here we are to take special note of the fact that it is not at the ultimate level of *Inner Voice* that Gandhi's epistemological position joins hand with ethics, as Surendra Verma points out (77). This is a partial, if not totally wrong, perception. In Gandhi's epistemology ethical or moral standard is uniform and is maintained throughout. Strict individual discipline is a *sine qua non* for search after truth. It is this discipline that qualifies a person, not only to listen to *Inner Voice* but even to receive reliable, valid sense perceptions. Unless the instruments of cognition, whether it be the senses, intellect or reason or intuitive faculty, are not kept clean and pure, cognition will certainly be defective. The senses must be unspoilt and the mind calm. This is so fundamental that Gandhi, with a touch of obstinacy, insisted on a high standard of personal discipline and purity for all those who seek truth. The whole set of *Ashram Vows* must be viewed in this light also. This idea he expressed most forcefully and concisely in his well-known, axiomatic statement: "Independent search for truth requires an intensely moral life" (78).

Thus it is clear that it is not at the ultimate position i.e., at the level of *Inner Voice* that Gandhi's epistemology joins hands with ethics. His epistemology in toto, from the level of sense perception to the level of the Voice of God within, is
based on and inseparable from ethics. It is true that Gandhi made a special mention of moral discipline in the case of Inner Voice and that may be because of all the means of valid cognition, this is the most difficult to attain and maintain.

III. 2. 4. The practical value of knowledge

Gandhi attached great importance to the practical value of knowledge. Knowledge for its own sake might interest and impress theoreticians belonging to the stream of scientific (systematic) philosophy, but not Gandhi. For him life was far more important than any theory of life. Similarly the practical value of knowledge is more vital than theory of knowledge. In fact, there is a long tradition in Indian philosophy which holds that the validity of knowledge can be determined by its practical value. Nyaya-Vaiseshika and the Buddhist schools, for example, adhere to this view. According to the Prabhakara School of Mimamsa, true knowledge must be an incentive to action that fulfills a practical need (79). Gandhi, no doubt, belongs to this tradition. In him we find a unique blend of theory and action, right knowledge getting translated into action almost instantaneously. In a weltanschauung the emphasis is always on the practical value of knowledge. The ideas of 'vision', 'interpretation' and 'attitude' implied in weltanschauung suggest this. In weltanschauung, to know is to be. So too in Gandhi.

III. 2. 5. The grand synthesis

The divergent theories in Epistemology had created some methodological problems as well. Some thinkers suggested vague solutions to them. Mantague, for example, says that the true solution of the methodological problem of logic consists in the federation of all six methods in a harmonious synthesis, in which each of the positive methods is assigned a pre-eminent, though not exclusive, role in a given domain of
the object of actual and possible philosophical enquiry (80).
The upshot of our discussion shows that Gandhi, with his
great genius for synthesis, has succeeded in effecting such a
synthesis of the various means of valid cognition by duly
recognising their respective usefulness and at the same time
admitting their inherent limitations. By providing
epistemology with an ethical basis he shows the way to prevent
the pursuit of knowledge from being misguided or abused. By
emphasising the practical value of knowledge he makes
epistemology an integral part of his weltanschauung.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. T.E. Hulme, Op. cit., 'Unconsciously' only suggests that
the assimilation is spontaneous and not laboured.

2. Although Gandhi absorbed certain elements from Indian
culture and tradition, he put everything to the acid test
of reason and "error, no matter however immemorial it may
be, cannot derive sanctity and even a Vedic text if it is
inconsistent with morality, with justice, will have to
go by the board". Mahadev Desai, Diary, Vol. VI. p. 95

3. This idea that Gandhi is a typical product of Indian culture
is forcefully conveyed by the Malayalam poet Vallathol
Narayana Menon in the following lines:

"Only the land that gave birth to the Gita
Could bring forth a Karma Yogi of this calibre
Only in the region between the Himalayas
And the Vindhya ranges
Could be found a lion so disciplined in peace,
Only in the land washed by the holy Ganges cluld flourish
A Kalpaka tree which bears so much unmixed good."

"My Master", in Prof. K.M.Tharakan (ed.). Selected Poems of
Vallathol Narayana Menon. Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Trichur,
translated by Kainikkara Kumara Pillai, p. 88

p. 3.

5. Ibid., 'World Homage', p. 459.

6. Young India. October 6, 1921.


9. R.K. Prabhu and Ravindra Kelkar (compiled). Truth Called them
p. 34.
10. This view is not accepted by all. There are writers who hold the view that the core of Gandhi's thought was Western, not Indian or Hindu. See for example, K.P. Karunakaran, "Gandhi's Intellectual Evolution", in Gandhi Marg Vol. 1. No. 7, October, 1979, pp. 424 - 435.


15. Ibid., see chapter XX pp. 57-59.

16. Ibid., p. 60.

17. Ibid., p. 61.

18. Ibid., pp. 132-133.

19. Gandhi devoted a whole chapter in his Autobiography for Raychandbhai of whom he says: "... I have since met many a religious leader or teacher. I have tried to meet the heads of various faiths, and I must say that none else has ever made on me the impression that Raychandbhai did. His words went straight home to me. His intellect compelled as great a regard from me as his moral earnestness: and deep down in me was the conviction that he would never willingly lead me astray and would always confide to me his inner most thoughts. In my moments of spiritual crisis he was my refuge." p. 75.


21. See for example, Bishan Sarup Sharma's Gandhi as a Political Thinker, Allahabad, 1956, p. 19, and Gopinath Dhawan's The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, Ahmedabad, pp. 41-43.

22. Writing on Gandhi's experiments with truth, Margaret Chatterjee opines that his experiments were integral to his own personal asceticism and that they were not mainly focussed on inwardness "but were tied up with something not unlike what the Marxists call Praxis". Margaret Chatterjee, Gandhi's Religious Thought, London, 1983, p. 58.

The familiar meaning of 'praxis' is 'practice' but it signifies something different. Paraxis describes the two-way traffic or better stated, a circular traffic that is always going on between theory and action. Action forces one to look at theory and theory forces one to look at action again, i.e., experiences from action help to modify and enrich theory and theory in turn helps in verifying whether one is acting the way one should/ought to. See Robert McAfee Brown's Theology in a New Key, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1978, pp. 70 - 77. 'Praxis' is transforming action; "praxis is", as Gregory Baum has put it, "the precondition of knowledge, even though in turn this knowledge issues forth in a new praxis". Theology in the Americas, (eds.) Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, Orbis Books, 1976, p. 407.
The relation between the theoretical and practical aspects of a *weltanschauung* can be better expressed if the terms theory and praxis are used in the above mentioned meaning.


28. Ibid., p. 10.

29. Ibid., p. 1.

30. Please note that all these general descriptive titles of philosophic theories are used in a variety of quite distinct senses.


34. Ibid., p. 23.


36. Ibid., p. 17.


38. Ibid., p. 15.


41. For a detailed discussion on the question see next chapter.


44. From *Yeravda Mandir*, (1945 edn.) p. 2.


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The broadest definition of the term intuition is immediate apprehension. Apprehension is used to cover such disparate states as sensation, knowledge and mystical rapport. Immediate has as many senses as there are kinds of mediation. It may be used to signify the absence of inference, the absence of causes, the absence of the ability to define a term, the absence of justification, the absence of symbols or the absence of thought. Given this range of use nothing can be said about intuition. See The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Op. cit., the entry: Intuition.

Some Western thinkers too have used faith, belief and intuition synonymously. For example, William Papperell Montague in The Ways of Knowing tacitly accepts belief as a form of knowledge. "We get more of our beliefs from the testimony of our fellows than from any other source. Little of our knowledge, of the Universe is directly tested by our own intuition, reason, experience or practice. We accept on trust nine tenths of what we hold to be true." p. 39.

See foot note 30 above. In Western epistemology we come across conceptual expression like Mystical or 'inexpressible intuition' (Bergson), 'intuition of the transcendent Ego' and 'the mystic intuition of God' (Fichte) etc., but there is a lot of ambiguity about their meanings and implications.


67. Ibid., p. 38.

68. Ibid.

69. This real knowledge according to the Upanishads is *aparoksha Brahmanubhuti*, i.e., intuitive perception of the self as *Brahman* beyond all distinctions. It is the identity of the self with the all pervading Supreme Self i.e., apprehension of the Self as non-dual non-rational consciousness that *Brahman* is - This is the culmination of knowledge. See Swami Satprakashananda, Op. cit., p. 41. This Upanishadic position is accepted by Gandhi and he described it in so many words.


71. Ibid., p. 774.

72. Ibid., p. 779. It may be mentioned here that there are thinkers who do not share this perception. For example Benoy Gopal Ray in his study Gandhian Ethics (Navajivan, Ahmedabad) argues that Gandhi "was not a mystic since he never led a mystic life, that he cannot be called a mystic in the sense in which Jesus Christ, St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assissi, Sri Chaithanya and others are so called. May we suggest that Gandhiji, though not mystic, had on several occasions what may be called the mystic mood?" pp. 16 - 18.


74. Ibid., p. 40.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid., p. 41.


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