INTRODUCTION

The quest for truth seems to be an integral part of human enquiry. It also seems to be an ongoing process. In modern days truth is taken to mean the scientific truth like water is composed of hydrogen and oxygen, or the earth orbits the sun etc, truth is also taken to mean a fact-historical, geographical etc. But here we are not discussing that kind of truth. Besides these kinds of truth man has been looking for another kind of truth, the truth that lies behind/beyond/as the foundation of all the phenomena. This is also called as the ultimate truth. There is misery, chaos, darkness in the world, the question that is often asked is- is there something beyond all this misery and confusion? The world is transient, subject to change all the time; so the question that is asked is- is there something that is permanent, something beyond change, immovable? Everything is subject to life and death and therefore apparent; is there something that is beyond birth and death? Everything is short-lived; can it be called as true? And then what is it that is always there, omnipresent? Such questions are raised and discussed in metaphysics. Different schools of philosophy put forth different answers; for example Advaita Vedanta holds that Brahman is the only reality and atman is Brahman. Buddhism does not accept existence of soul or Brahman; for them Nirvana is the truth. For Plato form would be the truth.

In the routine life we always experience that things are interdependent, nothing is independent. If there is such an independent thing that would be truth- everything else being relative. So, it is held that before this world came into existence, there was something that was totally independent and out of that the whole world emerged. This is ‘the’ truth. The nature of this truth is a topic of enquiry for the scientists and philosophers alike all over the world.

A question related to this is- can man ever know this truth? Truth is looked upon as the basis of everything. It is also regarded as a value. Many thinkers place great value on this. In the last century, Mahatma Gandhi was one who gave a lot of thought to truth and has discussed it in
great details. For him truth was the highest value, so much so that initially he considered ‘God is truth’ but later on he was convinced that ‘truth is God’. For him living a truthful life was to have harmony in one’s thoughts, speech and action. He said that truth cannot be compromised and the path of truth is not easy but that is the only path to travel in spite of the difficulties.

Mundaka Upanishad has given us the famous prayer ‘satyamevajayate….’ (Mundaka, 3.1.6) This prayer tells us that truth alone triumphs; not falsehood. The sages, whose desires have been completely fulfilled, reach where the treasure of Truth resides. Right from this ancient prayer to the recent finding of Higgs- Boson particle, search for truth is a worldwide endeavor. Ancient seers to modern thinkers- all have contributed to this search in different ways.

What is truth? In epistemology sense perceptions and beliefs, guesses, hypotheses, opinions, judgments etc. are taken to be the sources of knowledge. But sense perceptions have limitations, for example man cannot see beyond a certain distance, also these perceptions could be deceptive, for example a person suffering from jaundice sees everything as yellow. Perceptions are not reliable or accurate in this sense. In case of beliefs, judgments etc. we find that some of them are so to say more true than others and these are affected by the circumstances, tradition, culture etc. in which one lives. Therefore they are not the final truth; they are subject to change; and, the question ‘what is truth’ remains unanswered. It is also known that things by themselves are not either true or false; they just are or are not and our propositions/ judgments about them are true or false.

So how do we decide what is true? In the field of philosophy- western philosophy- we have three tests or ‘theories of truth’ trying to answer this question. According to the Correspondence theory any statement that is in fidelity to fact/actuality is true and truth is the agreement between the statement about a fact and the actual fact. (Flaw in this theory- we cannot directly compare our ideas and judgments with the world as it is.) The Coherence theory maintains that a statement is true if it is in accordance with or in harmony with other statements that are accepted to be true. (Flaw in this theory- it is argument in circle.) The Pragmatic theory holds that an idea or a theory or a hypothesis is true if it works out in practice, if it leads to
satisfactory results; and there is no static or ultimate truth. (Flaw in this theory- ‘satisfactory results’ is something very vague or ambiguous.) Thus none of these theories is perfect. Each has certain flaws and cannot be accepted as the test. Also, these tests or theories could be useful in the scientific field or in our routine, daily life. But the truth that we are talking about is something besides this, something that is not subject to change.

**Commonsense understanding of the word** - In our daily life we generally equate truth with a fact; for example if I say that there is a table in the room and if it is actually there, my statement is true. This is the simplistic approach and this depends on my senses. Generally we assume that our sense perceptions are correct and they lead to the fact. It is also assumed that truth is something that is immovable and permanent. We also differentiate truths like the scientific, material, subjective and objective. Another commonsense understanding is that there is an ultimate or ‘the’ truth besides the truths in our daily life. This ultimate truth is believed to belong to the spiritual, intangible category; various gurus, religions talk of achieving this truth or of reaching this truth. So truth here is looked upon as an achievement or destination and the belief that goes with it is that if we follow certain method or authority, or travel along a given path we reach it. In our routine life we find that truth is sometimes taken to mean validity, consistency, non-contradiction.

**JK’s understanding of truth**

“I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect.” This is what JK said in his famous speech that he made when he dissolved the Order of the star in the East in 1929 and it is apt to take this as the beginning point of looking into his concept of truth. This in itself is a meaningfully loaded sentence and we find that JK developed this point throughout his later life. In this significant lecture, JK has made two points absolutely clear. One is that truth is limitless, unconditioned, and unapproachable by any fixed path. The other is that you have to look for truth on your own. The quest for truth is one’s own; no one else can do that for you.
These two points considered together mean that truth is not something static or fixed; it is dynamic and therefore there is no laid out path that can take one to truth. And, there is no possibility of a path being made because a path will come into existence when a number of people travel on it. But in case of truth neither can I follow someone else’s footprints nor can anyone else follow my footprints. Thus there can be no path to truth.

Another important point that he made in the same lecture is that Truth cannot be organized. But, all over the world, various religions, sects or organizations are trying to do exactly that and therefore truth becomes only an ideal or a pursuit.

He explains it further by saying that for example we use a vehicle to reach at a certain predetermined place; organizations etc cannot be used in this way to arrive at truth because Truth is not a fixed point or an immovable destination. Also, a sect, religion, a mechanism- like a vehicle is something physical and external and it has nothing to do with spirituality. An organization may sustain interest in Truth, but it will be awakening the interest from without. Such an interest awakened from outside and not born out of love for Truth itself is, according to him, of no value. Because, then a person will no longer strive for Truth but will take efforts to fit into the framework provided by the organization.

On truth being dynamic he says, “truth does not lie in any temple, in any mosque, in any church. And it has no path to it except through one’s own understanding of oneself, inquiring, studying, and learning. Then there is that which is eternal.”  

**Reason, logic and truth**

JK holds that reason and logic alone will not discover truth. Up to a point we have to go by reason, logic, we have to enquire sanely and holistically; but beyond that point we shall be able to find a different state, a different quality of mind. Such a mind which is not bound by any belief, dogma etc. will be a free mind i.e. a mind that is free to observe ‘what is’. Such observation is also seeing/ arriving at truth. Then the mind will be full of energy; will take a different approach to social, economic, and human problems of relationships; that will be important for solving these problems. Thus reason or logic is not to be abandoned, they are
useful, but one has to go beyond these. Truth lies beyond reason and logic. As to why thought is not able to come upon truth JK says that thought, being memory, past can take you only up to a certain point but truth is beyond that because truth has no boundaries and, being fresh, it cannot be met with memory or the past. ‘Thought in its desire to find what truth is, is always looking in terms of the past. That is the difficulty of search. When you seek, you must be able to recognize what you have found; and what you find in terms of your recognition is the past.”

Reality, actuality and truth

In order to understand JK’s concept of truth it is essential to go into the distinction that he made between reality, actuality and truth. Truth lies beyond both reality and actuality.

Reality according to him is all the things put together by thought. He has pointed out that the word reality comes from the root ‘res’ which means ‘thing’. He further says that “… anything that thought operates on, or fabricates, or reflects about, is reality.” In his dialogue with Dr. Bohm he makes it clear that nature also comes under ‘reality’. We usually think of the world as given to us and then there is the man-made world of objects etc. But JK includes all the content of consciousness like desire, feeling, will etc. as belonging to reality. In the same dialogue Dr. Bohm pointed out that the root meaning of ‘thing’ is to condition, to set the conditions or determine. “And indeed we must agree that a thing is necessarily conditioned.” Then what is the relation of reality to truth? JK says that we are living in the world of reality and want to establish relation with truth where no ‘thing’ exists. It is not possible till we transcend/ go beyond the world of reality.

‘Actuality’, according to JK, means ‘what is’. The fact, what is happening, taking place at the present moment, not only in the external world but also within, is actuality. Thus actuality has a reference to the present. JK says, “Truth is not ‘what is’; but the understanding of ‘what is’ opens the door to truth.” That is how truth and actuality are related.
The word ‘true’ in Latin is ‘verus’ and means ‘that which is’. The root meaning of ‘true’ in English is honest and faithful. To comprehend is to hold it all together. Thus comprehension of truth is to hold all of the present i.e. understanding truth is understanding the present.

**Truth- Personal belief/opinion and absolute and relative truth**

The oft-asked question is- is truth something different from/ apart from personal belief/opinion? JK says that one has to find it out for oneself. Personal opinions, perceptions, experiences etc. are always relative, is there a perception, a seeing which is absolute and not relative is to be looked into by one.

In answer to a question on truth being absolute or relative, he points out that the human mind wants permanency in everything—relationship, property, virtue etc. The mind is always looking for something that cannot be destroyed and that is how we say that truth is absolute or that God is permanent.

Then he also says that whether truth is absolute or timeless depends on the mind. When the mind wants something permanent to cling to, it creates the permanent, when the mind wants something beyond decay or death, it creates something absolute. But if the mind is aware of everything that is going on externally and internally and sees the truth of it, then it is a timeless mind and only such a mind can know, “… that which is beyond names, beyond the permanent and the impermanent.”

**Truth and illusion**

How is one to find out if there is this kind of truth that is not relative, is absolute, complete and never changing? How does one’s mind, thought, intellect find this out? During this investigation one has to put aside all that is false in daily life and that is the only way to proceed. It means investigation into an illusion, a fantasy, an image, a romantic concept because they are not facts; they are the barriers in the way of this investigation. How does an illusion come into existence that needs to be looked into. JK says that illusion is playing with something which is not actual. So in illusion etc. one is moving away from what is actually taking place. An illusion is created
when one is unwilling, incapable or afraid of facing a fact; avoidance of facing fact gives rise to illusion etc. and that is moving away from fact which means moving away from truth.

The next question is- can one avoid this escape or this moving away from fact? JK has said, “If one could look at what is actually taking place, then there would be complete avoidance of any form of illusion.” 8 This looking at actuality would also involve looking at one’s dependency on a person, belief or ideal or a personal experience that has given one great excitement, happiness because dependence also creates illusion. By this he means that in order to come upon truth one’s mind must be devoid of creating illusion, hypotheses, and hallucinations. At the same time, JK points out, the mind must also be free from the want of grasping truth, it should not have the desire for truth. Such a mind, according to him, is a mind in order because there is no confusion coming out of illusion etc; the mind has lost its “capacity to create illusion.” 9 Then only truth can be understood.

**Search for truth by science**

JK shows the difference between the search for truth by science and the search for truth by others. He maintains that the scientists, astrophysicists are also looking for truth and they are using thought to investigate the material world around them; they are trying to go beyond physics but only with the help of thought. Thought is matter, so is the ‘me’ that is there inside. If you start looking inwards, “if one starts moving from fact to fact, then one begins to discover that which is beyond matter. Then there is such a thing as absolute truth, if one goes through with it.” 10

**Knowledge and truth**

Knowledge according to JK is a process like this- all our experiences are continuously recorded and stored by the brain. This is memory which is the past. Also every new experience is met with this storage of memory; you look at the new experience through the window of the past. When you meet with the present, the memory is invoked to understand the present. This we call as using knowledge. The recording, storing and invoking from the storage is called as
knowledge. That is why he says that knowledge being rooted in the past cannot meet the new moment which is fresh, not of the past.

Usually it is said that knowledge leads one to truth but according to JK knowledge is a hindrance when it comes to truth because, “… (knowledge) prevents the deep discovery of what is truth, …” Truth is the present which is the ‘now’ and cannot be known by the past. Further he explains that knowledge is cultivation of memory, you go on adding to it, using it and thereby adding to it repeatedly. This is of course useful at a certain level like carrying out daily chores, learning language or a skill, earning your living etc., but beyond that it becomes a detriment. He says, “To recognize the distinction- to see where knowledge is destructive and has to be put aside, and where it is essential and to be allowed to function with as much amplitude as possible- is the beginning of intelligence.” He means that realizing the limits of knowledge is real knowledge and then only there can be truth.

**Nature of truth**

He urges his listeners to think whether truth is, “some extraordinary mystery, something far away, unimaginable and abstract; or whether it is something which you discover from moment to moment, from day to day.” According to him, truth cannot be accumulated or gathered through experience because a spirit of acquisitiveness lies behind the accumulation. Truth cannot be acquired. Truth is also not something far away, something that can be found through a system of meditation or through severe self discipline involving sacrifice and denial because that is also a process of acquisitiveness. Again, truth being timeless, the moment you capture it, it is no longer truth.

And then he says, “Truth is to be discovered and understood in every action, in every thought, in every feeling, however trivial or transient; it is to be observed at each moment of everyday… in the process of your own thinking. Your thinking may be false, it may be conditioned, limited; and to discover that your thinking is conditioned, limited is truth.” Truth is not something to be stored up and then to be relied on as a guide because that is also another form of possession. But the mind functions in such a way that it is very difficult for the mind
not to acquire, accumulate or store up. Realization of the significance of this- not verbal but actual- is the finding out of what an extraordinary thing truth is.

Truth and the need for a guru

Mostly it is assumed that you need a teacher or a guru in order to know the truth; or it is also believed that only a guru can lead you to truth. JK goes deep into this and points out that you really do not need this kind of a guru at all. He says that obviously one does not need a guru for material purposes; one needs a guru for psychological purposes. You need him because you feel confused and do not know how to live in this world of decay, degeneration, misery, disintegration. You need him for advice, thus the need is psychological. Then JK explores the meaning of the very word ‘need’. He asks that everyone needs food, shelter, clothes, sunshine etc; does one need a guru/ teacher in the same way? In order to come out of the confusion does one need a guru?

JK has always maintained, ‘You are the world and the world is you’; he means that if the world around is full of confusion each one is responsible for that, I am responsible for that. And, therefore, I am the only one to clear it up. If I want to clear it up I must understand it myself. How can someone else ‘understand’ for me? So what is the point in going to someone else-teacher, guru whoever- to help you out of this mess? The teacher/guru could be someone great but the confusion exists in my life and life is relationship. Now, I have relationship with others, with society, property, ideas and so on; can someone else give me an understanding of my relationship with these?? I have to understand it myself, on my own. Such understanding is also knowing truth. You cannot go to a guru who has found truth to partake of it.

JK asks, can our inner problems, confusions etc. be understood by someone else? For example there is some confusion in your relationship. Then you need to understand the relationship, without running away from it or without avoiding it. This can be done only when you see the whole content of relationship. Only you can do that, how can an outsider have an access to your inner thoughts, feelings etc.? He means to say that everybody has to take stock of his/ her psychological world, of the contents of the world. Because that is the only way to actually know
the problem. And, knowing the problem is solving the problem. As he said, life is a book, you are the author and you are the reader. No one can read it for you.

Another important point made by JK here is – if you think that a guru can take you to truth it means that truth is something static and your guru can lead you to it. But this is false, JK repeatedly says that truth is not static, it is always dynamic. Therefore no one can lead you to it. And, something static can only gratify you because you know it and you can hold on to it and thus it becomes gratifying. Then, instead of truth, you are seeking gratification and the person who gives you the greatest gratification is your guru. He says that in the presence of the guru you feel at peace; feel that you are being understood. So, is it gratification rather than truth that you are looking for? “Another words you want a glorified father or mother who will help you overcome the difficulty.” Not just overcoming difficulties, but the guru who offers you an escape becomes your need, you start depending on him for solving all your problems. And dependency does not help when it comes to understanding truth.

JK holds that if a guru is worth his salt he will tell you to understand yourself in action, which is relationship; ‘yourself’ because it is your problem, misery, struggle etc. The guru could be a realized person or could be free but, JK asks, would that help you in your search? There are some who worship the guru and believe that the worship will solve their problem. JK says that such worship does not help; it is actually detrimental to your understanding of yourself.

He has pointed out another factor when it comes to revering or respecting or worshipping a guru. He says that when you start respecting one more and more it means that you start respecting others less and less. May be you salute your boss and ill-treat your subordinate; then your respect has very little significance. And he maintains that this is a fact of life, this is what actually happening. This is creating hierarchy, division and there is no place for hierarchy or division in truth.

JK tells us that we are in a state of confusion and we want a way out of the confusion, we want a guru to clear up the confusion. But can a guru clear up one’s confusion? Because, my confusion is a result of my own responses and therefore I am the one to clear it up; not an
outside person. He also points out that many times a way out of confusion is mistakenly called as truth. The confusion is created out of our own response and in order to clear it up, we have to understand ourselves first and foremost. Lack of understanding of our miseries, conflicts, responses is lack of understanding the self.

Then what place can a guru have? According to JK a guru is a kind of signpost. For example you are going from place x to place y. You see a signpost indicating the way like ‘take left’ or ‘go ahead’ etc. Thereafter you have to travel accordingly. When you stop and start worshipping the signpost you are not going to reach the destination place. When you keep on worshipping the guru something similar to this happens and you go nowhere. The guru can indicate, point out or point towards but you have to embark upon the journey leaving the signpost behind. Otherwise it will be like worshipping the signpost and not traveling. Then how to bring about this understanding? JK says that only when we are in relationship with the present can this understanding dawn. Very clearly JK says, “…that relationship is the guru, not someone outside.” This relationship is nothing else but one’s relationship/attachment to one’s property, to other people, to ideas and the relationship itself is the guru. Unless and until one understands this, the conflict within will continue- guru or no guru. If I want to know this relationship I have to be aware of myself in relationship and for this awareness no guru is required.

He also urges us to go in to the very need for a guru. You must examine whether you want a guru so that you can escape the hard work involved in the journey. You must also examine whether you are putting all the responsibility on the guru instead of shouldering it on your own.

**Truth – living from moment to moment**

“Truth is a thing that is living from moment to moment.” JK tells us that in order to come upon it a very ‘alert, pliable and swift’ mind is required; unfortunately we want to be/ we like to be put to sleep by rituals or mantras. Total attention is of great importance and that kind of complete attention is possible when you are in trouble, when you are facing a problem that is quite intense.
The following words throw more light on what JK means by truth- “The truth is not in the distance, truth is near, truth is in under every leaf, in every smile, in every tear, in other words, it is in the feelings, thoughts that one has. But it is so covered up that we have to uncover to see. To uncover is to discover what is false; and the moment you know what is false, and when that drops away, the truth is there.” Here he has pointed out that the search for truth is not a journey over a long distance. Truth is not a ‘destination’ or a station that you arrive at when you take a vehicle and move from point A to point B. Truth is there everywhere, but it is covered up in such a way that we fail to see it. Uncovering of truth is understanding it; it means that we have to find or discover what is false. The moment you know what is false, it will drop away; and when the false drops away truth shall be there. And this is something that is to be discovered by one on his own, this truth is not something to be believed in or quoted or formulated. Also, you cannot force truth to dawn; all you should do is to keep the windows and doors of your mind open.

So far we have seen what JK means by truth. It is to understand life as it is, every moment, without bringing in your own conditioning, like-dislikes etc. This understanding is observing life every moment. Such observation is meditation; then there is coexistence of freedom, mediation, love and truth.

Now let us turn to Mahatma Gandhi’s thoughts on truth. From the last century Mahatma Gandhi is the one who talked about truth and love; he also practiced what he talked about. And therefore in order to understand JK’s concept of truth more clearly Mahatma Gandhi’s concept of truth is also presented here.

**Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) on truth**

**Importance of Mahatma Gandhi’s concept of truth**

Gandhiji was not just a leader of the Indians in the Indian Freedom Movement but also a world leader who walked on the path of ahimsa; he has millions of followers all over the world. His contribution to the Indian Freedom is beyond question but he was also a great thinker, a philosopher, a saint, a person who had the courage to follow the dictates of his inner voice without any hesitation. He always preferred to walk hand in hand with truth. ‘Truth and nothing
else but the truth’ was his motto and that is why it becomes important to go into his thoughts on truth while we try to understand JK’s concept of truth. Also, both were contemporaries, both had actually seen the destructive results of war, both were respected by the then important personalities, and more important, both had a deep concern for the entire humanity. Their teachings and philosophy crossed the boundaries of nations.

**Mahatma Gandhi’s concept of truth**

For Gandhiji Truth was the sovereign principle of life. (He is of course not talking about scientific truth.) When asked to define truth he said that the definition is very much there in your mind but it gets veiled or obscured due to greed, anger and especially Ahamkara or ego. If you want to unveil it, your ego has to drop or vanish. According to him a seeker of truth has to become smaller than a speck of dust; then only you can know the truth.

In order to explain his meaning, he referred to the Sanskrit word for truth ‘satya’. The root word is ‘sat’ which means ‘to exist’ or ‘to be’. He says, “Truth alone is in the world, nothing else is.”¹⁹ Truth is the only thing that exists in the world all the time, all other things are transitory, short lived. Truth is a permanent thing which cannot be robbed from you. Truth gives you vitality; truth gives you perennial joy or ananda. Whether you are in a jail or suffering, this inner joy will always remain with you. Not just ananda, but along with truth you also have chit or true knowledge. He says that these three always go together. So truth is thus not just sat but a combination of sat, chit and ananda. Where there is true knowledge, there is bliss and sorrow has no place there. Truth is eternal, so is the bliss derived from it.

Gandhiji put truth above all the principles. So much so that he wrote, “Devotion to this truth is the sole justification for our existence. All our activities should be centered in truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life.” ²⁰ He further explains it by saying that once you understand this, all other rules of right living will fall in without effort and they will be obeyed naturally, instinctively. Without truth it is impossible to observe any rules or principles in life. Actually it is truth from which other principles, values or vows of life emerge. Ahimsa- non-violence, brahmacharya-chastity, asteya- non-stealing, aparigraha- non-hoarding will come automatically to the one who has known truth. Thus truth has a pivotal role in one’s life. This
point of Gandhiji is very significant and goes very close to JK’s concept of truth. According to JK truth is followed by right living. But JK insists that it should not be something imposed externally on you. Meaning, truth should dawn without coercion and then there is order in life, then your action will be right action and you will act not out of some force but out of natural- Gandhiji calls it instinctive- understanding of life. When this happens, everything will fall in line; there will be freedom, beauty, order, peace of mind and no conflict.

Gandhiji clearly distinguishes between truth and speaking truth. He says that generally people equate truth with speaking truth. But satya or truth has a much wider meaning or scope. He frequently talks about a harmony between thought, word and action; these three together, so to say, form truth. One who has realized truth will always have this harmony. This harmony exists because truth necessarily includes all knowledge in it. Without this knowledge there can be no inward peace. This inward peace is, in his words, a “never failing test of truth.”21 Thus while pointing out the wide scope of truth he also points to a test of truth. He says that once you are able to apply this test, you will at once be able to find out what is worth doing and, worth seeing and the unworthy will be automatically discarded thereby making life light-weight and peaceful. This point of his is important because most of us are seeking just that- life without a burden, life full of peace.

Here, it can be said that Gandhiji throws light on the practical, positive and useful aspect of truth. Actually, an important aspect of philosophical investigation is just that- showing a way out of individual suffering, putting an end to human suffering, having peace, finding bliss. Everybody in this world is trying to end his suffering or grief. Following truth can help in this regard. Various thinkers since ancient times engaged themselves with this task. Gautama Buddha is a well known name in this regard.

How important truth was to Gandhiji is clear when he says that we are alive only to the extent that we are truthful. Thus though truth has a wider meaning one has to adhere to truth, be truthful because that is the only way to live. As a guiding principle, as the inner voice truth shows us a particular course of action and as humans it is our supreme duty to follow that
course even if it brings threat to one’s life. Truth is the characteristic of living, of being human. It is the ability to determine truth for himself that separates man from brute, says Gandhiji.

**Truth and god**

Now we come to a significant point in Gandhiji’s concept truth. As is known, Gandhiji was a theist. In the course of life he pondered over great values like satya, ahimsa etc and actually followed them steadfastly. His deep thinking revealed him that God is nothing else but truth. He did not stop there, later on he came to the conclusion that Truth is God. ‘It is more correct to say that truth is God, than to say that God is Truth.’ Truth became supreme; so much so that he said that sat or *satya* is the only correct and fully significant name for God.

The following words explain his meaning in a compact, precise manner- “It is That (Truth) which alone is, which alone constitutes the stuff of which all things are made, which subsists by virtue of its own power, which is not supported by anything else but supports everything that exists. Truth alone is eternal, everything else is momentary. It need not assume a shape or form. It is pure intelligence as well as pure bliss. We call it *Ishvara* (God) because everything is regulated by Its will. It and the law It promulgates are one. Therefore it is not a blind law. It governs the entire universe.”

This small passage throws light on the deep conviction, the devotion that Gandhiji had towards Truth/God. For him Truth and God were not separate; the law and the law-maker were also one. The universe is governed by It which is intelligence and bliss. Clarifying his views he says that God is described by the seers as *Neti, Neti* (Not this, Not this) meaning God defies all description in words; the closest description of God would be Truth.

Then Gandhiji also points out that an atheist can deny the existence of God but he cannot deny the existence of Truth. That is the power of truth that cannot be surpassed by anyone. We do not find this kind of devotion to truth as the governing principle of the universe in JK’s teachings. But, as we have seen, JK placed supreme importance on truth.
Path to truth

Then comes the question of realization of truth or a path that leads to truth or a method of achieving it. Gandhiji refers to the Bhagvadgita- the ancient text that he revered throughout his life like his mother- and says that one can reach to truth by a single-minded devotion or abhyasa and indifference to all other interests in life or vairagya. But he also warns that by strictly following these two, what appears to be the truth to one person may appear to be untruth to another person. But that is no reason to worry for the seeker; his honest efforts will make him realize that the apparently different truths are like ‘the countless leaves of the same tree.’ He further says that it is like the knowledge of God. Everyone knows that He is one but appears to be different to different individuals in different aspects. What is more important is to follow Truth according to one’s light (here he means one’s religion), indeed it is one’s duty to do so.

Another thing required for the quest and subsequent achievement of truth according to Gnadhiji is tapas, the efforts that go into it, penance. For him tapas means self-suffering, sometimes even unto death. But more importantly, this tapas includes, as the Geeta says, complete absence of self-interest. This is a search without any self-interest and Gandhiji believes that one cannot go wrong with such a search. The minute one takes a wrong turn, he will stumble, but, he will be redirected to the right path. On this path there is no place for cowardice and no place for defeat. There is also no fear of death. “It is the talisman by which death itself becomes the portal to life eternal.”

While describing the path to truth Gandhiji says that this path is straight, narrow, sharp, a razor’s edge. But, for him it is the quickest and easiest. He also says that he was saved from coming to grief only because he adhered to this path. Apparently it may seem to be the toughest path but ultimately it is the only path that actually saves you in life. On that path there is no self-interest or ego so automatically there can be no grief that arises out of various kinds of attachments (like ‘this is mine’) and fear that arises out of the thought of the attachments getting destroyed.

JK also says that there is no place for fear, including fear of death, when truth dawns. Also, Truth is like living every moment anew, afresh. But the major difference is that JK does not
believe in there being a path to truth. According to him, as is seen earlier, ‘truth is a pathless land’. There is no prescribed formula or method for it. Everyone has to find his own path and observance of particular rules does not guarantee reaching or rather coming upon truth.

**Truth and Ahimsa**

Any discussion of Gandhiji’s concept of truth will not be complete without looking into his thoughts on the interconnection between truth and ahimsa. It is said that he put a stamp of an idea on an epoch and that idea is ahimsa. According to him, truth and ahimsa are two sides of the same coin. You cannot search for truth without ahimsa; you cannot find truth without ahimsa. It is practically impossible to separate the two. But then, he says that between the two ahimsa is the means and truth is the end. He means that if you want to follow truth, you must practice ahimsa.

For Gandhiji ahimsa means not to hurt any living creature by thought, word or deed. So, not just your actions but even your words and thoughts must not contain any violence in them. In other words it means that you understand and treat everyone else as your equal, you are sensitive about other people. It means that your ego takes a complete back seat and then only truth can be found. But this ahimsa does not mean cowardice. It is the ahimsa of the brave because he is ready to suffer for his cause without any fear. In fact, ahimsa necessarily includes fearlessness and this fearlessness is essential for truth. In Gandhiji’s words it becomes a better bulwark than the passion of armed men.

He named his peaceful resistance movement as ‘Satyagraha’, insistence on truth. This clearly shows that truth and ahimsa were intertwined in his mind. And that is how truth became his beacon, shield and buckler.

Along with ahimsa, truth also includes love according to Gandhiji. He calls it as the largest and universal love. This all inclusive love is such that ‘one must love his enemy or a stranger as he would love his wrong-doing father or son.’ Love brings forgiveness, humility, non-attachment and innocence. All these together provide enormous inner strength to the seeker of truth.
Difference between Gandhiji’s and JK’s concepts of truth

JK differentiates between truth, reality and actuality. Gandhiji does not make that distinction. He does not talk about the world that is given to man or the man-made world.

Gandhiji’s concept of truth is harmony of thought, speech and action; JK’s truth transcends thought.

Gandhiji says that the path to truth is ahimsa; JK holds that there is no path to truth, no programme for truth.

Gandhiji sees truth as god. According to JK god is something put together by thought. So there is no possible connection between truth and god.

Gandhiji talks about ‘fearlessness’ and not fear as such in connection with truth. JK goes deeper into the nature of fear. (This will be seen in the conclusion.)

JK says that truth is not an achievement, something that one can have. Truth dawns on you.

Gandhiji talks about pursuit of truth and practicing truth.

Next chapter is the concluding chapter. In the light of all that is studied in the earlier chapters the hypotheses will be discussed and established in the concluding chapter.
References
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