CHAPTER III
TRUTH IS GOD

Mahatma Gandhi has been the greatest emancipator in our history thus far and the most original social thinker that we have had since Buddha. Apparently, his whole life was political, but at bottom it was a religious life out and out. Truth and God were of supreme importance to him. It was his concept of Truth as God, which brought him to politics. He regarded his life as experiments in realizing Truth as God. He believed that not even a blade of grass moves without His will. God became his shield and made him courageous and self-confident. He was a firm believer in God. We find the words coming straight from the depths of his soul when he says, "I may live without air and water but not without Him. You may pluck out my ears but that will not kill me. You may chop off my nose but that will not kill me. But blast my faith in God and I am dead."¹

Gandhi is a true religious man who lived and died for Truth. We cannot understand Gandhi in any way till we understand what he meant by Truth. Before we may try to see Gandhi’s concept of Truth as God, it is necessary to say that Gandhi was not a philosopher in the western sense of the word. In this context Raghavan Iyer has said, “He was not interested in abstract theoretical speculation about the universe and man and he was not concerned with epistemological or logical enquiries.”²

Gandhi was not an arm chair philosopher confined in the ivory tower of contemplation. He is an experimentalist who tests ideas in the laboratory of his own life and thus earns the knowledge by living it. He does not trust second hand knowledge. Gandhi has very rightly called his autobiography “The Story Of My Experiments With Truth”. This reveals his scientific spirit and practical/empirical attitude towards
philosophy. Philosophy for him, in accordance with Indian tradition is not mere information, it is transformation. If it is not lived or does not change life accordingly, it is worthless.

Gandhi is a philosopher in a special sense, as an ancient philosopher has said that if a man were to record accurately all his experiences then he would be a philosopher without knowing a word of the subject. We can say that he is not an academic philosopher or a metaphysician, rather he is mainly a socio-political thinker and reformer. Nevertheless, as all the socio-political movements have underlying thoughts and ideas, one can try to piece together Gandhi’s ideas also and try to discover whether they are based on certain metaphysical ground.

Before starting what Gandhi meant by the concept of truth, we should try to know the meaning of truth in the Indian and the Western Context.

Truth, in the western context, is a characteristic of some propositional meaning, namely those which are true. There are three main traditional theories of the nature of Truth, namely correspondence theory of truth, coherence theory of truth and pragmatic theory of truth. Truth is an epistemological concept in the West.

In the Indian context, the nearest word to truth in Sanskrit is ‘Sat’. ‘Sat’ means real, sincere, existent, pure, good, effectual and valid. ‘Sat’ also means abiding, wise, self-existent, as anything really is, as anything ought to be.

‘Satya’, as Gandhi has stressed on several occasions is derived from ‘Sat’, which means ‘Ever Existent Being’. Gandhi has taken the term Truth or Satya from the Indian context where Truth is an Ontological concept, to be exact, Truth is Being itself. Gandhi realized that nothing exists in reality except Truth, everything else is illusion. In Indian tradition, ‘Sat’ stands for The Absolute, Archetypal reality and is common to the Hindu,
Buddhist, and Jaina religions. Though at different times ‘Satya’ has in practice been subordinated in emphasis without making it wholly subservient to Moksha, Dharma, Ahimsa, and even the Artha. Satya has also been regarded at times as entirely equivalent to Dharma. Gandhi believes that Moksha, Dharma, Animsa, Artha, and the Kama are the descriptions of Truth. He further says that truth is nothing but substance of morality and the things of the world are based on morality. So, indirectly, the world is based on Truth.

It seems that Gandhi’s concept of Truth underwent a gradual evolution. He writes in his autobiography, which is truly the story of his experiments with Truth in the following words: “There are innumerable definitions of God, because His manifestations are innumerable. They overwhelm me with wonder and awe and for a moment stun me. But I worship God as Truth only.”

During the early years although he regarded God as impersonal, all pervading reality, he was also well versed in the tradition of Vaishnava theism, reinforced by his contact with Christian Theologians to anthropomorphize God. The influence of Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharat, Ramayan, Koran-as well as Bible is very clear, so far as his idea of Truth is concerned.

Gandhi does not worry himself about the characteristics of God whether he is Saguna Sakara or Nirguna Nirakara etc. on which our old Acharayas have raised countless controversies. He is not interested in this. His concept of God is too broad and it covers everything in the name of God. To him God is both, Sakara and Nirakara.

As we all know that the influence of Christianity was deep on him. He compared the Sermon on the Mount with Bhagavad Gita. Under the influence of Christianity he so often
characterized God as Love. The influence of Buddhism is also very clear on him. He did not accept Buddhism as atheistic. According to him Buddha never denied God rather he identified God with His Law. The Law and the Law giver became one in Buddhism, according to him. Under the influence of Buddhism he said God is Law or Dharma.

According to Gandhi, the Law then which governs all life is God. Law and the lawgiver are one. I may deny the Lawgiver, because I know so little about it or Him. Even as my denial or ignorance of the existence of an earthly power will avail me nothing, so will not my denial of God & His Law liberate me from its operations, where as humble and mute acceptance of Divine Authority makes life’s journey easier even as the acceptance of earthly rule makes life under it easier.

He sometime characterized God as the unseen, mysterious power pervading every where, the sum total of everything that exists, the indefinable and indescribable power, the formless and the nameless. In one attempt to describe God, we describe the indescribable but God is really Neti Neti - ‘not this’ ‘Not this’. All these characteristics of God are very near to the advaitic characterization of God as Nirguna as an impersonal Absolute.

Gandhi expressed his preference for the concept of God as formless Truth. He believed in an impersonal Absolute. By Truth or Satya he meant, Existence, as he himself has said, “The word ‘Satya’ (Truth) is derived from Sat which means ‘being’. Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why Sat or Truth is perhaps the most important names of God.”

Hence by characterizing God as Truth or Satya, he perhaps wanted to take God as identical with the totality of existence, or with Existence as such, which again is an Advaitic conception. But despite his preference for taking God as a
formless Absolute, Gandhi never held inferior the Concept of God as personal. He openly said God is personal to those who need His personal touch. Under the influence of his Vaishnava background as well as due to the great impact that Christianity had made upon him, he sometimes characterized God as personal and gave Him such attributes as Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Benevolent, etc. Philosophically, we may find Gandhi's concept of God as 'formless' and 'personal' contradicting with each other apparently. But, he had not committed any logical contradiction – as for him, God was above all a mystery, an indefinable power, a power beyond human grasp. He was a deeply religious man and his religion covered all the religions on earth. What ever was true, that touched his heart and soul and what ever he said about God, words came right from his heart & soul. He was quite sure of the limits of human intellect and powers of human faith. Consequently, he knew that human beings will grasp God's nature in different ways and each one was true to Him as he says, I confess that I have no argument to convince through reason. Faith transcends reason. All I can advise is not to attempt the impossible.

Jainism, too had great influence on Gandhi. He said, "I am an Advaitist and yet I can support Dvaitism (Dualism). The world is changing every moment and is therefore unreal. It has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, it has something about it which persists and it is therefore to that extent real. I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal and thus being called an Anekantavadi or Syadvadi I very much like this doctrine of the many ness of reality. It is the doctrine that has taught me to judge a Musalman from his standpoint and a Christian from his... I want to take the whole world in the
embrace of my love. My Anekantavad is the result of the twin doctrine of Satya and Ahimsa.⁵

That way, Gandhi was an Anekantavadin and Syadvadin, and therefore he had no difficulty in moving from Impersonal to Personal descriptions of God. He was an Advaitin, a Dwaitin, a Vishishtadvaitin – all at the same time but without any contradiction. It may be maintained, therefore, that Gandhi was fully aware of the implications of his personal-impersonal characterizations of God and he did it knowingly and consistently.

But in his heart of heart Gandhi preferred taking God as formless Truth as Nirakara and Nirguna. Mahadev Desai has written in his diary about Mahatma Gandhi's idea about God. "I only prefer to worship the formless. This preference is perhaps improper. One thing suits one person, another thing suits another person, and no comparison can fairly be made between the two."⁶

At the same time he didn’t believe in the orthodox ideas of different religions – where they claim this that their's is the only religion. For Gandhi all religions are same at the roots and preach universal concepts of morality. He was not only tolerant to other religions or faith rather he respected them all as his own religion. Regarding his views about Truth and God he said that I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine, I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal Truths to our daily life and problems.

To him, there was no contradiction in calling God as Impersonal or personal. He often referred to God by such names as Rama, Krishna, etc. and this was a clear example of his personification of God. The Vaishnava impact remained alive upon his heart. As a matter of fact, he believed that God can be called by innumerable names, as there are innumerable men
with their sincere beliefs in God. We may call him formless or nameless or speechless. He believed in Avatars Krishna and Rama as God. He says I believe in Krishna but my Krishna is the lord of the universe, creator, preserver and destroyer of us all. He may destroy because he creates.

According to Gandhi Krishna and Rama are not mere mortals rather they both are same, the Supreme God and Worshipped in their glory. He wanted to have Ram Ram in his heart, while he may face the bullets, as he aimed at Moksha. He had lived with Gita, and wanted to die, even with it. It is very much written in Gita – as he had wished:

"अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरणमुक्तः कलेवरम् ।
यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संस्कृतः ॥"\(^7\)

It means that God says, he who at the last hour remembering Me only departs, leaving the body, enters into Me, of that there is no doubt. We are told that the last words in his mouth were ‘Hai Ram’ (हे राम). Again and again he referred to God as Rama in his hours of trials and stated: "I am a servant of Rama. I shall continue to do my work as long as He commands me; and I shall depart when He orders me to do so."\(^8\)

It shows that in Gandhi’s worship of Krishna or Rama there is not an iota of worship of personal God or sectarianism. Not only Krishna and Rama are the same to him, because he worshipped the God the supreme by these names. To him Krishna, Rama, God and Truth are synonymous words. He found ‘oneness’ in all the names of God in all the religions of the world. God is He who commands all his devotion, adoration and the whole self & the supreme bliss of Gandhi is in the total surrender of his entire self at His feet. Gandhi’s concept of God has evolved under the influence of Upanisads Gita and other
religious scriptures. The influence of Bhagavad Gita is great so far as the evolution of the concept of Truth is concerned.

Gandhi believed in the following verse where in the Lord states in Bhagavad Gita:

"से रथा मां प्रवचने तार्कशैव भजायत्।
मम वर्तमान्यत्त भुव्यः, पाध्य सर्वं॥ ॥"9

(That, I adore my devotees just as they approach Me.) To him, it is enough that God is there, He appears in the form in which the devotees conceives of Him. Any form of God that we adore is acceptable to God, according to Gita.

There is no doubt that the effect of Bhagavad Gita is great on the formation of Gandhi's concept of God but the final influence is that of Ishopanisad. We find him stated that the Gita is a commentary on the first verse of the Ishopanisad The verse seems to me to mean only one thing: Recognize that everything you fancy, you have is God's and from God, and take only that you really need for life.

I find pleasure in stating this beautiful verse of Ishopanisad, which overwhelmed him to find a full philosophy of life. It is:

"इशावास्यमिदं सर्वं
वचनं किंच जगालो जयत्
ते त्यत्तेन भुजायत
मा गृहं, कर्य स्विद्धनम्॥"10

The conception of God as it is found in Ishavasya upanisad with all its subtlety will be acceptable to Gandhi. He accepts God as the highest reality, the only reality. What ever we find around us is all God. Man is required to accept it that he is living in God's Kingdom. He can fulfill his needs and that is all, so far his share in the world is concerned. He should not aim at possessing or hoarding the wealth. His everything is, even his body itself given
as a trust by God. Man should live in this world of God while serving God and His world.

God is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the Universe and yet far above the whole universe. He is present in everything, yet He is above all. Truth and God are synonymous terms and he defined God as Truth. But he was still in search of a word which may be accepted universally for God or the supreme power. However, Gandhi shifted his emphasis from 'God' to 'Truth', as the ultimate object of human worship and reliance. He came to realize that 'Truth' alone 'Exists'; If there is God, Truth must be that.

According to N.K. Bose, "He used to say formerly that 'God is Truth from a little later before 1931, he began to say 'Truth is God'. The distinction though subtle, is of a very significant character. With this changed creed, he could easily accommodate as fellow seekers those who looked on humanity or any other object as their God, and for which they were prepared to sacrifice their all."

Mahatma Gandhi had not felt satisfied when he said God is Truth but when he said Truth is God, he felt greater satisfaction. As he says "I used to say, 'God is Truth' that did not completely satisfy me. So I said, 'Truth is God'".

The reason appears to be that the connotation of the English term 'Truth' is mainly epistemological. It is in order to show that Truth is not only epistemological but is also ontological that Gandhi has used the expression, "Truth is God", i.e. the Supreme Being. In fact, the Sanskrit word for 'Truth' is a word which literally means that which exists. For this and several other reasons, Gandhi drew to the conclusion that the expression 'Truth is God' is most satisfying.

The main motive of Gandhi in regarding God as Truth is to prevent us from believing that He is 'personal' in the way we all
are. The word ‘Satya’ does not imply personality. It stands for an idea, principle, or Law; and at the same time means ‘Being’. The phrase ‘God is Truth’ suggests that God is an idea and a principle. He later defined God as ‘Truth is God’. These are the reasons for laying more emphasis on Truth.

Firstly, the word, God, is vague and has different meanings for different individuals. But Gandhi had never found a double meaning in the connotation of Truth, therefore Truth is a better term than God for Mahatma Gandhi.

Moreover, Gandhi regards God to be the ultimate Law or Principle or Idea. God is never, philosophically speaking a person. Gandhi has repeatedly emphasized that he does not believe in a personal God. Truth on the other hand does not connote a person. It is always impersonal. It may be understood as an idea, principle or law.

Furthermore, Gandhi, finds that God understood as other than Truth can have no universal appeal. Atheists have delighted in denying the very existence of God. But nobody is able to deny the existence of Truth, not even the atheists. In fact Truth itself is their God, and if understood in this light even the atheists are believers in God in the same sense in which Gandhi believes in God.

And lastly, in the name of God, people have committed nameless atrocities. They worship God as anything and everything but never as Truth and therefore have indulged in lies, massacres of people without caring whether they were innocent or guilty, men or women, old or young. They have indulged in abductions and forcible conversions and have done all this shamelessly. Gandhi is not aware if anybody can do these things in the name of Truth. If we regard Truth as our God, we can not dare to indulge in barbaric and immoral acts. We must therefore worship God as Truth. It is because of these
reasons that Gandhi emphasizes Truth more than God; and goes a step further and says Truth is God.

Impressed by the orderliness in the universe Gandhi is convinced that "there is an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings."  

Gandhi says "Truth is the law of our being". In Indian philosophical thought recognition of Truth as law has been made from time immemorial: *Satyannastiparo dharma*, there is no better *Dharma* than *Satya*. *Dharma* is that which holds together, supports and upholds and as such it cannot be based on untruth. Ultimately the law of our being cannot be other than Truth itself.

Truth is existence. The identity of Truth and existence refers to the first principle of being ‘Sat’ in all beings. Gandhi does not accept the dualistic theory of knowledge, which separates the True from the Real. In his mind True coincides with the Reality or Existence. However, it is to be noted that the existence with which ‘Truth’ is identified is not the existence of this or that with which science is concerned. It refers to existence as such, “Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth” says Gandhi.

Truth is knowledge, but again, in the absolute sense of the term, it is not the scientific knowledge with its three-termed relation of the knower, the known and the knowledge. It is knowledge by identity or integral experience of reality (*Cit*). Ultimate Truth is not perceived by sense or understood by thought, but is intuitively apprehended.

Truth is a matter of immediate experience. When thus realized all doubts and differences are removed, all discords discrepancies vanish and our life is transformed and we are in a blissful eternity (*ananda*). Gandhi says, “Where there is no Truth, there can be no true knowledge, and where there is true
knowledge there is always Bliss. There sorrow has no place. And even as Truth is eternal so is Bliss."\(^{16}\)

Gandhi thus regards "Truth not only as the Law of everything and every being but also as 'Sat chit ananda', \(^{17}\) that is, existence, consciousness (or knowledge) and Bliss as such. In describing the ultimate law as Sat Chit ananda, Gandhi says, Truth is noteworthy, becomes identical with Samkara’s Brahman. Gandhi however does not call the Absolute by the name Brahman and adopts the term Truth instead.

Gandhi makes a clear-cut distinction between the Absolute Truth and the Relative Truth. "The Absolute Truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This Truth is not only the relative Truth of one conception but also the Eternal Principle.\(^{18}\)

Truth as an Absolute is imponderable. Nobody has ever seen it or known it. Gandhi believed that one could only have ‘fleeting glimpses’ in the sense of intuitive insight. "But these fleeting glimpses of Truth can hardly convey an idea of indescribable luster of Truth. Infact, what he has caught is only the faintest glimmer of that mighty effulgence.\(^{19}\)

Truth can be called the sum total of all that is true. But one cannot sum up all that is true. Human intellect cannot analyze Truth. Gandhi does not indulge in an analysis of it. "He goes behind the relative to the Absolute and gets his peace of mind."\(^{20}\)

"The Absolute Truth is thus the pre supposition, the background, the foundation of all the relative ones, and is itself completely free from the dual throng such as of love and hate, happiness and misery."\(^{21}\)

As such, Truth is indescribable. "But if mortal Man will dare to describe – he has no better medium than his own inarticulate speech."\(^{22}\)
The indescribability of the Absolute Truth is often described by Gandhi in Paradoxes like “Truth is hard as adamant and tender as a blossom”.23 The power we call God defies description.

Though the only reality is the Absolute Truth, relative truths are not unrealities. They are in fact partial temporal truths as against the whole eternal Truth. They are ‘the fleeting glimpses’ of Truth. They are not useless. They are true in their own kind and true only so far they go and for all practical purposes. Gandhi says, “As long I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by relative Truth, as I have conceived it. The relative Truth must meanwhile be my beacon, my shield, my buckler.”24

Though Truth is universally one and the same, it is to be seen in fragments and from different angles of visions. When Gandhi says Truth is one, but it is each individual who for himself determines it, he is not indulging in self contradiction. What he means to say is that everyone has to make his independent search for one and the same Truth, which, by necessity, cannot be realized as a whole but has to be gradually realized. Gandhi declared, “there is nothing wrong in every man following Truth according to his light. Indeed it is his duty to do so.”25

Gandhi believes that, truth and non-violence cannot be separated. He regards non-violence to be a necessary corollary to the former. Without non-violence, there will be a chaos and confusion. No doubt he stands for an independent search for Truth, he is convinced that, logically, truth is not different for different men; gradually, therefore, all the so-called differences will automatically vanish. Truth permeates the world. Therefore, men will by and by think alike. In non-essentials we differ, in essentials we agree, if today there are different tendencies and we think differently, a time will come, when we will think alike.
Confusion cannot persist, ultimately Truth will prevail (सत्यमेव जयते)

Gandhi regards God to be one without a second that pervades everything. Gandhi says, “God is in every thing, even in the stone.”26 He further says “those who worship idols, worship not the stone of which it is made, they try to see God who resides in it.”27 He conclude that in reality, He is everywhere but because He is formless and invisible, man cannot always sense His presence.

Gandhi thinks that as a pervasive reality God is immanent in the world, he unlike an ordinary pantheist, believes that God is also transcendent. He is in the world as well as beyond it. The absolute reality of God thus has two modes of existence. One is of nature and man and the other transcending it, that is, the Absolute Law does not exhaust its applicability to the phenomenal world and a good deal of its immeasurable power remains unknown to us.

The world is not maya, for Gandhi, in the sense of an illusion. The term that Gandhi has used for maya is appearance. He conceives the world in essence to be spiritual. The material world is only ‘appearance’. “Gandhiji has pressed us to recognize that appearances are deceptive. We must not treat them as realities. To recognize them as appearances is half the battle won. But the world of appearance is not an unreality when compared with the real behind it. For practical purposes both can be regarded real but are not, in fact, equally real. Sometimes he speaks like Samkarite & calls the world unreal but he means by the word ‘unreal’ only ‘impermanent’ or ‘transitory’.28

For him, as a matter of fact, the phenomenal world is neither unreal nor illusionary. It is a relative Truth. The ultimate Truth is God, and since God is one and the universe is a unity, it
follows that all partial Truth is related to the universal Truth and it is only in the light of the ultimate Truth that the lesser truths can be understood.

As in nature so in man, God is both immanent as well as transcendent. While God is the absolute Truth, man is merely a relative Truth. The one is infinite and perfect; the other is finite and imperfect. "God alone is Omniscient, man in flesh is essentially imperfect."²⁹

Though man, according to Gandhi is imperfect and finite, he is governed by the teleological law of life with its upward urge. "According to Gandhi life is an aspiration. Its mission is to strive after perfection, which is self-realization. The ideal must not be lowered because of our weaknesses and imperfections."³⁰ He further states that, "Man will ever remain imperfect and it will be his part to try to be perfect."³¹

Tandulkar writes in this context "The reason is obvious. God being immanent, His divinity is in every one and in everything — animate as well as inanimate — and is responsible for the upward urge towards perfection. It may be described as a continual longing to lose oneself in Divinity, which comprises all."³²

In spite of the fact that Divinity comprises all and God is immanent, Man is a part of the infinite Law and shares Divinity with God Himself. "He is such an infinitesimal part that he feels he is outside Him, without identification with the Divinity. And for all practical purposes this ‘smallness’ of man makes the relation between God and man external."³³

From the practical point of view (i) human activity becomes essentially religious and prayerful and "provides a moral basis for all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of ‘sound and fury signifying nothing.’"³⁴ (ii) "The body o’ man becomes a tabernacle of God."³⁵ (iii) The Universal Law
i.e., God acquires a perfect personality worthy of human adoration.

Absolute Law i.e. God works not only in Man but in Nature as well, as the Law of love, i.e. Ahimsa. Gandhi believes that all life, in essence is one and human beings are working consciously or unconsciously towards the realization of that identity, i.e. with all life, even with such beings as crawl on earth. Gandhi’s daily reference book for moral concepts, The Bhagavad Gita clearly says in chapter thirteen, in the 28th Shloka:

"समं परम नि सर्वत्र समवस्थितमौश्ररम्।

न हिन्नस्यायमनात्मानं ततो याति पांग गतिम्।।" 36

It means since seeing the Lord equally existent everywhere, he injures not self by self, and so goes to the highest goal. Again, in the 7th Shloka of the Eleventh Chapter of Bhagavad Gita, God has shown His Vishwaroop Darshan to Arjuna. It is:

"इहैैकस्यं जगत्कुलं पर्ययं सत्यार्जनम्।

मम देहे गुडाके शतवंदस्तुमुम्बाच्छि॥।"37

It means, God says, see now, Gudakesha, in This My body, the whole universe centered in one – including the moving and the unmoving and all that you desired to see."

It seems that it is the influence of Bhagavad Gita when Gandhi could see the world, man, moon, stars and animals everything as a part of God’s body, a relative Truth and the principle of Love and Ahimsa working behind the whole of the Universe. This Principle of Love is itself God. Non-violence and Love is an end as well as a means to realize that end. There is no other means of God realization than loving human beings by serving them. Bhagavad Gita has stated the same thought in the fourth Shloka of the 12th chapter. It is:

"सन्तिर्मोक्षिक्रमं सर्वेऽ समवृद्धमः॥ ।"
It means those who worship the God (indefinable) having subdued all the senses, even-minded everywhere, engaged in the welfare of all beings – verily, they reach only Myself.

Love of God demands love of God's men. By hating, killing, excluding ourselves from God, we can not love God, reach God rather to love Him demands continuous involvement in humanity's selfless service. I remember a poem read in the my childhood, 'Abu-Bin-Adam', where an Angel appears in the dream of a true social servant named 'Abu' with a list of those people whom God loves. In this list, Abu's name is on the top but his name did not exist in the list of those who loved God. It is true in the spirit of the above Shloka- that God loves those who love their fellow beings. Gandhi writes that God reveals itself in the phenomenal world through non-violence. Non-violence is the Universal law of love. The equation of Truth and Non-violence is the most original contribution of Gandhi to the Indian metaphysical thought.

Superficially we discover that life is beset with strife and bloodshed, we find on all sides life living on life. But it is not through strife and violence, it is through Co-operation and Non-violence that man can fulfill his destiny and his duty towards his fellow creatures. Ahimsa covers all creation not only human. Gandhi believes that all life in essence is one and human beings are working consciously or unconsciously towards the realization of that identity, i.e. the identity with all life, even with such beings those crawl on earth.

"In the social context, however, this universal identity means 'brotherhood of man'. It is because of this that Gandhi finds his God "myriad formed". Sometimes he sees Him in the spinning wheel, at other times he finds Him in communal unity,
or in the removal of untouchability and that is how he tries to establish communion with Him."39

It is his firm belief that man's nature not essentially evil. "Nodoubt man is born with brute strength, but he is born to realize God who dwells in him. That indeed is the privilege of man and it distinguishes him from the brute creation".40 Brute nature has been known to yield to the influence of love; one must never despair of human nature. Tendulkar writes in his book Mahatma, "Human nature in order to be human must cease to be beastly or brutal. Though we have the human form, without the attainment of the virtue of Non-violence, we still share the qualities of our remote reputed ancestor, the orangoutang." 41

Tandukar further states in this context, "we must, therefore, always strive to realize the Law of Love, which is immanent in us. Of course the body being the greatest obstacle, perfection in love will remain as unattainable ideal as long as man is embodied."42 'But this must not make him inert. "It should always be his part to strive ceaselessly towards such perfection for he becomes God-like only to the extent he realizes non-violence."'43 It is freedom from the daily coin of violence. Violence is brute force belonging to the lower self. In order to realize the higher self, one should reduce oneself to zero. So self-realization or moksha, for him is rising above violence, hatred and loving the humanity disinterestedly. Gandhi seems to believe that it is better to be deceived than deceiving others. His love of humanity attains the greatest heights of self-sacrifice in his search for moksha. He writes in his autobiography:

"I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in this quest. Even if, the sacrifice demanded my very life, I hope, I may be prepared to give it."44

Man is the highest creation of God and has been created in order to know his Maker. The aim of human life is not...
therefore to add from day to day to his material prospects and
material possessions rather he should come closer to his maker
i.e. God or Truth with each day that passes. To indulge in
physical pleasures, for Gandhi is, going away from the spiritual
pursuit and non-violence as the Bhagavad Gita preaches in the
second Chapter:

“ध्यायतो विभ्यान्दुः: सङ्ख्येत्रपुपजायते।।
संज्ञात् संज्ञायते कामः कामात्-क्रोधोऽभिजायते।।
क्रोधात् भवतिसम्मोहः सम्भोत्स्मृतिविभ्रमः।।
सम्मृतिभिः सब्दिनासारो बुद्धिनाशायणयति।।”

It means if we keep on thinking about the material objects
which satisfy our sense organs – we become attached to them.
From the attachment to the material objects – longing & from
longing anger grows. From anger comes delusion and from
delusion loss of memory takes place. And when loss of memory
occurs there is ultimately ruin of discrimination and he perishes.
Gandhi was fascinated by the beauty of those Shlokas in his
early youth and later on he realized the Truth in them. He
realized that attraction towards the material objects takes man
away from his Master. His Maker had advised him to follow the
principle of non-possession in the world, He believed man should
win the love of other human beings by serving them by removing
their sufferings.

Like a vedantin, his sole aim is the individual’s salvation,
but unlike a vedantic, he also thinks in terms of millions. He
wants to make Truth and non-violence, not merely for individual
practice but for practice by groups, communities and nations.
The Truth about the identity of selves, he believes that should
not remain the monopoly of a few, but should be experienced in
the collective life as well. Indian philosophy has emphasized on
the salvation of the individual. Aurobindo tells us that the
salvation of the individual is needed for a metamorphosis in his immediate environment, which is brought out by the very illuminating personality of the realized soul itself. But Gandhi, however goes a step farther by contending that salvation is impossible without effecting a change in the environment, for an unfavourable social environment will drag the individual down. The attainment of individual salvation forces an aspirant to live in fictitious and non-social environment. Gandhi does not like man to break down from society to which he belongs. So the only way out is to realize spiritual values by selfless service to community to which one belongs.

Gandhi’s conception of salvation is not individualistic. It cannot be achieved by an individual withdrawing himself from the world but it is to be attained by the service of humanity. The service of humanity however needs discipline and Gandhi prescribed the observance of certain vows, which form an integral part of the training of the inmates of his Satyagraha ashrama. "The object is to qualify its members for and make a constant endeavour towards the service of the country, not inconsistent with universal welfare." 46

"These vows are Truth non-violence, non-stealing, chastity, non-possession, bread labour, control of palate, fearlessness, swadeshi, and removal of untouchability and equal respect for all religion." 58

Many of these vows have been an integral part of the ancient religious heritage of India. The five cardinal observances of Non-violence, Truth, Non-stealing, continence and non-possession are mentioned in the Yoga-Sutras of Patanjali. Even prior to Yoga-Sutras - Buddha and Mahavira had preached these five religio-ethical vows as forming an essential part of an individual discipline. The vows of control of palate and fearlessness are also not new to Indian ethics. The remaining
vows, bread labour, equal respect for all the religions, *swadeshi* and abolition of untouchability are added by Gandhi in an answer to the needs of the modern age.

Gandhi has given equal importance to all the eleven vows and said, if one is broken, all are broken. Therefore, it is essential that all the disciplines should be taken as one. They form an indivisible whole in which every one of these forms a powerful link with the rest. And yet should be conceded that the first two vows *Satya* and *Ahimsa* enjoy a unique position in Gandhi’s philosophy for they are the end of salvation, the final values to be attained and they are among the means of salvation. Means and ends are convertible in Gandhi’s philosophy of life. Self-realization is both the process and the end in itself.

Gandhi rejected the traditional view that salvation is possible through meditation and contemplation and suggested active social participation in order to realize God, so all human activities social, political, religious should be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because, the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by the service of humanity. According to Gandhi, abstract contemplation is of no use as well as idol worship has no significance for self-realization.

Humanity is the only manifestation of God and the service of it would be the service of God. That is why he laid great emphasis on disciplines like removal of untouchability, respect for all religions, bread labour and *Swadeshi*. Besides, he also accepts the age-old disciplines of non-violence, Truth, non-stealing, fearlessness as preliminaries of self realization. According to Gandhi, man in order to realize himself, has also to
spiritualize and realize his surroundings through selfless service of suffering humanity.

As regards the know-ability of God, he rejects reason and intellect as means. He realized the limitations of reason and said that when it cannot analyze many a physical objects even, then how can it know the knower of the Universe. Intellect is God’s creation, it cannot succeed in analyzing the God. He did not believe that God is limited to man’s intellect. Speaking about the futility of reason Gandhi says that, reason is powerless to know Him. God is beyond the reach or grasp of reason. Sense perceptions are deceptive and reason cannot take us far, then how can we know God? Gandhi believes that God can be known through conscience, as conscience transcends the domain of sense and reason and it is infallible. Conscience is faith. Faith, for Gandhi is nothing but a living, wide-awake consciousness of God within us. God, for him is a matter of Faith and can be known and felt by faith alone.

To know God means to be one with it. So it cannot be finished at intellectual level. To be one with God or Truth requires to follow moral path in practice. Theoretical knowledge of moral values by intellect is just the beginning, where as their true practice in Man’s life is the end. According to him, “In the march towards Truth, anger, selfishness, hatred etc., naturally give way, .., otherwise, Truth would be impossible to attain. A man who is swayed by passions may have good enough intensions, may be truthful in word but he will never find Truth. A successful search for Truth means complete deliverance from the dual throng such as of love and hate, happiness and misery.”

Gandhi regards himself to be a man of faith who relies solely on God and believes that all that is necessary for the illumination of man’s life is this living faith in God. Faith,
according to him is an essential matter. Logic can make and unmake innumerable hypothesis. An atheist may win a debate but Gnadhiji on the basis of faith will challenge the whole world and say, “God is, and ever shall be.” He believes that he has no argument to convince through reason. “faith transcends reason. All that he advises is not to attempt the impossible.”

God is essentially a matter of faith. Gandhi himself recognizes that God will not be God if he allows Himself to be the object of proof. To prove God is to raise reason above Him. More over man's reason is also given to him by God only.

A seeker after Truth must be humbler than dust even. He says, “the world crushes the dust under its feet, but the seeker after Truth should be so humble himself that even the dust could crush him. Only then and not till then, man will have the glimpse of Truth.”

Gandhi has suggested a very tough path for self-realization. Ego has to be killed in this pursuit first of all. Man’s aim should be to be one with God and God he identify with Love, i.e. non-violence. He believed that the only way to find God is through loving humanity. He says, I see God in the fellowship with the masses the God I adore. I am impatient to realize myself to attain Moksha in this very existence. He says my nation service is a part of my training for freeing my soul from the bondage of flesh.

The concept of non-violence has achieved a completely new connotation in Gandhian Thought. He rises Ahimsa to a metaphysical status and declares it to be the Law of being. No thinker before him has ever given such a positive connotation of Ahimsa and likewise, it was never prior to him thought to be a metaphysical principle. Ahimsa presupposes sacredness of life, but it also implies dignity of the human being. The Ahimsa that
goes against the dignity of human beings and has no positive reference to Love and Compassion is no true Ahimsa.

Gandhi is a Monist who’s God is not personal rather it is a sovereign principle. It is an ever-existent reality. Even an atheist cannot deny that. So it is the same as the ‘Brahman’ of ‘Vedas’, ‘Absolute reality’ of ‘Bradley’, ‘Sunya’ of ‘Nagarjuna’, or ‘The Thing in itself’ of ‘Kant’ or Substance of Spinoza or Being of Parmenides or the ‘Idea of Good’ of Plato.

Gandhi has given nothing unique or original as a metaphysician. The position which he has taken is a central position, taken by Indian philosophy in general. The Upanishads, Yoga Sutras, the Bagavad Gita, Jainism and Budhisim are the chief sources of Gandhi’s basic philosophical ideas. He is a follower of a great tradition.

Following the Monistic idealism of Upanisads, he equate the essence of every thing with the ultimate source of the world. He also finds identity of *Atma* and Brahman.

Inspite of saying that God is an idea & not a personal being; he takes God as personal also, sometimes. It is like the concept of Absolute in Gita. As Gita does not repudiate the ultimate reality of the Absolute Brahman but it suggests that this Absolute reveals itself as the personal Lord.

Gandhi emphasises the impersonal aspect of God and says that ultimate reality is an ‘Unalterable Law’. Gandhi believes in the Universal self, which transcends the individual ego and coincides with the ultimate reality. It should however be conceded that Gandhi’s philosophy by and large is Truth and God oriented philosophy. Gandhi is not great because he has coined new words and phrases but because he has given life to the dead ideas and has lived his philosophy.

Gandhi’s God is one without a second, who is spiritual and universal. He is immanent in everything, even in the stone, and
human beings are consciously or unconsciously working to realize the oneness and unity of this Being. It is because of this fact that God reveals Himself particularly in the moral life. Though essentially a matter of faith, belief in God is not anti-intellectual. He transcends intellect but does not contradict rational life.

Such a God has got immense practical, emotional and psychological value for Gandhi apart from the metaphysical one. Radhakrishnan very correctly observes that what ever opinion we may hold of God, it is impossible to deny that He means something of supreme importance and absolute reality to Gandhi.
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