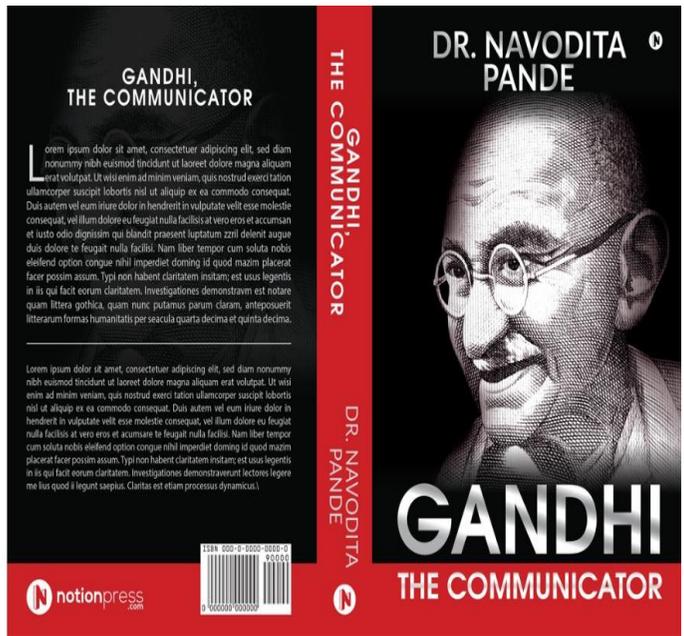
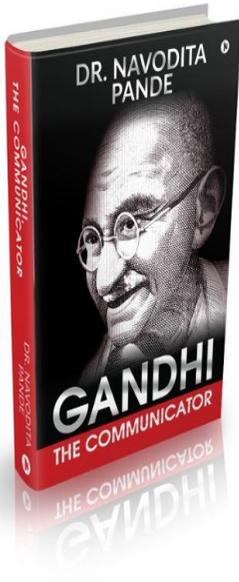


# Gandhi, The Communicator



Dr. Navodita Pande



INDIA • SINGAPORE • MALAYSIA

# Chapter 1

## Truth

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### Truth is God

At one stage of his life, Gandhi propounded that "God is Truth." After some "Experiments with Truth" (the title of his autobiography), he altered his position in 1926 and said that "Truth is God." Starting with the theological premise, Gandhism evolved the philosophical proposition. Theology prescribes the Truth; philosophy postulates a hypothetical absolute. Theology, built on blind faith, has to be monolithic and hence dogmatic in its goal, in its path to that goal, in its instruments, agents and methods; philosophy, which rests on reason and exploration, can be pluralistic and open-ended in everything. Gandhi espoused the Hindu concept of God. This has confused some protagonists of religionism. In contrast to the theological, anthropomorphic and personalized God enshrined in the Judaic, Christian and Islamic religions, the Hindu God is a concept of metaphysical explanations, a postulate of pluralistic exploration and a code of ethical enunciations; Gandhi sometimes called truth the "Inner Voice." Hinduism, in fact, should not be considered a religion as understood in the West; in its essence, Hinduism is a compilation of different systems of philosophies and ethics, ranging from atheism, agnosticism and materialism to naturalism, polytheism

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and monotheism. Viewed in this context, Gandhi's god is not the creation of theological limitations, or the crusader for religious dogma, or the prisoner of parochial prejudices. Gandhi's God is an open-ended hypothesis for a universalist and humanist explanation; Gandhi's God is a concept of absolute truth. The Gandhian concept of truth being God, indeed, provides a framework of philosophical and social analyses. If God represents the hypothetical absolute that is ultimate, universal and eternal, and hence the ideal, towards which everything moves, then any truth, whether metaphysical or mathematical, ethical or economic, political or polemical, could be tested on the touchstone of this hypothetical absolute purpose (telos); this teleology provides the broad-ranged standard of analysis that could be applied across classes, regions and cultures. Another implication: in this analytical scheme, truth is a human concept, and as such it is subjective, relative and relatively tentative. Yet these limiting attributes do not permit negativism, cynicism or scepticism, because human purposiveness lies not in attaining the truth, but in constantly trying to define and refine our concepts of truth through all possible searches, experimentations and verifications. As in science, every established concept of truth in human knowledge is truth, until it is disproved. Once the existing concept is disproved, then we must be willing to discard it, to accept the new concept and to start a fresh line of enquiry. This scientific spirit and philosophical approach imparts to all human endeavours the qualities of positiveness, purposiveness and dynamism. In this sense Gandhism is an optimistic philosophy of life, in contrast to the pessimistic view of human nature that considers humans as the products of original sin, condemned to damnation, or that life for all human beings is, in Hobbesian language, "nasty, brutish and short."

## **Truth Needs Freedom**

The Gandhian approach to truth also means that the scope for new questions and the opportunity for new experiments should always be present if human concepts of truth are not to become strangled

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with conformism or dogmatism. Stagnant concepts negate with the conformism or dogmatism. Stagnant concepts negate the unending search for truth. The questioning attitude and the experimental approach to truth demand an environment that provides and guarantees the freedom to think, to speak, to write, and to express oneself in support of and in opposition to the existing concepts of truths, their spokesmen and the political authorities behind them. These freedoms, in turn, rest upon other freedoms—the freedom of movement, association and assembly; of voting, becoming political candidates and conducting election campaigns, and of guarantees of fair and just procedures of the government assuring due process, rule of law and equal protection of the law.

## **Truth Demands Equality**

If Gandhian truth can be interpreted to be a human concept, then we may ask, which human being is capable of such conceptualization? Is this capacity available to all or many? Or is it limited to one or some who represent a particular class, caste, or community? Sex, status or society? Race, religion or region? Nationality, nation or nation-state? Gandhism is catholic and broad-minded in all its perspectives. It does not prescribe or ascribe or approve any form of discrimination or inequality. To the Indian masses Gandhi explained his commitment to human equality in his inimitable style arguing in the Upanishadic idiom that all human beings are the divine sparks coming out of the Great Divine Flame; sharing such divinity, how could anyone be evil or inferior? The Gandhian concept of equality is not to be reflected in simple majoritarianism, or in shutting off individual dissent. A simple arithmetical counting of individual heads or mechanical votes may not represent either Rousseau's General Will or an agreement on any concept of truth. Consensus, resulting from mutual exchange of ideas and opinions, peaceful persuasion or satisfying compromise, is a better measure of equality and a better indicator of mutual respect based on equality. "Majority tyranny" that is justified on basis of numbers in the

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mass democracy of today, seriously undermines the concept of equality. To make equality meaningful, individual argument should neither be disallowed nor be persecuted or be counted out, because every human being, according to Gandhian view, is capable of comprehending truth in his or her own way. In democratic context, this individualism is the very foundation for a charter of rights, which insulates and protects one person's liberties against the attack even by a majority of 99.9%. But Gandhian individualism does not propose a "tyranny of the majority" either. While advocating determination and courage for an individual to stand by his/her concept of truth, Gandhism constantly proposes that a satyagrahi (seeker of truth), should always be open minded towards the opposite viewpoint, should avoid any evil intention of hurting or harming or inconveniencing or exploiting the opponent, and should be ever willing to seek meaningful compromises without sacrificing one's principles. Thus the Gandhian approach to satya (truth) implies a philosophy that rests upon teleology as conceptualized by human mind with all its subjectivity and relativity of understanding, yet optimistic and dynamic in its orientation, and demanding a full commitment to fundamental freedoms and human equality. By laying such foundations of liberty and equality through satyagraha (truth force), Gandhian philosophy and praxis prepared India for democracy.

## **Truth is Built on Love**

If every human being is capable of comprehending satya, and if we are constantly engaged in search for new concepts for truth or in struggle for improving our concepts of truth, then we must undertake two basic measures: one, we must protect and preserve the life, and aid and abet the health of every human being so that the truth that he/she holds is not lost to us; this implies elimination of killing and bodily injury, disease, hunger and poverty; the other, we must always try to understand other individuals so that our concepts of truth can be



tested, validated or improved. These measures need our commitment to care, to serve and to appreciate other human beings who may be the custodians of our purposiveness and the carriers of our enlightenment. Gandhi also equated love and God. Obviously one cannot care for a person whom one hates or despises, or for whom one has no respect or affection. Love (prema) represents absence of spite and presence of respect, affection and care. Loving the fellow being is, therefore, the primordial preparation for satyagrahi (seeker of truth), who is engaged in struggle. Satyagraha (struggle for truth) integrates liberty, equality with fraternity. Understanding implies, first of all, open-mindedness; then a willingness to listen. Fad or fanaticism, and pride or prejudice may keep our minds closed. Lack of respect and empathy for the other person may hinder our willingness to listen. Without all of these preconditions, understanding is not possible. But understanding another person is not enough. Understanding others must be followed by an evaluation of one's own ideas and a willingness to drop our discredited ideas. Ego or fear may dissuade us willingness to drop our discredited ideas. Ego or fear may dissuade us from accepting the new idea. Even after accepting the new idea, we may not be able to act upon it; habit and conformism may prompt us not to implement the new idea. Only love (resulting from respect and empathy or sympathy) can conquer ego or selfishness, prejudice or fear, and fads or stubborn habits. Search for truth requires love; satyagrahi needs prema. The ultimate expression of true love is service (seva) of sacrifice (tyaga) towards the object of our love. Love is, therefore, a process of giving, sharing, caring and sacrificing. Selfish or self-centered love or self-love are terms in contradiction. In the Gandhian context, then, the concepts of "self-respect" and "self-love," as advocated by modern psychoanalysis and psychiatry, cannot be conducive for developing love for others. Love demands sublimation of the self through self abnegation; then and only then can love learn to share and sacrifice. Seva and tyaga emanate out of prema; service and sacrifice cannot be expressions of selfishness, egotism, prejudice, hate, destruction or death.

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## **Universal Well-Being**

The benedictions of truth, the overwhelming presence of love, and the ennobling instrument of service cannot be confined to a particular class, or be reserved for a special group, or a "chosen people." They are elements that are relevant, meaningful, necessary and beneficial for all human beings irrespective of race, religion, region, nationality or state. So any attempt at enriching one's own family or class at the cost of others, any policies of oppressing other states for the benefit of one's own state, any program causing intellectual and cultural degeneration of other nations so as to help the development of one's own nation, are counterproductive to the very goals of one's growth, because by such activities we destroy truths, love and services that others could have contributed to our own development and well-being more than this, in the process of hating and destroying others, we could brutalize our own capacities to love and to grow. There are certain simple truths that one cannot ignore: life cannot be meaningful amidst death; wealth cannot be multiplied when surrounded by poverty; development gains no advantage dealing with backwardness; happiness cannot be enthralling in an environment of tragedy; we cannot brutalize others without brutalizing ourselves. Intelligent and farsighted persons can easily realize that economic wellbeing of every human being, the social-political satisfactions of all states, the intellectual and cultural advancement of all nations, would prove beneficial for all human beings everywhere. This is the concept of sarvodaya, (universal well-being), also referred to as universal love. Sarvodaya should become the very framework for mapping and measuring the well-being of a particular class, or people, or state.

## **Lacanian Perspective**

In the Lacanian parlance (principles espoused by famous psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan) the being of the subject can be described by the three orders - Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real. The Imaginary is constructed around an ego. The ego is not the subject but the sense of the self.

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It is an illusion but the subject needs it because it offers the subject unity and cohesion. An ego is a unity as well as an illusion because it is originally a gestalt that every animal is naturally predisposed to and due to the premature birth it is corrupted. Hence the subject could construct it out of a mirror. The Symbolic is that order in the lap of what a neonate is born. It is the order of signifier and signified where the signifier needs not necessarily have any signified. It is the order of Law of the Culture and language. Any human being in order to be a cultural subject must fit himself/herself in to this pre-existing order of society, because by a metaphorical substitution Symbolic offers the subject a kind of freedom which is in fact artificial. The subject going after this illusive freedom, in turn, becomes subjectivized by the Culture. The Real is the order of that what the Symbolic and Imaginary cannot capture. It is that part of being what the subject has lost or repressed in order to be a subject. Hence the Real, we can say, is the ontology beyond any subjective metaphysics of symbolic - imaginary reality. From the cultural point of view, the Real is, therefore, unthinkable, unimaginable, or distorted like a Ghost. But, on the other hand, it is Real that, establishing thus a realism, saves the subject from sinking in the reverie of mere idealism.)

## **Truth and Culture**

In Gandhian philosophy, Truth is conferred with such a weight that Truth becomes that *End* what the Culture meditates on in its very imagination in a truthful manner of *Means*. Truth is, as if that missing point what the Culture has lost in the phenomenon of its own inauguration, i.e. in the event of the cultural advent. Culture has cut itself from Nature and has lost something which, I say, is Truth in Gandhi from a Lacanian perspective. Human being in order to be human, i.e. a civilized cultural subject, has lost a part of Nature which keeps haunting in her imagination. In Gandhi, this Ghost which haunts people's imagination is the Truth, for as a subject human has lost her true Nature as soon as she got contaminated by Culture.

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Truth from the retroactive cultural point will then bear the status of the *unthinkable* or the *unimaginable*, for, an artificial Culture cannot think of a pure Nature. Truth will, thus, sit on the cushion which is beyond the human reason and speech. Does it mean that Truth is all transcendent?

That too cannot be said. If Truth becomes all transcendent then Truth should be outside the periphery of imagination, i.e. a subject should not be able to think it even as the *unthinkable* or the *unimaginable*. But, a subject can do that. So, there is a part of Truth immanent in the very heart of human beings which is not, or cannot be, contaminated by anything, and, that remains as the purest essence at the heart of the Culture as an evidence of realism threatening all the time the reverie of idealism.

Truth thus has the status of the real, let us use Lacan's categories, which is unthinkable from a symbolic-imaginary cultural standpoint.

Then how to strive for that true Nature which is lost? Is there any device or means for that?

With this question, comes the problem of representation in language. For an individual, i.e. a personal subject Truth can be strived by meditation, Gandhi seems to opine (i.e. rejecting all those comfort that a Culture symbolically offers and at the same time seducing), in the practice of, say, reticence or aloofness in purity. For me, a personal Gandhian Brahmacharya does not mean more than this. But then, how can it be practiced in a large scale of inter-subjectivity?

Here Truth becomes symbolic. It has to be. Any gift, Culture confers on a human being, accepting what that human being gets transformed into a subject can only be in the sense of Symbolic. Culture cannot offer anything which is real. My identity, my status, my language, and even my location in a Culture can only be an artificiality that does not, or cannot, reach the true Nature, for they are all made for recognition in a conversational meet with other subjects in somewhat a virtual agreement. My name can be used by thousands, my status is defined in a scale of hierarchy, my language is useful on the basis of others' understanding,

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or my location is defined by a country I am residing in and taking a citizenship of. My name cannot represent only me as it can be used by others too. Similarly, neither there is an actual hierarchy in Nature, nor my language can reach its Ontology, nor are there any Real divisions of space of the same. We the subjects create it dividing the Nature by the virtual or artificial symbolic structure of Culture constructing a Reality against the real dichotomizing the Truth between the subject and the altar of objectivity.

Truth thus cannot be achieved by the Culture. It will remain the *end* of the Culture while the Culture itself becomes a *means*. Thus, it cannot be represented in language also.

Gandhi's credit lies in that that it is only him who exercises Truth at the symbolic level.

When a Culture becomes a means to attain the lost Nature, the real, the Truth; the symbolic of the very Culture must be at stake. It can be understood in the sense that the language a Culture uses must go through a metamorphosis of purification which can be understood in various ways. For Gandhi, this way is the technique of Satyagraha circulated in the language of non-violence or Ahimsa. The discipline of Satyagraha invariably invokes the hidden real sleeping at the heart of the subject and at the cracks of Culture beyond its artificial objectivity. The discipline should be understood and practiced accordingly against the lure of the artificiality of Culture in the virtual network of which a subject always loses her subjectivity being subjectivized in an ideological imagination.

For Lacan, human beings are gifted with the imagination because human beings have premature births. By birth, thus, a human being is absolutely helpless and has to depend on others who are already carrying a Symbolic trap of Culture. Due to the helplessness and the care a human baby gets from others in the struggle for survival a power of refined vision is developed in the human being precociously that eventually transforms into imagination. This imagination changes the Gestalt, the image by which an animal can recognize its species of same

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kind instinctively, and creates a distorted version of it. This distorted image created by the mediation of imagination is the Ego of a subject. This happens when the baby can see herself in absolute completeness in a mirror (i.e. peers, elders or the mother). This Ego which is basically Imaginary is, thus, an illusion. On the other hand, human being constructs a Reality out of this Ego, as this Ego captures the subject with a sense of I, the self, which with the mediation of the Symbolic in a stance of sharable inter-subjectivity offers an identity to the subject.

Truth is, therefore, also Imaginary, in the sense that a subject who is subjectivized in the imaginary-symbolic reality can only imagine It from the predicament of a distorted Gestalt, i.e. think It through the mediation of an illusory imagination. It is true that we are all humans. But, still our personal feeling of Truth is relative and hence imaginary. Gandhi could bring in a symbolic status to the personal imagination. In a way, he purloined the signifier of Truth. We should not forget that even our imagination strives for the lost Nature, the real of Truth which is beyond our imagination, we can understand at this juncture. By bringing in the inter-subjective symbolic Gandhi could catch the imagination of his generation, i.e. the Truth showed its face in the appeal to the symbolic of the Culture.

But, can Gandhi achieve Truth thus?

At least Gandhi talks of (a) humility- practice of which requires the utmost selflessness as a pre-condition in the pursuit of Truth.

This is a fact that a symbolic works with the instrument of ideologies. The language cannot capture the Truth even in metaphors. Because, the metaphorical representation of the concept of Truth though can talk of the ontological status of Truth, nevertheless, many a time, stops at a stagnated metaphysics of symbolic-imaginary Reality. Truth then gets substantialized and can be practiced only as ideologies. And we know that how any ideology can get politicized and moralized by any hegemonic authority. Dr. Ambedkar's accusation is, in fact, based on that kind of a thought, to reflect on from this perspective, in the sense that ideological morality or symbolic politics cannot reach the Truth of

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Nature as it cannot remain as Politics qua Politics or Morality qua Ethics, for, at the hands of Reason, the Master of rationality or Culture it gets politicized, moralized, or substantialized in a metaphysics of symbolic. Therefore, even a basket of interpretations cannot make anybody feel the true Nature of Truth if that interpretation reclines at a symbolic level.

The philosophical soundness of Gandhi regarding the concept of Truth thus rests on the theory, not in praxis in the practice of which something always slips out. This slipping out always creates a lack, the form that cannot be filled in by any so-called nameable object or recognizable symbolic action. This may be one of the reasons why an Anna's Satyagraha fails to capture the imagination in a totality. In fact, this kind of social action is a repetition of history and hence turns out to be a farce that makes a mockery of human subjectivity, for instead of reaching the Truth of Nature it often breaks the Whole of Nature and creates inassimilable residue in the margin of society. But, still there is a rigor in Gandhi in the sense that the Ghost of Truth is still haunting the symbolic-imaginary and we have not lost It because we can see It and we can try, although by some mistakenly placed symbolized act, to pursue It. The fact is that it is a failure that only guarantees the real of the Truth, the Ontology beyond any Metaphysics. Gandhians may feel a kind of *jouissance*, a kind of real happiness which is often sacrificed in the embracement of a corrupted ideological symbolic; if they keep searching after Truth not in a repetition of imaginary actions but by the sudden revolutionary Act altering the very co-ordinates of that bad-smelling symbolic. In philosophy, we call it a real event.

## **Truth & Bapu**

For a *Mahatma* or a *Bapu* in order to become a Name of the *Mahatma* or *Bapu*, the major signifier without a signified the *Mahatma* or *Bapu* must need to be killed. This is from the side of the symbolic, the subjects, not from the point of the Mahatma himself, a consideration

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on the basis of retroaction – a retroaction under the surveillance of the symbolic that must occur before the independence of India in terms of the metaphoric division of the subject into a so-called Hindustan and Pakistan. It happened – the fragmentation and chaos of the Mother Indus could have been captured by the symbolic category of India as a nation which must be confined with a boundary keeping something uncatchable outside in a demarcation of purity (Pak). This division that blocks the real continuity of the Indus soul was necessary for the resolution of Oedipus Complex via a castration in order to establish a centralized control system and national ideology. And it was inevitable that the real must usurp, force, or peep through the cracks as symptoms under the symbolic cloth of religions or boarder clash or any crimes done out of frustration. And many a time, a Father, must lose his symbolic grip and allow the subject to be foreclosed in the mad search of the Motherly shelter sometimes under the symbolic measurement of centralized ideology what can be named as terrorism of Naxalbari or Telengana or Manipur or Assam or Kashmir or what not – the list will follow endlessly and must follow for the sake of the symbolic itself.

It is, thus, the Gandhian Truth that talks of the real at the same time in the effort of defining it loses that rigor in an inauguration of an Imaginary other, a National ego that can only be observed in purloined symbolic participation. Truth thus gets a status of the Freudian totem when worshiped that can subside the guilt of killing the Father i.e. combating between themselves over the Motherly soil upon which the superegoic ethos of the Divine has been proclaiming a dominant role for ages.

Therefore, a proper study of altruism also becomes necessary – an Indian altruism that advocates of a social i.e. symbolic-imaginary brotherhood. Where is that brotherhood! It often happens that when I say that “I love you” it actually means that “my ego loves you”, thanks to the fact that your subjectivity does not threaten my ego, that I i.e. my ego can superimpose itself on you; it can colonize you in such a way that I can play with you the very presence/absence game in the

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*fort/da* style in what I get a metaphoric satisfaction of my desire. This proposal at the level of individuality is made by the ego - an ego that identifies with the paternal totem - with such aggressive seduction that it cannot be refused by the subject. On the other hand, the subject needs it to neutralize any conflict in the form of participation that can arouse respects for the fellow beings.

This provocative ego that is cast on the impossible real (i.e. none other than Truth itself ) that claims practicing an (ideological) austerity plays sufficiently the role of instrument.

To sum up with a symbolic metaphysical tone over the issue of Truth of Gandhi which is just an example of so many floating signifiers that have cast the fate of today's India, we can say that, Truth in a way filled the gap of privation of being of the Indian soul.

And Truth would be gnawing at the unconscious of the common Indian subject - the popular *aam aadmi* of the media play.

The Indian subject will continue going up to the imaginary scaffold of such and such ideology around those kinds of floating signifiers in order to see the world and determine their place of persecution, where she would be bound to the plank of guillotine executed by the major signifiers like *Bapu* or *Truth* or *Rama*.





## Chapter 2

# Celibacy

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### **Gandhi, the Celibate**

Understanding the reality of a person or an object becomes more conspicuous when it is analyzed through the systems of representation. The process of representing a life of any person in any mode could be based on an agenda. Every endeavor in representing the life of a person could be grounded on polemics. The procedure of the life writing activity is not simple but a complex process. Arguing for and against a person 's life is a general human tendency, and from this strategic disposition, there emerges the possibility of biography as a valid kind of literature. Represented versions of the life of Mahatma Gandhi in biographies, fictions and films give an impression that how stimulating is the subject of Gandhi. Gandhian biographers have attempted to characterize Gandhi not only to display the idealized versions of his life and praxis but also to critique the flaws in his personal life and socio-political misjudgments. The life-writing is an important task for tracing objectively the multiple voices of a person. Each of the biographers has approached the life of Gandhi with an intention to decipher all the unexplored complications affiliated to his experiments with life. Before disclosing how the life is narrated in some biographies of Gandhi, it would be essential for placing a brief understanding of

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the genre called biography. The biography is a genre which describes as well as records the life of an individual in a specific narrative pattern. In biography, the life has to be represented by considering the facts and events of one 's life. A holistic assessment of an individual 's life is the base for the lifewriting or life referential writing. Biography is one of the most popular areas of study providing sense of history, inspiration, didacticism, entertainment, and above all understanding life of a person. Though the making biography is a process of recording the significant phases of one 's life, it is not similar to the process of historiography. In historiography, the facts regarding a person or an event are presented in a scientific manner but in biography the author has the right to make the facts more creative. Ian Bruce Nadel quotes in his *Biography: Fiction, Fact and Form* (1984) the views of Virginia Woolf as presented in *The Art of Biography*(1915) thus: - Almost any biographer, wrote Woolf, if he presents fact, can give us much more than another fact to add to our collection. He can give us the creative fact; the fertile fact; the fact that suggests and engenders. For Woolf this is the greatest asset of the biographer, making him equal to the novelist in creative power and importance.

## **Interpretations of Gandhian Chastity**

Jad Adams in his *Naked Ambition* reveals Gandhi 's political life and personal life including the ideas of sex and chastity. The contradictory elements of Gandhi 's experiment in political act have been bravely disclosed: —he was an intensely ambitious man, but this was no ordinary ambition. He did not personally care about salt, and was trying to eliminate it from his diet; he supported the mill workers when he did not approve of dyeing cloth; he wanted Indians to rule India but had no time for elections and assemblies; he enjoyed the fulsome support of the rich while promoting the values of poverty. In the very beginning itself, Jad Adams puts forward the possibilities of unmaking the ideas of Gandhi and attempts to expose the notion that Gandhi 's objectives were for getting personal spiritual perfection. The episode of sex in the

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life of Gandhi is the major part discussed by Jad Adams. The author believes that if the subject of Gandhi and sex is banned then the good deal of Gandhi 's own work would have to go. It is not just for exposing Gandhi 's sense of sexuality but through this controversial episode an attempt is made to understand the whole life from a narrative. Jad Adams makes it clear on his treatment of Gandhi in his *Naked Ambition* in an interview to DNA daily:

Different things possessed him at different times in his life. When he was in London as a student it was vegetarianism (not sex or politics) that interested him. In South Africa his attempts to remain chaste and his creation of ideal communities were more important to him than his work for Indian traders. Back in India he was preoccupied with Indian nationalism and his ashrams in the 1920s and 30s. At the end of his life, his sexual experiments preoccupied his thinking. My interest is in the whole of his life — his political, spiritual and family life as well. I give what I hope is a rounded picture of Gandhi, not concentrating on sex, but not ignoring it either.

The childhood and marriage days of Gandhi have been described here along with his spiritual influences that led his later ideological make up. Gandhi's family tradition and belief have been described in the chapter, "Childhood and Marriage". Gandhi's aversions to certain family practices, namely approach to untouchables and child marriage have also been presented. The early sense of Gandhi towards sex and celibacy has also been disclosed significantly as this biography intent for making Gandhi 's view on sex and celibacy as a key subject: —Gandhi compounded his grief for his father 's death with guilt that he had not been present and with the shame of my cardinal desire even at the this critical hour of my father's death, which demanded wakeful service. He could never forgive himself for having for been in the grip of lust at that moment. ...it took me long to get free from the shackles of lust, and I had to pass through many ordeals before I could overcome it...let all those who married be warned by my example. Jad Adams replies to a question and his choice of taking up Gandhian sexuality as a subject -

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by Sharique N Siddiquie in an interview in Zee news on April 2010 – by stating the basic theme of *Gandhi: Naked Ambition* and reason for the daring treatment of this controversial subject: I'm not implying that this book is only about sex. The truth is that Gandhi as a man liked talking and writing about sex and challenged his own sexual needs, at times. Information shows that he had practical experiments with sex, there are written records of this. My work is not an interpolation of sex into the life of a man whose actions were otherwise non-sexual. In fact, Gandhi's attitude was labelled 'abnormal and unnatural' by Jawaharlal Nehru and during Partition, senior leaders like J Kripalani and Vallabhbhai Patel also distanced themselves from him on account of his sexual attitude. Any biographical attempt on Gandhi would be utterly incomplete when there is no serious reference on the contribution made by him in the political events that led to India's liberation from the shackles of imperial power. But certain life-narration like *Gandhi: Naked Ambition* foregrounds the personal matters relating to the ideas and convictions of the subject. It would be illogical from the part of biographer to ignore various aspects of Gandhi's life and evaluate him only on his political basis. Again it would not be a correct critical reading when one eschew the personal life of Gandhi especially his understandings and convictions on sexual life. Though, the normal Indian sensibilities would not be too broad in position to appreciate *Gandhi: Naked Ambition*, just because of the disclosing of Jad Adams namely, Gandhi slept and bathed with young girls, he examined the sex life naked with naked nubile women to test his chastity, the challenge of chastity, avoidance of sex, advocate of celibacy, views on how to overcome sex for spiritual upliftment and the purpose of sexual relationship in life. In order to analyze further the sexuality of Gandhi, it would be inevitable to know about his sense of brahmacharya. Gandhi started practicing brahmacharya in 1901. For Gandhi, brahmacharya is a search for brahma (truth) and to control flow of thought, word and action of all sense, in all times and in all places. Gandhi has clearly illustrated the fundamental nature of practice of brahmacharya in his seminal text *An Autobiography*

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or *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (2003): The knowledge that a perfect observance of brahmacharya means realization of brahman, I did not owe to a study of the Shastras. It slowly grew upon me with experience...Every day of the vow has taken me nearer the knowledge that in brahmacharya lies the protection of the body, the mind and the soul. For brahmacharya was now no process of hard penance, it was a matter of consolation and joy. Every day revealed a fresh beauty in it. The biographer tries to find the contradiction in the practice of brahmacharya by Gandhi and for he quotes from Gandhi's autobiography in this regard: —It is the height of ignorance to believe that the sexual act is an independent function necessary like sleeping or eating. The world depends for its existence on the act of generation, and as world is the play – ground of God and a reflection of His glory, the act of generation should be controlled for the ordered growth of the world. This peculiar notion, that the control of sex influences the functioning of the world, had its root in these first efforts at sexual renunciation in the late 1890s in South Africa; it was to have its bizarre culmination in India in 1947. Gandhi's attempts to control his high sex drive and to condemn expressions of sexuality in others would bring his political activity into disrepute. The experiments with sex by Gandhi could be interpreted in various ways, the natural manner would be to color him in a very deplorable and pitiable person with disgrace and shameful. But there could be another elucidation of Gandhi in relation to his sense of sexuality that the search for ultimate truth was the base his experiments. Girja Kumar in his 'Brahmacharya: Gandhi and His Women Associates' (2006) perceives that the inspiration of Gandhian brahmacharya is from the Indian tradition, he relates Gandhi with Ramakrishna Paramahansa by quoting Narasing Sil's text 'Ramakrishna Paramahansa: A Psychological Study' (1991): It has been said of Ramakrishna: [His] entire spiritual discourse is a sermon about sex...There is not only a deep preoccupation with sex, but the axiom of his sermons, reveals his obsession with what is called displaced sexuality' ...Gandhiji often asserted that perfect brahmacharya has existed only in imagination. He

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never claimed to be a perfect brahmachari himself...Ramakrishna admitted as much: —Ah, lust does not vanish till god lasts, a little of it continues even after that realization, but then it cannot raise its head. Do you think I am myself all together free from it?. Though Gandhi has repudiated his self from the sex he has maintained an idea regarding the purpose of sex: —...sex was sinful except explicitly for the production of children. Avoidance of sex could be an act for attaining an understanding which transforms one to a better personality. Abstaining sex was not a formula or strategy for his political end but for his personal understanding. Jad Adams quotes Gandhi 's collected works to substantiate the abstinence of sex by Gandhi: —The moment I bade goodbye to a life of carnal pleasure, our whole relationship became spiritual. Lust died and love reigned instead. Jad Adams quotes Jawaharlal Nehru 's views on the unusual sexual experiments: —as unnatural and shocking ...I think Gandhiji is absolutely wrong in this matter. His advice may fit in with some cases, but as a general policy it can only lead to frustration, inhibition, neurosis and all manner of physical and nervous ills. Brahmacharya is a sensitive subject to be discussed in a public with openness, yet Gandhi has his own broad minded approach in discussing it to the opposite sex. For Gandhi, celibacy means not to eschew women completely and lead an isolated life, but to recommend a community living where men and women can stay together. The relevance of Gandhi's sense of sexuality, to some extent is becoming relevant in the contemporary cultural space of India. The recently staged "Kiss of Love" protest in Cochin is symbol of cultural liberation to live a life of togetherness. The "Kiss of Love" is a novel and non-violent protest against the upcoming group of moral policing began in Kerala and it later spread to other parts of the country, namely Kolkata, Calicut, and Delhi, JNU. An open discussion on sexuality is not an immoral act but an attempt to bring renaissance in the sense of man- woman relationship. The non-violent protest against the fascist force by kissing each other for attaining the cultural liberation that happened in Kerala would have to be read in the context of Gandhian sense of celibacy and

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sexuality. The text “Brahmacharya: Gandhi and His Women Associates” tries to justify the conduct of his intimacy in the ashram and his approach to ashram women as, —···this experiment be considered maverick on his part. It was a part of his exploration in the cause of brahmacharya. In this brave new world, his experiments were meant to probe the limits to which a man could endeavor to intrude upon the domain of Kama. He had also in the process of exploring new ethics regarding the concept of brahmacharya. Absence of scriptural sanction for his unorthodox explorations did not deter him. Jad Adams has referred to the unusual relationship of Gandhi with Hermann Kallenbach, a German Jewish South African architect who was a close friend of Gandhi. The affectionate letters of Gandhi to Hermann Kallenbach has been colored by the biographer as a homoerotic: —Kallenbach was the only portrait he kept on the mantelpiece in his bedroom when he was in London lobbying for the recognition···There has to be a suspicion of a homoerotic attachment on the part of Kallenbach, who was two years younger than Gandhi and never married, but there is no evidence that his affection for Gandhi ever approached the physical. Another life – narration on Gandhi by Joseph Lelyveld that was published one year after the publication of Gandhi: Naked Ambition too observes the unfamiliar attachment towards Hermann Kallenbach in —Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle with India (2011): —Hermann Kallenbach···the most intimate, also ambiguous, relationship of his lifetime. —They were a couple. Kallenbach later remarked that they’d lived together —almost in the same bed···One respected Gandhian scholar characterized the relationship as —clearly homoerotic rather than homosexual. The facts presented in biographies are not shocking or new revelation on the life of Gandhi, but they help to understand and interpret the nature of Gandhian sexuality in this contemporary cultural space to remove the taboo of comprehending the natural meaning of sex. The life of celibacy is not an excuse for keeping oneself away from his wife, but it could be for attaining a state of mind for an intellectual transformation to achieve any objectives: —In Gandhi ‘s

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formulation, it seems less a renunciation of sexual desire than a rejection of wife and family. When Tolstoy similarly renounced his sexual nature when he was writing his novella of sexual disgust "The Kreutzer Sonata" in 1889-1890, his wife interpreted it as a rejection of her. The spiritual act of brahmacharya in Gandhi provided with spiritual space for redefining the emotion of love towards his wife Kasturbha: —He asserted that his spiritual love for Kasturbha began after he eschewed sexuality in 1906...His object in practicing brahmacharya was limited to getting rid of sexuality for the sublimation of his personality. Richard Attenborough in his Oscar winning film Gandhi (1982) has depicted a memorable shot that justifies the Gandhian sense of celibacy and the understanding of it by Kasturbha Gandhi. The scene takes place in Aga Khan Place in Poona in which Margaret Bourke - White, an American photo journalist interviews Kasturbha: Bourke - White: You mean he ... he ...gave up...married life? Kasturbha(with a smile): Four times he tried - and failed. But then he took a solemn vow... Bourke - White: And he was never broken it? Kasturbha: (with a twinkle in her eyes): Not yet. Bourke - White looks at Kasturbha incredulously and they both (along with Mirabehn, who is present during the interview) burst into laughter. Gandhian concept of brahmacharya is closely linked with his search of truth and nonviolence. His practice of brahmacharya is a source of inspiration for his philosophical search for truth through the medium of non-violence. His approach towards sex and other characteristics of brahmacharya has an affinity to, as mentioned in the text "Music of the Spinning Wheel: Mahatma Gandhi's Manifesto for the Internet Age" (2012) by Sudheendra Kulkarni as, —sex and ... brahmacharya was similarly a blend of science and faith, both having the common happiness and giving a God-ward reorientation to human life. When brahmacharya is thus understood the potential to transform human sexuality itself into a mighty new stream of energy that can heal man's divided self, reduce human suffering, and assist humanity to enter a new stage of its nonviolence evolution. The process of comprehending sex is a complex task, and it should not be an isolated human

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understanding, instead one could approach it with an instinct of human dignity. In this contemporary Indian social space, the rape and molestation are not uncommon news. The lack of mutual respect between man and woman and absence of proper conception of the sense of sexuality could be the reasons for misusing the very purity of sex: A man woman relationship is one of the greatest mysteries of human life on par with birth and death. But what is mysterious often becomes mundane with the passage of time as our capacity to love, trust, care, reflect and wonder, weakens under the weight of habit and the social environment. Not many of us make serious attempts to understand our own sexuality because doing so demands introspection with utmost honesty, transparency and understanding a task fear and avoid. Rarer still are those who, like Gandhi, not only examine the mystery of sex, but also harness its power to the pursuit of a larger social goal... truth as the ultimate and inviolable goal, nonviolence as the path to reach the goal, and brahmacharya as way of making oneself fit to travel along the path. Though there are several established spiritual and religious institutions for propagating moral values and ethics, the incidence of misusing these value systems has become a threat to the root of the culture fabric of our contemporary society. There must be a strong sexual morality to eschew the proliferation of misuse of sex and at the same time it doesn't mean that our society should hold the outdated traditional sexual morality and ethics. There must be an attempt to make one free and progressive towards understanding the purpose and the idea of sexuality: —Loveless sex, or sex with lust only, is an act of violence. It neither humanizes nor, much less, divinizes man. It signifies man's fall from his own higher evolutionary possibilities.

## **Celibacy & Social Restraint**

Though the internet has become a medium for encouraging and popularizing the voyeuristic temperament in man and woman, and thereby destabilizing the traditional cultural notions on sexuality, it has also on

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the other hand attempted to bring a novel method in propagating and disseminating the cyber-sex industry: — the internet satyagrahis attempt to evolve new sexual ethics, a major challenge they must address is how to tackle the menace of pornography and human trafficking. Since these ills feed to a large extent on the ongoing destabilization of traditional societies and cultures, achieving a new and humane social stability is, of course, a necessity... But far more important is the need to reform the personal conduct of individuals, beginning with Internet satyagrahis. It would be very much essential and inevitable to have an alternative sexual morality in the age of cyber culture for providing a better understanding and respect with man-woman relationship. Gandhian sense of relationship between a man and woman is possessed with secular and democratic approach. One of the major challenges happening in India is the issues of rape and molestation. The sexual exploitation against women has become a social challenge in the contemporary Indian culture. The root cause for this social menace would be the lack of proper comprehension of the values of sexuality. Looking at the emerging cyber and electronic culture one can easily derive at the fact that sexual explorations are mounting through the medium of internet and other electronic social medium. At this condition there could be a possibility for organizing an internet Satyagraha for framing morality in sexual behaviorism. The huge antirape non-violent protest across India may change our culture, and it also enhances a new sensibility in showing respect and dignity to the opposite sex. By considering all these reasons, it would be sensible to comment that Gandhian sense of sexuality and brahmacharya could be placed for judging the present world, at least for a upbringing a culture of mutual respect within the sexes. In an article on Gandhi Urvashi Butalia draws the Gandhi's approach towards women as, unlike most men, Gandhi had a great deal to say about women. He wrote about them in his treatises, he wrote long letters to them throughout his life, he examined his motives and beliefs about women all the time, and acknowledged and addressed the feminine in himself without embarrassment. Thus, Jad Adam's "Gandhi: Naked Ambition" presents a specific controversial aspect of

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Gandhi's conviction. The basic intention of this biography is not to blast the image of Gandhi, but to explore the complex method of sexuality that he practiced in his life as a part of the brahmacharya method through truth and non-violence. The general mind set of the people conceals a space for an open dialogue on the matter of sexuality, but through this life-narration Jad Adam reveals the true life-story of Gandhi from the perspective of Gandhi's sense of sexuality and celibacy. There are two possibilities to approach this biography; firstly, thorough repudiation of this work just for the reason that Gandhi's way of practicing and understanding of the sexuality and brahmacharya could negatively affect the cultural matrix of India; Secondly, this attempt of Jad Adam would provide a comprehensive examination of the life of Gandhi, and there could be a new endeavor in comprehending and realizing a new sensibility in the matter of sexuality and celibacy. Any cultural fabric of a society cannot be always in motion or stationary, but it has to change; multiply; proliferate; and it should never end. The force behind these cultural appropriations is from several influences and inspirations. The act of life-narrations has the power to generate a space for accommodating the mind, escalating ideas and philosophies of well-known people in a socio-cultural galaxy. The ideas and the views on sexuality is a controversial episode in the life of Gandhi which has been presented and interpreted in multiple ways; few have romanticized it, some have philosophized; some have documented it as a part of historiography; some have condemned it sharply and others have spiritualized it. All these interpretations show the complexity involved in comprehending Gandhi as a person and as an idea. There could be no other literary genre as life-narration that could bring a comprehensive and holistic approach in reading a person.

## **Brahmacharya & Religion**

Brahmacharya is a hallowed concept in most religions. It originates from the need of self-restraint and self-discipline for a religious man. But its philosophic roots go much deeper. In the Orient, matter is regarded as the seat of all evil, and it is necessary to extinguish all passions emanating

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from the material body to attain self-realization. Sexual impulse, being one of the strongest passions, becomes a special target of control and annihilation. In the Roman Catholic Church celibacy is mandatory for its priestly order, and its monasteries are barred and bolted like prisons. In Jainism and Buddhism also the celibate order is highly developed and its nuns and monks cannot marry. Whereas in other religions celibacy is prescribed for the ascetic orders only, Hinduism divides life into four ashramas or stages, and prescribes celibacy for all high-caste persons for the first stage. During this period a person is required to practice brahmacharya and devote all his time to gaining knowledge and educating himself for the task of adult life. In the second ashrama he gets married and becomes a full-fledged family man. It is only after he has fulfilled his worldly responsibilities and fired all his bolts that he retires from active life. In its ascetic orders it is only the highest priestly class which observes brahmacharya. But Hinduism takes quite a relaxed view of celibacy. One of its distinctive features is that the vow of celibacy is purely voluntary and there exists no external authority to enforce it. Hindu monasteries are open dwelling places, and a priest joining the monastic order can leave it at will. In his mid-thirties Gandhi became a brahmachari, and for the rest of his life he propagated the virtues of celibacy.

## **Brahmacharya & Bodily Restraint**

He kept fast regularly as 'an external aid to brahmacharya.' These austerities led him to a state where he could claim, 'Life without brahmacharya appears to me to be insipid and animal-like.' But it was all along a very tough climb. Writing at the age of fifty-six, nearly nineteen years after he had taken the vow, he stated, 'Today I may say that I feel myself fairly safe, but I have yet to achieve complete mastery over thought.' Throughout his adult life Gandhi regarded sex as something dirty, degrading and sinful. There was one incident in his life to show why he was convinced he had to tide over his vices. His father was seriously injured when he was journeying. Gandhi held Shraavan [his father] as a model of filial devotion, and he nursed him with great care.

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One night, after giving him a massage, he retired to his bedroom, woke up his wife, and had sex with her. He was still in the act when a servant knocked at the door and told him that his father had expired. "I felt," writes Gandhi in his autobiography, "deeply ashamed and miserable...I saw that if my animal passion had not blinded me, I should have been spared the torture of separation from my father, during his last moments...a blot I have never been able to efface or forget...and found unpardonably wanting because my mind was at the same moment in the grip of lust. I have therefore always regarded myself as a lustful, though a faithful, husband." In Hinduism a brahmacharya never gets married, he lives away from women, and his vow forbids him to even touch them. Gandhi prescribed it for married people and practiced it while living with his wife. On the other hand, most of the Hindu gods had a consort and lived a normal married life. In fact the Puranas are full of their tales of dalliance. His two great deities, Lords Rama and Krishna, enjoyed full-blooded conjugal bliss. In fact kama (sex) is one of the four Hindu purusharthas (desirable goals of life). Ancient Hindu literature and architecture is full of the celebration of sex.

This is the one area where Gandhi's conduct and explanations lack at times his characteristic ring of transparency and honesty, and this laid him open to the charge of casuistry, selfdeception and sophistry. Also, as pointed out by NK Bose, the mysteries of the senses seemed to interest him too much. It was always with women that he shared his worries about his 'dirty' dreams, his discharges, his sexual fantasies. The more explicit brahmacharya experiments of Gandhi were performed during 1945-47. Tormented and agonized by the turn of events, he was failing desperately to salvage some shards of his broken dream. And instead of seeking the causes of these developments in external, objective factors, he looked for internal flaws and deficiencies to explain these events. He wrote, 'I have been asking myself the question "What is it that is choking the action of my ahimsa? Why does not the spell work? May it not be because I have temporized in the matter of brahmacharya?" ' It was this conviction that led him to hold his own imperfections responsible for the

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crises and calamities of the external world. It was certainly an egocentric view of events based on his propensity for intense self-absorption. Of all the major projects of Gandhi, his experiments in search of pure brahmacharya were the most sterile. Instead of giving him a surge of soul-force, they proved a great drain on his energy. And they caused much avoidable pain to his followers and admirers. For it was not full-blooded sex in marriage—conjugal sex—that Lords Rama and Krishna enjoyed and for which they are remembered. Instead, Rama-Krishna sex is full-on lustful sex: sex with mistresses, prostitutes, casual sex partners, and sex professionals—sex with the fantasy sex workers that inhabited and cohabitated in their mythical, but graphic, tales. Thus their driven, compulsive sex fetishes with under-age minors, and their dark, convoluted pathological obsessions are what “in fact the Puranas are full of.” And thus, “ancient Hindu literature and architecture is full of the celebration of sex” and multiple sexual partners outside of marriage, and the evidence is literally, set in stone. In any case, it probably should be noted that, like his two greatly admired Hindu deities Ram and Krishna, Gandhi never chose ugly girls for his ‘sleeping-naked-with-his-naked-female-colleagues’ experiments. Indians understand this. Westerns, by and large, do not. It is a given in anthropology that every worldview generates its own worldvenue. This brings us to the question—did Gandhiji—earnest, intense, and elderly—cause the political and social turmoil of Indian nationalism and British colonialism because of his lack of performing the self-absorbing practices of brahmacharya perfectly? In my opinion, no. But what is important here is to note that he thought so. Many are aware that for Gandhi, his lack of perfecting brahmacharya added to India’s contemporary distress.

Gandhi also believed that brahmacharya was not only avoidance of sex, it meant control of all sensual appetites. ‘Control of the palate is the first essential in the observance of the vow,’ he wrote. So, he pursued his dietetic experiments more vigorously, and switched over to simple, bland and raw foods. He also gave up milk, as he believed it to be a stimulant.

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