



An Analysis of Mahatma Gandhi's Autobiography

Dr. Vinita Sandu

Assistant Professor, English Department, Government Arts and Commerce College, Jadar

Abstract:

The Story of My Experiments with Truth is the autobiography of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi "Mahatma" Gandhi. Published in a weekly journal, Navjivan, between 1925 and 1929, it covers the span of time between Gandhi's early childhood through roughly 1921. The book has been recognized as one of the most important spiritual works of the twentieth century. In the book's introduction, Gandhi disclaims that the opinions and ideas expressed in his autobiography are subject to change and that its purpose is not to relay a static picture of himself, but to show how personal truths evolve over time. He also claims that the book is moral and spiritual in nature, mostly away from politics. Gandhi expresses ambivalence about the usefulness of the typical autobiography, a Western literary invention.

Keywords – Autobiography, Gandhi, Mahatma, Truth

Mahatma Gandhi is one of the most inspiring leaders, not just in India, but across the world. For us Indians, Mahatma Gandhi – fondly known as “Gandhiji” or “Bapu” – holds a special place in our hearts. His autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth* is one book that instructs on what is right and bad. Gujarati was the original language, which was afterwards translated into English and other Indian languages. The book is divided into five parts, beginning with his birth and ending in 1921. “My life from this moment forth has become so public that there is almost anything about it that people do not know,” he writes in the final chapter. It was published in his periodical *Navjivan* from 1925 to 1929 in weekly editions. Gandhi explains in his “Farewell” to the readers that he never intended his autobiography to be an autobiography, but rather a story about life and truth experiments. In Gandhi's own words:

I simply want to tell the story of my numerous experiments with truth, and as my life consists of nothing but those

*experiments, it is true that the story will take the shape of an autobiography. But I shall not mind, if every page of it speaks only of my experiments ... I should certainly like to narrate my experiments in the spiritual field which are known only to myself, and from which I have derived such power as I possess for working in the political field ... If I had only to discuss academic principles, I should clearly not attempt an autobiography. But my purpose being to give an account of various practical applications of these principles, I have given the chapters I propose to write the title of *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.*

According to the preface, “Self-realization, seeing God face to face, and attaining Moksha are what I wish to achieve – what I have been trying and longing for the past thirty years. I live, move, and exist in order to achieve this aim.” While Mahatma Gandhi was in jail he decided to write his autobiography.

Gandhi's autobiography was memories of Gandhi's experience or experiments of

trying to make him better and others. He decided to write an autobiography midway through his career, he took the privilege to explain himself more into details. Although accepting of his position as a great leader in the struggle against the violence, racism, celibacy, and other principles of conducted believed to be different from truth, but for him he said truth is sovereign principle which includes various other principles. Gandhi was a god fearing person and for him there were innumerable definitions for God and He worshiped god as truth only. He believed after getting more devoted to God, he believed success was achieved in his life. He feels when he got more affectionate towards the god; it led him to seek simple living and life without violence.

His objective for writing this book that the reader can see his good points and bad points, his successes and failures, his triumphs and mistakes.

Interpretation Of The Text

The structure of Gandhi's autobiography is as follows: an introduction, five parts containing chapters, and a conclusion. The majority of the chapters is short and covers a single occurrence in his life. His account is almost entirely chronological. The introduction describes his search for truth, and the conclusion summarizes it, demonstrating the overall message.

Gandhi's birth (October 2, 1869), childhood, adolescence, and period in England are all covered in **Part One**. The beginning of the autobiography traces Gandhi's childhood and young adult life in Rajkot and Porbandar. Gandhi recalls eating meat, a practice he later renounced, and relates that he

had a rather hedonistic lifestyle in general. He admits to stealing and drinking excessively – all actions from which he now aspires to redeem himself. He explores some of his first favorite books, including the plays *Harishchandra* and *Shravana Pitrabhakti Nataka*. The latter play, in which the central figure Shravana realizes a deep respect for his parents, moved Gandhi to do the same. Gandhi is married to Kasturba in a child marriage at the age of 13, which means she's also a youngster and their parents are the ones who determine they should marry. He expresses deep regret for the childhood marriage, calling it "preposterously early" and fully denouncing its moral basis.. His religiously tolerant political official father and devoted mother affected him as a child. Another of Gandhi's most formative experiences was the early death of his father, Karamchand Gandhi. When Gandhi's father dies, a family friend advises Gandhi to study law in England in order to retain the family's high position. His caste, on the other hand, claims that travelling overseas is against their religion. His later activist work was heavily influenced by his early losses and mistakes

Meanwhile, his mother is concerned that he may become disoriented in a foreign society and begin to drink, eat meat and have relations with other women other than his wife, who will remain at home in India while her husband goes on his big trip. Gandhi informs his caste that he intends to travel to England and that they are free to expel him...which they do. Gandhi takes serious pledges not to touch alcohol, meat, or other women in

response to his mother's fears. He's now on his way to England. He returns to India after becoming a lawyer.

Part Two details his experience in South Africa, where he goes to work for a law business. He is thrown off a train owing to "colour prejudice" (his term for racism), and he chooses to fight back—albeit non-violently. He pursues his religious studies and establishes the Natal Indian Congress. He returns to India for a while, where he sees his master Gokhale and others, but is quickly summoned back to South Africa to continue his "public labour," as he refers to today's agitation.

In **Part Three**, Gandhi deepens his spiritual practice of self-control by accepting the brahmacharya vow of celibacy—by this time, he's had four kids, all with Kasturba—and by commanding an Indian hospital corps in the Boer War. He travels to India and stays with his guru, Gokhale, at the Indian National Congress. He also works as an attorney there. Gandhi opposes the doctor's request to give his second son beef broth when he becomes ill, demonstrating how seriously our author takes his religious convictions. Gandhi is definitely on the move at this moment.

Gandhi fights the Asiatic Department in the Transvaal, provides legal guidance to Johannesburg Indians in property acquisition disputes, organises an Indian Volunteer Corps for the Great War, and more in **Part Four**. He talks about his religious studies, diet trials (dang, only fruits and nuts), and his opinions on the brahmacharya vow. He enjoys being celibate, describing sex as "insipid and animal-like." He considers celibacy to be a purifying discipline that

helps him become a better seeker of truth.

Part five depicts Gandhi at his most powerful political moment. He founds the Satyagraha Ashram in Ahmedabad, secures assistance for peasants in Champaran, opposes the Rowlatt Act, suspends Satyagraha when people become violent, edits newspapers, and convinces the Nagpur Congress to pass a non-cooperation resolution. And that's only a sample of his political activities.

There's also his decision to drink goat's milk when a doctor suggested it as a treatment for a severe illness. Like vegans today, Gandhi saw all milk as an animal product, but he determined he needed strength for his public job and that his commitment to his mother not to touch milk only applied to buffalo and cow milk. Gandhi says that while drinking goat's milk does not contradict the text of his commitment, it does break the spirit, and he is conflicted and distressed by his decision. Gandhi concludes that his life's good work, so far, has resulted from the gradual taming of his destructive passions. He states that the desire for power, which begets ignorance, greed, and violence, exists within every human being. In his view, even more pernicious than the impulse for outright physical war are these "subtler" products of the desire to control people. He argues that the only way to find salvation is to reject these impulses, embrace a virtuous and spiritual life, and actively work to create a more tolerant and just world. In his final "Farewell" section, Gandhi writes that he never imagined these writings would transform into an autobiography. He hopes that his readers will look past the genre

ascribed to his work and utilize his experience to generate insights into their own pasts and conceptions of truth. This idea of truth as an ever-evolving process of developing a mindset about the world, rather than the study of a static object, is central to Gandhi's autobiography