

Ethics
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Module No. #01
Lecture No. #27
Gandhian Ethics Part-2

Before we speak about, the Gandhian Cardinal virtues, I would just like to put forth an, a little thought experiment for you.

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Now suppose, you are going to buy any item, in a market. Right. Let us say, it is a phone. Let us say, it is a mobile phone. What are the factors, that you would consider, while buying a mobile phone? And, what are the factors, that you would not consider? Now, this seems to be quite, intuitively answered question. But, I raise this question, to bring in the Gandhian Notion of Ethics, in economics, and in daily life in Commerce, about how we take decisions.

So, what would you consider? What would you value, while purchasing a mobile phone? Would you value, the facilities it has, the facilities you require, the brand image of the manufacturer, the reliability of the manufacturer, the review, the warranty period, the guarantee period, the price of course, and the value for money, that you are getting. Apart from these, which perhaps, many of us would value, if not all, atleast some of them, apart from the fact, that how it looks.

Apart from these, would you value, whether the employer, or whether the brand, or the company manufacturing the mobile phone, is an equal opportunity provider. Whether it uses, child labour, or forced labour, or not. Whether, it indulges in corporate social responsibility, or not. Whether, the seller, or the distributor, or the reseller, is given an adequate share. What are the terms and conditions? And, how about the working environment of the workers?

Now, one standard answer, to the way we go about this today, is that well, these things do not, or should not, concern us. Our commercial decisions, are very factual decisions, which regard to our usage of it. We need not look at the big picture. But, look at the small picture. That well, as long as the product suits us, and we can afford it, we should make a buy. There is no difference about it. What if, I have one mobile phone, and I require another one.

Well. If I can afford it, I should buy it. What if, I have two, and I want another one. What if, I would like to replace the one that I have, with the newer model that comes in. If I can afford it, I should be doing it. And, if I can afford it, and I want to do it, there is no reason, why I should not do it. Well. Here is where, Gandhian Ethics comes in. Gandhian Ethics comes in here, that well, when we talk about it in detail, that well, Gandhi's worldview is that, there is no sharp distinction between Commerce and Ethics.

And, Ethics is a part of the way, we go about our lives. And, there are various factors that should, or that ought to be considered. So, just an affordance level, does not guarantee a normative decision. Let us look at this, as an example, perhaps discussed earlier too. Say, in a water starved city, we have people queueing up for drinking water. And, in the same city, a plush hotel, can afford better water, in its plush tanks and bathtubs.

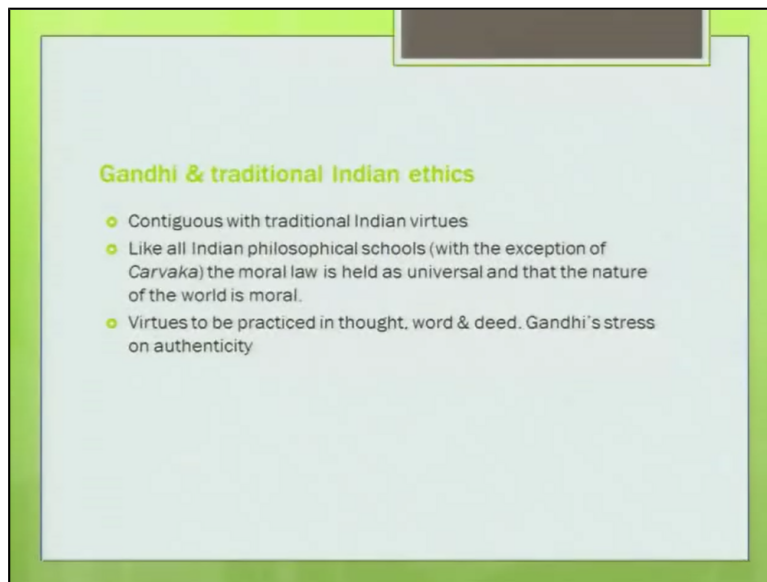
So, people at one end of the city, have to fend for a limited supply of potable water. And thereof, it is expensive, or they have to pay for it. And, at the other end they have, because they can pay for it. They have unregulated, or lot of access to water, in a water scarce environment. Now, it is here that, when we tend to think that, commercial or financial ability, gives us a normative justification, to purchase, or to acquire, or to use resources.

It is here that, Gandhi would disagree. That well, your financial ability, may give you the minimum essential to, for the utilisation of resources. But, that does not wholly determine the justification, for the use of a resource. Well. Let this question, play about in your mind. And, with this little thought experiment, that what would you consider, as the Gandhian means. How would you assess, the Gandhian way of working?

You can extrapolate it, into various aspects of life. Say, on a busy city road, a car occupying, say, x metre cube of space, carrying one person. And, a bus occupying, 3x metre cube of space, carrying 30 people. Now, who should be given, preference over the other. What sense, does it make? Simple fact, that well, if there are more number of people, should that be given a preference. Or, because I can afford a car, I can join the traffic.

And because, I can afford a car, and fuel for it, I can actually use it. And, the rest of the factors, are irrelevant. Anyway, let this little thought experiment, play in your mind. And, let us now quickly look at, what are the Cardinal virtues of the Gandhian Ethics. Now, if you look at the screen, you see, these are fairly strait jacketed Cardinal virtues, taken directly out of the Indian tradition. So, Gandhi's addition is only, one or two more virtues.

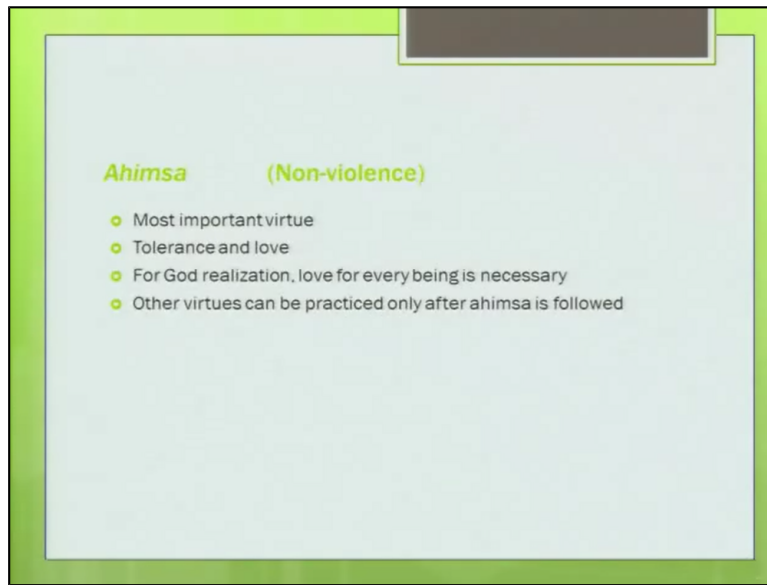
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Well. Gandhi, as we see is, Gandhi's traditional virtues are contiguous, with traditional Indian

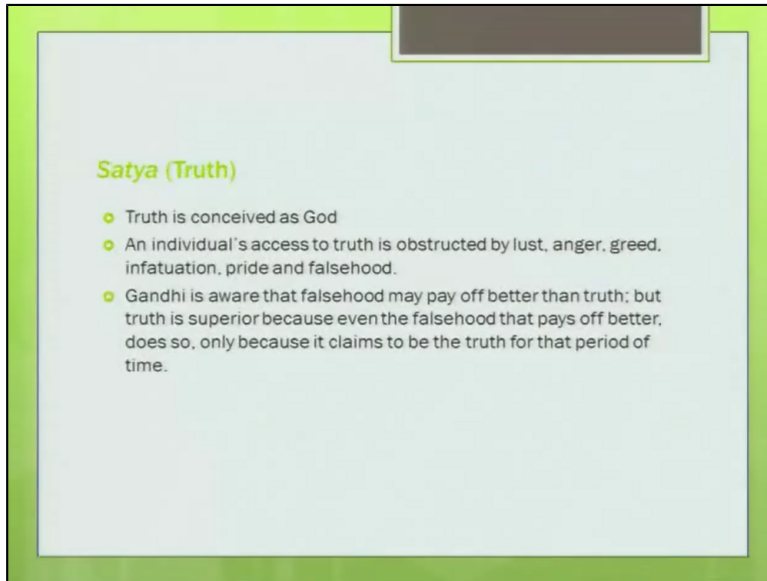
virtues. And, like all Indian Philosophical Schools, with the exception of Charvaka. The Moral Law is held as universal, and that the nature of the world is moral. That is, the world is not an amoral place. The world is not an aggregate of facts. It is not a congregation of facts. And, virtues are to be practised, in thought, word, and deed. And, there was of course, Gandhi's stress and authenticity that, thought and word is not enough, and it has to be practised in our intentions, motives, and deed.

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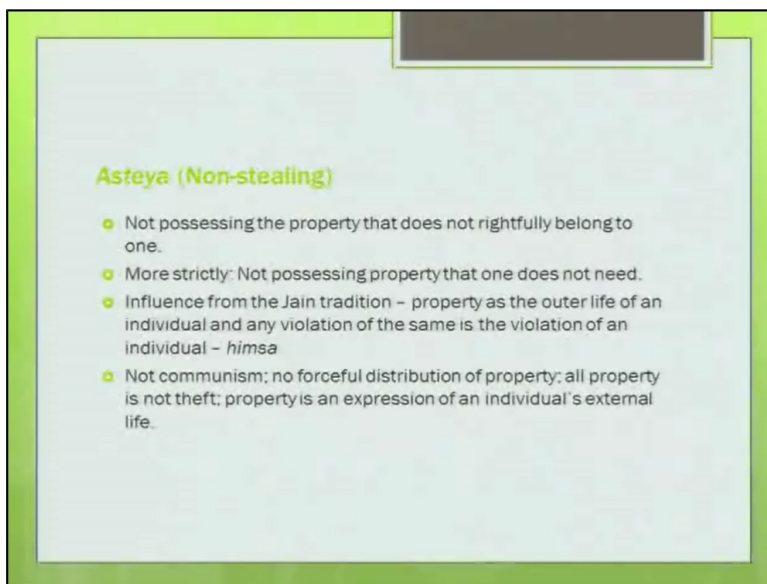
Well. The first virtue is Ahimsa, or Nonviolence. This is regarded as the most important virtue. And, it is based on, tolerance and love. Gandhi brings in belief in God, as a part of his worldview. And, for him, for the God realisation, love for every being is necessary. Other virtues can be practised, only after Ahimsa is followed.

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Satya or Truth. Truth is conceived as God. An individual's access to truth, is obstructed by the various obstacles, lust, anger, greed, infatuation, pride and falsehood. Gandhi is aware that, falsehood may pay off better than truth. But, truth is superior, because even falsehood that pays off better, does so, only because, it claims to be the truth, for that period of time. So, the very fact, that falsehood works, because it is in the garb of truth.

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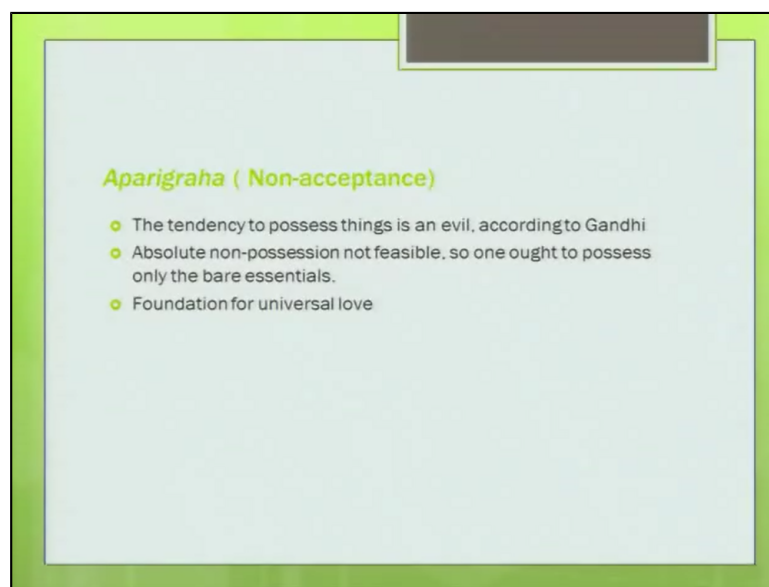
Asteya or Non-stealing. Not possessing the property, that does not rightfully belong to one. More strictly, not possessing property, that one does not need. This is influenced, from the Jain tradition, where property is seen as, the outer life of an individual. And, any violation of the

same, is the violation of an individual. Ahimsa. Now, we can perhaps, just take a look at this slide. And, understand that well, Gandhi does not come up with a strict communistic outlook. Gandhi respects property.

And, property: following the Jain tradition, that well, property is the incarnation of our external life. And therefore, snatching away property, or not handling property properly, is also an act of Violence, or Himsa, against somebody. So, property, that way, Gandhi is not a radical, as a communist that would say, that well, all properties theft, or their properties wicked, and that needs to be snatched away from those, in excess of it.

So definitely, we see, if you look at the slide, a non-communistic reading of Gandhi, clearly evident, when we talk about Asteya, or Non-stealing. Because, it does not justify forceful distribution, or redistribution of property. All properties, definitely not theft. And, property is an expression, of an individual's external life. Therefore, due care has to be allotted to it.

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Aparigraha, or Non-acceptance. The tendency to possess things, is an evil, according to Gandhi. Now, Aparigraha or Non-acceptance means, well, not that there should be, no position at all. But, we should have positions, that are our prior essentials. This is the foundation for universal love. The tendency to possess things, is an evil, according to Gandhi. Now, let us look at it, this way, in the contemporary worlds sense.

Now, if you see, what are the broad driving principles of, the world economic order. If it is understood, that there has to be an, ever rising demand to fuel, and ever rising supply. And, that in case, fuels require an ever increasing manufacturing or production. And, that leads to an, ever increasing requirement for labour, and labour reward. So, this becomes an escalating scale, which brings about flourishing. Which perhaps, roughly speaking, can be translated as, an economy in a boom face.

Now, this would be perhaps, the ideal to take place. Now, Gandhi, when he talks about, Aparigraha or Non-acceptance, are strictly as possessing items, as much as required is well, that we need not keep on increasing our requirements. And thereof, causing spin out in the increase in supply, and consequence in production, and thereof. But, that is not a world order, that Gandhi would support. Gandhi would support, that well, yes, we need things for our existence.

And, things are the shell of our external life. But, this shell, or these things, should not take over our life. And therefore, if I have a mobile phone that works fairly, this constant need for updating into newer, and more latest more attractive versions, without any strict increase in utility, or without any significant increase in utility, is again, what Gandhi would warn us as, things taking over people, rather than people using things.

We can get, very clear examples of these things. Now, look at it, this way. Everywhere, we are beamed into with advertisements, and advertising channels, and new kinds of products, that are trying to create a demand in us. So, the eternally famous statement of Gandhi goes, that nature creates enough for man's need, but not for man's greed.

So, when we have enough for our existence, it is for individuals themselves, to put a stop, or a pause, or a slowdown, on their requirements, instead of letting it escalate without any limits. So, when we talk about this Cardinal virtue of Aparigraha, or Non-acceptance, Gandhi is very clear about it, as mentioned in the slide, that the tendency to possess things, is an evil, according to Gandhi, especially when it goes out of control.

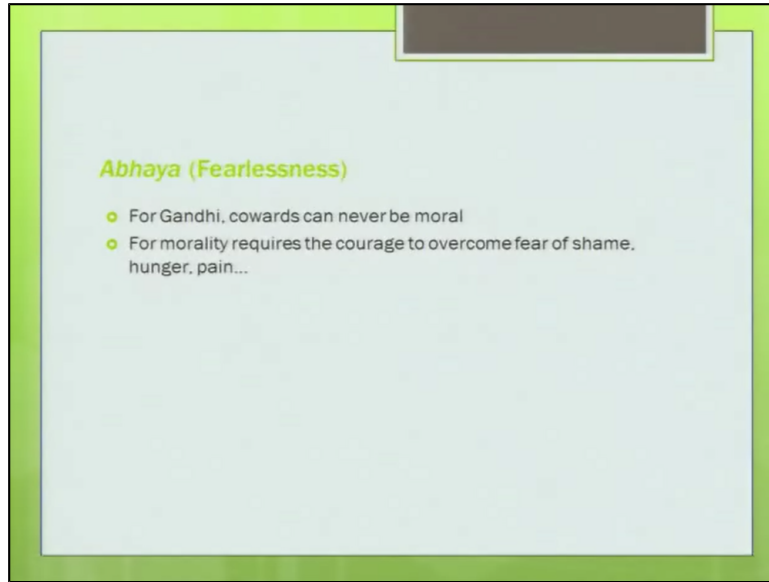
Absolute, of course Gandhi is not naive in the sense, claiming that, an absolute discarding of all positions. But, says that well, absolute non-possession, is definitely not feasible. So, one ought to possess, only the bare essentials. Now imagine, if we are only possessing the bare essentials. So, that what we require as bare essential, we bring about a kind of sense of simplicity. And that, according to Gandhi, will bring about, the foundation for universal love.

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The next Cardinal virtue, that Gandhi talks about is, Brahmacarya, or Celibacy. Now popularly, Brahmacarya can be understood as, abstinence from sex. But, Gandhi understands it as both, control over the sexual urge, in particular, but also a control and restraint over the senses and mind. So, Brahmacarya would, according to Gandhi put forth, that well, it is a general regulation of desires, to not let the desires, takeover human decision-making rather, the desires should be in line with the human agency.

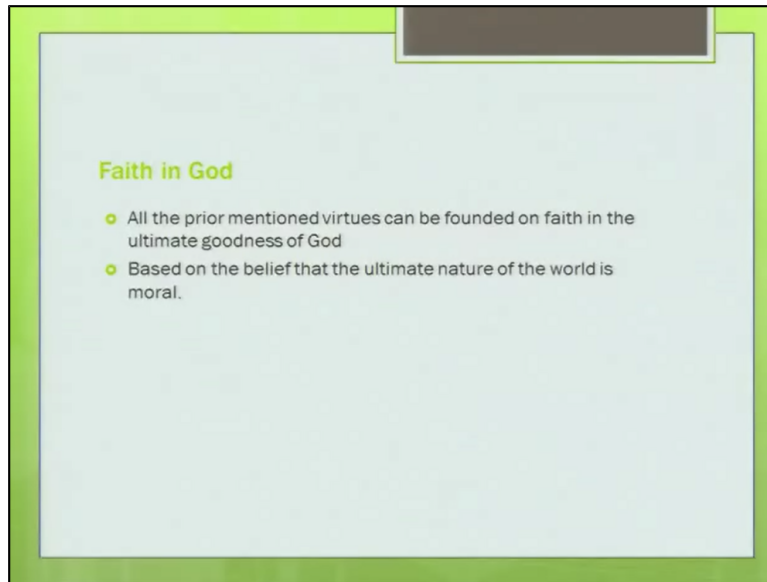
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Now, the virtues, that we talked about till now, were the virtues that are contiguous with the Indian tradition. Now, these are the virtues, that Gandhi adds as Cardinal virtues. When he talks about Abhaya or fearlessness, fearlessness is a virtue. Because, cowards can never be moral. For morality requires, the courage to overcome, the fear of shame, hunger, and pain. If, one does take the path of morality, it is bound to land one in trouble.

As, many proponents of free software have also said, that well, freedom is not free. We have to pay a price, for following the moral path. So, if we are trying to do something morally right, it is going to land us into, some inconvenient circumstances. And, to face these inconvenient circumstances, courage is a must.

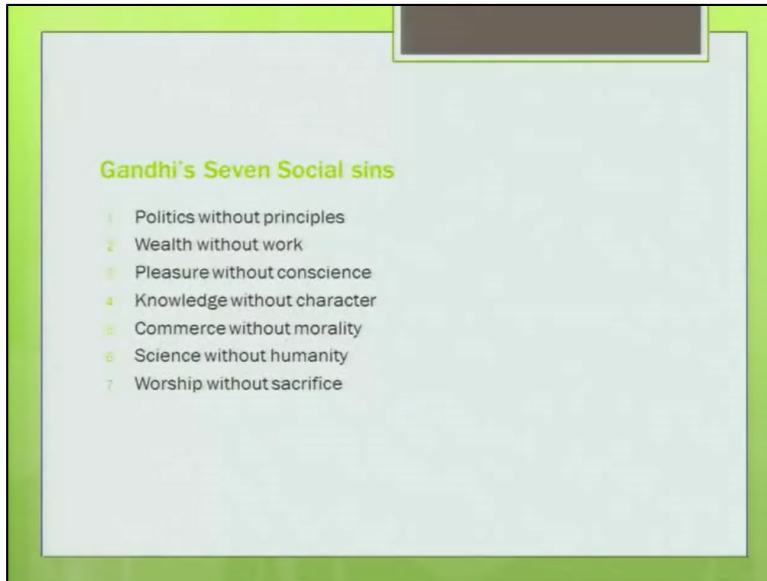
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And finally, Gandhi talks about, faith in God. That, all the prior mentioned virtues, can be founded on faith, in the ultimate goodness of God. So, based on the belief, that ultimate nature of the world is moral. So, the cornerstone, or key addicit, again comes out to be, faith in the goodness of God, or in the moral nature of the world. So, this is not necessarily, a belief in theistic nature. But, that the order of the world is not amoral, that there is a moral nature of the world.

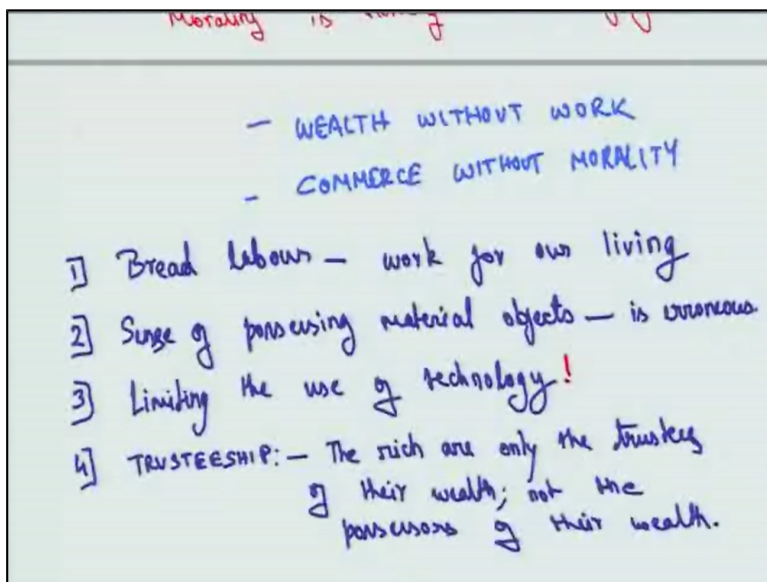
That, morality is not a creation of human mind. That, it is the very nature of the world, we live in. So, to understand Gandhi's God, we need not be a Theist, or an Atheist. It is not that an Atheist, is inaccessible to Gandhi's version of God. But, when we talk about, Gandhi's Notion of Moral Nature of the world is that, foundationally the world has a moral quality. And, it is not a quality, that is superimposed by us, human being. So, it talks about the moral nature of the world.

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Now, looking at the next slide, which is very, very crucial. Which is handed over to, one of Gandhi's friend, by Gandhi on a chit, on a piece of paper. Gandhi talks about, seven social sins. Well. Politics without Principles. Wealth without Work. Pleasure without Conscience. Knowledge without Character. Commerce without Morality. Science without Humanity. And, Worship without Sacrifice.

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Now, I would just take, this particular aspect. When we talk about, Wealth without Work, and Commerce without Morality. Now, here is where, I would bring forth, that well, for Gandhi, the crucial aspect of living is, Morality or Ethics itself. So, as you could see, from the seven social

sins that, Gandhi warns us against, all of them deal with different facets of life.

Say politics, say Commerce, say science, say knowledge, but are all ultimately tied up with, a value terms, be it character, be it principles, be it morality, be it all those mentioned as, essential requirements for the format to progress. I will now concentrate only on, these two fundamental claims, that well, Commerce without Morality, and Wealth without Work. Now, Gandhi talks about something called the, Bread Labour.

Well. What is meant by the, Bread Labour. Well. Bread Labour is, that well, simply put that, human beings, should work for their living. That, whatever bread we have, comes out of the product of our labour. Now, this is a very a simple, but a profound claim. Because, well, what it indicates is that, when we create, when we acquire, or when we possess, or create wealth without any work. So, Gandhi's insistence is further, by work he only meant, physical work.

So, it was necessary for us to do, some physical work, to earn our bread. And, it was not just, you can take it as, a critique of wealth, that is earned as interest. That is, in fact the Gandhian way of living, is far away from the way, we know the world today. Because, interest is no more taken as a sin, or as an undeserved fruit, that we get out of labour. So, by Bread Labour, Gandhi insists that, we have to work for our living, and it should not be without any work.

Gandhi brings in about, when we talk about, Commerce without Morality. When we talked about, this example of purchasing a mobile phone, what matters. Well. What would matter to, it is a commercial transaction. Where is the morality aspect in it? Now, we perhaps tend to classify in the Humeian Notion, as the world difference between facts and values. And, Commerce deals with the world of facts and values, have nothing to do with it.

Now, Gandhi has strict critic of such a worldview, where values are divorced from facts. That well, where Commerce is divorced from values. That well, values are to be the core of decisions. And, facts only inform the circumstances of a decision. So, whenever there is Commerce, it cannot be an isolation of morality. So, it starts by talking about Bread Labour, that well, we should have to work for our living. Well.

A lot of concepts of Gandhi are tied around, these ethical concepts are tied around, these notions like, Sarvodaya, and Swadeshi, and so on and so forth. But, let us just quickly take a look at, what is Gandhian Ethics. What kind of ethical world, that Gandhi imagines? First, Gandhi imagines the world, totally as an ethical world, that every decision is a moral decision. We cannot divorce the world of facts, from the world of values.

Now, the ontological belief of this, comes from the belief that, Gandhi had acquired from Isha Upanishad, which stated that well, all property or all material objects, in this world belong to God, and we are mere users of the same. Now, this also brings forth the Notion of Trusteeship, which we will talk about, in a few moments from now. So well, what Gandhi insists, if you look in the slide, is that well, sense of possession, or sense of possessing material objects, is erroneous.

So that, we never really possess material objects, we are users of material objects at the most, and it is possessed by God, according to Gandhi. Now, if this is kept on in our mind, that we do not actually possess objects, but we are the keepers of material objects, outlook to the world changes a lot. Now, Gandhi was limiting the use of technology. Now, that seems to be quite contentious point, that we are coming across.

When we talk about, that well, Gandhi is talking about limiting, the use of technology and machinery. Now, this would perhaps be counterintuitive to most of us, from today's perspective. That well, technology is a good thing, and we must have it, as much as possible. Well. What Gandhi meant by this, is that well first, there are many problems, with the use of technology and machinery. First, technology and machinery trends to bring about cities.

And, cities bring about anonymity, and therefore a distance between people. Cities, according to Gandhi, is not a happy place to be. In fact, Gandhi critiques this whole Notion of Modernity, which is bound on the industrial civilisation, and the evolution of urban centres of living. So, the urban centres of living, do not tend out to be a happy place to be. Rampant industrialisation causes alienation, or causes labour to be distanced from, the whole process of creating a single

entity.

And, we become specialised workers. This is a common strain, with how even, the communist would argue against the industrial culture. Gandhi, is definitely not against machinery, or the usage of machinery. But, what he is against is that, getting obsessed with the use of machinery. So, when we have a wheel, how much better can we make a wheel. So, when you have discovered the shape for a wheel, how much better can we make it.

So, Gandhi's outlook is that, well, machinery should be designed, developed, used, only to fulfil the necessities of human beings. It should not go ahead in us requiring, constantly a new machine, to intrigue us. Now, look at it, this way. This makes a lot of relevance, if you place this context, in the notion of say, the computer industry. Today, that well, a lot of addition, or evolution, or newness, that is coming into the software and the hardware, is simply put, unnecessary.

It is simply put, to keep each machine, or each software, to be a little more advanced, than the former version, and to keep this chain continuing. So, to have an aggressive upscaling, to enhance market, to have the latest gadgeted information, keep coming on. So, this in turn, if you would see a whole generation of people are, look forward to the release, of a new piece of machinery, or a new software, and continue with it.

So, it no more is that, machine playing a role of utility, in that individual's life. But rather, the individual seeks his fulfilment or purpose in, acquiring the latest piece of machinery or a software, that comes out to be. Now, this is prevalent among stocks, that we all look for the latest version of the hardware or software, that comes out to be. But, is the latest version, really a required version. Did not the earlier version, do its job properly. Or, all revisions necessary.

These are commercial decisions, to phase out the older ones, bring out newer ones, which may not be necessary at all. But, which are necessary to make the computer industry thrive, or beyond the boom path, has so mentioned. So, Gandhi cautioned us against this, obsession with machinery, that we continuously look for newer machinery. And, machinery takes over our life,

or technology takes over our life, where we are constantly looking for something new.

And, utility goes back, which was the primary motive of technology, utility takes a backseat. So that, I think is a very interesting caution, that we can import from Gandhian worldview, to how we are today. So, limiting the use of technology, according to Gandhi, is a requirement. Now, Gandhi, he did not arbore machineries. Rather, he wanted to use machineries, to limit the craze for machineries. And, he was against the, indiscriminate expansion and use of machineries.

Now, let me talk about, what Gandhi means by Trusteeship. We just talked about Trusteeship, sometime back. Well. And, Gandhi's relation with the capitalists of the office time, was quite good. In fact, he was able to get a, lot of willing voluntary donations, from the capitalists of those times. And, Gandhi has known to have had, good relations with capitalist families of India, at that time.

Well. One thing, that we need to learn about Gandhi is, Gandhi does not demonise the capitalist, or does not demonise the wealthy person, or wealth. In fact, there is a stark difference between the, communistic outlook, and of the Gandhian outlook, where Gandhi does not demonise the capitalist at all. Instead, Gandhi recognises the capitalist as a trustee, as a trustee of wealth. Now, if again going back, that well, if the sense of possession, if that is loosened, and we see ourselves as trustees of our wealth.

Because, this wealth, or material possessions, that are with us, are not going to stay with us, simply because, we are not going to stay, forever. So, for the time we live, we have these material things with us. And, we are mere trustees of these material things. It is a very simple commonsensical truth, which is perhaps evident, if one takes a very simple naive look to life, that well, we are having finite lives.

And therefore, what we own, is owning only during the duration of her life. So, we are not owning in a way, anything that way. So, Gandhi goes ahead, and has put forth this Notion of Trusteeship, where the wealthy, as long as wealth is created, he has no problem with it. But, as long as the sense of possession, or the lack of Aparigraha, comes with this creation of wealth,

that is where, the problem is. So, the wealthy are simply, the trustees of their wealth.

And, their wealth, they have to decide on, which best platform, it should go on to. So, by Trusteeship it means, that well, the rich are only the trustees of their wealth, not the possessors of their wealth. So, if this outlook is brought about in the wealthy, and the notion of trusteeship comes out to be, or the wealthy, are mere trustees of their wealth. And therefore, the sense of giving, and usage is much better than, what we find in a possessive material greed.

In fact, there have been a lot of instances of corporations, which have grown, acquired wealth, and then gone ahead with philanthropy. So, this is what comes out, perhaps which makes True Gandhian claim. That well, after a certain point, which is for the use of one's own bare necessities, wealth is just trusted upon to the wealthy, and for its effective utilisation. So, we find enormous foundations of these wealthy corporations coming up, trying to distribute wealth.

But well, Gandhi paints a very optimistic picture of life, and at every moment, or optimistic hope, or optimistic version, of human existence. Thus, cynic or the critic, sitting at every moment, denounce it at every stage, as impractical, or not feasible. But well, we will not take that question now. But, what we need to understand is, the Gandhian way of living. Now, we will go ahead, and talk with another Ethical Notion of Gandhi, which has affected, in fact the history of the world, which is the Notion of Satyagraha.