

Mohandas k. gandhi:
the story of my
experiments with
truth



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ Truth is like a vast tree, which yields more and more fruit, the more you nurture it. The deeper the search in the mine of truth the richer the discovery of gems buried there, in the shape of openings for an ever greater variety of service” (Gandhi 191). Mohandas K. Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, and ever since that day has dedicated his life to the search for truth. During this quest, he became a leader of the Indian Nationalist Movement against British rule and to this day remains a highly influential figure in political activism and social progress.

In his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Gandhi shares stories of his triumphs and falls while trying to free India from British rule, all the while trying to stay true to his vows to his mother and to himself. The point that shows through brightly in Gandhi’s autobiography is that his values and morals about life coincide with his political philosophy.

Gandhi’s main view on business and politics is the strictness to truth. He explains this well when he states: Business, they say, is a very practical affair, and truth a matter of religion; and they argue that practical affairs are one thing, while religion is quite another.

Pure truth, they hold, is out of the question in business, one can speak it only so far as is suitable. I strongly contested the position in my speech and awakened the merchants to a sense of their duty, which was two-fold. Their responsibility to be truthful was all the greater in a foreign land, because the conduct of a few Indians was the measure of that of the millions of their fellow-countrymen” (109).

Gandhi's devotion to truth begins as far back as his high school days. During a spelling examination Gandhi has trouble spelling the word "kettle". Seeing this the teacher tries to prompt Gandhi with the point of his boot to copy his neighbors answer, with which Gandhi does not respond cooperatively and was the only one in the class to misspell the word. He explains, "I never could learn the art of 'copying'"(4). His devotion to truth only is strengthened as he matures eventually he states that he is a, "Worshiper of Truth"(6) and that, "The passion for truth was innate in me"(9).

Gandhi shows an admiration for truth that runs deep in his blood. Most likely he obtained this ideology from the devotion his mother held within her. He explains of the impact of his mother while stating, "The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness. She was deeply religious. She would not think of taking her meals without her daily prayers"(2). Clearly Gandhi received his committed, religious mindset from his mother; the exception was that Gandhi's religion was his search for ultimate truth. To begin his odyssey Gandhi travels to London for training to become a barrister.

The profession of barrister comes with the reputation of being filled with lies and trickery, which one might say disputes the purpose of Gandhi's existence. However, Gandhi does not believe this is so explaining, "As a student I had heard that the lawyer's profession was a liar's profession. But this did not influence me, as I had no intention of earning either position or money by lying"(324). Gandhi's pure heart could not be tainted by even the most corrupted of professions. After school he returned to India in 1891 and in 1893 accepted a job at an Indian law firm in Durban, South Africa.

Gandhi was appalled by the treatment of Indian immigrants there, and joined the struggle to obtain basic rights for them. Gandhi's determination to honesty and truth combined with his uprising political stance granted him great respect in the political community. He realizes this when he states, " I also saw that my devotion to truth enhanced my reputation amongst the members of the profession, and in spite of the handicap of colour I was able in some cases to win even their affection"(328). Not only is he gaining enough prestige to win the cases he is doing it despite the nonwhite color of his skin.

The honor he earns in and out of the court room allows him to put up a valiant effort in his fight for Indian rights. His values in his political war are synonymous with the strict values he holds in his real life. One of the main aspects of his life is religion. To prove this he states, " It is that faith which sustains me"(335). Faith and religion holds a deep place in his heart and coincides with how he feels politics should be handled. He states, " I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means"(454).

For instance, when Gandhi goes to experience the Bengal religion he is deeply troubled by the tradition of sacrificing a lamb and explains " To my mind the life of a lamb is no less precious that that of a human being. I hold that, the more helpless a creature, the more entitle it is to protection by man from the cruelty of man"(208). In Gandhi's eyes it is not moral to kill any life including one that is less powerful than a human being. This religious view

that he holds translates to how he deals with issues in society. Such as the terrible Zulu rebellion, a rebellion in South Africa against British rule.

Hearing of the rebellion Gandhi did not fight back or fight with the South Africans he simply set up an Ambulance Corps and helped the South African victims. Through out all of his life Gandhi never once harmed anyone to get his political point across, for that was not in his religion to do so. Just as religion affected the way he viewed politics, so did his diet. For a majority of his life Gandhi has been a vegetarian, which was all started by a vow that he promised to his mother in his young adult life. The main value that his strict diet has taught him is self restraint in the rest of his life.

He mentions this saying, " One should eat not in order to please the palate, but just to keep the body going"(287). When Gandhi gives up the pleasure one gets from eating he leaves it simply to the biological need of the task. He explains the difference between his life and of others when he states " The diet of a man of self-restraint must be different from that of a man of pleasure, just as their ways of life must be different" (292). He uses his value of self restraint to his political advantage when he makes his stance simply by being controlled and not reacting to the situation.

For example, while him and some of his followers are retrieving water from the well they are faced with great abuse and are told that they would pollute the water. To combat this, Gandhi uses great self restraint and simply tells everyone, " put up with the abuse and continue drawing water at any cost", this works beautifully, later " when he saw that we did not return his abuse, the man became ashamed and ceased to bother us"(356). Gandhi's use of

self restraint and self control give him up the upper hand in any political fight and like this one, always almost end up in a victory for him in the end.

Both his self restraint and non violence values come in to play in Gandhi's main political weapon, civil disobedience. Civil Disobedience involves making a stand and taking action against a social injustice, however, using complete peace and never once resorting to violence. Gandhi explains it best when he says, " A nation that wants to come into its own ought to know all the ways and means to freedom. Usually they include violence as the last remedy, [civil disobedience], on the other hand, is an absolutely non-violent weapon. " (339).

An instance where this strategy is used is while the government is trying to force its Indian citizens to pay an unnecessary tax on their crops with no exceptions, even in a famine. Gandhi forms a pledge to be signed by all the affected citizens that simply states that they will not pay the taxes anymore. No violence is used and no emotional or physical pain comes in to play. While Gandhi does not share the consequences of the pledge in his autobiography the reader realizes the courage it takes to stand up to authority calmly and not defensively.

A more famous example where there was a beautiful demonstration of civil disobedience is the salt march that Gandhi led his followers on. When the citizens were being taxed excessively on salt, Gandhi leads them on a march to the sea to make their own salt in protest to the government's taxes. Gandhi explains the powerful affect this has on the people when he states, " The people had for the moment lost all fear of punishment and yielded obedience to the power of love which their new friend exercised"(367).

<https://assignbuster.com/mohandas-k-gandhi-the-story-of-my-experiments-with-truth/>

Civil disobedience not only works magically to solve social problems it does it without causing harm to either party involved and causes a strong community atmosphere to develop, which works faster to solve difficult political issues. Civil disobedience is a contribution to today's society that will never be forgotten and never taken for granted. Gandhi will forever leave an impact in every person's heart. He used his extraordinary values and morals to free the Indian citizens from harsh British rule.

His politics never deterred from what he held deep in his heart. He answered the tough questions such as, ' What if everything is pointing me to do something I do not believe in? ' and ' Where do you step aside from your values for the betterment of your community? '. His answer to these questions are always follow your heart and follow what you believe is true. Gandhi dealt with extreme turmoil and through out every obstacle never stopped on his quest for the truth. While not every step there was smooth, it was a determined path none the less.

When Gandhi explains the symbol of a Court of Justice he states that it " is a pair of scales held evenly by an impartial and blind but sagacious woman. Fate has purposely made her blind, in order that she may not judge a person from his exterior but from his intrinsic worth"(127). This is comparable to Gandhi's view on life and politics. He does not judge the people around him, he takes the situation for what it is, truly, and does what he believes in his heart is right. While Gandhi has had an incredible impact in politics forever his real lessons begin in finding ourselves, and the truth within ourselves.