

Book Review

Gandhi and Philosophy: On Theological Anti-Politics

edited by Shaj Mohan and Divya Dwivedi,
published by Bloomsbury Academic, NY, 2019

Amita Valmiki

Dept. of Philosophy,

Ramniranjan Jhunjhunwala College of Arts, Science and Commerce (Autonomous), Mumbai

amitavalmiki@gmail.com

“If Gandhi’s enormously powerful and successful strategy of non-violent resistance had met with a different enemy – Stalin’s Russia, Hitler’s Germany, even prewar Japan, instead of England, the outcome would not have been decolonization but massacre and submission.” – Hannah Arendt in her essay *On Violence* (Gangeya 2016, 79)

The book in *Introduction* (that carries on in the following chapter 1, *Hypophysics*) seems to be a dialogue between philosophers on Gandhi, mainly Western – Kant, Maurice Blanchot, Hannah Arendt (though in her brief remark on Gandhi in her essay *On Violence*), Deleuze, Derrida, Balibar, Badiou, Zizek and many others with regard to Gandhi. These thinkers have categorically and critically approached Gandhi’s reasonings on Non-violence, *Satyagraha* and *Swaraj*. But the seeming paradox in fact ennoble Gandhi’s stature to the readers. Gandhi was counter to speed; but, was in fact, perpetually dynamic in his thoughts. He had a persuasive weapon of non-violence and therefore Gandhi authenticated the law of *hypophysics*. As mentioned by the author(s), “Gandhi’s engagement with speed as the measure of value is outside the ambit of metaphysics, and yet, it is all around us in the talk about technological rapidity and disengagement with roots, and about the speed of production and violence.” (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 03-04) The concept of *hypophysics* in relation to violence, “For him (Gandhi), non-violence is indestructible and is heterogeneous to violence.” (Mohan and Dwivedi

2019, 05) So, was Gandhi anti-technology? Indeed, not in the sense of Heidegger's or Deleuze's anti mechanic approach; as Gandhi needed 'speed' for his thoughts to transfer as soon as possible towards imperialists and the masses. Therefore, Gandhi countering parliamentary democracy; never had systematized text of his thoughts as for him systematization is colonial in temperament. So where does the *hypophysics* fit in here? As the book mentions, "Gandhi wished to be a bridge between the occident and orient without belonging to either, and leading both to a new horizon, '*Hind Swaraj*' as World." (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 11)

In *Hypophysics* the theological becomes pragmatic but without losing its authenticity and authority; this is with regard to the 'Law-Maker' (and therefore theological). Though physics is incorporated and is intrinsic part of *hypophysics*, it is still derived. Therefore, physics seems to be an aberration derived from hyper-aberration. (Is this what the author(s) mean?). Gandhi is clear; values are intrinsically right, de facto they need no evaluation; but the 'scalable' values need evaluation. Subsequently they remain mundane. This is reflected in Kant's transcendentalism. The chapter reflects on ancient Greek philosophies to substantiate this point. Gandhi also referenced to Greek philosophies. As Gandhi notes, "The law is itself the nature that it governs, 'an unalterable Law governing everything and every being that exists or lives.'" (*Young India*, 11 Oct. 1928, 340) Akeel Bilgrami's view on this upholds Gandhi's concept of 'work'; and further emphasizes Gandhi should not be taken to mean as harsh but is saturated with 'values'. Wherefore it is mentioned in the book, "In Gandhian *hypophysics*, the difference in nature is not of the quantities of the good but of the quantities of speed, the quantity according to which nature is distributed." (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 25) Here the gamut of philosophers is taken into consideration. The question is what made Gandhi to overtake the West with the subcontinental thought? For this we move to the second chapter or chapter 2.

In *Scalology: Speed* (chapter 2) Gandhi ventures into distinguishing between 'nature' and 'values' to accredit the supremacy of the former though composed of the later. Departure of values from nature has led human being go astray. This turbulation has to be erased and we need to bring nature's togetherness with values. For Gandhi, human beings scale values in nature; construing a blunder

as the scaling is materialized, it makes human beings land up in a whirlpool. Compared to Charles Bonnet's *scala naturae*, human beings remains on top of the ladder, scaling from outside remaining intact within nature. De facto, "The Gandhian scalology is not a hierarchy such as that of the *scala naturae*." (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 34) Aristotle and Kant (in *Critique of Pure Reason*) substantiate this notion by relating the scalology with two hypophysical terms, namely speed and place (not space or *aakasha*). But to get access to Gandhian ubiety, the Maker is 'nature', wherein movement is intrinsic within motionless Maker; hence speed-less; and 'all' is to be measured in speed. Gandhi is exceptional to resisting speed (than others who resisted speed). Taylor's *The Fallacy of Speed* validated Gandhian concept of *Hind Swaraj*. For Gandhi, in relation to speed and the Maker, "The good lies in the divine inertia." (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 41). Speed also entered into politics and defined the segregating families as 'slow' and 'impatient' political parties. Therefore, he felt the need for 'trusteeship'. This is quite apparent in Gandhi-Nehru divide. In Gandhi's scalology, speed has to be curbed but not in moral realm as that is the realm of the Maker.

In chapter 3, *The Faculties I: Body*, Gandhi's theological anti-politics is furthered. For him, the body, mind and soul trio are parts of his *hypophysics*. And precisely this was depleted under British rule. This claim is substantiated by either in contradiction to or in cooperation to thinkers and poets alike. He accepted body as machine (to which he was anti); but then his question was, "can machines worship?" (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 55) Therefore, a metamorphosis is needed. As mentioned by him (in 'Key to Health', Complete Works of Mahatma Gandhi, 77, p. 2), "The human soul is a part of the universal spirit of God. When all our activity is directed towards the realization of this link, the body becomes a temple worthy for the spirit to live in." (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 56) Therefore, Gandhi's *Nishkamakarma* is *Anasaktiyoga*, that where the body has to strive for purity by controlling bodily desires. The machine in control; purity transfers to the ascending ladder to unity. His adventures by experimenting *Satyagraha* and *Hind Swaraj* through individual body to corpus of body - that is ultimately the hypophysical state of soul, he termed it 'moksha'. In this chapter Gandhi's concept of aesthetics is explored which has been interpreted in terms of *hypophysics*. (Rodin, Michaelangelo or Sophocles' plays exploring *hypophysics* through body.)

So, “Individual essences cannot be obtained by abstracted predicates, but they are expressed only by individual internal milieus.” (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 69)

Chapter 4, moves from body to *The Faculties II: Mind and Soul* and arrives at the axiom that body and mind need to be controlled for realizing the potentials of the soul. Gandhi was quite enlightened for not being enlightened in relation to the extensive theories of mind in scriptures. Therefore, the industrial approach extracts a particular memory essence of an event in a conservative manner that denies flaunting the essence in the real hypophysical sense. “This industrial experience of essence is how we have come to gain our exhortations such as ‘Essentialism is violence,’” (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 73) which becomes the tag line in his quintessence of understanding mind; not an extraction but is incorporated in that which ‘is’. Therefore, Parel indicates Gandhi’s non-violence and satyagraha as part and parcel of the wider spectrum of *Purusharthas* (the goals of life). So, Gandhi talks of organic whole rather than geometric divide. Gandhi wrote (in *Gandhi’s Health Guide*, p. 16), ‘There is nothing closely connected with us as our body, but there is also nothing perhaps of which our ignorance is so profound or our indifference so complete.’ (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 76). From polynomia we enter in homology that is fairness to “the others”, those who are in fact not distinct from oneself. The idea of homology is translated in Gandhi’s ideas on education. As he noted in *Young India* (1928), “Among the many evils of foreign rule this blighting imposition of a foreign medium upon the youth of the country will be counted by history as one of the greatest.” (Kothari 2003, 83). The dialogical communication in Jaspers’ (Miron 2012, 118) sense has to be – between the body, mind and the soul; this keeps the individuality intact in relation to others. The resultant effect is ‘correlationism’. Gandhi’s idea of soul transgresses regional boundaries and brings about the various scriptural hermeneutics together to understand the concept of soul, be it Greek, Christian or Indian. In this case Ramanujacharya’s philosophy of Atman as part of Brahman with *swagat bheda* (internal distinctions) is reflected with double force. (Hiriyanna 2005, 175–201). As mentioned in the book, “The soul is the inner voice and the inner voice is derivative of the split within.” (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 86) And moves towards silencing the mind.

Coming to chapter 5, Dynamics: Active and Passive, the idea of *Übermensch* (Superman) from Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1893-5) in connection to history is expounded; Gandhi the history brings severance from the realm of nature that accommodates values governed by passivity, authoring history active initiating a walkout of values from human life engraving manifestation of violence. History does not dare to define nature per se; but the jugglery of active departure is the noteworthy aspect of history. In fact, "Gandhi opposed the two forces – active and passive – in the region of politics and of psychology." (Mohan and Dwivedi, 2019, pp. 91) Therefore, the pace of speed has to be slowed down especially in the matter of *Khadi/Swadeshi* as it is an anti-speed procedure to arrive to this material. Though Glyn Richards affirms that Gandhi drew from history the passive facet to move from violence to establish non-violence in the time that is through Truth (*Satya*). Speed finds correlation in action but Gandhi's "action" was an abstraction of passivity of history; therefore Nishkamakarma. This passivity is also the demand of politics of purity. Here language plays a pivotal role with its different connotations. While reading this part of the book, I wasn't surprised as to why Gandhi was so influenced by Jaina theory of *Syadavada* (the doctrine that all judgments are 'contextually speaking' and therefore 'conditional') and Jaina metaphysics in relation to matter; that actions can associate itself to intrinsically 'righteousness nature' or can go antagonistic to it. Thus, homology has to be perpetuated. Thence keeping in mind, the distinction between the active and passive force, an individual has to move in the realm where s/he 'belongs'. "The ideal passive resister will travel to all locations by foot, for such a journey, irrespective of the location, would be pilgrimage. The passive resister is the pilgrim of the zero." (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 110).

In chapter 6, *The Law of the Maker*, Gandhi strongly upheld the 'law of the Maker'; but found the lawyer's profession despicable. As in lawyer's profession, law is interpreted in two ways, one the law of sanity and other the law by itself. There are multitudes of laws, broadly divided into two, law of human beings and law of the Maker which he himself cannot break. Again, the passivity in scalology of values permits to disobey man-made laws as one has mastered the art of obedience to the law. The parallel can be drawn in Kant's philosophy. Accordingly, a 'rule' has to be distinguished from the 'law'. The corpus of law for Gandhi is much wider

than thought of; the laws of science, machines, *hypophysics*, humanities, private/individual law or the Maker's – it is wide spectrum. Consequently, the need for 'passive resister' who complies with the laws of the Maker and therefore becomes worthwhile. "Gandhi's compass, astrolabe, and the sextant are obedient to the spiritual or hypophysical laws, which are opposed to the purely physical." (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, pp. 123) So manmade laws have to be attuned with the Maker's law as the laws of the Maker are justified rationally on theological forefront. The uniqueness in Gandhi with regard to law was to synthesize the teleology and deontology; broadly termed as 'calypsology'. The chapter ends with: "In order to understand the supreme law expressed in a proportional articulation – that is in proportion to the means there will be ends – which ultimately concerns the relation between Truth as end and non-violence as means, we need to attend to Gandhi's Truth." (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 134).

Chapter 7, Truth and Will, 'truth' is translated in various walks of human life; that finds manifestation in Gandhi's "My Experiments with Truth". Truth finds expression in the concept of calypsology. The chapter draws parallels between Gandhi's truth with Socrates' or Kierkegaard's, (where I strongly missed Jaina exposition of 'truth') as suffering. And 'truth' and 'will' as one find in Gandhi is also with Nietzsche and Alan Badiou. And the concept of 'subjectivity as expounded by them in relation to 'truth' and 'will' remain almost same. For Gandhi taking somewhat different stance than Nietzsche, "The many rules of truth form the single nexus of Sovereign Truth." (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 140). Gandhi tried to create a balance between the governs of head with heart; this is a platitude with regard to his stand in Congress party from which Nehru deviated, especially with Gandhi's idea of Hind Swaraj and *Rama Rajya*. The author(s) write Truth means end; I reiterate what I said prior to this chapter, Gandhi's teleos is deontology. If this is an advantage in Gandhi, it is equally a deterioration when the same ideology gives him allowance to accept caste and racial discrimination. "For Gandhi, the actions through which men move away from their family obligations, clan rules, and social codes are measures taken by men against the Maker, who had set the speeds and occupations for each man." (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 148-9) But to sum up the chapter the author(s) regard 'truth' and 'will' combo seek the resultant effect in action as non-violence.

Chapter 8, *Violence and Resistance* is in continuation with the former chapter. Comparing with Foucault, Gandhi's non-violence and resistance is not outside the domain of political structure. Resistance is not without 'force'. Resistance is always in relation or multiplication to resistance. (*Hypophysics* intended here). So, repression is in correlation with resistance and vice versa. For Gandhi resistance is tenacious action antinomy to any event. Therefore, passive resistance can be translated into non-violent resistance and active resistance its opposite as it is against the Maker's law. Courage is understood by Gandhi in Platonic sense that plays a vital role in resistance. Gandhi's non-violent resistance is distinct from others as he remains in and out of politics holding himself responsible for his actions, completely cloaked in Platonic virtue of 'temperance' and 'courage'. Therefore, even in non-violent resistance Gandhi displays *hypophysics* and therefore, calypsology. The views of Foucault, Benjamin and Arendt are taken in comparative version. The march towards zero continues.

In chapter 9, *Critical Nation*, the author(s) mention, "Gandhi's critical nation is the final home of the most anti-political project, which for Arendt is death...." (Mohan and Dwivedi 2019, 187). Things of any kind and any being have to be in conformity with the law of nature to be called healthy. Thence, the passive resister needs to be awakened all the time for means and end (in calypsology) to materialize. As for Maurice Blanchot, it is in dissolution of the self to zero through practice of nonviolence. Again, the teleos which for Gandhi remains, is to establish a non-violent ontological status for all, everywhere. And since Gandhi was all for the Maker's law, he was not outspoken to eradicate certain Western ideas of social evil in India as he considered the Maker's law designed to befit a certain region; may be this made him reject inter-dinning or cultural racism as things are structured in nature which one need not violate. Hence Gandhi's was a radical politics. The paradoxes in Gandhi are inseparable, and still neither of the fallacies committed – contradiction or tautology. He confessed he is not a politician but in the domain of politics with which he struggles he would like to be left alone. The author(s) elaborates Gandhi's non-political politics with Pierre Clastres, an anthropologist and an anarchist.

The *Salt March* is an example of Gandhi's violating act in the domain of non-violence.

Therefore, primitive societies synchronize with Gandhi's 'critical nation' concept. Gandhi's theological non-politics is now challenging all manmade laws, and this is what the Maker's Law demands. Anthony Parel redefines celibacy as an important element of *Purusharthas* from Gandhian perspective. Gandhi's Satyagraha is not political movement but a passive movement of penance and baptism. But the movement is always marked as political movement. De facto reassessment is must.

The last chapter 10, *Conclusion: Anastasis*, in Gandhian epoch, in the twentieth century, is the epoch of criticalization. (I intentionally did not mention about the forward written for this book by Jean-Luc Nancy as it seemed to me meaningful now). As Nancy speaks of the ambiguity of words, their meaning in West need to be reinterpreted in the Indian sub-continent through the kaleidoscope of hermeneutics. For instance, the word: 'humanism'. The frantic speed that needed to be curbed probably was overlooked by West; that need to be revisited through Gandhian lenses as the West is feeling now. So, the need for *hypophysics* is felt seriously. The era of criticism continues as it is part of nature.

So, the process of *anastasis* continues.

The book brings Gandhi in proximity to physics, consequently taking him to a primordial level. By way of physics and a level higher, *hypophysics*, Gandhi is found to be all pervasive. The distinct ingredient of the book remained – Gandhi in constant conversation with Western thinkers; where the precept and praxis demarcation is overcome; and throughout the book he is in dialogical communication, not just at local or national level, but at global level. Thereupon Gandhi is established as a philosopher through rigorous dialogue.

References:

Hiriyanna, M. 2005. *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, New Delhi

Kothari, Rita. 2003. *Translating India*. Routledge, NY

Miron, Ronny. 2012. *Karl Jaspers. From Selfhood to Being*. Rodopi, Netherlands

Mukherji, Gangeya. 2016. *Gandhi and Tagore: Politics, Truth and Conscience*. Routledge, NY



CONTRIBUTORS' BIONOTES