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Gandhi's Concept of Truth and Transparency: Countering Misinformation, Deepfakes, and Post- Truth Politics

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Abstract

This paper looks into the idea of Satya (truth) and transparency as an ethical-political stance of handling misinformation, deepfakes, and post-truth politics as expressed by Gandhi. It reinstates truth as a disciplined act of self-criticism, non-instrumental communication and social responsibility instead of the truth being right in terms of facts or a metaphysically determined doctrine. Placed in opposition to recent discussion on the issue of information disorder, algorithmic amplification and erosion of epistemic authority, the paper proceeds to suggest that Gandhian ethics throws light on the required yet not sufficient terms of democratic strength: ethical restraint, moral bravery and institutional clarity. It further forms identification of structural and scale-related constraints to Gandhian schemes in digitally mediated space, and that there is a demand to combine virtue-based strategies with modifications in governing media and designing platforms. The conclusion suggests future studies of multi-scalar practices of transparency, intercultural ethical cultures of telling the truth, and interdisciplinary frameworks in the interplay between political philosophy, the study of media and technology in governance.

Keywords: Satya, transparency, misinformation, post-truth politics

Introduction

The modern society, currently dominated by democratic features, is in a known epistemological crisis. The spread of fake news, mechanization of information distribution, deep fake media, as well as what researchers refer to as post-truth politics, all have essentially ruptured the collective empirical assumptions about the real world upon which democratic discourse relies (McIntyre, 2018) ^[17]. In the conditions of the post-truth, objective facts cease to be rolled as the main ones in the formation of the opinion of the population, and emotional appeal and personal beliefs systematically replace the consideration of evidence (McIntyre, 2018) ^[17]. This crisis is not confined to lone instances of lying, those that were always with us, but it is a structural situation where institutional sources of authoritative knowledge have become authoritative based on the situation when epistemological resources are needed the most (Bennett and Livingston, 2018) ^[3]. Deepfakes and synthetic media play upon the uncertainty, making casual verification impossible; fake news is spread at an even higher pace than a system can cope with it; and political leaders start cynically using the epistemic fragmentation as a strategic asset (Appel and Prietzel, 2022) ^[1].

However, a resourceful intellectual tool of modern democratic theory has been neglected Mahatma Gandhi has developed a philosophy of platform of Satya (truth), transparency that is not metaphysical abstraction, rather ethical-political practice. Gandhi saw truth-telling not as the passive description of facts but as the act of living with constraint in moral power, the practice of discipline that requires a man to live what he thinks is true, to say it in the context of society, and to act it out. His transparent governance theory, the Satyagraha (truth-force) points out that opposition to injustice should not demean the dignity of the opponent, rather it should rest on scrupulous honesty, despite using deception that may otherwise conserve the righteous cause (Gandhi, 1927). In the following paper, the alternative truth and transparency Gandhian frameworks are explored, properly historicized and implemented to

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explain the democratic reactions to postmodern misinformation and post-truth politics without anachronistic projection and technological determinism.

Truth (Satya) as Ethical and Political Practice in Gandhian Thought

To Gandhi, Satya (truth) is not an abstract metaphysical ideal but practical exercise, which involves moral alertness and accountability to the people at all times. To seek the truth, Gandhi in his writings *Autobiography: My Experiments with Truth*, defines that truth is an experimentation: a strict practice of truth-seeking that required harmonization of inner personal belief with the outer declaration and performance (Gandhi, 1927). Such a conception is essential to leave the passive perception of facts and instead, Satya is the result of active development of moral courage and ruthless self-doubt. According to Gandhi, the truth-telling demands that one recognizes his or her fallibility and limitations and that humans only have a limited and temporary knowledge (Gandhi, 1927).

Politically, Satya provides a power prohibition as well as an act of communicational control. Gandhi (1909) in *Hind swaraj* postulates that radical transparency is the only way to fight injustice, one cannot attain legitimate independence by means of trickery and propaganda, as by doing so he/she is feeding into the logic of the oppressor (Gandhi, 1909). This value is the basis of Satyagraha (truth-force), not passive non-resistance, but aggressive struggle based on truthfulness and consideration of the opponent which upholds their dignity. According to the current history, it is believed that Satyagraha means a kind of dissent based on fundamental values and interests without necessarily defeating the opponent but accomplishing the adjustment of protests by awakening the moral consciousness of the opponent (Gandhian Ethics, 2025).

Gandhi was also transient and therefore the institutionally, he needed to be held accountable. The way he conducted himself, through the act of regular self-admission of error and correction of standpoints whenever they were challenged, as a gesture of what he believed were his special duty as a leader to be a model setter of truth-telling. Transparency in his ideal village government was not the formality of the procedure, it was a living responsibility, that is, the village was governed in front of people and here they could challenge the line of reasoning of the officials. This kind of political truth is founded on the understanding that democracy is based on communicative fidelity and denial of political leverage on the vulnerability or lack of knowledge of citizens.

Satya (truth) to Gandhi does not serve as abstract and metaphysically privileged principle but as a practice that demands moral disciplines and social responsibility, and needs to be preserved at all moments. Gandhi has described his truth-seeking in his *Autobiography: My Experiments with Truth* as experimental practice which is a strict application to the facts which requires a congruence between personal belief and outer declaration and action (Gandhi, 1927). This perspective is radically different in that passive reception of facts it is exactly Satya that is born on the basis of intentional, concerted effort toward the development of moral courage and ruthless self-inspection. According to Gandhi, in telling the truth one must recognize his own fallibility and incompleteness, and he needs to understand that people only have provisional, partial

knowledge (Gandhi, 1927).

Satya at the political level is a disciplinary power and communication relate restriction. Considering *Hind swaraj* (1909), Gandhi claims that a valid opposition to injustice will require its radical transparency: he cannot establish legitimate independence by deceptive methods and propaganda as the latter ones corrupt the struggle itself, making the oppressor reasoning logos (Gandhi, 1909). This guideline is the basis of Satyagraha (truth-force), i.e. not passive non-resistance, but active struggle based on the principles of truthfulness and dignity of the opponent. According to the current history, it is believed that Satyagraha means a kind of dissent based on fundamental values and interests without necessarily defeating the opponent but accomplishing the adjustment of protests by awakening the moral consciousness of the opponent (Gandhian Ethics, 2025).

Gandhi was institutionally loyal to transparency which demanded the accountability of the population. The fact that he, as a leader, enjoyed a special responsibility of being the first to speak truth, which was demonstrated by his practice of periodically confessing his error to the crowd and revising his stand on matters in relation to his response to criticism. The accountability on the spot face-to-face mode of decisions, where individuals could challenge the rationale of the authority; this was a manifestation of transparency in his vision of village governance in gram sabhas (local councils). This is a political truth seeking on the basis that democracy is reliant on communicative integrity and unwillingness to take advantage of the vulnerability or a lack of understanding among citizens to gain political leverage.

Transparency, Self-Discipline, and Ethical Public Life

Transparency and self-discipline were the structural elements of ethical leadership in the populace according to Gandhi. Gandhi had had a quite different conception of transparency, the belief that as a moral effort to be transparent is living accountable, to take the risk of openly admitting a mistake, to change standpoints in reaction to criticism, to fashion a moral consistency between inner belief and outer deed. In his *Autobiography*, Gandhi insists on his habit to publicly admit his errors as many times he states that a leader who does not accept the fact that he is wrong is not a democratic person, and contributes to injustice continuously (Gandhi, 1927). This transparency was not only covering individual behaviour, but also the practice within institutions. In *Hind swaraj*, the strategy put forward by Gandhi is a system as close to real efficacy as village councils (gram sabhas) in which decisions are made publicly and citizens holding the state directly accountable are able to challenge the government arguments (Gandhi, 1909, p. 89).

Epistemic integrity was directly linked to Gandhi unable to conquer personal desires and focusing on the self to maintain self-discipline, which is established through such practices as Brahmacharya (mindful self-restraint). A person can make sure that their motives, mind, and prejudices are under strict control, which will reduce the chance of the unconscious intentions to affect perception and expression (Gandhi, 1927, p. 143). It was not a withdrawal into politics but an analysis of self that ensured what was ethical political action. Theorists who examine the topic of the Gandhian Perspective on Ethical Governance and Society stress that to

Gandhi, transparency was the democratic necessity rather than the act of virtue; accountability of the government to people through open decision-making procedures was the key to the legitimacy (Kamalavalli, 2013) ^[15].

Most importantly, it was the combination of transparency and self-discipline that has contributed to political credibility of Satyagraha. An actor in politics who uses deception or concealment however strategic loses any right to call on the opponent to change. Through radical honesty and offering themselves to social scrutinizing Satyagrahis were able to clearly show that their protesting against unjust was not a self-seeking move of political power but a sign of pure ethical illustration. This model does not focus on the triumph of the party when political validity but on moral uprightness.

Misinformation and the Moral Crisis of Contemporary Politics

The modern democratic societies are faced by what the scholars call an information disorder that can only be subject to stringent conceptual distinction. Misinformation is used to represent the inadvertent release of improper data, whereas disinformation implies the intentional transfer of erroneous statements aimed at cheating (Wardle and Derakhshan, 2017, Bellocchi *et al.*, 2025) ^[23, 2]. An extensive literature search that lists 1,261 journal articles released in the period between 2010 and 2021 reports the explosion of the growth in this phenomenon, especially after major political incidents such as the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections and Brexit (Broda & Stromback, 2024) ^[4]. This proliferation is not merely an issue of technical concern but it is also a crisis of morality and epistemology. With the post-truth political environment, the emotional appeal and personal belief are systematically prioritized over rationally sound arguments, destroying the factual foundation on which deliberation in the democratic process is based (McIntyre, 2018) ^[17].

The structural mechanisms augment the crisis. The social media, which are supposed to be designed to maximize engagement and not precision, reward sensational content irrespective of its truthfulness. This architecture is used to the strategic political benefit of coordinated disinformation campaigns. The systematic analysis of 756 articles (2014-2022) uncovers the formulation of fragmented epistemological agreement that forms the basis of democratic operations replaced by multiple contradicting narratives (Lee, Tóth, and Carter, 2025) ^[16]. Compared to fakes in history, the modern information disorder is systematic: false news travels at a greater speed and distance than fact-checking; the process of validation is slower than the production of fake news; an institutional authority loses credibility at the time that epistemological power is required the most (Bennett and Livingston, 2018) ^[3].

The misinformation and disinformation is a form of moral crisis as it is taking advantage of the vulnerability and uncertainty of citizens to gain political advantages at the expense of what the democratic theory practically presumes, which is that the public discourse facilitates collective reasoning towards mutual agreement. The weapon of doubt in itself turns into the mechanism: it does not need to persuade citizens in false propositions, on the contrary, it does not allow objective verification and does not restore the credibility of citizens (Lee, Tóth, and Carter, 2025) ^[16].

Deepfakes, Algorithmic Mediation, and the Erosion of Truth

Deepfakes and algorithmic amplification are new forms of epistemic and political threats, chosen separately and may be of a different nature. Deepfakes are faux-real media created by artificial intelligence to effectively pose as real individuals or events to harm the evidentiary basis which is the traditional basis of democratic discourse. Theorists who examine the issue of deepfakes based on the democratic theory focus on the fact that synthetic media pose risks to three fundamental democratic functions: empowered inclusion (citizens lack reliable means to check claims), collective agenda formation (shared premise of facts is broken up), and the process of collective will (trust in institutional communication is destroyed) (Pawelec, 2022) ^[20]. More importantly, when one systematic literature review comes to its end, it finds that deepfakes cannot be devolved into a problem that can be addressed by simply detecting and verifying them with algorithms (Jacobsen and Simpson, 2024) ^[14].

This crisis is increased algorithmic amplification. The ranking system used by social media platforms is based on the desire to attract maximum attention to the user, and these rankers include engagement-based systems. Experimental evidence of analysing about 2.7 million posts shows that low-credibility information in a tweet has an unfairly high amplification in the algorithm in comparison to high-credibility information (Corsi, 2024) ^[6]. In a preregistered algorithmic audit of Twitter engagement-based ranking, the algorithm promoted out-group hostile content that was also emotionally charged and negatively affected users, as well as that which they indicated they are more or less satisfied with, indicating worse-performance of user stated preferences (Milli *et al.*, 2023) ^[18].

The things work by using feedback to amplify the polarization that already exists in society as they also create a new polarization due to the amplification options they use. The issue is not a technological one but a political as well as ethical one. Algorithmic incentive structures are intended to derive optimal engagement instead of truth-reading, and are inherently misaligned with the whole concept of truth-seeking. It is not just that information becomes challenged, but that systematically the infrastructure of communicative democracy, where citizens can share access to accessible information and discuss it and come to a mutual background, is undermined.

Gandhian Ethics as a Counter to Post-Truth Politics

When interpreted well of course as a practice and not just as a principle Gandhian ethics sheds light on resources that can be used today by democratic based resistance to post-truth politics. The main principle of this model is that the process of telling the truth is moral discipline, rather than strategic communication. In contrast to the post-truth discourse, where truth is instrumentally defined, that is, treated as the means of securing political benefits, Gandhian ethics relies on the truth telling, which is dependent on the commitment to non-injury and the dignity of the opponent, and therefore demands what Gandhi discussed as moral courage of the willingness to admit his or her mistake in front of society, the consistency of the conviction to actions, and the lack of manipulation of the confusion of others (Gandhi, 1927). This model deals with the pathology of post-truth: the rejection of facts of shared premises. Even those who

examine the post-truth era argue that the only counter to it is to foster a set of skills such as disciplinary inquiry, democratic deliberation, and reasonable argumentation; these skills should be based on the commitment to truth as an ethical value (Ferretti, 2023) ^[8]. Gandhian ethics gives one such ground. In addition, the current media ethic research also recognizes the presence of values vital to democratic operation, trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, truth, and self-restraint, which are quite consistent with Gandhian political behaviour (Nandagopal, 2022) ^[19]. These values are not decorative but instead characteristic of the actual process of democratic communication.

More importantly, Gandhian structures do not provide technological solution and even suggest that truth is self-evident. Instead, they maintain that democratic actors need to develop moral habits, like institutional practices, which enable truth seeking: a periodic self-examination, open-minded bookkeeping, answering to the people one is claiming to. Gandhian strategies suggest the idea of creating a legitimate political power base by basing it on their moral integrity rather than rhetorical power, which is exactly what the post-truth politics systematically do not allow (Gianolla, 2017) ^[12].

Limitations and Critical Challenges

The implementation of Gandhian ethics in addressing modern-day democratic issues faces structural and technological challenges that need sincere consideration. The model by Gandhi assumed a face-to-face accountability and local government, down-sized to direct transparency, very radically different compared to mass digital communication to billions of people worldwide (Gianolla, 2017) ^[12]. The intercultural democratic discourse by Gandhi is facing challenges observed by scholars when he emphasized his view of local ethical communities and had to deal with the fact that modern political categories have appeared only due to liberal democratic regimes as well as the global-scale technological systems (Gianolla, 2020) ^[13]. The misinformation-driving platforms generate structural incentives that are entirely antithetical to the Gandhian transparency, since their operation is governed by algorithmic structures that act to boost interaction and not truth. Additionally, Gandhian ethics require voluntary self-discipline of the morality, which is hard to establish or enforce on an institutional level. Competitive disadvantage arises in unbalanced power situations where actors who are well-endowed in the engagement of coordinated disinformation acts opponents who act ethically. Modern commentaries observe that the development of Science and its malevolent offspring technology develops complexities that the localist structures of Gandhi did not foresee (Prasad, 2017) ^[21]. These constraints explain scope: Gandhian concepts shed light on long-term moral necessities of the democratic communication and cannot be adequate without technology restructuring, regulation, and institutional reorganization that takes care of power inequalities and platform architectures.

Democratic and Policy Implications

Gandhian ethics as combined with structural reforms would imply normative conclusions in terms of the democratic governance, the media accountability and the cultivation of civic society. Ethical governance requires the institutional

transparency, accountability mechanisms in which the subjects of decision-making reasoning are accessible to the influenced people not as a formality of procedure but as a democratic necessity. Studies have shown that the ethics and moral values promotion is an essential aspect of good governance that inherently includes such aspects as transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and integrity but does not necessarily represent their add-ons (Gaur, 2014) ^[11]. The conceptual schemes on the accountability of the populace insist on the idea that as long as there is transparency and real means of making power answerable, it serves democratic legitimacy; lack of consequences because of disclosing information brings about cynicism (de Boer, 2023) ^[7]. Media organizations have a particular duty of truth-mediation, in which they are meant to make professional pledges to veracity, validity of the source, and the public nature of rectification of mistakes, also known as information politics that inquires continuous self-critical legitimation (Carlson, 2018) ^[5]. Civic education should create disciplined critical inquiry as opposed to scepticism skills- abilities to judge evidence, identify manipulation and have epistemic humility. Democratically, short term competitive advantage needs to be subjugated to long term development of communicative virtues as it is realised that taking advantage of epistemic uncertainty erodes pre-requisites to collective self-governance. These connotations are still only philosophical, not operational, they determine what should be the values of democratic institutions but do not dictate certain policy-making mechanisms.

Conclusion

This analysis has explored how the idea of Satya (truth) and transparency as perceived by Gandhi, as ethical-political practice, can enlighten the current trends of democracy dealing with misinformation, deepfakes and post-truth politics. Gandhian ethics cannot provide any technological solution to the issues in the digital age but provides a strictly moral epistemology, which is based on personal control, institutional responsibility, and epistemic virtues that are required in a democratic communication environment. Although deepfakes weaken the fundamentals of evidence and algorithmic amplification is rewarding inaccuracy massively, rather than the truth, Gandhian theories believe that opposition would demand more than detecting systems; ethical restraint, moral courage to admit failure publicly, and not to use the fact that people are unsure as an excuse to gain political triumph.

There are critical limitations that are still present. Gandhian ethics assumed the governance of local scale that made it possible to hold oneself accountable in person- the situations that are radically different in a digital environment. The application of these principles needs to be combined with structural reforms that cover the design of platforms, regulation, and power oppositions to which Gandhian thinking cannot easily apply to.

The future research ought to take three approaches, first, it should find out the efficient operation of the transparency mechanisms and accountability practices at various scales, starting with local governance and ending up with the digital platforms. Second, comparative analysis that explores the philosophical traditions of non-West (such as Gandhian, Confucian, Ubuntu) that base the idea of truth-telling on relationship ethical systems as opposed to personal rights. Third, interdisciplinary research between political

philosophy, studying the media, and governance of platforms to come up with combined theories that would regulate against both the ethical cultivation and structural reform. Democratic futures are based on the understanding that truth is also essentially a practice - something communities accomplish by disciplined commitment and not something they possess.

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