



# 16

## Gandhi's Wisdom in the Twenty-First Century and Beyond

V. K. Kool and Rita Agrawal

One of the editors of this book, Kool, was addressing a small group of wealthy people who were interested in helping needy children. When he asked each one of them to take an initiative and invite a young child and keep him/her for a day at their affluent homes, very few showed spontaneous and instant readiness. While they had genuinely meant to help the needy, their own comfort and identity in interacting with a poor child for the entire day at their homes became the issue. One member was concerned about her image in society, another with hygiene, and more.

At this point, we are reminded of what Gandhi had said: “recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man who you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him”

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V. K. Kool (✉)

SUNY Polytechnic Institute, Utica, NY, USA

R. Agrawal

Harish Chandra Post Graduate College, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India

(Gandhi, August 1947, p. 125). Psychologists such as Skinner had used this quote of Gandhi to support the theory of reinforcement, but in the absence of any development of identity with the person, the authenticity of wisdom fails to bring the desired results. No wonder, as stated earlier, Skinner was not successful in sustaining his community as compared to what Gandhi did at the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa or at Wardha ashram in India.

Any understanding of the need for wisdom hinges, basically, on our survival and adaptation to an ever changing physical and social environment, which, in turn, helps to forge our personal identity. Further, personal identity has important links to two domains: first, the core of communal culture and, second, its representation in human cognition. Together, they form, guide, and monitor our experiences, helping us to build a super identity that provides the abstraction of who we are and who we want to be, maybe God-like, a Rocky, an Avatar, or Gandhi.

Even those living beings that are placed lower down in the phylogenetic scale and are unable to use language are gifted with several forms of behavior leading to their survival. Scholars in the field of comparative biology and related disciplines have been, constantly, extrapolating information about them, and with recent advancements, there is considerable that can be learnt from their ways of adaptation and survival, making us wiser in the process (for more details, see Kool & Agrawal, 2010, 2011). Therefore, it is important to begin with asking a question: what happens when we think that we are wise even though we may not be so?

## **Why Do We Need Gandhi More Than Ever Before in Our Search for Wisdom?**

The trajectory for the study of wisdom has been overshadowed by issues from its very inception. Firstly, human beings engage in discrimination by considering themselves wiser than other living beings. This tendency escalates, further, to the intra-human level leading to feelings such as White versus Black, mature versus immature, or, young versus old, leading to the switching off of the default mode of our wisdom and, believing falsely, that our lives are more significant than that of others.

Often, we kill other living beings without any remorse. Make a visit to a slaughter house to know the value of life and what do you find? Should we call ourselves wise consenting to what is happening around? Sure, we may say, we or they are wise but helpless. Is there wisdom in inaction? At the same time, putting wisdom into action has its own problems (Boulware, 2019). But, according to Gandhi, wisdom is no wisdom if it does not seep into action. "Walk the talk" is the motto of wisdom.

Secondly, whether there is consensus regarding a common definition and measurement of wisdom or not, Hume's contention, that, while values are represented in the state of mind, it is the affective responses which determine the perceived value of properties around us, has to be agreed upon. In this respect too, the core issue for understanding wisdom requires inputs ranging from those of lower levels of organisms to that of the godfathers of humanity. One such example of how organisms lower down in phylogeny struggle to survive and create desirabilities for augmenting and demonstrating their wisdom is provided by a 60 minutes-CBS program journalist who visited an island, unsullied by human presence, and was amazed to be shown a bird who had created a huge six feet tall nest and danced, incessantly, to lure a mate to its own Taj Mahal (for details see Kool & Agrawal, *Psychology of Technology*, 2016).

Such creatures in nature lack human intelligence and are unable to construct mansions but offer useful information for the study of wisdom. Thus, phylogenetically and incrementally, conceptualizing or measuring wisdom involves a trajectory, different from the traditional approach, for exploring the affective and emotional nature of wisdom manifested in self sacrifice, altruism, and more. It is precisely for this reason, that Gandhi remarked in an interview with Benjamin May on December 31, 1936 at Wardha, India and reported in his book, *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography*:

Nonviolence is not passive resistance but rather an active force. It is three fourths invisible, one quarter visible. Likewise its results are likely to be invisible and not capable of measurement..... when one retreats in nonviolent effort, he must never retreat out of fear, nor because he believes the nonviolent technique will never win. His faith must teach him that nonviolence can never lose because three fourths of it

is invisible and cannot be measured. So it can never be said that the method is impractical, or that it has failed, if a campaign is called off. (May, 2002/1936).

The above position of Gandhi might appear troubling to those who specialize in wisdom and its measurement. More recently, sensing the need for focusing on the affective aspect in wisdom studies, Grossman (2017) has proposed the concept of *emodiversity* (reported in Chapter 1 of this book), illustrating how the experiencing of diverse emotions becomes an integral part of wisdom. Both cognitively and emotionally, wisdom is a behavioral feature that defines our potential for existence and often expands our cognition, on one hand, and relieves us from the burden of those limitations that had, hitherto, appeared irreversible, on the other. Therefore, the range of study of wisdom is complex and it is not surprising that Gandhi had expressed his reservations on having some set exactitude and parameters of wisdom. In fact, even today, its quantification eludes scientists.

Thirdly, the history of psychology is replete with the overemphasis on various forms of pathological behaviors and the identification of organic disorders that are associated with such behaviors. It is difficult to believe, but true, that as late as until the end of the previous century, psychologists were preoccupied with the study of self control in the context of the breakdown of normative behaviors, leading to criminality and other forms of deviancy (for example, work by leading scholars such as Roy Baumeister, 1999). On the other hand, a cursory glance at the role of self control in situations beyond our normal repertoire of behavior, for example, in yoga, mindfulness, silence, fasting, and other myriad forms of behavior that communities around the world, and, religions in particular, have offered to us through the ages reveals the positive nature of self control. In several chapters of this book, readers will find examples of how Gandhi demonstrated his wisdom through such nuanced forms of behavior.

More specifically, Gandhi's wisdom is rooted in one's ability to manage, monitor and test self control in the most arduous conditions, imaginable. With temptations constantly surrounding us, the chances of

the depletion of self control, as reported in numerous modern psychological researches (also reported in other chapters of this book) are high, but to manifest self control in the face of adversity is challenging for not only expanding cognition (for example, how to continually use fair means to achieve our goal), but also for managing the ambivalent emotions (for example, controlling our anger and disgust and loving the perpetrators of violence, at the same time).

On examining the event of the historically famous Dandi March organized by Gandhi for the making of salt and defying British law, it is clear that the abundant exuberance of self control, as manifested by the scores of nonviolent marching protesters who succumbed to the brutality of British led police, became the cardinal expression of the identity of millions who found their communal identity merging with their personal identity of freedom (Kool & Agrawal, 2018). The journalists witnessing the event got so emotional that they declared, instantly, that the West had lost its moral superiority and that India had become a free country, there and then, using the moral weapon of nonviolence. Self control helps to create affordances that demonstrate the wisdom of nonviolence and expands human cognition in the face of emotions that continue to flood us.

A close examination of the life and work of Gandhi illustrates that he not only focused on the carving of human cognition in relation to a variety of emotions, or as modern psychologists present them in the context of emodiversity, as mentioned in Chapter 1, but he also realized that the driver of nonviolence must have enough intrinsic motivation, in the form of will power, to steer the movement in the right direction (Kool, 1993, 2008; Kool & Agrawal, 2013). For this purpose, his experiments with truth provide strength to his followers to test themselves in several domains but especially, in remaining nonviolent even in the face of being annihilated (Kool, 2013). Thus, by focusing on self control as a cardinal form of behavior, Gandhi engaged and enmeshed the subtle threads of human cognition, emotion, and motivation for engineering and demonstrating human wisdom.

## On Moving Away from the Study of Negative Forms of Behavior: The Context of Gandhi's Wisdom

Since its inception, the science of psychology has been simultaneously preoccupied with the study of pathological behavior on one side and that of the intellectual and creative aspects of the human mind, on the other. In its applied form, the practitioners of psychology have advocated, directly or indirectly, that the elimination of unwanted behavior and the availability of creative intellectuals, scientists, professionals, and community leaders in key positions would help in solving problems at all levels, both individual and social (Kool & Agrawal, 2006). However, it was not until the beginning of the current century that the flagship journal of the American Psychological Association, the *American Psychologist*, published its first complete issue on positive psychology with topics such as happiness, resiliency, and more. Even at this stage of the growth of psychology, it is difficult to convince most intellectuals and policy makers that the control of war, violence, hostilities, and other such forms of negative behaviors are no definite or sustained corollaries to well being, peace, and development.

At an interview in the 1980s, when Kool was asked about his specialization, he replied, "human cognition and the psychology of nonviolence". The committee members began questioning his specialization by saying: "oh, we have psychology of industry but not non-industrial psychology"; another said, "we understand psychology of violence, but are you going to set up a course/program on non-cognitive psychology as well", and more. The counter argument that Kool presented was whether non-vegetarians would eat the meat of pets such as dogs and cats? The answer, obviously, was an emphatic "no". In much the same way, Kool told them that the adding of the prefix "non", does not necessarily, make a concept the mirror opposite of another.

From the above and many other illustrations, it is clear that understanding and finding interventions for the enhancement of wisdom is not easy, since comparisons with its flipside, for example, the comparison of "wise" with "unwise" is not only risky but also leads to dubious

contentions. In the context of multicultural training programs it would, unquestionably, be a disaster. And yet, in program after program, an integral part of the training is to enhance the thinking in terms of opposites. We were surprised to find that it is difficult to complete a certain executive program of Cornell University without identifying the opposites of the presented concepts/scenarios. Recently, Grossman (2017), a leading scholar on wisdom, has offered inputs for the understanding of the context of wisdom, but it needs greater elaboration and authenticity in view of the above argument.

For Gandhi, wisdom comes not by simply eliminating the negative aspects of life, but by realizing the yin and yang of life, as Barbara Fredrickson (2001) conceptualized in her Broaden and Build theory, highlighting both the upper and lower spirals of well being. In terms of Grossman's description (refer to Chapter 1 and Grossmann et al., 2020) of the components of wisdom in terms of moral grounding, encompassing the pursuit of truth, shared humanity, and common good orientation, the weights assigned to each category by different individuals were found to vary, offering plasticity in the understanding and the seeking of applications of research on wisdom. Such plasticity corroborates the idea that with changing context, culture, or the core of consciousness, wisdom may not remain wisdom.

Gandhi's wisdom, rooted in nonviolence, has a moral grounding but offers little plasticity as we move away from its default mode of nonviolence. For this reason, psychologists such as Kohlberg (1976) placed Gandhi in the highest tier of moral development attained by hardly 5% of people, and, even at that level, the moral development attained by Gandhi would not be easy to measure. It is difficult to categorize people such as Gandhi, wrote Owen Flanagan (1991) in his book, *Varieties of moral personality*, because, though they are viewed to be at the apex of human existence, they do not operate in terms of a single or a predetermined multiple set of moral standards. Nagin Sanghavi, eminent historian and writer on Gandhi had exactly the same belief regarding Gandhi: when interviewed by Rita Agrawal in 2017 (and described in our book, *Gandhi and the Psychology of Nonviolence*, 2020) he contended that mahatmas (great souls), such as Gandhi, are difficult to describe and measure.

Wisdom can be seen emerging in a variety of forms including,

- The clergy way: do as it has been prescribed by the holy books or social order,
- The saint way: apply ethics and find the right thing to do,
- The hermit way: live and be guided by your conscience; becoming a loner but never disavow your responsibility toward the community.

In his search for truth, Gandhi never hesitated to find solace in any of the above stated categories because relativism is the basis of the idea that truth is endless and provides further meaning to our navigation through life. Psychiatrist Jeste, in his description of positive psychiatry and as mentioned in Chapter 1, contends that there is considerable to be learnt from our grandma's wisdom (Jeste & LaFee, 2020). It is also true, that such wisdom is acquired from the combination of any or all the above stated experiences. Unfortunately, Western dictionaries define a hermit in the context of a schizoid personality disorder. Raghavan Iyer (1983) was so correct in his assessment that for Westerners, Gandhi, in the role of a hermit, would be impossible to understand.

The silver lining in the research on wisdom is the category of meta-wisdom according to Baltes and Staudinger (2000) and Gugerelle and Riffert (2012). They have found uncertainty, relative values, and context to be salient features of wisdom. Any conceptualization of human life is impossible in the absence of choices, but hermits, unlike ordinary human beings, become reclusive and discard material life following their own choices in life. Yet, they never step away from the highest grounding of human virtues, tried and tested in the most compelling circumstances of life. Gandhi took a leaf from hermits, laid his hands to the study of various religious books including the Bible and the Gita and interacted with religious leaders in the three continents of the world where he had lived and operated. Gandhi determined that by being in the company of such people around him, he could observe behaviors such as silence, fasting, and vows so as to keep the essence of a hermit in his character. He enjoyed moral engagement with people around him but at the same time displayed features of behavior so typical of a hermit. This is the nature of authentic wisdom of a super human being (Ferrari et al., 2016).



By living like Gandhi, we experience his wisdom, as is amply demonstrated in the chapters presented in the third section of this book: Nagler's interpretation based on the Hindu holy book, the Bhagwada Gita, and his establishing of the Metta Center for Nonviolence (Box 16.1); Cortland as protester; and Paxton on war. In many ways, among those who emulated Gandhi in their life and work, for example, Karve, Bhave, and others, had an opportunity to experience Gandhi directly and found ways to advance his wisdom through doosri azadi (second freedom), that is, freedom from poverty coupled with rural development, literacy, and self governance. Gandhi's wisdom, rooted in the soil of nonviolence, is a human ontogenetic foresight characterized by least uncertainty as long as we do not replant it in the soil of violence.

**Box 16.1 Michael Nagler's Metta Center for Nonviolence and the Third Harmony**

Michael Nagler, the contributor of a chapter in this book, is the founder of the Metta Center for nonviolence in California and has advocated nonviolence based on Gandhian principles for decades (Nagler, 1990). He has offered a path of nonviolence following a harmonious way of life into the mainstream of our culture:

Harmony 1: with all there is (universe)

Harmony 2: harmony with the earth, and

Harmony 3: focusing inwards

According to him, with the above in harmony, we would contribute to the future of nonviolence, which is being proven by the decades of scientific research on quantum physics and brain science.

Source: Nagler, M. N. (2020), *The third harmony: Nonviolence and the new story of human nature*. Berrett-Koeler audio; Sandra Bass, Berkeley blog, November 30, 2020.

Nagler's conceptualization of human nature, rooted in the current stream of scientific research and thinking, is an invitation to focus on the relevance of human behavior in dealing with issues concerning harmony at the above three levels and to seek lessons from Gandhi in cultivating

our wisdom by unfolding the layers of our coexistence as seen in the moral grounding of Gandhi as a cleric, saint or sage (Box 16.1). Through his experiments with truth, Gandhi offered a trajectory to expand our cognition in seeking such harmony, which, modern scholars of the psychology of wisdom also find handy. For instance, procedural knowledge regarding the planning, understanding, and finding of meaning in life, claim psychologists, are the basic parameters of wisdom, but it, definitely, requires a person to invent and impart these elements of wisdom. Following nonviolence, Gandhi amply demonstrated these attributes of wisdom but where is Gandhi in the psychology of nonviolence? The proof is in the pudding, as Murray et al. (2014) wrote in their chapter, *Toward a psychology of nonviolence*. While summarizing the status of research and publications on the psychology of nonviolence, let alone, specifically, covering the wisdom of Gandhi, they write:

Although there have been some efforts to develop a psychology of nonviolence (e.g., Kool, 2008), and the APA has had a division of peace psychology since 1988, the potential for contributions of psychology to the study and practice of nonviolence has been largely untapped. The possibilities, however, are exciting. We have only enough space to make a few suggestions. Kool (2008) gives a far more extensive discussion. (p. 179)

## Faith, Wisdom, and Gandhi

Let us narrate the story of a 10 year old boy who bought an umbrella when it had not rained for five years and the community members gathered to pray to God to bestow them with plenty of rain for their survival. While the boy covered himself with the umbrella, others looked at his weird behavior because it had not rained for five years. But soon, it started raining. Only faith defines the genuineness of wisdom. We know several family members and health professionals who risked their lives to save patients suffering from the recent COVID pandemic. Similarly, think of Schindler's list and the saving of Jews from Hitler's genocide. It is our faith in the sanctity of life that guides such behavior.

If it is misdirected, it could create rebels, terrorists and other similar agents. Therefore, Gandhi, a rebel himself, taught us to never switch off the default mode of the wisdom of nonviolence in our cognitive system and to keep respecting the sanctity of life at all levels (Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam).

No matter what the form of faith—religious, political, or any other—it is a fact that it eases the cognitive load by acting as a heuristic, and thereby, facilitates the faster processing of information. So, meeting a member of our own church helps in the effortless perception of certain group attributes. Social identity theory, as described elsewhere in this book, provides ample evidence on how unknown individuals form groups even for simple tasks such as counting dots and making other judgments. With sentiments and emotions accompanying a faith, the pace of information processing increases, becoming a precursor for the forging of an identity in the context of violence or nonviolence. Faith in a violent group may make one a terrorist while faith in a nonviolent group makes one a Gandhian nonviolent protester.

Another hallmark of wisdom as exemplified by Gandhi is humility, so often ignored by politicians and leaders the world over. Gandhi has offered us innumerable examples, but we tend to simply ignore them or learn nothing from his life and work (Box 16.2).

### **Box 16.2 Following Gandhi's Wisdom Has Its Own Rewards**

1. While educating inmates of a youth correctional facility in NJ, USA, Mark Edwards (2020), a Princeton University faculty, asked them to think of their prison as Gandhi's Ashram and encouraged them to focus on Gandhi's life and work and be like him during their remaining time in prison. Not surprisingly, Edwards noticed that the mode of their cognitive appraisal of violence reversed and they began to appreciate and value nonviolence. Similar effects were reported by Cervantes (2020, April 20) while teaching degree courses such as *Waging Nonviolence* in a program offered to prisoners in Chicago. Using Kool and Sen's test of nonviolence, scholars at the University

- of Maryland found that when nonviolence was primed at the cognitive levels of inmates, it helped reduce violence among the inmates of three prisons of Maryland (for details, see Kool & Agrawal, 2020).
2. While stalwarts in business and industry have long believed that Gandhi's views are not practical, contributors in this book such as Graeme Nuttall show how Gandhi's wisdom of *aparigraha* helps in increasing productivity in UK and Australia; Nachiketa Tripathi demonstrates that the calling orientation contributes to greater morale; Tej Prakash shows its relevance to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Using Kool and Sen's test of nonviolence and by designing their own tool for relevant measurement in industry, Bhalerao and Kumar (2015) revealed how testing employees in the domain of nonviolence helps to break the cycle of violence.
  3. A number of concepts of Gandhian nonviolence, such as *tapas* and *anasakti* appear exotic, but several scholars have empirically tested and demonstrated their usefulness (for details, see Kool, 2008; Kool & Agrawal, 2020). Manickam (2014) created a test of *Sahay*, meaning tolerance, which is relevant for the understanding of Gandhi's wisdom.
  4. While it is inspiring to learn from scholars who go beyond words and writings to emulating Gandhi's life and work, and provide opportunities of witnessing the authenticity of his wisdom, there are countless people who could be rated as being less if not at all familiar with Gandhi's life and work. One such example is Lisbeth Ejlertsen (2017), of Denmark, who has written a book on spirituality, recently and has visited India several times. When Kool requested her to relate her thinking with Gandhi, she found wisdom in Gandhi and stated her willingness to communicate about him.

As stated in the opening chapter of this book, while scientist Einstein, President Obama, and prominent intelligence scholar Howard Gardner, intend to seek inspiration from the life and work of Gandhi, placing Gandhi in an island of the moral world of our time that is getting lonelier by the day will be unwise. Further to President Obama's remark in his book (2020), that Gandhi had set the moral tone of the previous century, it is mandatory that we must not only hear the tone but also continually test it through our cognition and behavior in the current millennium.

Faith is a facilitator of cognitive activity. With faith in nonviolence, wisdom widens its scope in relationships with community members. In his balance theory of wisdom (reported in Chapter 1), Sternberg (Sternberg, 1998; Sternberg et al., 2019) refers to this scenario of wisdom as the extra-personal aspect, in addition to the intra-personal and inter-personal (e.g., dyadic relationships) domains. While it is logical to argue that the context and attributes of wisdom vary as we move from intra- to extra-personal levels of wisdom, the question with which wisdom scholars have been grappling is about the identity it generates, particularly in the noosphere, allowing and stamping their existence, and viewing oneself as an individual and in relations with his/her community. Erikson (1969) was very clear on this issue as he pointed out that identity without affiliation has no meaning. He argued further that with affiliation to Gandhi's nonviolence—the cardinal virtue of coexistence, the emerging identity mitigates the boundaries at all levels—intra-, inter, and extra-personal. The individual finds himself or herself in the core of community and vice versa.

Throughout human history, faith has been the mainstay of wisdom, helping people in testing their individual effectiveness and collective survival. Attesting to Gandhi's trajectory of wisdom and in making it appear isomorphic, Raghavan Iyer (1983) wrote:

Although Gandhi based his faith in the supremacy of the individual on his view of conscience and of the duty that a man owes to himself, his stress on action rather than thought led him to assert that the duty that a man owes himself is also owed by him to his fellow men.... This is, as Adam Smith pointed out, the only looking-glass by which we can, with the eyes of other people, scrutinize the propriety of our own conduct. (pp. 133–134)

Let us examine how the faith of two leading thinkers of the previous century, Marx and Gandhi, differed: while Karl Marx called violence the midwife of human history, Gandhi substituted nonviolence for the same expression. Marx was against any role of religion in human life as he considered it the opium of humankind and clubbed nonviolence with religion. In contrast, while extolling nonviolence, Gandhi viewed

violence as regressing to animality and a threat to existence. Was Karl Marx violent at home? Was Hitler, either, violent at home? In analyzing violent behavior of nonviolent individuals vis-a-vis nonviolent behavior of violent individuals, Kool (2008) concluded that there are several gray areas in viewing violent and nonviolent behaviors (see also Chapter 2) and observed that while Hitler was very kind and loving at home, he was brutal at work in contrast to Gandhi who kept nonviolence as his default mode at all levels. Again, a faith is no faith when it is planted differently at different places and times. Not surprisingly, William James, like Gandhi, was also concerned about the dual self of modern human beings.

With Gandhi's nonviolence as the default mode of our cognition, it is not difficult to understand how faith, created in view of one's own conscience and aligned with duty, would be the cardinal test of wisdom. Gandhi, therefore, advised each satyagrahi to search their conscience to determine their faith in truth and nonviolence, before they sign up for their participation in his movement. Did Karl Marx or Hitler impart the same wisdom to their followers? The reader will notice that the default mode of cognition of nonviolence did not shift while shifting from the personal to the social levels, in the case of Gandhi. He was critical of the external inducements offered by the media, politicians, and others holding power in corrupting the innocence of the masses who believed and trusted them.

Like Seligman's authentic happiness, if there is a need to find authentic wisdom, Gandhi certainly heralded it and with no secrets around, made it transparent at all levels—intra-, inter-and extra-personal. This was Gandhi's "un-othering", a topic discussed in another chapter of this book. Gandhi is a perfect example of Kaufman's (2020) transcendental personality.

On the other hand, we invite readers to evaluate Gandhi's well-known example of ordering the killing of a terminally ill calf upon the incessant crying of her mother. He stood against his own faith of nonviolence, culminating in a number of his followers abandoning him. He acted like a hermit who would prefer to remain aloof than to succumb to the desirabilities around him.

Gandhi, as we learn, found wisdom in creating upper spirals of virtues and contended that faith could monitor and guide behavior but the genuineness of love and search for truth must keep updating our wisdom. When faith reaches a cross road, wisdom steers it in the direction of cardinal virtues—albeit, not instantly visible on the navigational system. But the human being must keep moving on and experimenting. There is wisdom in such progression and the killing of the sick calf should not be construed, dogmatically, as regression to animality.

## **Wisdom Is Psychological and Yet Not so Psychological**

Like many other concepts in psychology such as sensation, perception, memory, intelligence, and motivation that usually contribute to the core of an introduction to psychology, concepts such as compassion, forgiveness, empathy, and wisdom, while forming the substance of positive psychology, are equally important and are rooted in our relationships with others. With the wisdom of nonviolence as the default mode of cognition, the study of activities of the newer prefrontal cortex is as relevant as the operation of the subcortical centers in the limbic and hippocampal areas of the brain. Emotions have evolutionary significance as they bond us, positively, negatively, or both, with people and things around us. Wisdom manages the tsunami caused by emotions and with self control intact, resists the evil of violence and guides us toward the appreciation of coexistence. Therefore, while wisdom is psychological, it also calls for inputs from external agents and could remain in moratorium in the absence of feedback from others.

More than our perceptual and intellectual processes, wisdom creates affordances in seeking feedback from others or nature, both in micro and macro forms. In our daily lives, it is wise to follow the norms as we do in following the traffic rules. However, is it wisdom if a surgeon drives over the speed limit while rushing to save the life of an injured patient admitted in a hospital? A surgeon friend of ours has asked us this question numerous times after receiving speeding tickets. However, while he received speeding tickets from only a small number of police

personnel, several acquitted him, while a few not only acquitted him but also escorted him to make sure that he reached the hospital at the earliest. Scholars engaged in wisdom research in particular, and moral psychology in general, have sought answers to such moral conflicts for decades but judging wisdom in such scenarios has remained elusive, leaving its interpretation to the eyes of the beholder. Our surgeon friend continues to defy the speed limits, for he finds wisdom in saving a life rather than caring about his driving record, fines, and insurance issues. For Gandhi, virtue and wisdom are interchangeable as long as both tend to address the larger interest of humanity.

Kenneth Boulding, former president of American Association of Advancement of Sciences and known as half Mahatma Gandhi and half Milton Friedman, encouraged psychologists, at a conference in Wisconsin in 1988, to lay greater focus on Gandhian psychology. Along with him, others also felt the need for the establishment of an independent peace psychology division in the American Psychological Association. It was, indeed, a pleasure to all those concerned that this was established soon after. Kool invited him, again, at a conference in 1992 in New York to assure him, in the presence of several distinguished members of this division, that psychologists had, indeed, begun their work in this new sub-field of psychology of nonviolence and peace. In his inaugural speech, Boulding remarked (and, on the same day, also, reiterated his viewpoint while addressing the local Chamber of Commerce) that at least 90–95% of human activity is nonviolent, or call it unviolent, but it was Gandhi who formally laid the foundation of organized nonviolence (Boulding, 1993). Out of the three faces of power, physical/military, economic and integrative (reported in Chapter 1), Boulding (1990) contended that integrative power has strong psychological roots for organized nonviolence. He illustrated how Gandhi won the hearts of the British labor class even after boycotting British textile products which were hurting their livelihood. Did Gandhi not notice the impact of his wisdom of nonviolence and truth as presented in Box 16.3? It was the charisma emanating out of his integrative power based on love for his adversaries, the seeking of truth, and the adherence to nonviolence.



**Box 16.3 Boulding: An Eyewitness of Gandhi's Influence in UK**

"I remember Gandhi making his famous visit to Lancashire when I was young. In spite of the fact that his boycott of imported British textiles in India was affecting the Lancashire economy adversely, he made a great impression on the people. I remember a popular song which went something like this: We don't like the black shirts, we don't like the brown shirts, we don't like the white shirts, but here is to Gandhi with no shirt at all" (p. 204).

Source: Chapter by Boulding, K. E. (1993): Nonviolence in the twenty-first century. In V. K. Kool (Ed.), *Nonviolence: Social and Psychological Issues*. Latham: University Press of America

As stated in Chapter 1 of this book, Gandhi's wisdom of nonviolence is as important for human cognition as homeostasis is to the balancing and functioning of the body. Take away nonviolence and everything becomes chaotic and threatens survival. Nonviolence is akin to the default mode in machine language or homeostasis in physiology: it is the cardinal basis of human existence and leads to authentic wisdom. It is because of this that we regard him as one the wisest of human beings and a father figure, an architect of human psychology in the East, much like we have known William James for decades in the West.

## On the Wisdom of Machines

In the above context, Boulding also invited us to examine the cognizance of nonviolence in the twenty-first century through popular songs. As the reader can easily figure out from Box 16.3, Gandhi's wisdom worked like magic and resonated in the songs of the British labor class. In contrast, Boulding noted that the World War II produced hardly any songs while the Gulf War, though raising considerable enthusiasm, did not generate any songs at all. Israel's social scientist, Moerk (2002), noted that folklores, including songs, offer scripts to the cognitive framework of a culture and tend to honor their leaders. Just as national songs arouse

nationalism, folklores, and songs with violent leaders, such as Hitler or Stalin, in the driver's seat could cause enormous suffering to humanity.

Further, Moerk contended that such folklores have evolutionary significance for the survival of a community and they are here to stay, even with the arrival of the new millennium. What is significant is that we will soon be in the company of robots and a beginning has been made with the awarding of citizenship by South Arabia to Sophia, a humanoid.

The reality of the presence of such mechanical artifacts has already bombarded us and their presence is being acknowledged by expressions such as, "hi Siri" or "hello Google". Sherry Turkle's view of the emergence of the second self in the context of technology is, definitely, gaining in prominence in our cognition (Turkle, 2011). Our dependence on machines has become so pervasive that we tend to look for our own phone number in our mobile phone, or require a calculator for adding 54 and 21!

Not in the very distant future, we would be in the company of intelligent robots capable of showing and sharing our emotions. Like our pets, they would be like members of our family, but with a difference. They could be more intelligent and sophisticated than us and could control us. In Chapter 10 of this book ("Turing Testing and Gandhi's Wisdom in the era of Cognitive Computing" by V. K. Kool & Rita Agrawal), we have raised the issue of survival in the company of humanoids. Thankfully, we can kill them by deleting the source of their energy. There would be no remorse in such violence nor would Gandhi be unhappy in his grave.

However, arguments such as the above come with a caveat. What if we fall in love with the humanoid Sophia? Unable to differentiate between the living and the lifeless, a baby cries when the mother begins to dust her doll, believing that it is getting hurt. But, even adults, who are able to differentiate between the living and the lifeless, are behaving in similar ways. People in Japan have been offering Buddhist funeral services for robot dogs and a Japanese astronaut bade farewell to a robot companion. In the company of such mechanical devices, we expect new folklores to emerge and become a part of our life and culture. So long as they promote nonviolence and are given positive treatment through funerals, etc., such expressions are manifestations of the core of humanity, namely,

compassion. However, in the context of the current culture, they might also appear weird.

The management and control of the artificial intelligence of robots could become problematic as humans lose control over the data mined from their systems (for further details see other chapters in this book). Can machines become spiritual, as discussed by Kurzweil (1999, 2005), and can they be made to follow nonviolence as the default mode? As current experts of technology believe, it is likely that robots could kill us.

At some point in the twenty-first century, Gandhi's spinning wheel could take the shape of a robot for wise interaction and improvement in the quality of life. For Gandhi, the charkha (spinning wheel) is not just a machine, it is a source of livelihood, easy to operate without intimidation and education, a source of appreciating physical work, boosting our self esteem, and a collective endeavor for experiencing humanity. Maybe, such a scenario could be nomenclatured authentic human-machine wisdom, should we be getting ready to address various other forms of wisdom such as collective wisdom, cultural wisdom, religious wisdom, and so on. Following the findings of the National Science Foundation (Rocco & Bainbridge, 2002), it would be difficult to predict our interaction with machines beyond a period of 20 years, but the usefulness of Gandhi's wisdom of nonviolence can certainly be predicted lasting till human life is wiped out from the face of the earth.

Therefore, we invite the readers to use the lens of nonviolence to visualize Gandhi's wisdom.

## **Wisdom, Nonviolence, and Happiness: Gandhi's Seasons of Life**

Walt Whitman, known as the first poet of democracy in the USA, wrote eloquently about the seasons of nature: "many a changeful season to follow, and many a scene in life". Gandhi's truth and nonviolence, too, are bound to show countless seasons as we navigate through life with wisdom as our scull. Unlike intelligence, wisdom has a greater collective orientation and acts much like a brilliant sailor who knows the finer differences between sailing a ship in a calm sea and that during

the worst of storms. Wise people may appear enigmatic and mysterious as they sense changes in the season around them. British journalist and educationist Candler (1922) and Gregg, American author of the well-known book, *The Power of Nonviolence* (1958), both of whom had met Gandhi in India, write that though they found him wise, he was also very enigmatic. Candler wrote in the *Atlantic*, in July 1922:

Probably there is no figure in contemporary history who means so many different things to so many different people. To the incurious Westerner, the name of Gandhi calls up the picture of a saint, or a charlatan, art ascetic, fanatic, or freak. If he reads many newspapers, the Mahatma will appear in turn as patriot, martyr, high-souled idealist, and arch-traitor; evangelist, pacific quietist, and truculent tub-thumper and revolutionist; subverter of empires and founder of creeds, a man of tortuous wiles and stratagems, or, to use his own phrase, 'a single-minded seeker after truth'; generally, in the eyes of the tolerant who are without prejudice, a well-meaning but mis-guided politician. Certainly a complex figure.

Further, Candler wrote very candidly that "I must confess that I never believed in Mr. Gandhi until I met him". .... and added, "Happily or unhappily, the common man in the street does not understand Ahimsa or Satyagraha".

We are not surprised to find that Gandhi's wisdom has often been taking the shape of collective violence in the garb of peaceful protests around the globe (Stengel, 2011; *Time*—"Person of the Year: The protester"). The essence of his message has been lost and it is being used for political, bureaucratic, employment, or other purposes, as opined by Weber (2018) (known as the Australian Gandhi).

Life is about generating happiness. It comes with faith in humanity as in raising a child. It has its own cost and rewards. Gandhi's happiness lay in nonviolence and in finding the means to attain it, without worrying for the goal per se. For him, it is a process, not a state. There is no absolute truth nor is there absolute happiness.

For Gandhi, there can be no compromise as far as seeking and deploying nonviolence as the corner stone of human cognition, replete with the tested and continually refined scripts and schemas of nonviolence and generating individual happiness in tandem with his/her role

in the community (one example of how this can be done is by Roy, 2011). This is the essence of Gandhi's psychology, so significant at both theoretical and applied levels: to bring together authenticity of wisdom, happiness, and nonviolence and to keep on experimenting with truth and love as the default mode of cognition.

And then, one may find wisdom in Whitman's "many a scene in life".

Recently, leading scholars on the psychology of wisdom, such as Robert Sternberg, have argued that the issues concerning wisdom remain ill-defined and more so, at the curriculum levels in the schools where formats of testing such as multiple-choice examinations do not afford opportunities to explore and examine real life problems. In his article, "Where Have All the Flowers of Wisdom Gone", Robert Sternberg (2019) reported that stories that relate to wisdom in imparting education to children in schools have declined, significantly, over the years. According to Sternberg, such a scenario does not help them to think wisely.

It is our contention that neither have the flowers of wisdom and nor its seeds or the emphasis on "the moral skill" gone, as far as our institutions are concerned. Our contention is further reinforced by that of Schwartz and Sharpe (2019) through their article, *Practical Wisdom: What Aristotle Might Add to Psychology*. The missing link is our focus on nonviolence, placed, as it has been, in the back seat, and, the presence of mighty war weapons, international rivalry, and corrupt politicians and media (Kool & Agrawal, 2020). With such a scenario, accepting nonviolence as the default mode of cognition becomes problematic. Not surprisingly, children are primed to either adhere to violence or find themselves in a state of aphantasia, a state in which they are unable to carve a solution to the problem.

Through his experiments with truth and nonviolence, tested and experienced in three continents of the world, Gandhi demonstrated that the gap between theory and practice could be narrowed through our action evidenced in our conduct, but certainly not by merely holding on to beliefs. How far would our imparting of instructions take us? As illustrated in Box 16.2, when Edwards (2020) asked the prison inmates to think of their prison as Gandhi's ashram and follow Gandhi, the default mode of cognition changed from violence to nonviolence. How was he able to accomplish this? First and foremost, he must have had the

approval of the prison authority to test Gandhi as a model in the prison. Mere instructions in the prison would have had a limited effect in the absence of an unaligned social policy, the creation of feasible curriculum instructions, and the motivation of the learner.

On the other hand, before psychology, as a science, offers recipes for wisdom, it needs introspection regarding its own wisdom. Did we learn from Milgram's disobeying participants in his experiments who refused to deliver shocks to the learner in a simple task? Have we highlighted and given preference to nonviolence, as championed by William James, the founding father of modern psychology in the west? Has psychology integrated the views of leading interdisciplinary scholars such as Galtung (1996), Boulding (1993), and more in its growth and as veteran scholar Sharp (1960) contended that Gandhi would be helpful in developing the theory and practice of social sciences, including psychology (Kool & Agrawal, 2020)? Has psychology not ignored Erikson's contention offered more than 50 years ago that Gandhi's work has great insights for the growth and development of modern psychology?

Nonviolence is the precursor of wisdom and while its correlates have been explored in bits and pieces by contemporary psychologists, a comprehensive examination of the psychology of nonviolence does not appear to be in the main menu of psychologists. This is clearly recognized when we scroll down the history and growth of modern psychology and as Murray and coworkers (2014) wrote:

Although there have been some efforts to develop a psychology of nonviolence (e.g., Kool, 2008), and the APA has had a division of peace psychology since 1988, the potential for contributions of psychology to the study and practice of nonviolence has been largely untapped. The possibilities, however, are exciting. We have only enough space to make a few suggestions. Kool (2008) gives a far more extensive discussion. (p. 179)

The above observation is further reinforced by Arnett (2008) in a paper published in the *American Psychologist* that while the American Psychological Association has been the leading body of psychologists in the

globe, it has also been neglecting the remaining 95% of the population of the world. Is there wisdom in neglecting learnings from the rest of the world or in fulfilling its obligation by showing its alignment with the rest of the world by offering mere passing references, as we find in the case of Gandhi and the psychology of nonviolence? While we applaud the American Psychological Association for inviting Martin Luther King to address its convention shortly before his assassination in 1968, works on Gandhi and the psychology of nonviolence need to be enlivened in psychology, in general, and in wisdom research in particular.

Gandhi's wisdom is like a rose bud ready to flower with its petals of compassion, love, forgiveness, and the humanness within us. To find it you do not have to separate it from the thorns around it. For Gandhi, wisdom is about understanding the lack of understanding. Wisdom needs to be preserved but also expanded over time, much like the rose, whose fragrance is expanded through the experiences of holding it in our hand fingers despite the bleeding caused by its thorns. It may be visible to others or not, but phenomenologically, it is about knowing what we know about the lack of understanding. This is not only the root of human cognition but is, in essence, wisdom emanating from the life and works of Gandhi in whom Western Psychology might find the iterant, incomer but convincingly, the founding father of modern psychology in the East with a genuine calling. As Obama had stated, ever so succinctly, "Gandhi had set the moral tone of the previous century".

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