



Many Facets of Truth

For Prelims: [Mahatma Gandhi](#), [Non-violence \(ahimsa\)](#), [Satyagraha](#)

For Mains: Dilemmas and Complexity of Truth, Moral dilemmas in Historical Narratives, Ethical Conduct, and Democratic Ethos, [Relevance and Significance of the teaching of Mahatma Gandhi](#)

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Why in News?

For millennia, philosophers have wrestled with questions about the **nature of truth**, its knowability, and whether it is **universal or subjective**, leading to **diverse perspectives** on the concept.

What are the Various Thinkers' Perspectives on Truth?

▪ Correspondence Theory:

- Thinkers like [Aristotle](#) and **Bertrand Russell** assert that truth is determined by the correspondence between our statements or thoughts and the external world, meaning **a statement is true if it accurately reflects reality**.
- For example, "The grass is green" is true because the **grass actually** has the property of **greenness** in the real world.
- This theory doesn't account for **abstract truths (e.g., mathematical theorems)** that don't directly correspond to physical reality.

▪ Coherence Theory:

- Thinkers like [Immanuel Kant](#) and **Friedrich Hegel** assert that truth is determined by the **internal consistency of ideas**, where a statement is true if it coheres with an **established framework of knowledge**.
- For example, **scientific theories are considered true if they are internally consistent** and explain a wide range of phenomena.
- This theory can lead to closed belief systems that **resist new evidence that contradicts the existing framework**.

▪ Pragmatic Theory:

- Thinkers such as **William James** and **John Dewey** argue that the **truth of a statement is determined by its practical usefulness** and its ability to lead to successful outcomes.
- Example: The **theory of gravity** is considered true because it allows us to predict the movement of objects and build stable structures.
- This theory makes truth relative to context and **doesn't account for objective facts** independent of human usefulness.

▪ Mahatma Gandhi's Quest for Truth:

◦ Divine Truth and Non-Violence:

- Gandhi's **truth wasn't merely factual accuracy**. He equated it with the **ultimate reality, God itself**.
- Truth is naturally obvious, but it becomes clear only when the ignorance around it is removed. This absolute truth could be understood through [non-violence \(ahimsa\)](#).

- His **truth is not just a concept but an eternal principle equivalent to God**, making the pursuit of truth and the practice of non-violence inseparable.
- The unending quest for truth involved introspection, continuous questioning, and the readiness to acknowledge errors, seeing truth as an ongoing journey of self-discovery rather than a set endpoint.
- **Truth in Action:**
 - Gandhi's commitment to truth extended to his **methods of protest**. He devised [Satyagraha](#), meaning "**truth force**."
 - Satyagrahis, Gandhi's followers, **aimed to awaken the conscience of the oppressor through acts of [civil disobedience](#)** and unwavering truthfulness.

What are the Dilemmas and Complexity of Truth?

- **The Complexity of Truth:**
 - The **three lions on the [Ashokan pillar](#)**, part of India's national emblem, symbolise **three perspectives of truth**: my truth, your truth, and an observer's truth.
 - **The fourth, unfathomable dimension of truth** often leads to the saying, "**God only knows the truth.**"
 - For example, during an election, the task of the [Election Commission of India](#) becomes challenging.
 - The challenge lies in [political parties](#) often engaging in caste or communal speech by use of clever language which makes it difficult for the [election commission](#) to act.
 - The [Model Code of Conduct \(MCC\)](#) though bans explicit appeals on these grounds, but loopholes let political parties make divisive statements indirectly.
- **The Dilemma of Truth and Deception:**
 - Historical and mythological narratives, like **Yudhishtira's half-truth** in the [Mahabharata](#), illustrate the ethical dilemmas faced when truth is manipulated.
 - Yudhishtira's declaration of **Ashwathama's death** led to a **misinterpretation** that caused **Dronacharya's demise**.
 - This story underscores the moral complexities that arise when truth is bent for strategic purposes, highlighting the potential loss of moral high ground.

Conclusion

- The principle of "**Satyameva Jayate**" remains a **guiding light** for **India's democratic ethos**.
- However, the practical application of this principle in our day-to-day lives demands a **robust commitment** to ethical conduct by all stakeholders.
- It must be supported by a **collective moral awakening** among political leaders and citizens alike.
- Ensuring that truth triumphs in the democratic process requires **continuous vigilance, introspection**, and an unwavering commitment to [rule of law](#) and ethical values.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. In context of effective governance and policymaking, discuss the significance of recognising the diverse dimensions of truth in comprehending societal realities, with examples from contemporary events.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains:

Q. "Corruption causes misuse of the government treasury, administrative inefficiency, and obstruction in the path of national development." Discuss Kautilya's views. (2016)

Q. What does each of the following quotations mean to you? (2021)

(a): "Every work has got to pass through hundreds of difficulties before succeeding. Those that persevere will see the light, sooner or later."- Swami Vivekananda

(b): "We can never obtain peace in the outer world until and unless we obtain peace within ourselves."- Dalai Lama

(c): "Life doesn't make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, it is better for us all."- Erik Erikson

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