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If the truth shall kill them,
let them die

Truth pierces the veil of ignorance
shattering the crown of lies
desolates the city of darkness
not to be toyed with
one may surmise

The Mundaka Upanishad
extolls the virtues of truth with
its aphorism 'satyam eva jayate', "truth
reigns supreme." The learning indicates
truth to be immortal, as an entity in itself -
Unfailing, irrepressible and absolute.

When dealing with truth, then,
it would be prudent to assume that
it will have its way. Personified, truth
is nature itself and nature always has
her way. Would it not then be, an
assertion made rationally, that if this
force of nature were to kill something,
it is but an inevitability that must be
allowed to occur?

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This essay seeks to unfold the idea of truth as unstoppable and unfailing, while seeking to hold aloft that premise against time, place and person. It also intends to verify if death maybe a reasoned outcome of truth given the contestable nature of truth itself.

Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram

The Gandhian tenets of speaking truth are best captured by the three insignias that speak, hear and see no evil. The Mahatmas insistence on holding truth to power caused the untimely demise of the empire on which the sun never set. Gandhiji's truth spelled their doom, and few today would mourn the empire's premature death.

Parallels of 'satya' exorcising the demons of falsehoods exist across different societies spread across time

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The Aristotelian idea of ~~geo~~^{heli}centrism militated against the prevailing notion of geocentrism. The 'Church', for one was specially peeved that its theological treatises were incorrect.

Whilst Aristotle did not live to see his 'truth' prevail, his tomb bears the inscription "Επ' ουρανὸν κίνησθαι", but the earth does move". Truth prevails eventually, to which one may contend, if truth shall kill them, let them die for the march of truth is inevitable.

Truth and its many Victims

If truth may be imagined as a beast, it may take the form of a raging bull. Even when it is penned in by falsehoods and misconceptions, it will eventually break free. And a vengeful bull may take many more victims than the tamer one which may not have added more to the toll than necessary. Therefore it's critical that truth and its disclosure maybe absolute and

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timely.

Racism numbers among the victims felled by truth. The arrogance of "white man" and his burden of civilization was laid to waste by the discovery of genetic similarity in composition when the Human Genome Project announced 99.9% of all humanity is alike, Hitler's idea of 'Übermensch' died once more.

Science has since disproved other such contestable notions such as divine theory of conception. Organic theory of evolution tore open the ecclesiastical framework and its treaties. If truth shall kill it, it must perish.

Parallels also lie in everyday life where criminals believe they've outsmarted legal institutions when they bury their victims skeletons deep underground. But they continue to be exhumed, and truth will one day resurface, almost-as an inevitability.

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Mirror Mirror on the Wall

The ~~egg~~ evil queen stepmother asks the all knowing mirror who is the fairest of them all. "Snow White" comes the prompt reply, a reality that is at odds with her expectation.

Truth's ability to hurt therefore appears to be linked to a skewed understanding of the world. If one imagines a world of make belief, where one is immortal, truth and death have a means to tear down the castle in the clouds.

Truth hurts where interests are aligned with falsehoods. Power weakens when light is shone on the true nature of individuals. Reputations are destroyed when skeletons tumble out of the closet. But if entire lives were constructed from misgivings, and the world will eventually collapse, why must it not be brought down immediately? And

Why must the purveyors of falsehoods be given any reprieve where nothing short of the hangman's noose is their preordained inevitable sentence by time and fate?

The truism in "shelf life of a lie is short" cannot be understated.

So much so that law makes special exemptions for truth and specially conceives lying ~~as~~ with added vexatiousness. While perjury (lying to the court) is frowned upon, truth may be used as the sole defence to any reporting.

Besides, truth may be invoked as the prime witness to defamation as well. The fourth estate and its many constituents frequently rely on truth to defend writings that may reflect poorly on the subjects of their coverage.

So when the Supreme Court refers to the transformative ability of

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The light emanating from truth to dispel the darkness of corruption, measures of transparency such as the RTI and proactive disclosure are upheld.

Transparency removes the gentle veneer of falsehood cloaking the true picture of the crime. In the tale of 'Dorian Grey' who does not age, but whose picture reveals his true self, it appears inevitable that even if societal perception is different, truth will always be reflected.

Therefore if the truth may kill them, let them die, lest they take more with them to their grave. But in all this supposition of truth, the very nature of what is true has not been uncovered. For in the epistemology of truth, lies the devil's advocate.

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Devils deceit and truths conceit

The Jainism belief of
Anekantavada is a notion of multiple

truths. And if multiple versions of
truth may coexist at once would it be
moral to destine one to the gallows?

The truisms of today may become
falsehoods the next. Even the methods
of science are not exempt to the
idea of validity of truth. Till the
double slit experiment spoke of wave
nature of light, the assumption that it
was a straight line was unquestionable

If physicists maybe wrong despite
their deductive processes, what really is
fundamental about truth? Chandekya's

Mahabharata confounds the very identity
of truth when he supposes that truth
may be rewritten to please the author
of such works

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Truth therefore is written by the victor, and truth is a construction of the mind. And if a misdirected version of the truth were to kill someone, would it be cogent to let them die?

fact vs Factoid

In the absence of absolute certainty that may change the status of the two, it may be treated as equals. As Rudyard Kipling says in "If" to treat success and defeat in the same light, it would be rational to hold truth and falsehoods as both impostors till certainty is given.

And till that time it may not be established 'beyond reasonable doubt' that it is what it is, the decree of death may be stayed. Perhaps that is why the principle of Natural Justice presumes innocence till proven guilty beyond doubt.

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The deontological school of thought may disagree but the utility of a lie cannot be undermined. If a lie can console a dying man in his final moments, must truth really be held at such a high pedestal? Does the utility of a 'harmless lie' not preclude justice and kindness in one breath?

If the truth shall kill them let them die. But if the truth is left to one's judgement, then perhaps stay the blade, and let them live.

No, instead that which may perish
for the truth is written by time
Time alone shall indicate
That which is benign
And which is malign