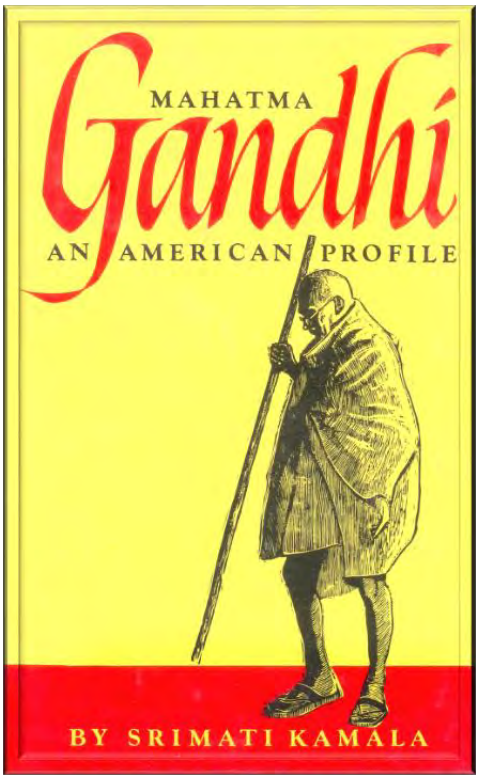
Mahatma Gandhi: An American Profile

By Srimati Kamala



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To the spiritual kinship of America,

land of my birth and my vocation,

and India,

land of my rebirth and my illumination,

and to the Gandhian of my dreams.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

The United States of America, which is two hundred years old and has about three hundred million people is today the most powerful democracy in the world. The Americans had to fight with their own mother-country for their freedom. India, the oldest among living civilizations is the largest democracy in the world with her eight hundred million people. She had to fight for her freedom: a unique armless and bloodless battle with the British empire, the biggest ever.

The world is watching with great interest both these democracies, in which freedom of the individual is the basic and most cherished value.

Politics and economics, or political economy as it was earlier designated, is not the whole of human life, nor can it be said to be the most important aspect of it. It has to be recognized, however, as the footstool which is necessary for human life and society to stand on its own, and it has to play its legitimate and destined part.

It was a significant moment in the history of both India and USA, when in the Parliament of Religions assembled in Chicago in 1893 the Indian monk Swami Vivekananda was hailed as one who had shed new light on all religions by declaring in the very spirit of his Guru Ramakrishna Paramhansa that all religions were but doors to the same Temple in which the one shining God of Truth was enshrined. His ministry of Advaita Vedanta and Yoga which began then, has never stopped. If Rev. John Haynes Holmes acclaimed Gandhi early enough as the Prophet of the twentieth century, it was but a recognition of a Truth which proved itself when the United Nations Organization lowered its flag spontaneously on hearing of the martyrdom of Gandhi on January 30, 1948. It is a flag which recognizes only Heads of State!

More than forty long and eventful years have passed by after that event. Now comes to our hand a small book entitled Mahatma Gandhi: An American Profile.

And who is the writer? Not a globe-trotter, or a journalist or a book-maker who writes for money.

Srimati Kamala, the writer, is a scholar, an accomplished academic, the ordained Minister of the Church of the Advaita Vedanta, and one who graces a great institution, the Gandhi Memorial Center in Washington, D.C., as its director. She is thus not only a follower of vedanta—a philosophy of non-attached action – but also a devout student of the Mahatma, who was an embodiment of spirituality in action. "Action is my field," Gandhi declared early in life. Nothing changes without direct action, he said. Truth as perceived by his purified mind and selfless heart of compassion guided him at every step. It was not the recognition of Truth or even its declaration from house-tops that seemed to be his mission. It was the establishment of Truth in human life which was uppermost in his mind and action. He pledged himself to the supreme doctrine of Ahimsa, non-injury to all life and sentient beings. Nonviolence is too poor a word to convey the connotation of historic ahimsa. By now, however, nonviolence has caught the contagion of the full connotation of ahimsa. In positive terms, it is Love, Service, Suffering, and Sacrifice if need be, for the sake of Truth.

Thus pursuit of the Truth of life and human living through ahimsa or nonviolence alone became 'the sword and shield' of Gandhi, the heroic fighter throughout his life and even to the last moment of his life. It is on record that he refused to be protected by the police or the army, though reports were rife that there was imminent danger to his life. Thus his death as a martyr to Satya through Ahimsa immortalised him for mankind.

In 1935 when Gandhi was visited by a group of Negroes under the leadership of Dr. Thurman, he told them that "...it may be through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of nonviolence will be delivered to the world." This was in the nature of a prediction. It did happen. And now history of the fight against discrimination by Negroes in America is well-known. The Supreme Court of America declared in 1954 that segregation of Blacks in educational institutions was unconstitutional. A Gandhian hero and a devout Negro priest

and minister of a church, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., took up the fight against all kinds of segregation and discrimination in American life between the whites and blacks. Ultimately he succeeded all along the line and was given the Nobel Peace Prize! Acknowledging his debt to Gandhi, King said: "The faith I have in God I owe to Christ but the faith to fight for justice to my people in a nonviolent manner I owe to Gandhi."

Many are the Americans since Rev. Holmes who have written about Gandhi and several aspects of his life and especially about his Gospel of Satyagraha— that is non-violent resistance unto death to uphold Truth and Justice. Srimati Kamala's book, however, is unique in more ways than one: It speaks of the 'mental continents' of the two peoples across millennia, the Americans and the Indians. In this context Americans include American Indians who have been inhabiting that continent since about 20,000 years when they came there via the Bering Straits! It requires us to stretch our imagination to the era when America might not have been a separate continent!

However, the point is that the author has drawn upon her study of the philosophy of the life of the unsophisticated American Indians, their simple beliefs and life close to Nature and raised to higher levels on account of contact with sublimities that Nature provides. It is very interesting to note the comparisons the author has drawn between the utter simplicity of Gandhi's life and yet his appreciation of Nature in all its aspects—simple, artistic as well as sublime. The simple, direct faith in the presence of the Divine everywhere and in everything seems to be the common factor between the American Indians and Gandhi. It is striking—call it spirituality if you like;

Of course, Gandhi knew about Emerson and his intimate acquaintance with Indian thought. From Thoreau he learnt about his civil protest, and in fact, the expression 'civil disobedience' is a gift of Thoreau to Gandhi. But what he made of it, and later how another brother American, Martin Luther King, Jr., transformed it into a civilized weapon for the emancipation of his black brethren of that young nation today forms part of the history of great fights against socio-political injustice through loveful self-suffering. Perhaps in search

of the D.N.A. of this great principle, we may delve deep into history and find a definite trace in Socrates. Gandhi had no end of respect for that ancient Greek saint-philosopher. Lifelong, he preached Truth heroically. He did so by facing the penalty of death for it cheerfully, since what he taught was not welcome to the 'powers of the day.'

In the words of Henrick Zimmer, the great German philosopher, British Raj in India was an 'untruth.' Swaraj, **the** birthright of India, was a Truth' by any standard. Gandhi fought for it not by shedding any blood but by voluntary suffering without even so much as ill-will for Britishers. He and all Indians had to civilly disobey bad laws heaped upon the nation by jurisprudence. Gandhi matched his matchless juris-conscience armed with soul- force against jurisprudence armed with weapons of la w and order! The ding-dong battle went on from 1921 to 1944. But it was a sight for God to see the whole nation up in arms against the iniquitous Salt Law in 1930-31; even women and children defying the law and picking up untaxed salt from the sea and selling it in the face of police repression!

The 'Quit India' movement of 1942, which was Gandhi's last fight, made way for peace with friendship with Britain. It has stood the test of time for four decades!

Across millennia, Indian thought and culture have travelled far and wide and Buddhism has penetrated deep across continents. It is vedanta and yoga which have followed, and today yoga is a term to conjure with.

Srimata Kamala, the disciple of Swami Premananda of India, (founder of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Foundation in 1959) has given us a glimpse of her abilities to build a firm and abiding bridge between the cultures of the United States of America and India. She has already come out with another book on the Frontiers of the Spirit. We are encouraged in expecting more from her pen as well as from her cultural visits to us in India.

Humanity is at the cross-roads. It can be saved from the holocaust of a nuclear war and/or nuclear winter only through working for a humane world Govern-ment. We can avoid such a tragedy and lay the foundation of living together for

each other and help towards the destined evolution of mankind to perfection or to divinity. But all that can come by small steps taken for building bridges across continents and the minds and hearts of human beings.

R.R.Diwakar

Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi

Ramnavmi, 14 April 1989

INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi had been dead to this earth for a decade when I first saw him. Even so, he has always seemed alive—never remote or foreign—to me.

As a young girl of twelve, sitting in my family's den in Oklahoma—so distant and different from the India of Gandhi's life—I beheld the now familiar dhoti-clad figure on a television screen. Gandhiji[*] and the surrounding Indian people and countryside were equally unusual to me then, to be sure, but the image of the Mahatma himself fascinated me, awakening and absorbing my consciousness with an affinity I did not understand but was certainly unforgettably aware of. I carried that first impression from childhood for many years before I responded, to its meaning.

In college I searched my university library for available biographies of Gandhiji and did whatever I could to explore India's spiritual heritage through philosophy and the arts. Upon graduation I established my residence and my life with the Self- Revelation Church in Washington, D.C., headed by Swami Premananda of India, to learn and to serve the ageless wisdom which nourished Mahatma Gandhi.

Swamiji had founded a Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Foundation, incorporated in 1959, which had gathered over the years a substantial library of books on Gandhi and India's priceless cultural traditions, housed in one of the church buildings. In 1975 he handed me the blueprints for a Gandhi Memorial Center, along with the total responsibility to build and direct its life.

"The highest and noblest and best of India is its spiritual heritage," he said. "Mahatma Gandhi represents that heritage before all humanity. Let America and the world know that life through the Gandhi Memorial Center."

With his guiding words and blessing my real life with the Mahatma began—from the ground up and the heart out.

When I say that I feel I have known the Mahatma, it is not from any privileged encounters, nor dreams or visions, nor merely from books or passing interests,

but from a deepening appreciation and identification through my life and work in the attempt to bring his message to American life.

I studied the life of Mahatma Gandhi not primarily for insight into the man, but for the broader understanding of life that his life example reveals. I sought not to follow Gandhi, but to follow the ideals he sought.

In adding to the enormous and ever-burgeoning body of Gandhian literature, I submit neither another biography nor a textbook. These writings represent two decades of exploring and sharing insights and inspirations from Gandhi's life with my church, my working associates, schools and universities, theological and civic groups, and thousands of visitors to the Gandhi Center. They are the product of my search rather than research, as I would venture the distinction. Thus I would humbly invite you, dear reader, to find from these pages and mine from your own heart the rich and profound treasures from the life of Mahatma Gandhi.

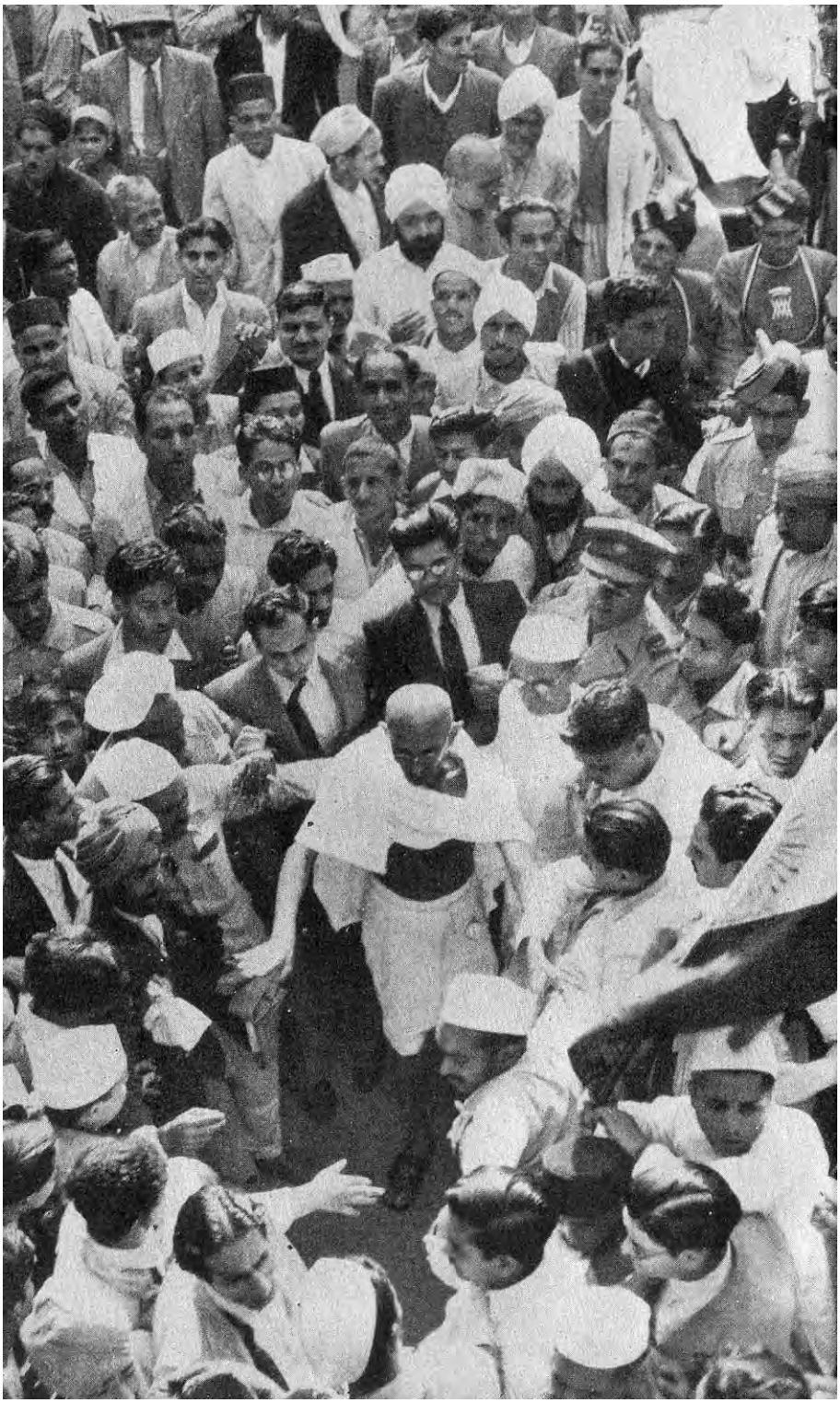
S.K.

Washington, D.C.

October 2, 1987

[*] "ji" is an honorific suffix indicating respect.

The Legacy of Gandhi



The World of the Mahatma

"The world is my country:

All mankind are my brethren,

To do good is my religion, I believe in one God and no more."

—THOMAS PAINE

"I have never attempted to make a convert,

nor wished to change another's creed.

"I have ever judged of the religion of others by their lives...

"For it is in our lives, and not from our words,

that our religion must be read."

IM-THOMAS JEFFERSON

THE WORLD OF THE MAHATMA

Many individuals have stirred changes in the course of societies only to have them later swept away by the shifting tides of political impermanence or intellectual vogue. Rare are the souls who have achieved a virtue of being—leaving their truth as an indelible impression on the course of history and its transforming power in the hearts and minds of men. From the historical drama of India and the world of Mohandas K. Gandhi a life will endure which will forever offer its vital message to soothe, guide and ennoble the hearts of mankind.

India offered to humanity over 2500 years ago another soul—that of Buddha—whose life left a lasting impression on earth. But that life, so remote, has been clouded with legend. Time sometimes obscures greatness in clouds of uncertainty, and history seems jealous of greatness. Human frailty which seeks to minimize the contributions of a great soul, or human adoration which may exaggerate the facts, makes it difficult to separate the myth from the man or to preserve the true man in retrospect.

Yet there can be no cloak of legend or uncertainty over Gandhi's life. He lived and moved and spoke while the entire world observed and listened, aided by die relentless scrutiny of massive documentation and instant universal communication. With praise or blame the world responded to the aspirations, identities, struggles, failures and glories of Gandhi's life which he shared so selflessly, sincerely and shamelessly as his only message.

Gandhi's life is uniquely near to us—not only by virtue of his living in our own times, but also because he seemed to share every aspect of our life: religious, cultural, political, economic, personal, social, national and international. His commitment was not one of policies but of being. Hence, the name "Mahatma" (Great Soul) designates a soul large enough in consciousness to embrace the total life of all in the oneness of life.

Certainly a life of over sixty years of intense public involvement in so many vital areas will yield conflict's judgments. Many will interpret Gandhiji's mean's from the perspective of their own limited or contemporary persuasion only. The religionist as well as the economist will pour over volumes of "Gandhiana" to extol or decry the significance of why this one life should occupy such a profound place in the course of civilization.

Photographing the procession for the immersion of Gandhi's ashes in the Yamuna River in India, Margaret Bourke-White said that she was aware she was witnessing what was probably the largest mass of humanity ever assembled on the face of the earth.

Th[e] Whole world mourned Gandhi's martyrdom. Never in history has there been such a universal mourning. Why?

In him was seen something of the lives of all great souls of the last era and also something of the aspiration and destiny of everyman. In Gandhi one could recognize the spirit of Moses whose death millenniums ago liberated his people from the bondage of Egypt without violence. Gandhi liberated over 400 million people without firing a single shot. Perhaps one saw a part of Socrates who lived and died for Truth. Gandhi said, "Truth is God, and God is Truth." Here again was a part of Buddha who lived for the poor and the neglected. Gandhi renounced everything that the poor might be understood and helped. In him was also manifested the ideal of Jesus in the philosophy of love and forgiveness, and of Mohammed in the supremacy of One God. No wonder Jews, Moslems, Hindus and Christians all over the world looks to Gandhi in recognition of all the noble virtues and aspirations of all good souls who preceded him on earth. Perhaps more importantly, they see the truth of their own souls in Gandhi's simplicity, honesty, humility and love.

There have been countless testimonies to Gandhi's greatness from world leaders of every field. Albert Einstein's now-familiar words had already the poetic ring of prophecy when first uttered: *"Generations to come, it may be, wild scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth."*

Lamenting that the "light of India" had gone out at Gandhi's death (January 30, 1948), Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru perceived that, "*That was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for many years will illumine this country for many more years, and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this country, and the world will see it, and it will give solace to innumerable hearts.*"

Gandhi's greatness as a world leader must be understood as being due not merely to his direction and perception of national and international needs but to the magnanimity of his own character. Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Viceroys sought and heeded his counsel because they trusted his unselfish motive, his total commitment to his word and his ability to speak for the hearts of his people. Yet with equal interest and dedication the same Mahatma walked among the poorest, the lowliest and the lost.

Gandhi's legacy to all is to be known in the timeless purity of the human heart, for *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* are none other than the propriety of Good and Truth and Love as Supreme Reality and Law expressed in even the simplest of actions throughout life. For the action to be pure and true towards an end which is just, the means must be consistent. Without adherence to this cosmic law, the whole struggle of life ensues, leading to suffering and unhappiness.

Frequently the question is posed, "What has Gandhi's idealism to do with the issues of OUR world?" The question is valid, but in itself reveals the limitations of historical interpretation. One must know them to evaluate the ideal and - accomplishment of Gandhi's life. He himself explained the limited perspective of history:

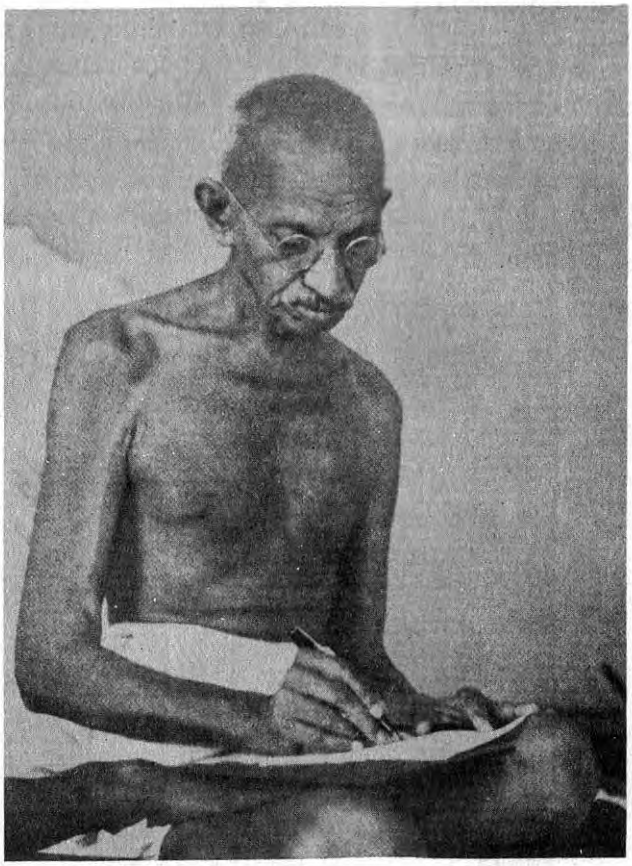
> *"History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul. Soul- force, being natural, is not noted in history.*
>
> *"The law of the survival of the fittest is the law for the evolution of the brute, but the law of self-sacrifice [of Soul-force] is the law of evolution for the man.*

> *"Thousands, indeed tens of thousands, depend for their existence on a very active working of this force. Little quarrels of millions of families in their daily lives disappear before the exercise of this force. Hundreds of nations live in peace. History does know and cannot take note of this fact.*
>
> *"There is no reason to believe that there is one law for families and another for nations."*

To understand and to learn from the lives of idealists, we must first learn to recognize that their perspective of human life transcends and yet encompasses current issues. We must learn to step into their larger world and thereby inhabit our own with wisdom.

To all those who argue the "relevance" of Gandhi's message in our modern world I would simply ask, *is Truth irrelevant at anytime?* Is human life ever meaningful if there is no truth found in it? As our understanding and concern for human welfare increase, Gandhi's relevance increases, because he gave us a way to resolve strife nonviolently and to remove pain by ourselves becoming more compassionate.

The meaning of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* must be known first within the person, lived within the heart. In that, we will not become heroes overnight, yet even the first commitments are rewarding. To emulate Gandhi's idealism is to seek a life through personal adherence to truths wherein not only the individual but the whole of humanity shares— wherein duty means more than pleasure; truth more than life; humanity more than oneself; brotherhood more than family; and mankind more than nation. Such is the world of a mahatma.



Foundations for Life

"Great men are they who see that spiritual is stronger than material force, that thoughts rule the world."

— RALPH WALDO EMERSON

"To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but to so love wisdom as to live according to its dictates a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity and trust."

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU

"There is no truth existing which I fear, or would wish unknown to the whole world."

— THOMAS JEFFERSON

FOUNDATIONS FOR LIFE

Pursuit of Truth

Mahatma Gandhi was not content with conjuring an idea of Truth as a theory of reality. In the story of his life he entitled MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH, he explained how he took one ideal—simple and obvious in its universal conclusions—and brought it to life in immediate and practical affairs. The consequences of his "experiment" penetrated the hearts of millions, altered political philosophy for generations to come, and illustrated with simplicity, lucidity, and purity a statement both prophetic and timeless. He was unique. Yet, "Anybody could do the same thing in my stead," he said with disarming modesty and honesty.

Here at last, stripped of visions, prophecies, legends or miracles, is philosophy devoid of pedantry. Gandhiji cared not for teaching; he wanted to search the meaning of life that comprehends the saint or sinner, rich or poor, learned or unlearned. That meaning he sought to incorporate into every facet and experience of life. He tried on Truth for size, one might say, and found that it fit humanity for every occasion—provided one wears it with humility, discrimination, dedication and selflessness.

As Gandhi strove to live by an ideal, he entreated others to do so also—to make the same discoveries for themselves—or new ones, by their own light of the same Truth.

> *"There is no such thing as 'Gandhism,' and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems. Those who believe in the simple truths I have laid down can propagate them only by living them."*

In order to live and to see the "simple truths" for himself, Gandhi developed communities wherein the inmates sought to guide their conduct according to spiritual idealism in fulfillment of very practical aims. His first households in

South Africa—Tolstoy Farm, containing friends and relatives whose responsibilities were shaped by a desire for spiritual work and conduct, and later the Phoenix settlement, whose objectives were purity of body and mind as well as economic equality—were the first steps towards the formal ashram communities at Sabarmati and Sevagram in India, though no one called them ashrams at that time.

It was only after the philosophy, the goals and ideals, of Brahmacharya, Satyagraha and Ahimsa took shape in Gandhi's mind that he began to look upon his settlements deliberately as ashrams, i.e., as being based on religious purposes. ("Religion here should not be understood in a narrow sense, but as that which acts as a link between different religions and realizes their essential unity." —M.G.)

Gandhi's interest was essentially *life*—or *character*—building, and the ashrams provided the context for experimentation. In them, under his careful observation, a microcosm of humanity could evolve logical and practical means consistent with and leading to larger Truth.

The Ashram Life

What is an ashram?

In its original and purest traditional sense, "Ashram" reveals a totally spiritual purpose of self- perfection through means that are noble and natural to human society.

An ashram is NOT a retreat from responsibilities of life (such as work, study or self-improvement), or a place to gather under "monastic" restrictions of individual freedoms to contemplate in bovine idleness or become puppets in the hands of an autocrat.

In ancient Upanishadi times, four "ashramas" of life were conceptualized as four abodes of principled self-expression. The "abodes" designated not locations at all but subjective stages of unfoldment harmonious to man's active, thoughtful, emotional and spiritual nature and well-being. The stages as predominant tendencies of consciousness as we journey through life from birth to death are

not mutually exclusive but progressively expressive of the balance of ideal and practice.

Thus, those who live according to the ideal of ashram wherever they may reside are those who join in conscious identification with a progressive ideal of human existence. The ideal gathers them in subjective kinship of pursuit of its realization through self- dedication, self-purification, wisdom and selfless service no matter what their objective circumstances in life.

The members of communities founded by Gandhiji were expected to embrace the ideal of ashram as embodied in certain vows (observances).

The Ashram Observances

The ashram vows, to Mahatma Gandhi, were more than arbitrary rules or mental decisions pertaining to matters of ephemeral importance (which may be alterable by moods of fancy or which may even be imposed from without). A vow one takes upon the altar of one's conscience in the name of all that one holds to be sacred and true. "God is the very image of the vow," said Gandhi.

> *"A vow is a spiritual commitment of self-dedication of body, mind, heart and soul consistent with Truth which is cosmically beneficent. Based on what is constituent to our being, a vow is self-fulfilling— itself a power of progressive realization."*

To vow means to do steadfastly and at any sacrifice what one really ought to do according to purity of heart and the nature of Truth. "A vow is the marriage of ideal and practice, of duty and will."

The perpetual striving to fulfill basic vows in one's life constitutes the means of religion. The means then perfect the art of living consistent with the purest of human nature.

During his incarceration in 1930 in the Yeravda Central Prison (Poona), Mahatma Gandhi wrote weekly letters to the community of workers at Satyagraha Ashram on the banks of the Sabarmati River in Ahmedabad, India. The letters contained descriptions and examinations of the principal ashram observances. The "ashram life" had been cultivated under Gandhiji's supervision

and example for already more than one decade, and its influence had far exceeded its geographical confines—proof of its practical and universal applicability.

Copies of his letters were printed for wider circulation, therefore, and translations were rendered into various Indian languages. In 1932 (from prison) Gandhi himself put pen to the final English translation of Mahadev Desai, his secretary, which was later published as FROM YERAVDA MANDIR: ASHRAM OBSERVANCES. Over the years Gandhiji wrote, said and demonstrated much more, elaborating upon and analyzing these basic principles of conduct which he himself considered to be the heart of any philosophical conduct consistent with Truth-

The following are Mahatma Gandhi's own words, faithful to their original context, but gathered from different times and texts and chosen for their timeless and universal importance. Thus, they are equally practicable for our as well as his generation, and for generations to come.

1. Truth

The word SATYA (Truth) is derived from Sat, *which means "Being." Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why SAT or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God. Where there is Truth, there also is knowledge which is true. Where there is no truth, there can be ho true knowledge. That is why the word CHIT, or "knowledge," is associated with the name of God. And where there is true knowledge, there is always bliss* (Ananda). *There sorrow has no place. And even as Truth is eternal, so is the bliss derived from it. Hence we know God as* Sat-Chit-Ananda—*one who combines in Himself Truth, Knowledge and Bliss.*

For me, truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God.

I worship God that is Truth or Truth which is God.

2. **Ahimsa**, *or Love*

In its positive form, Ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of Ahimsa, I MUST LOVE my enemy. I must apply the same rules to the wrongdoer who is my enemy or a stranger to me as I would to my wrong-doing father or son. This active Ahimsa necessarily includes truth and fearlessness.

Ahimsa is not the crude thing it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of Ahimsa. But it is its least expression. The principle of Ahimsa is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody. It is also violated by our holding on to what the world needs.

3. **Brahmacharya**, *or Self-Mastery.*

Brahmacharya is a mental condition. The outward behavior of a man is at once the sign and proof of the inner state.

Let us remember the root meaning of Brahmacharya. "Charya" means course of conduct; "Brahma-charya" conduct adapted to the search of Brahma, i.e., Truth. From this etymological meaning arises the special meaning, viz. control of all the senses. Thus an impure thought is a breach of Brahmacharya; so is anger. All power comes from the preservation and sublimation of the vitality that is responsible for creation of life.... And since thought is the root of all speech and action, the quality of the latter corresponds to that of the former. Hence perfectly controlled thought is itself power of the highest potency and can become self-acting. That seems to me to be the meaning of the silent prayer of the heart.

4. Control of the Palate

Most of us, instead of keeping the organs of sense under control, become their slaves.

We must not be thinking of food all the twenty-four hours of the day. The only thing needful is perpetual vigilance, which will help us to find out very soon when we eat for self-indulgence and when in order only to sustain the body.

This being discovered, we must resolutely set our faces against mere indulgence.

5. Non-Stealing

The profound truth upon which this observance is based is that God never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. Therefore, whoever appropriates more than the minimum that is really necessary for him is guilty of theft.

It is theft to take something from another even with his permission if we have no real need of it. We should not receive any single thing that we do not need... We are not always aware of our real needs, and most of us improperly multiply our wants, and thus unconsciously make thieves of ourselves. If we devote some thought to the subject, we shall find that we can get rid of quite a number of our wants.. .Most of the distressing poverty in this world has arisen out of breaches of the principle of non-stealing.

6. Non-Possession

Non-stealing and non-possession are mental states only. No human being can keep these observances to perfection. The body too is a possession, and as long as it is there it calls for other possessions in its train.

These difficulties appear to have given rise to the current conception of sannyasa *("renunciation of the world") which is not acceptable... Such sannyasa may be necessary for some rare spirit who has the power of conferring benefits upon the world by only thinking good thoughts in a cave. But the world would be ruined if every one became a cave-dweller. Ordinary men and women can only cultivate mental detachment. Whoever lives in the world and lives in it only for serving it is a [true renunciate],*

7. Physical Labor

It is a gross superstition to imagine that knowledge is acquired only through books. Even for real intellectual development one should engage in some useful bodily activity (having) fully acquired the skill of correlating the three R's with body labour... (and)... the idea of serving others. The Ashram ideal is

to live to serve. In such an institution there is no room for idleness or shirking duty, and everything should be done with right goodwill.

8. Fearlessness

Fear has no place in our hearts, when we have shaken off attachment for wealth, for family and for the body. "Enjoy the things of the earth by renouncing them" is a noble precept. Wealth, family and body will be there, just the same; we have only to change our attitude towards them. All these are not ours, but God's. Nothing whatever in this world is ours. Even we ourselves are His. Why then should we entertain any fears? The UPANISHAD therefore directs us "to give up attachment for things, while we enjoy them."

9. Swadeshi

A man's first duty is to his neighbor. This does not imply hatred for the foreigner or partiality for the fellow-countryman.

Our capacity for service has obvious limits. We can serve even our neighbor with some difficulty. If every one of us duly performed his duty to his neighbor, no one in the world who needed assistance would be left unattended. Therefore, one who serves his neighbor serves all the world. As a matter of fact there is in Swadeshi no room for distinction between one's own and other people…One to whom the whole world is as his family should have the power of serving the universe without moving from his place. He can exercise this power only through service rendered to his neighbor.

10. Religious Tolerance

The principal faiths of the world constitute a revelation of Truth, but as they have all been outlined by imperfect man they have been affected by imperfections and alloyed with untruth. One must therefore entertain the same respect for the religious faiths of others as one accords to one's own. Where such tolerance becomes law of life, conflict between different faiths becomes impossible, and so does all effort to convert other people to one's own faith.

Religion binds man to man.

Mankind is one... Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads so long as we reach the same goal? In reality there are as many religions as there are individuals.

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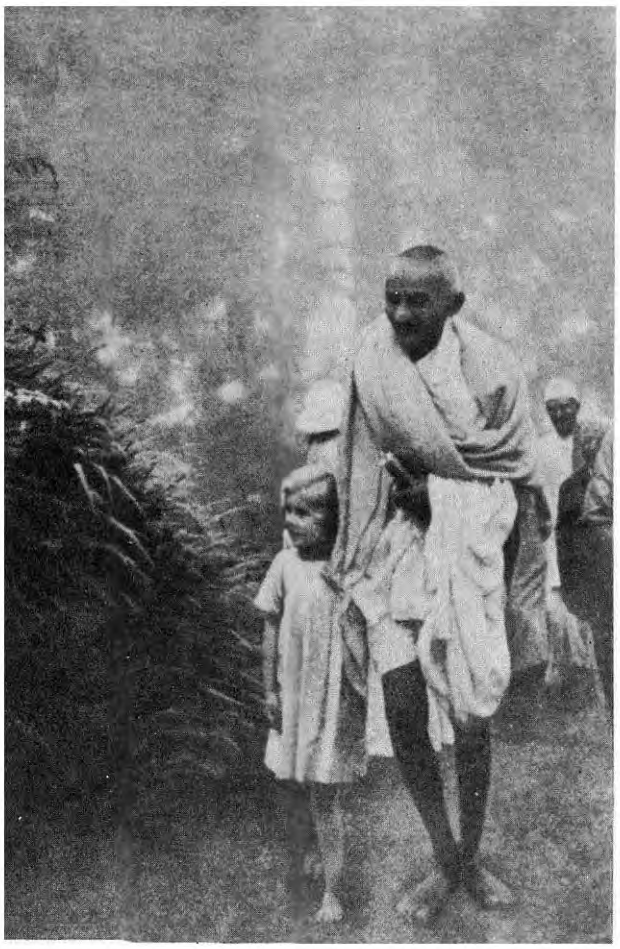


Who Practices Ahimsa?

"If you have a nation of men who have risen to that height of moral cultivation that will not declare war or carry arms, for they have not so much madness left in their brains, you have a nation of lovers, of benefactors, of true, great, and noble men. Let me knoio more of that nation; I shall not find them defenseless, with idle hands swinging at their sides. I shall find them men of love, honor and truth; men of an immense industry; men whose very look and voice carry the sentence of honor and shame; and all forces yield to their energy and persuasion."

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

"Cowardice asks the question, 'Is it safe?' Expediency asks the question, 'Is it politic?' Vanity asks the question, 'Is it popular?' But conscience asks the question, 'Is it right?' And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular but he must take it because his conscience tells him that it is right..."

—MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

"With malice toward none, with charity towards all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on...."

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Who Practices Ahimsa?

> *"The Law of Love, call it attraction, affinity, cohesion, if you like, governs the world.*
>
> *"The more efficient a force is, the more silent and more subtle it is. Love is the subtlest force in the world.*
>
> *"Ahimsa, in its positive form, means the largest love, the greatest charity. When ahimsa becomes all- embracing it transforms everything it touches. There is no limit to its power."*
>
> — MAHATMA GANDHI

I was introduced to the concept of ahimsa when I was in college in the 1960s. While I read about Gandhiji's experiences with the Indian and British people, my classmates and I were anguished over the issues of civil rights and the Vietnam War. So, from that beginning my interest was more than academic.

It has been especially in the last decade, however, that the metaphysical basis for the moral exigency, the personal utility, and the pervasive need for the practice of ahimsa have emerged as of paramount importance to me. Gandhi's own example reveals that ahimsa has a wide range of ramifications in personal practice. Ahimsa is universally applicable because it employs a principle which is cosmic and eternal—that of the unity of life. That principle, he explained, manifests in the balance of nature as well as in the integral brotherhood of man. Most simply, it is a dynamic network of cooperation at every level of life. But because man is the most morally responsible participant in this universe of life, he bears the greatest responsibility for ahimsa. It is for man to creatively integrate the principle of ahimsa into his own and his neighbor's life to bring the unity of life to perfect universal self-manifestation.

Americans typically turn to Gandhi's philosophy of ahimsa academically or in times of social crises, but we can see that merely applying ahimsa as tactical nonviolence to social ills is like trying to mend a broken heart by putting a

band-aid on the chest. The meaning of ahimsa must first be known within the heart, then lived, given a creative body in experience.

To Gandhiji, ahimsa is the hallmark of moral evolution. By moral evolution I mean the unfoldment and expression of man's true character—of the highest potential of his godliness—of love, of compassion, of understanding. Although the moral evolution of mankind has little to do with the objective marks of civilization, practice of ahimsa is observable in our daily affairs. It works to fashion man to his greatest possible divinity and dignity. As the craftsman fashions an object with care for the needs of the recipient, so one who practices ahimsa works to create a gift of his life worthy to be called art.

If through Gandhiji's own attainments and vast influence his personality looms before us as awesome, indeed as saintly, it is all the more important to remember that the steps he took were no greater than those that can be taken by any man. But he took them all—deliberately, steadfastly, creatively, and, I should add, prayerfully. Every crusade for remediation of a vast social problem took root first within his own consciousness as a vow and a prayer for "self-purification, self-dedication and selflessness," as he defined *satyagraha*.

People will always find it easier to idolize Gandhi than to work for his teachings. Yet, if we do not work for some of his basic ideas, then homage to the man is insignificant. In fact, it is hypocrisy. Our focus on "Who Practices Ahimsa?" then is personal and current and is given in Gandhi's own terms.

The personal practice of ahimsa is not as simple as pasting "NO NUKE" stickers on our automobile bumpers or refusing to participate in geopolitical warfare. It is not fulfilled, either, by merely campaigning in mass demonstrations for even the most worthy of causes. Furthermore, any confrontation which is adversarial or coercive in motive is absolutely contrary to the philosophy of ahimsa. The practice of ahimsa is as broad as life itself and consists of our daily efforts to convert the negative demands of our selfish ego into the positive expressions of the soul. This requires constant vigilance, subtle thinking, and, above all, great love. Pure motives and sincere efforts are the greatest powers and attainments

of ahimsa. In this we will not become heroes or mahatmas overnight, but even the first commitments are rewarding.

Gandhiji explained the principle of ahimsa in much the same terms as Buddha did some 2,000 years before him. Ahimsa means abstention from harming, from causing pain to oneself or others through thought, word or deed. Thus it is a negative term for the positive principle, love. As non-injury it is the most fundamental principle of all ethics.

But it is not easy to live by principle. Many forces converge on each little activity of ours in day-to-day living, and we tend to lose sight of the principle in practice. Gandhiji found ways to realize the loftiest dimensions of ahimsa in the most humble and simple daily practices. Here, then, are some of Gandhi's own perceptions about ahimsa. They may surprise us in their modesty, but they illustrate "Who Practices Ahimsa?"

Righteous effort and aspiration constitute *ahimsa*. Wasting time or dissipating one's precious energies imprison the constructive and progressive will of the soul, causing pain. Lassitude where discipline is required towards oneself or another is violence.

Moderation is *ahimsa*. Extravagance is violence, because it deprives another of what would benefit him. One should take for his use only according to his genuine need.

Cleanliness is *ahimsa*. It reveals physical well-being, subjective purity and spiritual harmony. Personal uncleanliness is violence, indicative of self-forgetfulness, inflicting discomfort on oneself and others.

Punctuality as a self-discipline is *ahimsa*. Unpunctuality is violence; it pains another. Tardiness is theft of another's good time.

Cheerfulness is *ahimsa*. Melancholy inflicts one's own self forgetfulness or ignorance on another, increasing pain all around.

Mental composure is *ahimsa*. (In his hut at Sevagram Ashram Gandhi posted a quotation from G. C. Larimer: "When you are in the right you can afford to keep

your temper, and when you are in the wrong you can't afford to lose it.") Wisdom is the power of self-mastery.

Sincere, courteous and a constructive attitude is *ahimsa.* Blame, complaining, loud or abusive talk are violence. On the other hand, silence where a word of encouragement could be offered is *ahimsa,* injurious.

Forgiveness is *ahimsa,* superior to the brute force of punishment.

Such examples reveal that it is not by drawing or dropping the sword that one proclaims his attitude towards violence or ahimsa. Ahimsa is living so as to realize the oneness of all life.

The problems that Gandhi faced are still painfully with us: war, racism, exploitation, poverty, illiteracy. But as he approached the problems of "man's inhumanity to man" personally, with the power and commitment of his own essential humanity, so must we.

It is folly to think that ahimsa can be legislated, as it is folly to think that the pure conduct of character evolves through the political process. We cannot as communities or nations realize lofty and universal goals of peace and freedom as long as we as individuals pursue the contrary means of self-indulgence, divisiveness, aggression, greed for power and squandered natural wealth. As Gandhiji would sum it up, the means must be consistent with the ends. Ends do not justify the means; means justify the ends. He started with himself, as one who, amidst all obstacles, practices—no, *lives*—ahimsa.

(Remarks delivered for Gandhi Jayanti (Birth) Observance, Gandhi Memorial Center, Washington, D.C., October 2, 1983.)

Who Pursues Truth?

"The right to search for truth implies also a duty; one must not conceal any part of what one has recognized to be true."

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

"God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please; you can never have both."

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

WHO PURSUES TRUTH?

THE RANKS OF first generation "Gandhians" are thin. The episodes, the anecdotes, the recollections of meetings with the Mahatma belong to history. Our homage this evening is not retrospective, though it is certainly a remembrance of the man in terms of what he lived and died for.

We ask, "Who pursues Truth?" so that we ourselves may better be able to seek what he sought. Gandhiji's message of Truth is practical: How one can best live in this universe of God, on this planet, in harmony with nature, with his fellowmen and with *himself*.

Many people have seen depictions of the crowds and yet fail to understand why the millions flocked to this frail man who held no earthly power over them. They flocked—drawn, I think, by what Gandhiji asked of them: That is, to be *truly human*.

According to Gandhi, man is essentially a seeker after Truth. Truth is our ultimate concern, giving meaning to life.

Not pleasure, not lure of adventure, not progress, not even liberty—but the search for Absolute Truth is the nature and destiny of man.

By saying "Truth is God" Gandhi got away from mere metaphysical speculations and laid his personal quest firmly on the bedrock of ethics. In short, he was a practical idealist, content to ascend towards the ultimate through the daily relative truths. In fact, he felt that abstract truth has no value unless it incarnates in human beings who represent it by proving their readiness to die for it.

Soul-force

What Gandhi called "satyagraha" means adherence to the power of Truth by what is commonly called soul-force. Soul-force is the reality of Truth within us, the inner power of the soul's divine intelligence-life-love. The more we are

aware of it, the more it grows. Hence, R.R. Diwakar aptly said, "Gandhi did not make satyagraha; Satyagraha made Gandhi."

Our problems come when we mistakenly look for security where it does not exist. Competition, greed, fear of loss—so many things—make people feel insecure. If we are not careful the insecurities in us dominate the force of the soul, and we misplace values, giving importance to what is temporary, secondary or unreal to life. We bring suffering upon ourselves and others from this confusion in our own minds. Gandhi pointed out that to pursue carefully Truth is to overcome the confusion by becoming increasingly aware of the soul-force, Truth, within us!

This philosophy did not originate with Gandhi, nor does it belong to any particular religion. It is, rather, at the heart of all. Socrates practiced it, saying, "No evil can happen to a good man either in life or after death." Christ taught it, saying, "Man does not live by bread alone." So many others: Tolstoy, in his principles of "Resist not evil," and "Reform yourselves before you reform others." Ralph Waldo Emerson, in "Self-Reliance." Henry David Thoreau, in "Simple Living," to cite just a few. They all believed that the power of Truth is real and natural to every person in his daily life and *most* useful and effective for the just causes of people.

Unfortunately our tendency is to preach such ideas; to relegate them to slogans; to organize* marches to demonstrate them or to request large sums of money for, their "institutionalization" or implementation—just proving that we do not have the slightest understanding, strength or courage required to *live* them. The pursuit of Truth requires no rhetoric or publicity, no mass demonstrations; no amount of money will generate soul-force. Truth creates a current and atmosphere more effective than Madison Avenue advertising—ONE HAS SIMPLY TO LIVE IT.

So we ask on this sacred occasion which gathers us to reflect on this eternal Truth, "How?"

No wonder Gandhi felt that his whole life was dedicated to the answer to that question, for it demands knowing our natural state of being, finding the right direction for the individual, and above all, maintaining a reverence for *all* life.

Truth Has Nine Lives

Let me offer from what I have gleaned from Gandhiji's own life message as nine elements of "satyagraha"—or nine characteristics of one who pursues Truth:

1. ***Love***. *"The very first step," Gandhi said, "is that we cultivate in our daily life, as between ourselves, truthfulness, humility, tolerance, loving kindness." Love is the cornerstone of Truth and nonviolence. It is the essence of life, the oneness of life. It generates in us a continuous source of power which is indestructible, ever-productive and transforming. "Truth in our daily living produces selfless motives in ourselves which are good in themselves."*
2. ***Honesty***. *Satyagraha requires one to be "truthful in thought, word and deed," as well as "incorruptible, fair and square in his dealings."*
3. ***Selfless Service***. *What has been seen as the turning point or conversion in Gandhi's life was not that kind of conversion that makes a man's heart narrow with the belief that others outside his persuasion are unsaved or are in darkness. When pushed out of the train into the severe cold of the South African winter he was pushed out of a life of sheltered ego into a life of selfless service. One of the greatest contributions of the Mahatma to religious growth was that of the spirit of participation, expansion, in the removal of the koshas ("shells") of ego which veil and inhibit the soul.*
4. ***Self-culture and Self-improvement***. *Gandhi said that if you wish the good of those you come in contact with, the only way to achieve that end is to be good yourself. All too often we are quick to insist on truth from everyone else but from ourselves. History, as Will Durant perceived it, is a struggle to rectify this error: "Perhaps man," he said, "having remade his environment, will turn around and remake himself."*

5. ***Silence***. *Gandhi looked to silence not merely as an escape from the din of problems, but as an unfailing source, of inspiration, to cultivate the "still small voice of Truth within."*

   "I feel more in tune with the Infinite when I am silent," he said, "though I agree that we should always be in tune with it, whether we are silent or speaking, whether we are in solitude or in a bustling crowd."

6. ***Sincerity***. *More important than success, more important than objective scrutiny, is the spontaneous and honest effort in thought, word and deed—in short, the spirit of the person who strives for Truth.*

   Mr. Lawrence Houseman, in his welcoming address at the Friends Meeting House when Gandhi was in London for the Second Round Table Conference, said, "You are so sincere you embarrass us; so simple you baffle us." (That sincerity should be so surprising is a telling commentary on our human affairs!)

7. ***Non-attachment—Without succumbing to worry or defeat***. *Gandhi adhered to the GITA'S philosophy of karma that to work is one's nature and duty, but* that he must leave the outcome to God's determination. "The pursuit of Truth is a science/' he said. "The word 'failure' has no place in the vocabulary of science. Failure to obtain the expected result is often the precursor to further discoveries."

8. ***Ability to See the Good***. *When others around him sank into gloom and despair, Gandhi held to an unfailing optimism. A text often on his lips to reawaken others' lost inspiration was from Tulsidas' RAMAYANA:*

   "All things—with or without life—the Lord has created with their good and bad points. The wise, like the discerning swan, separate the good milk and reject the adulterating water."

(Perhaps Gandhiji also knew Shakespeare's similar sentiment: "There is a soul of good in things evil if men observingly distil it out.")

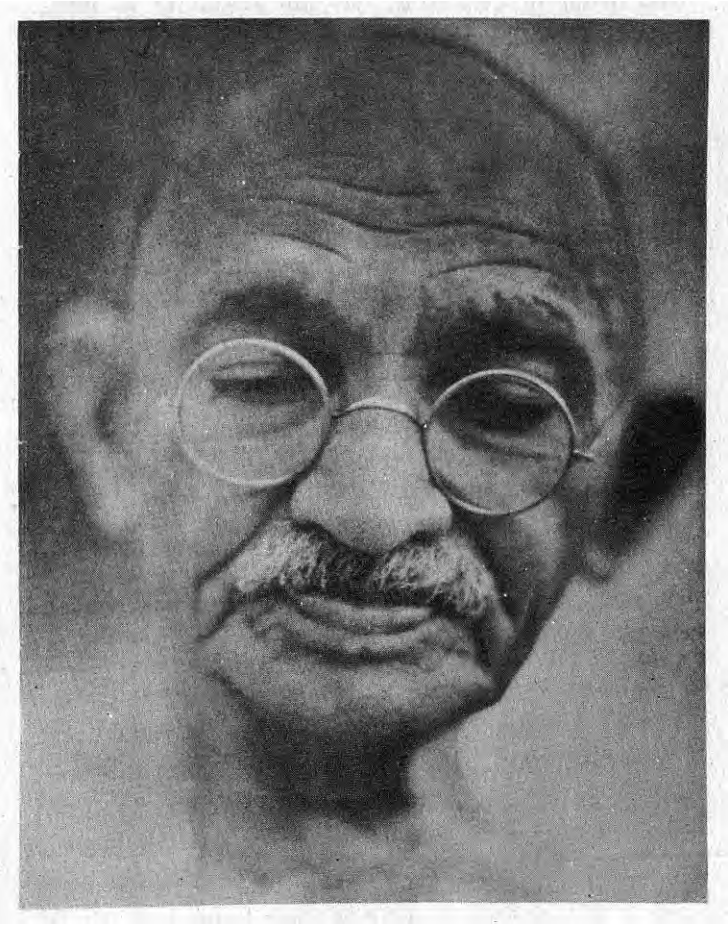
With such faith in the essential good, Gandhi could identify with his opponents, treating all with the same unfailing courtesy and urbanity. He faulted the action, never the doer of the action personally.

9. ***Humility***. *Unlike the aforementioned elements, humility cannot be cultivated. It unfolds as a result of attainment in realization of Truth. By it Gandhi was always willing to regard or magnify his own defects and to disregard or minimize those of others. Perhaps it also deterred feelings of anger, as he sought not to dominate by his personal will or lord over others.*

Today, when we complain of the decay of moral values, the rise of indiscipline, the loss of faith in leaders, the discrepancies between what is professed and what is practiced and between what is promised and what is delivered, we can succumb to fear, hopelessness or the equally serious diseases of cynicism and apathy—or we can turn to a truer, better way to think and to live which will transform and elevate life.

The influence of Gandhi for the future will depend more and more, I hope, on the realization that the fundamental unity of the constitution of man, that is Truth, is central to the practical affairs in the commerce of man on earth. The problems of our present day are really none other than those of any other time. They are problems in the pursuit of Truth, and they will be successfully met by one who pursues Truth as did Mahatma Gandhi.

(Remarks delivered for Gandhi Jayanti (Birth) observance, Gandhi Memorial Center, Washington, D.C., October 2, 1984.)



A Time for Peace

"The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of men when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells Wakan-Tanka, and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us. This is the real peace, and the others are but reflections of this.

"The second peace is that which is made between two individuals, and the third is that which is made between two nations. - But above all you should understand that there could never be peace between nations until there is first known that true peace which, as I have often said, is within the souls of men."

—BLACK ELK American Indian

"It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

"Peace hath higher tests of manhood than battle ever knew."

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

A TIME FOR PEACE

Looking at our present world it seems that there are struggles and discordance everywhere. The din of confrontation and threats of violence are all around — among nations, within societies and especially within the individual. World leaders as well as the common citizen long for a time for peace that must come. But how, from where, and *what kind of peace?*

Mahatma Gandhi, the most universally quoted man in the United Nations, is broadly heralded as the philosopher of peace for the modern world. He is more than that. Surrounded by violence he was yet an architect of peace. He *knew* and *lived* peace so that he could apply it to violence and emerge victorious. His method was perfect according to the laws of the cosmic nature as he observed them, and therefore his peace is a peace practicable by the human nature which is parcel of it. But like the profoundest and simplest of philosophical truths, Gandhi's is too often misunderstood, misapplied or altogether ignored.

The popular misunderstanding about peace is that it is a group contrivance — that it can be legislated or physically enforced. Even with respect to present day "satyagrahis" there has been exploitation of the "peaceful" means Gandhi employed as some seemingly sincere followers have used "noncooperation" as a kind of political blackmail. Gandhi admonished against the use of nonviolence as such coercion which makes adversaries of the parties and then becomes a kind of punishment.

What Gandhi comprehended, advocated and— most important—lived, is a complete yoga of peace. The truth of it, as he confessed, is "as old as the hills." The idea of returning love and forgiveness for hatred and injury was not, of course, invented by Gandhi. Krishna revealed to Arjuna that he who mortifies or abuses the body does injustice to the Self residing within. Buddha taught directly that *ahimsa* (non-injury) is the highest *dharma* (principle) of life. Patanjali's first precept is *yama* which includes abstention from injurious thought, word or deed. Gandhi himself referred often to the teachings of Christ to "Love thy neighbor as thyself;" to "resist not evil;" and to "bless them that

curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

At the time of the Second Round Table Conference in London (1933), an English lady observed it "strange that Christians should feel that the best Christian in the world today is a Hindu." In a "Christian world" it seems that from the time of Christ few have understood his teachings of how to meet evil. No great leader of the Christian Church has ever proclaimed nonviolence as the WAY to salvation.

The ethical validity for using moral force rather than brute force was preached by Leo Tolstoy whom Gandhi called the greatest apostle of nonviolence that the modern age has produced. Thoreau's "Essay on Civil Disobedience" influenced Gandhi's design for peace, and the phrase and concept, "the moral equivalent of war," was introduced by the American philosopher William James. But Gandhi's life is a profound marriage of the metaphysical reality of peace and its meaningful human manifestation. In fact, Gandhi stands as a landmark towards which our evolving consciousness of peace will progress:

> *"The greatest power in the world is that of the Soul. Peace is its highest expression. To attain peace, first, we must acquire greater mastery over ourselves. We secure then an atmosphere of perfect peace, calm and goodwill that protects and fortifies ourselves and blesses others around us.*
>
> *"Peace requires one first to BE brave enough to love another, to tolerate another, and to trust another. That requires faith in oneself. One has not the strength to be peaceful if he is fighting the internal duel of selfish desires. Good can never result from evil desires or actions; hence, the GITA'S central teaching of the oneness of the means and ends. The practice of peace is thus a test of the sincerity of our hearts; it requires solid and silent self-sacrifice, honesty and the capacity for diligent work, but must be realized first in its source within."*

Gandhi of course decried the physical violence of war, but his motivation was the perfection of human nature and character:

> *"Behind the death-dealing bomb there is the human hand that releases it, and behind that still is the heart that sets the hand in motion… Human nature will find itself only when it realizes that to be human it has to cease to be beastly or brutal."*

War is glorification of brute force, and therefore it is essentially degrading and demoralizing to the human spirit. Gandhi wanted to see us train ourselves in the realization of soul-force daily through the common actions of self-restraint, unselfishness and patience. "These are the flowers," he said, "which spring beneath the feet of those who accept but refuse to impose suffering."

"A Time for Peace" addresses not only our global issues, but also our individual cultivation of peace as the first requisite to world peace. Gandhi himself exemplified this in several ways, especially by acknowledging his heeding of the "still small voice" of his consciousness of peace within. He also set the practice of daily prayer meetings and, though a man of intense and almost continuous action, he tried to observe one day of silent self-examination per week to establish his own inner peace. Even through his practice of vegetarianism, which he originally followed only out of acceptance of a cast injunction, he evolved to a belief in man's responsibility to care for lower animals and thus to uphold God's plan for a peaceable kingdom throughout nature.

Gandhi demonstrated that it is not necessary or even desirable to lead a life apart from responsibilities, associations, and activities in order to find stillness and peace. The "cloistered" life is not a full and natural one. For most, retiring to cave-like seclusion in order to find inner peace would mean disaster. Their minds would still be whirring with thoughts, impressions and desires from their involvements with the bustling world they left. The way to leave the world is not to reject it! Furthermore, where is there room for brotherly love and service in the cave of solitude?

Gandhiji heeded these teachings of the BHAGAVAD GITA he so loved:

> *"...the man who has attained perfect control over his mind and complete mastery over his senses, who is free from attachment and aversion, while living in the world of sense objects, he realizes peace. "Impossible*

is the attainment of wisdom by the uncontrolled mind. Impossible is meditation for the restless. Peace can never be attained without meditation. And unless one has realized peace within, where else can one find it?"

(Ch. II, verses 64 and 66)

—translation by SWAMI PREMANANDA

Mahatma Gandhi's Last Possessions

Economics: Life's Object Lessons

"Good for the body is the work of the body, good for the soul the work of the soul, and good for either the work of the other."

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

"The crowning fortune of a man is to be born with a ' bias to some pursuit which finds him in employment and happiness."

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

"Poverty often deprives a man of all spirit and virtue; it is hard for an empty bag to stand upright."

—BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

ECONOMICS: LIFE'S OBJECT LESSONS

The Isha Upanishad (the most essential of all scriptures, according to Gandhiji) instructs that heaven itself is to be attained only by reconciling life in this world with the Infinite:

> *"By wise utilization of the objects of the finite world one gains freedom of mind, and by the right realization of the Infinite he attains the liberation of the Self."*

American writer and Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes' assertion that "Civilization is the process of reducing the infinite to the finite/' also ordains religionists to meet the issues of our day with practical idealism, to reconcile the divine and the mundane in human nature.

Not an economist in the formal sense, Gandhi entered economics as he entered politics: compelled by devotion to Truth as an all-encompassing ideal. Thus, his philosophy of economics can best be understood along with its foundation of Hinduism.

> *"Economics is untrue which disregards moral values. This extension of the law of nonviolence in the domain of economics means nothing less than the introduction of moral values.*
>
> *"The end to he sought is human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. I use the adjective moral as synonymous with spiritual."*
>
> —M. K. GANDHI

Economics is a manifestation of human values—the interrelationship of inner goals, the use of natural resources and interdisciplinary creations for the evolution of life on earth. I am not equipped as a religionist to talk about new industrial orders, foreign investment plans, balance of import/export, global market plans, balance of payment and debts, movements of commodities and power groups' strategies. But according to my faith I recognize that, despite

institutional reforms, nothing short of spiritual understanding and moral reforms will succeed in ameliorating the problem of world economic disparity.

In meeting the issue of economic disparity, the threats to life are comprehensive ones—to the ecology of our planet, to our personalities, and to our values of justice:

Ecological destruction: One-third of the earth's land is already desert; the rest is eroding unceasingly. Greed or shortsightedness compels acceleration of agricultural production by means of yielding food which is organically unwholesome to the consumer and to the land. Industrialized waste pollutes air and waterways and reeks havoc on all societies.

Depletion of nonrenewable resources: Undisturbed, Nature maintains a relative balance of cooperative and competitive existence. Man lives by some predatory imposition on nature, but is responsible for his planet's symbiosis.

Poverty of mind: Work serves a purpose in the development of the mind and the spirit of man. Unemployment stagnates spiritual growth. "Labor-saving devices" are not necessarily ideal. Most certainly, technology is not a neutral factor—morally, economically or politically: Who decides (and on what basis) what is "appropriate technology." For good or bad, technology imposes the Western concept of healthy economy on all societies, leading to concentration of power in the hands of the few who have the capital and the power to create and to produce by it.

The Problem of Justice: How are the interests—political, economic or "humanitarian"—in "helping the poor" to be fairly gauged? By whom and according to whose standards?

What is "development"? And to what end? We would all agree to the abolition of absolute poverty, hunger and want. But does that mean "modernization" and the triumph of Western materialism? The term "developing countries" indicates worldwide confusion over basic human values. Certainly in the West we also seek to develop. But does development require mass production, factories,

cities; large-scale and chemical agriculture; drug and surgery-based health care; endless pursuit of consumer-oriented growth?

Our world seems to be proceeding to the future according to the "hard realities" of economics and politics governed at the macro level, which fosters competition among nations without regard to genuine development of their quality of life. Despite the rhetoric of "mutual interest" and "partnership," the real issues continue to be power and dominance rather than cooperation and acceleration of growth with little regard to equitable distribution. Survival of societies with indigenous skills, resources and modest technologies out of step with priorities of the competitive world order, is threatened.

There are dangers in international short-term "fixes" (the politics of macroeconomics) which history records have forced alliances of vested political and economic interests to cooperate for market manipulation or survival, leading to alienation and greater misunderstanding among nations. Societies collapse from the pressures of such imposed change. Enclaves of power and elitism only further depress those who suffer in the relentless cycles of deprivation.

Nor can the world today afford the economic vanities of the "quick fix." Mere application of economic aid seems like giving an old face a cosmetic face-lift while allowing the internal organs, bones and musculature to continue their programmed processes of decay. The patient improves (perhaps) in appearance only. The surgeon alone (institutional bankers, to suit our economic illustration) profits by the operation. Economic life, like personal life, is sustained by an organic, total process of self-renewal or, as with the human body, it inevitably suffers death.

The Hindu Foundation of Gandhi's Economics

The Cosmic Reality, its projection into an orderly progressive manifestation and man's purpose and conduct in it, participate in an integral unity or yoga— a "spiritual GNP," if you will—a dynamic symbiosis of "God-Nature-Person." The

Hindu social/economic theory derives from this perspective of the cosmic oneness of life.

According to Hinduism one does not strive for a "heaven on earth," nor does he believe that there will be an eventual eradication of evils (greed, passion, ignorance) from society. The mixture of light and dark, good and evil, knowledge and ignorance— what is called Maya—is the universal phenomenon, the bifurcation, manifold and multifarious reflection of the One Reality. Good and evil, pain and enjoyment, etc., come not from fixed quantities obtaining at any time; there will not come a time when good alone will prevail, for that would obviate the terms of universal existence.

The world must offer a spectrum of conditions to fulfill its nature. Hence, there will not be a "perfect" economics of equality, for such a condition would be tantamount to sameness in Nature. In a story from the ancient epic RAMAYANA, Sita, observing the human condition, said to her husband, Lord Rama, "It would be grand if every home in our kingdom were a perfect mansion such as ours. I find many houses are dilapidated and in need of repairs."

"But my dear," replied Rama, "if all the houses were beautiful ones what would the masons do?"

Understanding of the purpose of work and social conscience as well as detachment are necessary to bring about the balance of an ideal society.

Nature's economics exists instinctively to fulfill the primary needs of hunger, shelter, procreation and growth; but the same economics we observe in nature is also observed in human societies. One of Gandhi's disciples of economic theory, J.C. Kumarappa, described the "natural" economics in ECONOMY OF PERMANENCE (Wardha, India: 1958). There are five "economies." In order of lessening destructiveness or violence and increasing selflessness and harmony of cooperation, they are: Parasitic, predatory, enterprising (e.g., bees pollinating flowers while both benefit), gregarious (e.g., ant colonies performing instinctively dutiful work to benefit the group), and serviceful (the highest form of economy in Nature and man, this is the relationship between parent and young, where one sacrifices selfish interest, ambition, recognition,

praise or reward and is motivated by love and service). Humans *qua definition* utilize the additional dimension of free will and creative and introspective consciousness, thus becoming the custodians for the welfare of nature as well as human society. The continuous "work" of Nature is a perfect economic system—predictable, cooperative and organized. The wages are honest, and the participants serve a common cause, though unconsciously. Man's trouble in his participation in the economic order is twofold: *He is free to choose or assign work, and he determines the wages for his efforts.*

In Hinduism, mankind is perceived as spirit evolving—a transitional being, individually as well as collectively.

Society is the manifest spectrum of opportunities, attainments, behaviors and responsibilities commensurate with the needs for human consciousness to work out salvation by observing the all-pervading, established Principles or Laws of Existence (*Dharmas).* Moral law, social duty and intellectuality all serve its gradual unfoldment.

The philosophy of *karma* (the law of self-manifestation or action) is the basis for understanding economic idealism in Hinduism and the foundation of Gandhiji's convictions. The message of *karma* is one of *promise* and *justice*—that of the progressive purpose and power of the individual working out his freedom (*moksha*) from the limitations of the world. Bovine idleness and reveries of salvation are not justifiable means of attaining salvation, as revealed by the Lord in the BHAGAVAD GITA:

> *"Action is produced by vibration. Vibration emanates from the imperishable. Therefore the eternal Reality is all-pervading and ever present in action. (III, 15)*
>
> *"Without the performance of action, none can attain tranquility and wisdom. Perfection is never realized by merely giving up sensory activities. (III, 4)*

> *"0 Bharata, the ignorant ones, desirous of personal good, perform actions with sensory attachment. But the wise work with an impersonal attitude and spiritual vision for the good of all beings." (III, 25)*
>
> — (translation by SWAMI PREMANANDA)

Thus work has a three-fold value for man: It joins him to the universe of unfolding life (nature and society); hence, it is a service. Second, it draws forth the creative potential of the human soul; hence, it is constructive and progressive. Third, when it is performed without attachment (i.e., greed, desire for recognition, pleasure or rewards), it is self-liberating.

The progressive economist, the late E. F. Schumacher, precisely echoed this ideal of *karma* in his book GOOD WORK:

> *"First, to provide necessary and useful goods and services. Second, to enable every one of us to use and thereby perfect our gifts like good stewards. Third, to do so in service to, and in cooperation with others, so to liberate ourselves from our inborn egocentricity."*

Hinduism identifies four inherent motive desires which constitute our performance of actions and coordinate our spiritual and secular pursuits. As the "Four Aims of Life" they have an overarching unity, modifying and serving each other. They are *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (artistic and cultural life), and *moksha* (spiritual freedom). There is no permanent feud between the human world of natural desires and social aims and the spiritual life.

Hinduism condemns only pursuits unrelated to the spiritual whole.

Living in pursuit of the evanescent glories of the world is unwholesome. As prosperity itself is impermanent, to pursue it alone is to disengage life from the Eternal. A few words should be said about the legitimate aim of *artha* (wealth):

> *"Artha takes note of the economic and political life of man, the craving for power and property. The urge which gives rise to property is something fundamental to human nature. Unless we change the very constitution of the human mind we cannot eradicate the idea of*

> *property. For most men property is the medium for the expression of personality and intercourse with others.*
>
> *"While the pursuit of wealth and happiness is a legitimate human aspiration, they should be gained in ways of righteousness (dharma) if they are to lead ultimately to the freedom of man (moksha)."*
>
> —RADHAKRISHNAN, THE HINDU VIEW OF LIFE, p. 80.

Hinduism does not adopt one particular idea as the standard for the whole human race, because it recognizes that mankind seeks its goal of God at various levels and in various directions. To include all people in a social plan with sympathy, society was symbolically described as being comprised of four cooperative stages, or classes.

That original theory of *Varna* or "class" provided for the "nature" as well as the "nurture" of the social personality and was based on tolerance and trust. Valid as a conceptual explanation only, it was unjust (hence, outlawed) as a delimiting social practice.

In the hymn of the "Sacrifice of the Cosmic Man" ("Purusha Sukta") which appears in the RIG VEDA we find what is perhaps the world's most ancient economic theory (older than 2,000 B.C.). Its author conceptualizes four great classes of the Aryan society emerging from four different parts of the symbolic "cosmic man's" anatomy: First, the Brahmans (Intellectuals) issuing forth from the mouth, ideally pursue most selflessly the highest knowledge, with the right and obligation to impart it. The Kshatriyas (Military), issuing from the arms, have the power and honor beyond their personal life to enforce justice and to protect society. The Vaishyas (Commercial), issuing from the thighs, provide for dissemination of ideas through trade—gaining wealth for themselves, but also providing wealth and work for others. The Shudras (Labor), last, issuing from the feet, work primarily for their own physical comforts and are thus given little public recognition.

For the intellectual, values are spiritual and self- regulated; the social and enterprising require legislation for their behaviors; enforcement is the behavior

of those responsible for the moral and altruistic responsibilities of society; and guidance is given to those whose self-centered responsibilities are for primary needs and wants.

People in America have marvelled at the impact of Mahatma Gandhi on Indian life—surprised that huge crowds would gather for a mere glimpse of him. The truth is that the Hindu culture traditionally values selfless work; the Indian populace responded spontaneously, emotionally and spiritually to one they understood as being egoless and without possessions, and who asked the same selflessness of them. (Significantly, Gandhi's birth into what is called the Vaishya class did not mean delimitation of his opportunities or attainments nor diminishment of people's highest reverence for him.)

One of Hinduism's greatest teachers, Swami Vivekananda, saw human society as being governed in turn by its four classes, with the advantages and characteristics of each predominating at any given time:

> *"If it is possible to form a state in which the knowledge of the priest period, culture of the military, distributive spirit of the commercial, and the ideal of equality of the last can be kept intact minus their evils, it will be an ideal state. But is it possible?"*

The Swami perspicuously foresaw at the turn of the twentieth century the turn of the twenty-first:

> "We *can identify all four classes throughout time. Perhaps the fourth (Labor rule) is emerging. We are globally in the third (Commercial). But it is easy to see that the 'gold standard' of life has been making the rich richer and the poor poorer."*
>
> (—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, COMPLETE WORKS, Vol. VI, p. 381.)

Hinduism is illustratively rich in its theoretical conceptions of life, a fact which has led critics to point to India's conditions of poverty today and to blame Hinduism for the inability of India to overcome its social and economic problems.

I would put the blame on human failures in government, not on failure of the philosophy. Proving my point are the ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, excavations in the Punjab that reveal a sophisticated and technically precocious society that existed before the semibarbaric hoard of Aryan invaders approached from the West, 2300- 1750 B.C. These great walled citadels were governed by boards of municipal administrators who organized city streets and blocks and standardized its bricks and buildings. The cities contained imposing buildings, covered brick drainage more sanitary than that found in many modern Indian towns, wells, shops, police stations and monasteries. The agriculture was enhanced by sophisticated systems of inundation and irrigation, yielding a healthy commercial economy capable of supporting a large surplus urban population (Harappa: 35,000). while maintaining granaries for surplus and trade. The large merchant class exported spun cotton (India's gift to world civilization) and imported other luxury items.

Gandhiji's Economic Strategy

Gandhiji's strategy for India's and our futures is totally consistent with Hinduism, deriving clearly from its philosophical concerns: Does the system respect the essential symbiosis of life? Does it give hope for a better life? Does it remove difficulties and suffering? Does it raise the moral and spiritual tone?

> *"The end to be sought is human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. I use the adjective moral as synonymous with spiritual."*

Gandhi offered a tolerant, yet totally consistent set of methods for "mutually operative systems" based on Truth and nonviolence with the means and ends consistent.

He pleaded for service instead of exploitation, renunciation instead of acquisitiveness, and the largest measure of local and individual initiative instead of centralization. (For him self-regulation was the ideal.) The economic system, politically nonviolent and democratic, should be cooperative and constructive instead of exclusive, competitive and militant.

It is incorrect, however, to say that Gandhian economics leads away from industrialization and technology. He favored limited, selective and socially-controlled industrialization.

Certain industries, such as public utilities, of necessity must be large-scale, centralized and capital- intensive (but under public control); others, small-scale, labor-intensive, decentralized and village- based to serve diverse needs.

Not opposed to material progress, Gandhi was yet against the development of luxuries and superfluous goods which subvert the aims of larger society. He allowed himself to own and to use only those materials which were commonly available to a humble villager, encouraging this attitude by conviction and example. Simplicity, virtually his criterion for civilization, serves progress:

> *"Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of selfish wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service."*

The goal of "Swadeshi," a self-reliant economy envisioned for India by Gandhiji, meant not autarchy, but the absence of dependence. Gandhi sought the building of a society able to supply the minimal needs of its people without dependence on external sources. For this, maximum use of *indigenous* resources and technologies, appropriate skills, materials and use of labor force would predominate, with foreign imports limited to only unavailable materials. His target for social amelioration was the village— with its revival as a model of efficiency and self- sufficiency: 'The world is my village, and my village is the world," he said.

In any economy the main resource is the people, though Gandhi recognized the inequalities of skill, industry, intelligence and opportunity inherent in the nature of societies. He acknowledged the aim of *artha,* that people with talent will earn more. Gandhi realistically accepted income differentials but felt that to ensure steady development with socially just income distribution within a politically democratic set-up, the resultant "property must serve the cause of human happiness and should also uplift the person who manages it."

Trusteeship

He believed in the ideal of the "cosmic man"—i.e., that a just and viable economy could exist wherein the differences would not conflict, but fuse, mutually serving. Basically, to the theory of capitalist investment (which serves speedy economic growth by raising employment, which generates income), Gandhi added the spiritual and secular idea of "Trusteeship."

Perhaps the ancient scripture of Tamil Nadu, Thiruvalluvar's THIR KURAL, most accurately elucidates Gandhi's philosophy of trusteeship:

> "*Good men put forth industry and produce wealth not for themselves but for the use of society." (Ch. 22)*
>
> *"He alone lives who shares his wealth with others; he who does not recognize this duty is to be counted as dead, a burden to the earth, or a man bent on acquisition of riches and not true fame." (Ch. 101)*

The GITA'S ideal of non-possession, as cited by Gandhi in his autobiography MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH, is further endorsement:

> *"Those who desire salvation should act like a trustee who, though having control over great possessions, regards not an iota of them as his own."*

Gandhi, looking to God for the standard of human conduct, said that everything belongs to God and is from God. Therefore it is for His people as a whole. When an individual earns more than his proportional needs he should become a trustee of that surplus portion for God's people and for God's purpose. Riches do not harm per se, but as a form of power they may be used in a beneficial or harmful way. Gandhi wanted the rich to employ wealth in service of society. Not for expropriating or liquidating the rich, he wanted them to utilize their skills and talents in honest and fruitful ways for the country.

Marxists have contempt for Gandhi's rejection of the theory of the inevitability of class conflict and its substitution by the principle of trusteeship, but history

shows that the Marxist power is power of one elite passing to another and behaving no less oppressively or selfishly than the "capitalist elite."

Let us examine the positive elements of Trusteeship:

Trusteeship respects the individual as the root of all progress. It involves the least regulation of the state. (Trusteeship not only presumes but promotes democracy.) It is a move towards decentralization and self- regulation, and it requires leadership willing to support the uplift and the efforts of the poor by identifying with their best labors.

Referring to the GITA, Gandhi emphasized the dignity of labor as more than a commodity for sale in the market in exchange for wages leading to the "wealth" of leisure. Work serves the moral and spiritual purpose of self-liberation through sacrifice and selfless service. Voluntary participation in Trusteeship involves choosing one's own path, setting one's own goals and then sharing the benefits. There is no place in a society of Trusteeship for an "elite enclave."

Trusteeship provides a system of checks and balances between public and private sectors, but relies on an extremely high adherence to cooperation and coordination at all levels, viz. labor, politicians, administrators and managers. Gandhi admitted:

> *"I will be very happy, indeed, if the people concerned behave as trustees; but, if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the state with the minimum exercise of violence."*

The compulsory method he advocated was the establishment (by public decision) of a maximum wage.

The problem of trusteeship is its very strength and attraction, oddly enough—that it relies- on human nature. It is an ideology that requires understanding and commitment to a conceived evolutionary social purpose of transferring the power of elitist wealth.

What Gandhiji brought to life was the clearly interdisciplinary approach, a recognition of the yoga (unity) of life. Ecologists urge us to be rational, to

"work with Nature," the material *alma mater* of life; to revalue the irreplaceable resources; to discontinue privileges and subsidies in the economy; to use only "positive" technology—the -sun, air, water and earth—as much as possible instead of continually thoughtlessly squandering our nonrenewable re-sources. Such sensible and obvious suggestions respect the oneness of life and a higher human moral consciousness. Gandhi's humble example dramatically involves us in the essential question: *whether the "haves" can live up to the ideal*. Can such selflessness and justice in the economic field be possible in a world dominated by industrialized societies, which are largely acquisitive and competitive and which measure men's progress and advancement in terms of wealth and power and not in moral terms?

> *"The goal of development should not be to develop things, but to develop man. Development must be aimed at the spiritual, moral and material advancement of the whole human being, both as a member of society and from the point of view of individual fulfillment."*
>
> - UNESCO MIDTERM PLAN, 1981-1962

* * *

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An American Profile

Gandhi and the American Indian

"Great Mysterious Spirit, have compassion on me.

"I bow to the Sun and the Moon and the Stars and the Blue Sky and the Thunder Trails and the Mountains and My Grandfather—the Rocks and Waters which give life to all beings.

"1 thank you for these and for Mother Earth with all her creatures that inhabit the world."

— AMERICAN INDIAN PRAYER

"I believe in advaita, in the essential oneness of all that lives...

"When I admire the wonders of a sunset or the beauty of the moon, my soul expands in the worship of the creator."

— GANDHIJI

Gandhi and the American Indian

A Bridge Across Humanity

"I believe in the absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity."

— GANDHI

TOLSTOY WROTE in a letter to an American friend that America has great philosophers, but that it hasn't learned to listen to them yet. He made reference to Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman and others. He could well have included the American Indian. Our "Boston Brahmins" are often credited with the foundation of wisdom to which we link the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Yet I find from the legacy of America's first great philosophers, the American Indians, a wisdom akin to that of the East Indian. It seems that the same vast ocean of Truth has carried ashore the spirit of Gandhi's message almost from time immemorial, linking our mental continents in return waves.

Far from coincidence or contrived relatedness, there *was* an *actual bridge* linking Asia and India's spiritual heritage 4o America: the Bering Strait, today a fifty-mile-wide stretch of shallow sea, some two hundred feet deep at most, which separates Alaska and Siberia.

Several times during a two million year period as massive glaciers grew or waned, the land stood high and dry or filled to their rhythmic formation. Most recently, in the Pleistocene Ice Age, the land bridge was open—about 20,000 B.C. Thus it was that Asiatics, when the world's racial groups differentiated themselves, merely walked across the Bering Strait and joined us forever in humanity's vast Truth. The positive and wholistic metaphysics of the American Indian later discovered and shared by our "Boston Brahmins" and others who enunciated "The America^ Dream" may be claimed to derive from the same ageless Eastern realizations which nourished Mahatma Gandhi.

Yoga and Our Native Americans

When Americans turned with reawakened interest and conscience to our native American ancestry in the 1960s, the motive and the discovery were more than historical. The *way of life* of our first Americans has become increasingly meaningful to our society grown tired by competition and alienated by a standard of living based solely on the number of things a man possesses. We view with more appreciation the ancients' ability to build a satisfying and colorful life without constant aid of gadgets. We look to discover their close kinship with nature and the world of the spirit, their zest for life, the value of silence and a soul at peace, and the need for a healthy life comprised of more than getting and spending.

The entire religious experience of the American Indian—purification of mind and body, prayer and fasting, a strong personal relationship with God, meditation to learn from the "Great Mystery" its teaching beyond words—describes the spiritual heritage that nourished Mahatma Gandhi perfectly in one word: Yoga, the ideal of union of soul with God and the oneness of Man-God-Nature.

The same ideal of Yoga drew the attention of Henry David Thoreau to study both the American Indian and the Oriental. He recognized in the American Indian a spiritual dignity and freedom attained through pursuit of the art of living studiously close to Nature and Mother Earth:

> *"The charm of the Indian to me is that he stands free and unconstrained in Nature, is her inhabitant and not her guest, and wears her easily and gracefully...*
>
> *"These are our predecessors. Why, then, make so great ado about the Roman and the Greek and neglect the Indian?"*

Hence, to ponder the roots and kinship of Gandhi's idealism in America, I do not start with Emerson's philosophy of the Oversoul (Brahman) nor with Thoreau's ideas "On Civil Disobedience." Earlier than Columbus' happening upon America on his search for a new route to India; earlier than Walt Whitman's dream of a

"Passage to India" (in spirit), it was our native Americans who first established the spiritual current of Mahatma Gandhi's thought in America.

Followers of the Eternal Way

As a Hindu, Gandhi called himself a follower of the ancient ideal of "sanathan dharma." "Dharma" refers to the cosmic principle or law. "Sanathan" designates that reality as eternal, abiding and sustaining. Believing in the essential oneness of all life in the eternal *dharma,* one aspires to center and to harmonize his life in that indwelling, supreme life-intelligence-love.

The American Indian distinguished himself by the same persistent characteristic perception of himself and of his relation to the universe around him. He centered his life in the natural world, committed to its spiritual bonds for his self-awareness, ethics, joys, and aesthetics, as well as for his religious practices. Religious rites varied among the tribes, but the purpose remained the same as that of the Hindu: a seeking for an infusion of the divine power through the medium of the natural world of universal forces.

It is this deep feeling for the world of the spirit articulated through daily expressions that the Native American Indian shares with the Oriental.

I have shared the soul-stirring devotions at dawn along the Ganges River at Varanasi in India, when thousands of devout Hindus bow to the Dawn, addressing the processes and powers of creation as kin—a ritual as old as the Vedic Age, whose message emerges from the MANDUKYA UPANISHAD: "The soul of man is of identical nature with the God of the universe."

Usha, the Dawn, lifts her gaze over the horizon and illumines the world of man with her embrace of living light. The devotee enters the river to bathe with the prayer that the holy stream of life may purify and bless him with the realization that the same divine power links life within and without.

Gandhi, too, was nourished by the daily purification of body and mind by the indwelling spirit:

> *"Just as this physical purification is necessary for the health of the body, even so spiritual purification is necessary for the health of the soul...*

> *"Far more indispensable than food for the physical body is nourishment for the soul. One can do without food for a considerable time, but a man of the spirit cannot exist for a single second without spiritual nourishment."*

Compare that *bhav* ("state of consciousness") persisting for millenniums through India's spiritual heritage to the manner of worship described by Ohiyesa, Santee Dakota physician and author in 1911:

> *"In the life of the Indian there was only one inevitable duty,—the duty of prayer—the daily recognition of the Unseen and Eternal. His daily devotions were more necessary to him than daily food. He wakes at daybreak, puts on his moccasins and steps down to the water's edge. Here he throws handfuls of clear, cold water into his face, or plunges in bodily. After the bath, he stands erect before the advancing dawn, facing the sun as it dances upon the horizon, and offers unspoken orison. His mate may precede or follow him in his devotions, but never accompanies him. Each soul must meet the morning sun, the new sweet earth and the Great Silence alone!"*

Nature

"There is an orderliness in the universe; there is an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is no blind law, for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings."

— GANDHI

Gandhi's views of the responsibility of man to live morally and in harmony with God's nature are basic to his philosophy of *ahimsa* and the teaching of the ancients in India, a reverence for the life of all beings.

Gandhi was surrounded by religious lore and experience which awakened in him deep reverence for the nonviolent life. I recall a story from the life of Buddha that was probably known to Gandhiji. It describes the young renunciate in a forest happening upon a beautiful bird that has just been wounded by a hunter's arrow and lies suffering to death. He prays lovingly and heals the young

animal, but the eager hunter breaks into the tender scene to retrieve his prey. "Give him to me. He's mine. I killed him," demands the hunter.

"Give him to me. He's mine. I gave him life," responds the Buddha.

Gandhi felt that the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection by man from the cruelty of man.

To one believing in a natural order of the world, our well-being is related to the order around us. In Hinduism this harmony with the purpose of the cosmic spirit is called *Rita,* meaning lightness, order, and balance.

Gandhi respected the powers of nature for purification, and based his ideas about health on a conviction that disease can be prevented (or cured) if one lives naturally in harmony with nature's forces. I think he was the first in India to promote what we call "health food stores," the Khadi Gramudyog Bhavans where whole, unprocessed foods are available. He wore only "ahimsa" leather sandals from cows that had died a natural death and promoted fabrication of only "ahimsa" silk from cocoons whose worms were allowed to mature to fly away instead of being killed.

Wisely, Gandhi discerned what I would call a moral appropriateness of conduct with nature:

> *"Contrary to the Hindu precept of non-killing... I felt it was quite moral to kill serpents, bugs and the like...*
>
> *"But one thing took deep root in me—the conviction that morality is the basis of things and that truth is the substance of all morality."*
>
> (AUTOBIOGRAPHY)

The American Indian's reverence for nature with a deep feeling for the world of the Spirit is his greatest legacy to our life. What Western culture will one day relearn from him is the *synergetic* relatedness of life— that is, that the experience of the whole is greater than the sum of its components, and that the "experience of the whole" comes not from accumulation of its components but from awareness of kinship in the integral whole. Native American wisdom

says, "We are many selves looking at each other through the same eye with different lenses."

As with the Oriental, Nature for the American Indian was to be honored, not brutalized or subdued:

> *"Only to the white man was nature a wilderness, and only to him was the land infested with wild animals and savage people; to us it was tame. Not until the hairy man came and with his brutal frenzy heaped injustices upon us was it wild for us. When the very animals of the forest began fleeing from his approach, then it was for us that the wild west was born."*
>
> —LUTHER STANDING BEAR (SIOUX CHIEF)

For one hundred years the Apache Indian was called "sneaky" for his practice of walking the earth without leaving footprints. Respecting Earth and her gifts, he deemed it man's arrogance to leave his impression on her. How similar the reverence of the East Indian Bharatanatyam dancer, who begins every performance by touching her shoulders and then the ground, symbolically removing her vanity and then with humility bowing to touch Mother Earth in thanks for the privilege of dancing on her.

A true story touchingly exemplifies the idea of appropriate conduct in conformity with the Great Spirit: A young Navajo Indian on a reservation was having difficulties making ends meet. He was out of a job. His wife was expecting a baby. Someone asked him why he didn't shoot some deer, as the hills nearby were full of them and he was* a good hunter. The young Indian replied that while they were awaiting the gift of life he felt it inappropriate to take life. Here again is the consciousness of self- purification: More important than the physical food is the spiritual nourishment.

The World as Symbol

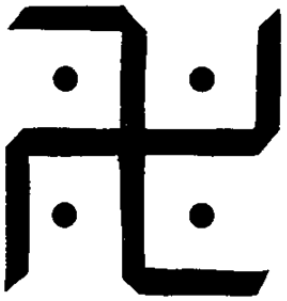
Where the spiritual and commonplace is perceived as one, the world becomes a multitude of symbols, its images leading to endless revelations.

Though inclined to almost austere simplicity in his possessions and surroundings, Gandhi found meaning in symbols, and his ideas about art and beauty respected natural order.

> *"My room may have blank walls and I may even dispense with the roof so I may gaze out upon the starry heavens overhead that stretch in an unending expanse of beauty. What conscious art of man can give me the panoramic scenes that open out before me when I look up to the sky above with all its shining stars? This, however, does not mean I refuse to accept the value of productions of Art.. .but only that I personally feel how inadequate these are compared with the eternal symbols of beauty in Nature…"*

The most profound and ancient Hindu symbol is the circle, the *mandala,* the wheel of life which reminds one not only of life's cyclical involution and evolution, but also of the wholeness and perfection of life. When the center of the circle is designated the qualities of the most ancient cross, the *swastika* of the Hindus is born: The center is the source, the one reality. The emanations from it are its projection into the four corners of the universe. The four sides are bent but do not join (which would wrongly define or delimit that infinite reality). Their hypothetical completion is the perfect circle.

Gandhi has been criticized for being so utilitarian and austere in his thinking that he found no place for aesthetics; yet art and beauty were comprised in Truth for him. As life tries to be a circle and everything one does in life moves towards conformity with cosmic life, Gandhi wanted a symbol to express its' Truth. His art was not to be "put on" as ornament.

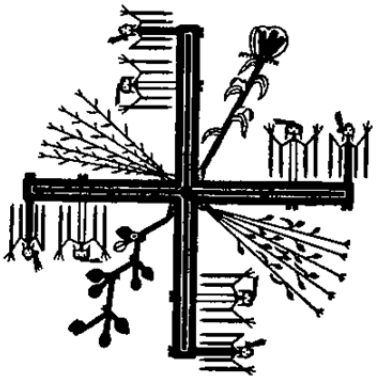


The Hindu Swastika

Each quadrant contains the presence of the Absolute Perfection shown by the dot.

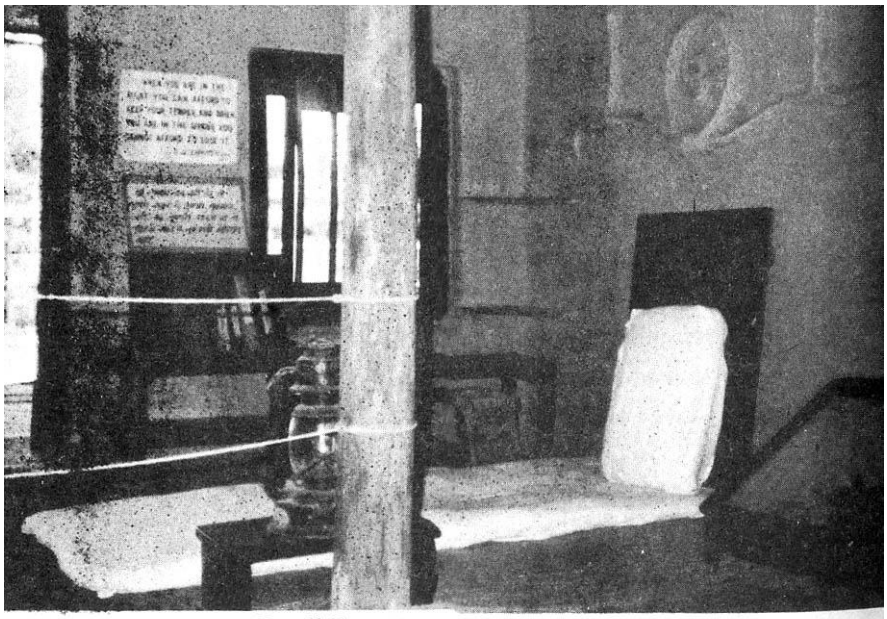
Navajo symbol

The Navajo Indians' symbol was virtually the same. Each quadrant contains the symbols of man and nature.



At the university founded by him in 1920 (Gujarat Vidyapith) in Ahmedabad, the dormitories for students are adorned above each graceful archway with the symbols Gandhi wanted to inspire the youth of India: the *swastika,* the ^ (AUM—symbol of the self- manifestation), and the *charkha,* the spinning wheel. The spinning wheel, which became the means to the dignity of economic independence for millions in India, had itself taken on larger symbolic meaning to Gandhi—as the wheel of life. Its spinning to him was a meditation on the oneness of capital and labor, rich and poor, of the world of nature and the world of man working and cooperating mutually.

Other objects were thoughtfully chosen by Gandhi to keep him identified with nature and his fellow-man. In his ashram cottage he kept for his use only those instruments which were locally available to the poorest man and which were produced from the readily available resources. On the mud wall at Sevagram he allowed Mirabehn (Madelin Slade) to design the AUM and palm trees, symbols of indwelling life and its immortality.



Gandhi's cottage room at Sevagram

The American Indian also portrayed his deep relationship with nature in symbols which revealed the world to him beyond its physical attributes. Finding the circle everywhere in nature, he said that the Power of the world always works in circles, and everything tries to be round, aspiring to that perfection. The earth, birds' nests, trees (how their trunks show rings of growth), cycle of rains all carried messages of "how Wakan Tanka (the Great Spirit) takes care of me."

> *"In the old days when we were a strong and happy people, all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation, and as long as the hoop was unbroken, the people flourished. The flowering tree was the living center of the hoop, and the circle of the four quarters nourished. The east gave peace and light, the south gave warmth, the west gave rain, and the north with its cold and mighty wind gave strength and endurance. This knowledge came to us from the outer world with our religion. Everything the Power of the world does is in a circle. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth*

and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves. Our tepees were round like the nests of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the nation's hoop, a nest of many nests, where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children."

—BLACK ELK, IN BLACK ELK SPEAKS as told through John G. Neihardt, 1961.

The American Indian's aesthetics, like Gandhi's, was marked by his perception of the world—its powers, properties, spiritual values and essences. Form, language, and imagination were powers by which relationships of the Great Spirit could be realized and conveyed, used for healing and strength. Although the white man found his totem poles insignificant, each creature on them demonstrated the Indian's knowledge of the order of the universe and his communication with the Great Spirit. The white "man, uneducated to the meditative formalism of the Indian's ceremonial decoration, was frequently aghast at the use of bird skins, snakes, and various plants, feathers and stones which brought to the Indian a spiritual enhancement, an imbibing of the qualities and expressions of the mythical being.

To the Hopi, for instance, evergreens, seashells and furs symbolized their close spiritual ties with nature. Corn was of special significance: The Earth Spirit, it is believed, gave the Hopis corn when they entered this world long ago. "Maize" is mysteriously unique in its relationship with man as it is the only grain requiring his assistance in its regeneration. Because man must plant the seedgrain, its yield was much more to the Hopi than physical nourishment.

Hopi infants were ceremoniously given an ear of corn at birth. They were to recall throughout life their "Corn Mother," a spiritual relationship symbolizing the strength offered from her powers throughout one's earthly sojourn.

It is not surprising that every detail of the care of corn for the Hopi became sacred, so central to the life of the tribes was its cultivation: The seeds were planted to a certain depth in a specific number of hills which were to be set in

offset patterns of rows arranged straight across hills. Even the colors of the seeds had special significance. The traditions were handed down from generation to generation so that the ways have survived even where the rationale has been forgotten.

Given the example of the Hopi's reverence for "Mother Corn," perhaps we can better understand Gandhi's reverence for "Mother Cow," central to the entire ecology, industry, and nourishment of Hindu life literally and figuratively: Alive, the cow provided dairy products and dung—food, fuel, and fertilizer. Dead, its body offered leather.

Although Westerners typically have difficulty understanding the veneration of the cow in Hinduism, Gandhi, who was not at all ritualistic in the orthodox sense and who never promoted any idol worship, nevertheless defended and personally claimed worship of the cow:

> *"Hinduism believes in the oneness not merely of all human life but in the oneness of all that lives. Its worship of the cow is, in my opinion, its unique contribution to the evolution of humanitarian- ism. .'..*
>
> *"The cow means not merely the animal, the giver of milk and innumerable other things to India, but it means also the helpless, the downtrodden and the poor.*
>
> *"Mother cow expects from us nothing but grass and grain...Mother cow rarely falls ill. Hers is an unbroken record of service which does not end with her death. Our Mother cow is as useful dead as when she is alive. Vie can make use of every part of herbones, of her body… Man, through the cow, is enjoined to realize his identity "with all that lives."*

A Place for Prayer

Travelling through the countryside in India by car or train one sees here and there in the midst of a field or rice paddy or by the roadside small stone altars. In my own initial ignorance of their spiritual purpose I assumed they were property markers! At least I had had no acquaintance with such monuments to prayer in America, though country fields and woodlands also comprise my

habitat. The small temples or altars are there in India out of respect for the Source of life and its place in the midst of man's labors.

The American Indian, too, prepared a place for prayer in his fields. In Arizona one used to see in the center of the Hopi's cornfields prayer shrines made from a bower of evergreen branches from which fluttered prayer feathers—soft white eagle feathers carrying messages from this world to the spiritual one.

Prayer was central in the daily life of Mahatma Gandhi as well. Though he acknowledged the place of churches, mosques and temples containing images appropriate to the symbolic tendency and temperament of worship for many, he himself chose open-air prayers in the midst of the day's work wherever he travelled, lived and worked.

For the congregational morning and evening prayers at his ashrams there were no images of any kind, only the "eternally renewed temple of worship under the vast blue canopy inviting every one of us to 'real worship..." Those who gathered assembled sitting "Indian fashion," if I may use the *double entendre,* on the ground.

Gandhi would speak of the healing and mothering power of the earth and of the feeling of being close to its soil which, according to Hindu medicine (Ayurveda) and faith, is strengthening, cleansing and healing.

Chief Standing Bear speaks of the Lakota, the tribal name of the western bands of Plains people now known as the Sioux, as worshippers on Earth's lap, too:

> *"... the old Indian still sits upon the earth instead of propping himself up and away from its life-giving forces. For him, to sit or lie upon the ground is to be able to think more deeply and to feel more keenly; he can see more clearly into the mysteries of life and come closer in kinship to other lives about him..."*

A Right Time to Die

It is regrettably evident that both Gandhiji and the American Indian lived more than others of their times in the constant threat of death. Yet, holding philosophies of life which did not admit an end to life with the death of their

bodies, both gave us guiding counsel from their own realized strength on how to live fearlessly and how to die fearlessly.

Gandhiji:

> *"Our scriptures tell us that childhood, old age and death are incidents only to this perishable body of ours and that man's spirit is eternal and immortal. That being so, why should we fear death! And where there is no fear of death there can be no sorrow over it either."*

For Gandhi, fear of death indicated a lack of religious faith, a forgetfulness or denial of the life of the immortal soul, our very divinity. Incompatible with the philosophy of the soul, he felt, was either "ludicrous joyfulness" at birth or "orgies of loud lamentations" at death which are equally disturbing.

Death, in terms of the evolution of life, should be a comforting thought. Whenever it comes, it is the wisdom of God for our own soul's progress and the economy of Nature, the constant working out of *Karma,* the unchangeable law of God in manifestation.

"As Hindus," Gandhi said, "we ought to be least affected by the thought of death, since from the very cradle we are brought up on the doctrines of the spirit and the transitoriness of the body."

What helped Gandhiji particularly to detach himself from mourning the passing of a soul dear to him was his remembrance of the oneness of all life in the cosmic Life—that *all souls* are dear to us as part of our own souls. He consciously extended his idea of relationship to include those beyond his parental, communal, religious or even national family.

"Not a moment passes when someone is not born or is not dead in this world.... The souls of the living as well as of the dead are all one. The eternal processes of creation and destruction are going on ceaselessly. There is nothing in it for which we might give ourselves up to joy or sorrow… Even if we extend the idea of relationship... how many births shall we celebrate? If we weep for all the deaths in our country, the tears in our eyes would never dry. This train of thought should help us to get rid of all fear of death."

Death—as deliverer from agony, a help "against ourselves," giving our life always new chances and new hopes, the "sweet restorer" of life of the soul—is not just impersonal law; it is Friend. When it comes at the "inevitable hour" we should face it and welcome it.

Death has a special meaning for the "warrior who dies for his cause, i.e. truth," Gandhi said. It is "twice blessed" and should be respected without dread or mourning.

Of his own death, Gandhi only voiced his prayer that he might remember God at the appointed time, departing from this world with the consciousness of his oneness with the Supreme Spirit. His final words, utterance of the name of God three times, as if a threefold blessing, prayer, and forgiveness to his assassin, were testimony to that self-remembrance: "H<§ Ram, H<§ Ram, H<§ Ram."

The American Indian

> *"You still sit among us, Brother, your person retains its usual resemblance and continues similar to ours, without any visible deficiency except that it has lost the power of action.*
>
> *"But whither is that breath flown, which a few hours ago sent up breath to the Great Spirit? …Alas! every part of that frame which we lately beheld with admiration and wonder, is now become as inanimate as it was three hundred winters ago. We will not, however, bemoan thee as if thou was forever lost to us, or that thy name would be buried in oblivion; thy soul yet lives in the great country of Spirits, with those of thy nation that are gone before thee; and though we are left behind to perpetuate thy fame, we shall one day join thee..."*
>
> —NAUDOWESSIE INDIAN FUNERAL ORATION

Perhaps what distinguished the Indian's ideas about death was his concept of time. Time to the Indian was not the linear or sequential arrangements Westerners conceive of, but a sense of expanded present. Accordingly, most did not think of progress or growth in their life as a sequence of goals (such as getting an education, leaving home, being married with family, becoming an

elder, etc.) leading to a finality at death. Such thinking of a "full life" in terms of linear time makes us feel that a death which occurs in youth is a deprivation of a part of life that is ahead of one, or "due to one," or that life is only complete or fair if lived through sequential stages to old age.

When time is viewed as "expanded present," life can only become fuller by measure of its character at any given place or moment, not by what lies ahead or behind. Growth, then, is awareness, not an accumulation of experiences.

Is this not the true meaning of the Hindus' ISHA UPANISHAD wherein is stated, "Man must desire to live the *full measure* of his life, but he must do so with the remembrance of the Self?"

Recall Gandhi's words about the martyr for Truth whose death is "twice blessed" by virtue of his consciousness of the Supreme when you read the words of Chief Crazy Horse before a battle in which his beloved Sioux were hopelessly outnumbered Looking over his beloved people and lands, he said, "Today is a good day to die, for all the things of my life are here."

All Men Are Brothers

"The whole world is my village." - GANDHI

Language reveals much about our perception of humanity and our ability to value other races: To the Greeks *all* others were "barbarians;" the Romans set out to conquer "savages;" the Chinese called those who lived beyond their borders "foreign devils;" the Egyptians simply referred to themselves alone as "humans."

Perhaps no one in our age took to heart the essential brotherhood of man more than Gandhi, whose death reminds us how much "civilization" goes on adverse to the reality. Here was the man who in agony over the brutality to the Jews wrote a letter to Hitler pleading for nonviolence. Tellingly, Gandhi addressed whom the world condemned as tyrant, "Dear Friend." He could condemn the act but not the doer. He believed in the perfection of the soul, in man's oneness and in human nature which responds eventually and ultimately to the "grand law of love."

It astonished me since my first visit to India that almost every person I met who was alive during Gandhi's life could relate to me a personal encounter or identification with him. I used to be skeptical: Gandhi could not possibly have met so many people, I thought! It seemed that Gandhi somehow had time for everybody, that he wrote to anyone he could not see. I always heard that his character knew no pettiness and that he was incapable of being unkind. He seemed to have welcomed everybody as friend whether he had known him as friend or was meeting him for the first time or would never meet him at all. This practice automatically *made* everybody his friend. Whether those who told me they "knew" Gandhi had actually met him in the flesh or not finally became a moot point to me. Because they shared his true spirit of kinship, indeed they "knew" Gandhi as "friend."

During India's independence movement, when Indians seemed to be responding to the appeal for communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims, Gandhi proclaimed his indifference to all distinctions of nation, community or religion:

> *"This unity among all is no new love with me. I have treasured it, acted up to it from my youth upward. Love so deep seated as it is in me will not be sacrificed even for the realm of the whole world."*

Gandhi's valuing of humanity was simply an identity with all men as brothers, and he recognized in that identification the mutual responsibilities of love. In India he replaced the name for the "untouchables," the down-trodden poorest of society, with a new name, "Harijans," meaning "Children of God."

The American Indian

> *"I admit that there are good white men, but they bear no proportion to the bad; the bad must be the strongest, for they rule. They do what they please. They enslave those who are not of their color, although created by the same Great Spirit who created us. They would make slaves of us if they could, but as they cannot do it, they kill us!.... They will say to an Indian, 'my friend! my brother!' They will take him by the hand, and at the same moment destroy him. And so you, addressing*

yourselves to the Christian Indians, will also be treated by them before long."

—PACHGANTSCHILHILAS, Chief of the Delawares, addressing Moravian Indians

In the tragic course of disillusionment and assault by the white man's ways, the American Indian's deep sense of human brotherhood was betrayed. Before the white man came, tribes addressed one another with kinship to establish an instant relationship, and the bonds were to be respected with mutual obligations of trust and peace.

To converse with strangers, including the white man, the Indian used the same terms of family relationship in order to bring about the desired closeness, the same mutual respect, and responsibilities. Unfortunately, calling the U.S. President "the Great White Father" and themselves "children" was misinterpreted by the white man as a sigh of inferiority and dependency. Most tragically, the Indian's heartened echo of the white Christian missionary's words, "my friend! my brother!" in an appeal for mutual trust was only met by the cruellest mockery of faith.

A Legacy for Mankind

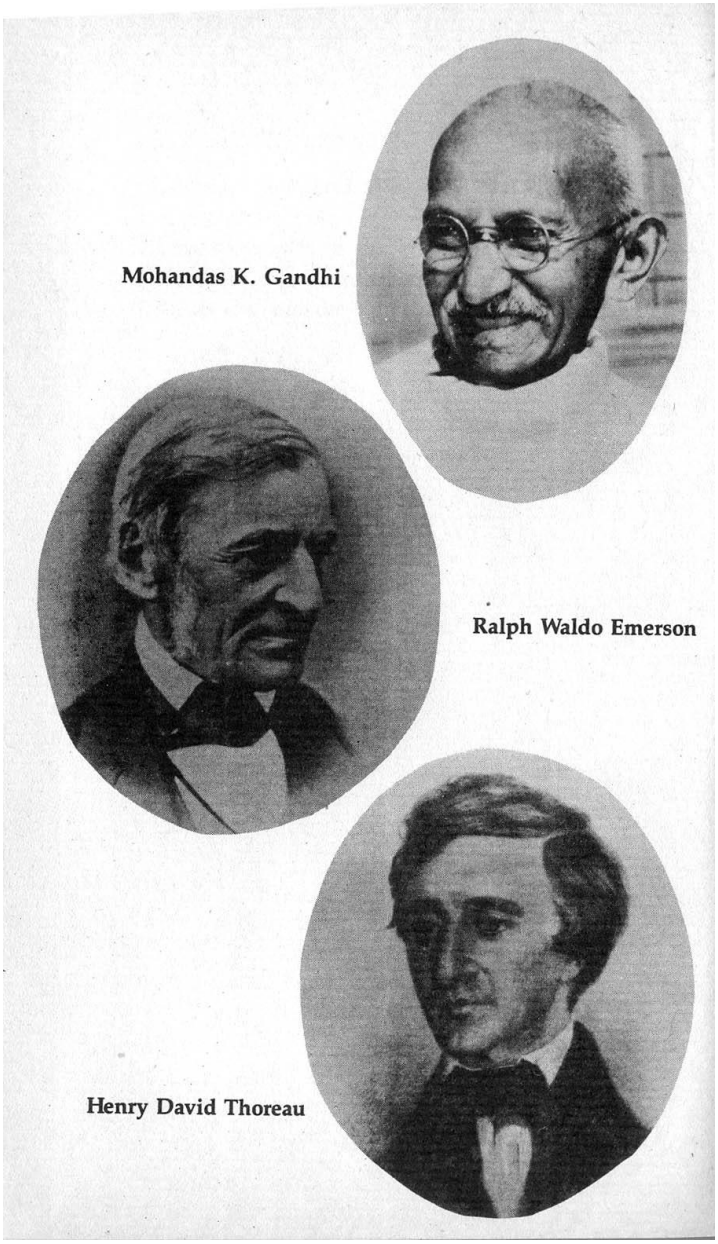
Philosophy took on life for Gandhi and the American Indian in a legacy that our futures must seek to emulate if we, like they, are to realize the fullness of life. A soul at peace, a balanced life, respect for leisure and shared enjoyment are all needed for a healthy life.

To Gandhi, the art of living meant pursuit of Truth, the cultivation of simplicity and high-mindedness as the secret of freedom and real happiness. (These values he called India's true wealth.) The American Indian, too, found wealth not in his material possessions but in his spiritual well-being. He demonstrated to us an ability to find richness in being close to Nature. To him, to be "poor" was not to be without money, but to be without tribe, without care, without the spirit of kinship.

The martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi and the American Indian was humanity's martyrdom of innocence, the secret of happiness and of true wealth.

It is difficult to close this chapter in my mind. My heart is so exalted in the remembrance and yet immensely saddened in the tragedy for the way of life lost to us… a legacy to be dreamed of, remembered, and, hopefully, to be reborn.

> *"The values and skills of the past are our legacy. They belong to us, but to the future as well. We should learn about them for the future generations to come, that they mil gain respect and understanding for the values and knowledge of our ancestors."*
>
> — HOPI INDIAN CHIEF



Emerson, Thoreau, Gandhi

"To some extent, and at rare intervals, even I am a Yogi."

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU

"All life is an experiment. The more experiments you make the better."

— RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Emerson, Thoreau, Gandhi

AUTUMN, 1964. Sitting in the Saint Lawrence University library in upstate New York on a beautiful afternoon, pouring over my research for a freshman English paper on 'The American Dream" I came across those musings of Henry David Thoreau which ultimately led to the transformation of the character and course of my life:

> *"Depend on it, that rude and careless as I am, I would fain practice the yoga faithfully… 'The yogi, absorbed in contemplation, contributes in his degree to creation: he breathes a divine perfume, he hears wonderful things. Divine forms traverse him without tearing him, and united to the nature which is proper to him, he goes, he acts as animating original matter. To some extent, and at rare intervals, even I am a yogi."*
>
> (letter to H.G.O. Blake)

Perhaps it is curious that the writings of the American philosophers Thoreau and later Emerson led me to explore India's noble spiritual heritage and finally to discover the life of Mahatma Gandhi as a kind of culmination of its character and evolution. Now, twenty-three years later, as Director of the Gandhi Memorial Center, the understanding of Mahatma Gandhi's life in America is a sacred cause to me. There is no greater human light offered to our modern world.

Such universal idealists as Gandhi, Thoreau and Emerson may justly be claimed by any society. But I believe that Americans—especially teachers and professors—will rejoice to discover the parallels of life and thought that exist in the lives of the Concord "Brahmins" and the Mahatma.

Though surface conditions of culture and history shape different appearances, the same timeless and universal ideas have emerged to shape the common destinies of our two countries, India and America, crossing the oceans to commingle in the current of understanding.

I rejoice that a great deal of credit for Emerson's and Thoreau's perspectives goes to India—that these "Transcendentalists" were profoundly affected by oriental literature, feeding the minds of our New England forefathers with its nectars. I am proud, too, to know that Gandhi was influenced by the writings of Thoreau while in South Africa and adopted his ideas as a guide, even taking the name "Civil Disobedience" for his campaigns in India- But isn't it curious that Gandhiji's first imprisonment by the British upon his return to India was in part for his publication of Thoreau's same treatise in violation of the Rowlatt Act!

Emerson championed the dignity of the common man; Thoreau sought the companionship and wisdom of the American Indian and cherished the life of rustic simplicity close to Nature and thereby close to God; Gandhi called the "poorest and lowliest and lost" of India's society "Harijans" ("Children of God"), and also had faith in the humblest expressions of life. By their expansive and charitable consciousness of the kinship of human evolution, all three men have been absorbed into the world thought that transcends national bounds.

We identify all three as philosophers, though none arranged a system of theories by structured logic. Each rather had a practical passion for wise living governed by self-knowledge, faith and intuition. They were all interested in conducting life with the belief that the whole or perfection of it can be realized by even this parcel of it—that in each of Nature's limitations the intimation of the Cosmic dwells, and that therein resides the moral consequence of harmony of oneself with the cosmic principle (dharma).

> *"He stopped at the thresholds of the huts of the thousands of the dispossessed, dressed like one of their own. He spoke to them in their own language; here was living truth at last, and not quotations from books."*
>
> —RABINDRANATH TAGORE about Mahatma Gandhi

From 1919 upon his return from South Africa until 1948, his martyrdom, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi occupied the center of the Indian stage and was the chief hero of a great historical drama that culminated in the independence of 400 million people. The intrepid strength of this frail little man changed the

entire political character of the world overnight: At independence India became the world's largest democracy; the population of the "free world" doubled. The world seeks to know: Who was the man?

Dressed in a loincloth, at home among scavengers, the Harijans, the villagers or the elite—from beggars to the King Emperor—Gandhi demonstrated a *Yoga*, or harmony, in the art of living. His ideal was that of man perfect and balanced, who remembers his Maker, who lives at peace with God and with his fellow creatures. However difficult it is to attain, it is the only life worth pursuing, Gandhiji would say, for the effort itself draws us to our maximum potential and teaches us to live harmoniously within ourselves and with the cosmos at all levels.

The basic themes that integrate Gandhi's life message into one yoga are virtually "The American Dream" as espoused and shaped by Emerson and Thoreau.

As did Emerson and Thoreau, Gandhi evolved his philosophy from life—as a composite of commitments, beliefs and aspirations voiced and acted upon. For him the transcendental must come to form and manifestation, and it must reach the hovel of the humblest of society:

"I am indeed a practical dreamer," he said. "My dreams are not airy things. I want to convert my dreams into realities as far as possible."

Indians refer to Gandhiji as the father of their country—as George Washington is called by Americans. By influence, but not by administration, Gandhi may be called so. Politics was never his first concern. At the crucial moment of organization of India's government, Gandhi relinquished interest in official position and proceeded directly and personally to the people. Furthermore, his concern was more for the *causes* of human strife and moral debility than for legislative platforms. Laws, he would say, are only patchwork remedies for universal and timeless needs of mankind.

His was the voice of conscience, not just of his country, but everyman's. Gandhi didn't just want Indians to be free of British yoke; he wanted all humanity to be

free of *any* yoke—especially the yoke of self-imposed limitations of greed, selfishness and untruth.

Many know and remember Gandhi as a complete humanitarian and as a social reformer. In his life of service he lived and worked and spoke for social and religious rights, for religious unity, for social equality, for village economy and for basic education for all. These are noble and idealistic goals, but they of themselves do not comprise what Gandhi essentially was—a man of God.

> *"The divine in man has had ho more easy, methodically distinct expression. His personal influence upon young persons is greater than any man's. In his world every man would be a poet. Love would reign. Beauty would take place. Man and Nature would harmonize."*
>
> — THOREAU ABOUT EMERSON

Emerson hailed from a long tradition of New England clergymen. Like Gandhi, his father died when he was yet a boy, and his mother's courage, faith and religion left their mark on his personality. Like Gandhi, though he graduated in the upper half of his class, he did not distinguish himself in college.

The theme of self-reliance in Emerson's life ripened through his own experience as he taught school to earn for his own studies. As a young man he, too, was shy and modest—but likeable. As Emerson's personality developed, so did his conscience. He began to seek deeper laws and meaning from surface issues. He criticized the ministry and religious thought of his time, but wrote and lectured on the subjects of the spirit, the intellect and character. Because he felt that the formal ritual observance of sacraments was not as Christ intended, Emerson resigned from his first and only church pastorship. (Emerson, Thoreau and Gandhi were all criticized for their avowed departures from the rituals and dogmatic observances of their religious ancestors.)

Though Emerson's life in the bucolic and serene community of Concord cannot be compared to Gandhiji's in the turmoil of India's emergence to independence, there are parallels in their public service, and Emerson should not be typified as reclusive or scholarly. For years he lectured throughout the East and Midwest

in times when travel was arduous and means of communication primitive. He crossed the Mississippi on ice, traveling at various times by carriage, sleigh, canal boat, steamboat or train—for meager offerings and out of a sense of duty and faith, "to cheer, to raise and to guide men by showing them facts among appearances." He actively served as a member of the Fire Brigade, and he opened his home as a library and reading room to generate philosophic intercourse among the townspeople of Concord.

Admittedly, while Gandhi emerged to be politically active, Emerson was deliberate in his reluctance to do so, preferring to plant the seeds of ideas and to stay apart from the practical fray of affairs. While Gandhi patiently pleaded and persuaded with even his adversaries, Emerson did not like to argue or speak out about contemporary social issues. He took no part in fighting the Civil War, though he advocated the abolition of slavery.

"Swaraj of the Spirit"

In contrast to Gandhi's countrymen, Americans had their own land—even new frontiers for expansion—in Emerson's time. Although political independence had been achieved twenty-four years before Emerson's birth, America, Emerson insisted, still took its culture from abroad. "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe," he said. "Look not to antiquity; do not depend on 'heritage'; you are accountable to the present, not to posterity."

In his bold address on "The American Scholar," delivered in 1837 to the graduating Phi Beta Kappas of his alma mater, Harvard, he enunciated what I call a "Swaraj of the Spirit" for Americans, urging us to live and think and worship like free men. Called by Oliver Wendell Holmes "our intellectual Declaration of Independence," Emerson's program of thought defined the spirit of self-reliance, individual dignity and courageous intellectual new-frontierism that so characterize "The American Dream" and his philosophy. The "scholar," he said, serves independence of the spirit and must therefore look forward, not backward, through the exercise of creativity.

Wanting to see India free, independent and strong, Gandhi crusaded for the same spirit among Indians. He said:

"'Swaraj'" is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint which 'independence' often means. Swaraj is the sum total of all activities that go to build up a free and vigorous nation conscious of the strength that comes from right doing.

"If we were not under the spell of hypnotism or if we were not being acted upon by that great force inertia, or want of self-confidence, we would find it the most natural thing to breathe the air of freedom which is ours to breathe."

"Brahma"

The poem for which Emerson is best remembered and which clearly reveals his comprehension of Hinduism is "Brahma:"

If the red slayer thinks he slays,

Or if the slain think he is slain,

They know not well the subtle ways

I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;

Shadow and sunlight are the same;

The vanished gods to me appear;

And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;

When me they fly, I am the wings;

I am the doubter and the doubt,

And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,

And pine in vain the sacred Seven;

But thou, meek lover of the good!

Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

I cannot help thinking that Emerson, the first great American literary figure who read deeply and fully the available philosophic literature from India, may not have anticipated our discovery of what could be called his paraphrasing—if not plagiarism—of these verses from the BHAGAVAD GITA of the Hindus:

He who believes the Self to be a slayer,

And he who thinks that it is slain,

Neither of these knows the truth.

The Self does not slay, nor is it slain.

(CHAPTER N, VERSE 19)

Weapons cleave not the Self,

Nor doth fire burn it,

Waters wet it not,

Nor do winds dry it.

(CHAPTER N, VERSE 23)

Neither the Devas nor the great Rishis know my origin, because in every respect I am the source of the great souls and the great sages.

(CHAPTER X, VERSE 2)

He among mortals who knows me as birthless, beginningless, And the supreme Lord of the Universe; Becoming free from delusion attains liberation from all imperfections.

(CHAPTER X, VERSE 3)

—TRANSLATION BY SWAMI PREMANANDA

> *"In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the BHAGAVAD GITA, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seems puny and trivial."*
>
> —FROM WALDEN, CHAPTER XVI

Emerson and Thoreau were contemporaries and friends, though exactly when and how they met is unsubstantiated. Thoreau descended from a family of sea captains and merchants. His parents were vigorous-working, intelligent and principled people who instilled in young Henry sacrifice as duty and respect for personal honor. As did Emerson and Gandhi, Thoreau suffered the loss of his father when he was still in his formative years.

Much of Thoreau's personality parallels Gandhiji's. Like Gandhi, for example, Thoreau had a passion to explore the conduct of life through disciplined and pure means. In his own time he cautioned men to heed the *means* of commerce, business and invention consistent with the desirable ends. Like Gandhi, he wanted to simplify living in order to enhance the experience of life's greatest values. "I have three maxims for life," Thoreau is supposed to have said, "Simplicity. Simplicity. Simplicity."

In 1841, Thoreau was invited to live with Emerson's family—his handiwork and carpentry in exchange for room and board.

Thoreau's down-to-earth practicality complemented Emerson's abstractness, while Emerson's wider fame presented Thoreau with new acquaintances and awarenesses.

Thoreau chose to be rich by making his wants few. He was concerned not with how we eke out our living, but how we live. ("Beware of all new enterprises which require a new set of clothes and not a new wearer of clothes," he said. "If there is not a new man, can the new clothes be made to fit?") He preferred the company of a good Indian to the refinements of mannered society, declining invitations to dinner parties with the observation that the hosts "take

their pride in making their dinner cost much; I take my pride in making my dinner cost little."

Thoreau, a Naturalist, used neither trap nor gun; he ate no flesh, and he drank no wine. But whereas Thoreau's personal conduct was just that—i.e., personal—Gandhi's simplicity had an ulterior humanitarian motive: At home in his cottage at Wardha, Gandhi studiously kept for his use only those instruments and materials which would be accessible to any villager so as not to separate himself from the commonest of humanity. His practice was also instructive, an example: "Simplicity alone promotes real happiness and contentment and capacity for service."

Thoreau's intensity and depth of character were often misunderstood as eccentric. Too often his shyness and sensitivity were taken for rejection of or calloused indifference to the norm. However, it was, rather, that he, like Gandhi, wanted to strip away the artificiality, and he felt out-of-place in "social rites." He spoke of Nature's society first, with man a parcel of it. Like Gandhi, he felt the spirit's presence in the ordinary and the humble, through the oneness of nature and man and God.

Thoreau's "Experiment with Truth"

As Gandhi called his whole life an "Experiment with Truth," believing that the experience of Truth is accessible to all, Thoreau, too, sought to find the One. His interests in yoga, though mystical, were not confined to the realm of contemplation. His sincerity allowed him to reject superstition, extreme practices or superficial mental devices in favor of direct apprehension.

Significantly and symbolically, on Independence Day, 1845, at age twenty-eight, Thoreau started an adventure that has become an American classic. To explore his philosophy of the simple life he built a one-room cottage and lived alone in the woods outside Concord for two years, two months and two days.

At Walden Pond Thoreau found a wise approach to life. Those who read WALDEN today will find not introvertive, but expansive and penetrative observations of human character. Thoreau studied Nature because it is man's background. His

thirst for observing life yielded not vapid verses or whimsical appreciations from placid strolls. His was an exhausting experiment; he wanted to drench himself in Nature's moods, knowing the extremes, examining the laws and facts of Nature as a scientist does.

Thoreau, the "Sage of Walden Pond," found Truth in Nature's cathedral; Gandhi took to the exhausting expanse of the human arena to discover God. Thoreau found man's moods in the turbulence of Nature; Gandhi found cosmic order in even the turbulent turns of human character and celestial beauty in the mined treasures of the human heart. Yet, the conviction of both men is the same: In the words of the MANDUKYA UPANISHAD of the Hindus, 'The soul of man is of identical nature as the God of the Universe."

Contrary to the opinions of some, Thoreau was not reclusive by nature. As soon as he exhausted the advantages of solitude in the woods, he abandoned it. "I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there," he wrote. "Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one."

What he derived from his "experiment" committed his character henceforth:

> *I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."*

Like Gandhi, Thoreau placed duty to God's law above duty to an unjust man-made law, refusing to pay his poll tax in 1846 as a protest against slavery. Though he was not the first man in Concord to go to jail for such refusal, and though he spent only one night in jail, the symbolic act inspired him to write what has become the most widely read of all his works, his essay on "Civil Disobedience."

Whereas the Concord newspaper *Freeman* reveals that while Thoreau spent his historic one night in prison, the townspeople had their minds on more frivolous matters, Gandhi's imprisonments, on the other hand, made international

headlines. Gandhiji, who became acquainted with Thoreau's writings while fighting for the rights of Indians in South Africa in the early 1900s, adopted some of Thoreau's ideas and named his Indian movement "Civil Disobedience."

Thoreau took his causes public in earnest when John Brown defied the government at Harper's Ferry. He readily joined the action, but fate would not allow Thoreau the vocation of social activist it did Gandhiji. His brief involvement took its toll on his frail health which deteriorated from that time to his death at age forty-five. He welcomed death with no regrets jor fears. Satisfied that God would reveal Himself in measures Gandhiji would quote the favorite Christian hymn, "Lead Kindly Light, I do not hope to see the distant scene; one step enough for me." Thoreau would take life "one world at a time" rather than speculate on the hereafter. Asked on his deathbed whether he had made his peace with God, he responded simply, "We have never quarreled."

MAHATMA GANDHI AND THE CONCORD CONNECTION

On God

"To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness; God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. For in His boundless love God permits the atheist to live. He is the searcher of hearts. He transcends speech and reason. He knows us and our hearts better than we do ourselves. He does not take us at our word for He knows that we often do not mean it, some knowingly and others unknowingly.

"He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply is to those who have faith. He is all things to all men... He is in us and yet above and beyond us."

—GANDHI

"Ineffable is the union of man and God in every act of the soul. The simplest person who in his integrity worships God, becomes God; yet for ever and ever the influx of this better and universal self is new and unsearchable. It inspires awe and astonishment. How dear, how soothing to man, arises the idea of God, peopling the lonely place, effacing the scars of our mistakes and disappointments! When we have broken our god of tradition and eased from our god of rhetoric, then may God fire the heart with his presence."

—EMERSON

"The Great Spirit makes indifferent all times and places.

"The place where he is seen is always the same, and indescribably pleasant to all our senses. We had allowed only neighboring and transient circumstances to make our occasions. They were, in fact, the causes of our distraction. But nearest to all things is that power which fashions their being.

"When the common man looks into the sky, which he has not so much profaned, he thinks it less gross than the earth, and with reverence speaks of'the Heavens,' but the seer will in the same sense speak of 'the Earths,' and his Father who is in them."

—THOREAU

Ideal

"Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities—social, political, religious have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavor simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it."

—GANDHI

"Be content with a little light, so it be your own. Explore, and explore. Be neither chided nor flattered out of your position of perpetual inquiry. Neither dogmatize, nor accept another's dogmatism. Why should you renounce your right to traverse the starlit deserts of Truth, for the premature comforts of an acre, house, and barn? Truth also has its roof, and bed, and board."

"There is one soul. It is related to the world. "Art is its action thereon. "Science finds its methods. "Literature is its record.

"Religion is the emotion of reverence that it inspires.

"Ethics is the soul illustrated in human life.

"Society is the finding of this soul by individuals in each other.

"Trades are the learning of the soul in nature by labor. "Politics is the activity of the soul illustrated in power. "Manners are silent and mediate expressions of soul."

—EMERSON

"I know that lam. I know that another is who knows more than I, who takes an interest in me, whose creature, and yet whose kindred in one sense, am I. I know that the enterprise is worthy, I know that things work well. I have heard no bad news."

— THOREAU

On Truth

"For me, truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God."

— GANDHI

"The senses minister to a mind they do not know. At a moment in our history the mind's eye opens and we become aware of spiritual facts, of rights, of duties, of ' thoughts—a thousand faces of one essence. We call the essence Truth; the particular aspects of it we call thoughts. These facts, this essence, are not new; they are old and eternal, but our seeing of them is new."

—EMERSON

"In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime. But all these times and places and occasions are now and here. God himself culminates in the present moment and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages."

—THOREAU

Life, An Experiment

"I worship GOD as Truth only. I have not yet found Him, but I am seeking after Him. I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in pursuit of this quest. Even if the sacrifice demanded my very life, I hope I may be prepared to give it. But as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must 1 hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. The relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler. Though this path is straight and narrow and sharp as the razor's edge, for me it has been the quickest and easiest. Even my Himalayan blunders have seemed trifling to me because I have kept strictly to this path. For the path has saved me from coming to grief, and I have gone forward according to my light.

"Often in my progress 1 have had faint glimpses of the Absolute Truth, God, and daily the conviction is growing upon me that He alone is real and all else is unreal. Let those who wish realize how the conviction has grown upon me; let them share my experiments and share also my conviction if they can."

—GANDHI

"O father, O mother, O wife, O brother, O friend, I have lived with you after appearances hitherto. Henceforward I am the truth's. Be it known unto you that henceforward I obey no law less than the eternal law.

"Do not set the least value on what I do, or the least discredit on what I do not, as if I pretended to settle anything as true or false. I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred; none are profane. I simply experiment, an endless seeker with no Past at my back.

"I am primarily engaged to myself to be a public servant of all the gods, to demonstrate to all men that there is intelligence and good will at the heart of things, and even higher and yet higher leadings."

—EMERSON

"My desire for knowledge is intermittent; but my desire to commune with the spirit of the universe, to be intoxicated with the fumes, all of it, of the divine nectar, to bear my head through atmospheres and over heights unknown to my feet, is perennial and constant.

"My profession is to be always on the alert to find God in Nature, to know his lurking places, to attend all the oratories, the operas in Nature. To watch for, describe, all the divine features which 1 detect in Nature."

—THOREAU

On Self-Reliance

"My work will be finished if I succeed in carrying the conviction of the human family that every man or woman, however weak in body, is the guardian of his or her self-respect and liberty."

—GANDHI

"Self-reliance, the height and perfection of man, is the reliance on God.

"The only progress ever known was of the individual.

"We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds... .A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men."

—EMERSON

"Man is the artificer of his own happiness. Let him beware of how he complains of the disposition of circumstances, for it is his own disposition he blames.

"The day is never so dark, nor the night even, but that the laws of light still prevail, and so may make it light in our minds if they are open to truth…

"When I hear a grown man or woman say, 'Once I had faith in men, now 1 have not,' Lam inclined to ask, 'Who are you whom the world has disappointed? Have not you rather disappointed the world? There is the same ground for faith now that ever there was: It needs only a little love in you who complain so to ground it on.' The mason asks but a narrow shelf to spring his brick from; man requires only an infinitely narrower one to spring the arch of faith from."

—THOREAU

On Simplicity

"All universal rules of conduct known as God's commandments are simple and easy to understand and to carry out, if the will is there."

—GANDHI

"The secret of culture is to learn that a few great points steadily reappear, alike in the poverty of the obscurest farm and in the miscellany of metropolitan life, and that these few are alone to be regarded;—the escape from all false ties; courage to be what we are,

and love of what is simple and beautiful; independence and cheerful relation, these are the essentials,—these, and the wish to serve, to add somewhat to the well-being of men."

—EMERSON

"In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness.

—THOREAU

On Democracy

"Democracy must in essence mean the art and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in the service of the common good of all.

"My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest."

—GANDHI

"The less government we have the better,—the fewer laws, and the less confided power. The antidote of this abuse of formal government is the influence of private character, the growth of the individual."

—EMERSON

"There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly.

"Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison."

—THOREAU

Working with Gandhiji

"Do a little more of that work which you had sometime confessed to be good, which you feel that society and your justest judge rightly demand of you. Do what you reprove yourself for not doing. Know that you are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with yourself without reason. Let me say to you and to myself in one breath, 'Cultivate the tree which you have found to bear fruit in your soil.'"

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

"Life itself is a mixture of power and form, and will not bear the least excess of either. To finish the moment, to find the journey's end in every step of the road, to live the greatest number of good hours, is wisdom."

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Working With Gandhiji

BECAUSE WE GATHER together for Gandhi Jayanti only once a year to focus on the ideal of the greatest human light of our century, I feel the responsibility and the opportunity profoundly. I am so committed to this year's subject that I had originally entitled my talk "The Gospel of Work," but I feared that might sound so overzealous or sermonizing as to send even the most faithful fleeing in alarm—and I would risk missing you all until our next annual reunion.

I want to talk about Gandhi—The Working Man— Gandhiji's philosophy of action. East or West, rural or urban, in home, school, or office, we all live with varying successes and struggles of work. But the real dilemma about our work is this, as neatly stated by Edgar Allen Poe: "Man is now only more active—not more happy—nor more wise, than he was 6,000 years ago." Our problem is not merely the number of us living without working, but the number of us working without truly living.

Gandhi's life inspired and spurred millions to action. It also offers wisdom to help us to channel, sometimes to restrain, but always to purify and to empower our work. The same philosophy which says "do" says "think." And so let us.

What about Gandhi, The Working Man? Have you ever considered the many vocations of Gandhiji? Of course he was educated for law and spent his life in public service. But he was variously a farmer, a weaver, an inventor, a journalist, an editor, a publisher, an educator, an economist, a philosopher, a priest, a nutritionist, and a statesman.

Yet he was no occupational diletante. He studied and entered into each of those fields thoroughly, contributing original thought, forging new ways or establishing new institutions in every one. No wonder experts from so many interests and vocations study Gandhiji!

He seemed to have an almost inexhaustible energy and capacity for work and the good humor and patience to be personable and attentive to almost everyone. Yet he wisely heeded the time for quiet, for a soul at peace. Just

what was his philosophy of action by which he sustained such energy and enthusiasm, by which he single-mindedly converted his dreams into reality?

A perceptive foreigner observed that American people lead lives "so practical, so confused, so excited, so active, that little time remains...for thought." If you think those words hail from a Third World country facing us in the industrial age, let me point out that they are from Alexis de Tocqueville of France and that he wrote them more than 150 years ago.

Ours is certainly the "more" culture, the "fast" culture. Life in the fast lane may be called the American path of life. We behave as if everything worth doing were worth overdoing. We always want more—more money, more business, larger homes, faster food, more growth.

Gandhi is a controversial figure in our working world. Whereas most can appreciate his emphasis on the need for dignity of labor and personal fulfillment in the task, others find no beauty in simplicity and assert that "Small is Beautiful" is reactionary, going against every progressive urge. Should we revert to medieval means of production? What does simplicity mean? What does it require? What does it produce?

It is a mistaken notion that Gandhiji set the loincloth as the criterion for civilization… or that for him simplicity meant poverty or abstinence… or even that profit incentive, mechanization and growth were to be shunned.

After all, everything that lives, grows. What is more natural to life than growth? Growth is essential to our expression, to our fulfillment, joy, health and well-being. Gandhi understood our insatiable desire for "more," and, as far as I know, he Set no limits on growth, though he was not for unrestrained or irrational growth.

The question is, should ALL our energies be directed towards MATERIAL growth? What about the powers and energies we possess for inner growth? What about growth in giving love, in attaining and sharing peace and happiness... in spiritual character? That inner life—or soul force—is growing, too.

Characteristically, Gandhi emphasized our spiritual being first and action which springs from our consciousness of it. He emphasized non-material growth. His focus for work was not the familiar Gross National Product, but what I would call a *spiritual* GNP, a harmony of God-Nature-Person. His ideal of work was Karma yoga, the perfect action, exactly as his name suggests: "Mohandas" means devoted to God. "Karamchand" means realization of God through work or action.

Respecting the integral harmony of God-Nature- Person mandates gain without greed, profit without theft, abundance without exploitation—on all levels.

To find out how this spiritual self of ours can best grow in harmony with the Truth of Cosmic Nature, Gandhi turned to the primary Hindu scripture, the BHAGAVAD GITA, for guidance. Then, finding so much from the GITA to serve his desire to find Truth through work and service, he translated the entire text in that light. The literal meaning of BHAGAVAD GITA is "The Blessed and Beautiful God's Song." Matthew Arnold so poetically called it "The Song Celestial." The GITA, according to Gandhi, (which you can find in our Library) is entitled "ANASHAKTI KARMA YOGA; THE GOSPEL OF SELFLESS ACTION." Gandhi felt there could be no wisdom without action; no freedom without responsibility; no happiness without sacrifice; no greatness without service.

Listen to Gandhiji's emphasis: "I do not believe the spiritual law works on a field of its own. On the contrary, it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields."

You may all relax, because I am not going to delve into the economics or politics of work, but rather to point out, as Gandhi did, what that spiritual law means in our ordinary life—in that glorious, mysterious microcosm of our own character.

It means that our ideals, our prayers and our meditations can take us to God only insofar as they express through actions which are pure and self-liberating.

To work on the development of moral and intellectual faculties Gandhiji fashioned the life of his ashram communities in a particular way—according to voluntary and cooperative service, inspiring others through his own example.

He specifically avoided programmed solicitation of funds or co-workers, finding that by relying instead on the awakened higher and nobler self-initiative he himself grew in his understanding and faith in material and spiritual provision.

I am convinced that such voluntaryism and non-solicitation should be the principle and soul of any Gandhian work or center. They bring out the best in the individual. Our purpose, after all, is to build life, not institutions. Obviously entire society cannot function on voluntaryism, but if we found more ways to develop its components of helpfulness, sympathy, and charity without material aims in our families and elsewhere, our society would be a healthier one, and we would all be happier.

In Nature all things ascend to a higher design; man, a merchant of actions, can much more wisely invest his energy to higher aims. Need the greatest consumer on earth exist always as debtor to life? He, too, can contribute to higher being. Isn't that, after all, the true meaning of sacrifice—"to make sacred"? Work has an uplifting purpose; it serves freedom of spirit in realization of the oneness of life. Our inner peace and joy are served when the resistance of the ego—the selfish interests which bind and burden the soul—is overcome.

To conclude, I bring before us the familiar and poignant image of Mahatma Gandhi at the spinning wheel—a depiction not only of the man but of his ideal of action:

> *"The message of the spinning wheel is much wider than its circumference. Its message is one of simplicity, service of mankind, living so as not to hurt others, creating an indissoluble bond between the rich and the poor, capital and labour, the prince and the peasant."*

Many times I have sat wondering at that compelling pose—its commanding presence of dignity and humility:

Is it that the man, so great, should have performed such a humble and loving work that our hearts are stirred? Other such examples have moved us: From the BIBLE, the image of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. From the MAHABHARATA, that of Lord Krishna himself cleaning, tending and feeding the horses while the Pandavas performed their evening prayers. To me it is that and more—a message larger than the character of any person. It is that even the humblest, simplest of actions can attain a greatness of power and grace when performed with the self-mastery, the consciousness of perfection, and, above all, love.

From the life we devotedly honor tonight come the words:

> *"Real affection is shown not through praise but through service.*
>
> *"In times to come people will not judge us by the creed we profess or the label we wear or the slogans we shout, but by our work, industry, sacrifice, honesty and purity of character."*
>
> —GANDHI

* * *

(Talk delivered for Gandhi Jayanti (Birth) Observance, Gandhi Memorial Center, Washington, D.C., October 2, 1986.)

The Gandhian of My Dreams

"The teacher that I look for and await shall enunciate with more precision and universality, with piercing poetic insight those beautiful yet severe compensations that give to moral nature an aspect of mathematical science. He will not occupy himself in laboriously reanimating a historical religion, but in bringing men to God by showing them that He is, not was, and speaks, not spoke.

"Truth is simple, and will not be antique; is ever present and insists on being of this age and of this moment. Here is thought and love and truth and duty, new as on the first day of Adam and of angels."

— RALPH WALDO EMERSON

"God grant that not only the Love of Liberty but a thorough knowledge of the rights of man may pervade all the nations of the earth, so that a philosopher may set his feet anywhere on its surface and say, This is my country."

— BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

The Gandhian of My Dreams

REFERRING TO MY TITLE, first, I begin with an apology to the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi and an explanation to you for my use of the term "Gandhian" at all: Gandhiji objected to such terms, saying, "I do not want to leave any sect after me." I use the word advisedly, accepting that the lives of great souls are lamps to our own spiritual vision. We seek the light that he sought; we perceive it through his life.

Second, you can see that this is a personal statement—one that has welled up or formulated within me over the past twenty years of working with Gandhiji's message in America.

On such occasions we usually tend to look *backwards*—inviting more eminent speakers than I to talk about, say, "The Gandhi I knew." But the ranks of first generation Gandhians are thin. I encourage you each and all to explore the Gandhi Library which is filled with a wealth of first-hand appreciations of Gandhi's life.

Nowadays people from India are more apt to tell me with affection and appropriate pride, "My mother (or my father) was a follower of Gandhi." Let us admit that inherited links, though historically interesting, do not in themselves perpetuate or serve great causes. That takes life—*this* life. As Gandhiji himself said it, "Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards." Or, as the English historian Ed Gibbon similarly observed, "All that is human must retrograde if it does not advance." Let us shirk neither our power nor our responsibility to advance, to elicit change, to ameliorate life.

The greatest nightmare to me is that Gandhi's life would remain a dream, that we would, in a lethargy of self-satisfaction remain unawakened to its significance, that we would be content with the books and the history, and that the dream would die for want of *life support*.

This nightmare applies to institutions as well as to individuals:

> *"...no deserving institution ever dies for want of support. Institutions that have died have done so either because there was nothing in them to commend them to the public or because those in control lost faith, or which is perhaps the same thing, lost stamina."*

In the past year I have heard people say, "We could use a Gandhi in the Punjab"—or in South Africa or in Beirut—or in countless other places where we have lost sight of our essential humanity. We form hypothetical projections of how our problems would be solved if Gandhi were alive today.

Bernard Shaw's poignant imagining of Christ's return today—that we might just invite him to a dinner party and then ridicule what he had to say after he left—provokes me to wonder what Gandhi's return would mean to us. The question is, what are *we* doing to cultivate and promulgate Gandhi's life message?

Whereas wishing will not bring a messianic second coming of the Mahatma, there can be a rebirth of that inherent divinity in our hearts. I am reminded of Gandhi's own words to a missionary audience in Bangalore:

> *"Christ did not bear the cross only 1900 years ago, but he bears it today… Do not then preach the God of history but show him as he lives today through you... It is better to allow our lives to speak for us than our words."*

It is evident that the mere duplication of Gandhian vocations from India will not be appropriate here in the United States. When our Gandhi Center was just beginning, there were those who expected us to campaign for the deindustrialization of America, to throw out our polyester and our refrigerators, to spin and wear *khadi,* and to convert the backyard to a garden for growing our own organic food. I have learned that others have been able to raise over $3 million by walking across the U.S. in Gandhi's name (and in the name of Nike shoes), and they have gained considerable public attention. I think all that is summarily made-to-fade idealism, serving no worthy cause here or abroad. My country is not all that bad, and some so-called Gandhian postures are not all that good either. Again, education is the answer, and a positive living statement of true Gandhian interpretation and application in this country

would certainly build better bridges of understanding between America and India.

Ah, the Gandhian of my dreams… He is not necessarily dead and will not arrive as a messiah. In fact, I expect to see glimpses of him during my lifetime. He does not live in a remote place, but anywhere. Mahatma Gandhi told us a great deal about him—about his strength which comes "not from physical capacity... but from an indomitable will," about his faith, his character, his compassion and his service.

He has many vocations: He is a *businessman* who works for what Gandhiji called "Commercial peace" as Gandhiji found it symbolized in the message of his spinning wheel: in "goodwill and self-help, living so as not to harm anyone;" in "sacrifice, simplicity, self- control, and voluntary cooperation among millions."

Quoting Gandhiji: "It is wrong to think that business is incompatible with ethics. I know that it is perfectly possible to carry out one's business profitably and yet honestly and truthfully." By this standard our computer's bytes need not be violent ones nor serve "commercial war" any more than the Charkha did. It is all a matter of the character of one's ideal, of one's conscience.

The Gandhian of my dreams is a *technologist* who realizes that "Machinery has its place; it has come to stay," but that "to be well used it has to help and ease human effort." It should not help "a few to ride on the backs of millions."

He is a *lawyer* who believes that "Society will be much cleaner and healthier if there were less resort to law courts than there is," and a respector of justice who understands that the "justice that law gives is a punishment. What a lover gives transcends justice."

He is a *parent* or a *teacher* who perceives that

> *"Man is not a body; he is not educated merely for its vanities and comforts. He is something infinitely higher. His aim is therefore not to add to his material possessions and prospects but to heed the calling to come nearer to his Maker."*

And that "all education is in vain if one does not learn good manners."

He is a *student* who accepts that

> *"Character cannot be built by other hands than your own. The principal and professor cannot give you character from the pages of books. Character-building comes from your very lives, and, really speaking, it must come from within yourselves."*

He is a *patriot* whose patriotism "includes the good of mankind in general." Gandhiji distinguished between "Patriotism based on hatred which 'killeth' and patriotism based on love which 'giveth life".

In every field he is a *satyagrahi*, one who adheres to Truth by the practices and virtues of "self-purification, self-help, self-sacrifice and faith in God."

Obviously—purposely—the Gandhian of my dreams speaks to the *future* even as Mahatma Gandhi did. He said he served "what *youth* craves for."

Gandhi's life is so extremely dear to us here tonight not just because his problems, vocations and interests are ours, but because he heeded and understood our own moral urge, and he fulfilled it by Emerson's definition of genius which might also guide us:

> *"To believe your own thought. To believe what is true for you in your own heart is true for all men. That is genius."*

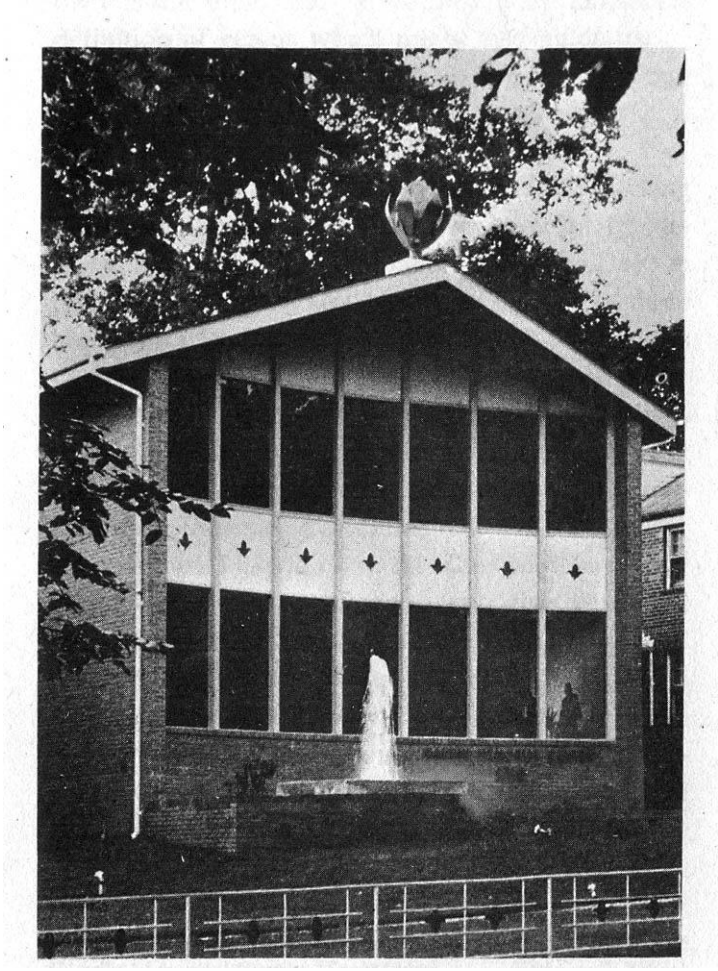
I am glad that there are many good people working for legislation to honor Mahatma Gandhi by designating October 2nd a "Mahatma Gandhi Day" in our country, but I am convinced that it is more important first to work for the education to his ideals in ourselves, in our homes, in our schools, and in our vocations. If that were even slightly accomplished, the exercise of lobbying would be superfluous, or at least the goal easily realized without banquets, fund- raising or letters to Congressmen.

Sometimes I like to think that the Gandhian of my dreams is about twelve to twenty-five years old today, but perhaps he is just a babe. Actually, he is an ideal emerging, a composite—not a personality, not a *Mahatma* (a great soul), but that glorious *part* of the *Paramatman* (the Supreme Cosmic Soul) to be real-

ized in each of us and our future generations. And we can work now for his coming, for his actualization.

* * *

(Remarks delivered for Gandhiji's Birth Observance at the Gandhi Memorial Center, Washington, D.C., October 2,1985.)



The ***Gandhi Memorial Center*** houses headquarters of the Foundation, a library and special meeting rooms for programs, lectures and films depicting the life and activities of Mahatma Gandhi and the spiritual and cultural heritage of India. All are welcome.

The Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Foundation, Inc.

"The real purpose of our Gandhi Center is not research or book lending, but life building. Gandhiji's aphorism, 'My life is my message,' means not only that we should see him more in light of what he did than in terms of what he said or wrote—but also that we ourselves should be more and do more than what we merely say or theorize. Ours is not a museum or shrine for inert thoughts, but an environment for self-realization in service of SATYAGRAHA as the Mahatma himself described it: 'self-purification, self- dedication and selflessness.'"

—SRIMATI KAMALA

The Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Foundation, Incorporated, was founded in the United States of America in 1959 by Swami Premananda. The purpose of the Foundation is to disseminate and represent the philosophy, ideal, life, service and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi as well as the cultural heritage of India. The Foundation is a legally-independent, nonprofit cultural and educational organization.

The Gandhi Memorial Center, dedicated for public service on January 30, 1976, by the Indian Ambassador, His Excellency T. N. Kaul, houses headquarters for the Foundation, a library and special meeting rooms for lectures and films depicting the life and activities of Mahatma Gandhi and the cultural heritage of India.

The Library, located on the main floor of the Center, contains several thousand books, magazines and pamphlets. In addition to the complete works of Gandhiji, it offers a broad representation of authors from many cultures, educational displays and recordings.

The Library is open every Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., except during the month of July. Special programs take place year-round. All work of the Center is the dedicated effort of volunteers who serve with no remuneration.

The mission of the Gandhi Center extends beyond our Washington campus. "Mahatma Gandhi's Message in America" is a large photographic display of over 60 panels and other accompanying materials prepared by the Gandhi Memorial Center. The exhibit was originally sponsored by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, New Delhi (1980), and is now available for loan to museums, universities, or civic groups.

The Gandhi Center administers a one-year Correspondence Course in the United States on Gandhiji's life, thoughts, and work leading to a certificate from the Gujarat Vidyapith (the university in Gandhiji's home state founded by him in 1920). It is the only such course existing outside of India.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Srimati Kamala is an American, born in 1945, whose life for the past twenty years has been exclusively dedicated to the interpretation of the spiritual heritage of India, and the life message of Mahatma Gandhi in her country.

She studied at the University of Rouen, France, Saint Lawrence University, New York, (B.A.) and the University of Maryland, where she completed a Master's Degree with Honors in Special Education.

She settled in Washington in 1968 to become identified with the ideals of the Self-Revelation Church of Absolute Monism and the Gandhi Memorial Foundation, both founded by Swami Premananda of India who came to America in 1928. The Church follows the spiritual tradition of Swami Shankarachariya's *Advaita Vedanta* with a totally nonsectarian philosophy. She is the ordained Minister of the Church as well as Director of the Gandhi Memorial Center.

In recognition of her outstanding contributions in representing India's spiritual heritage, she received an award as "Ambassador of Indian Philosophy and the Ideals of Mahatma Gandhi in the U.S.A." from the Association of Indians in America (Washington 1980). At the Second Convention of Asian Indians in North America (Chicago 1982), Kamalaji was given a special "Friend of India" award and citation for "fostering the cultural and spiritual heritage of India in North America." Her visits to India in 1979, 1983, and 1986 were sponsored by the charitable Lotus Trust of Bombay and the India Government (Indian Council for Cultural Relations).