

Footprints of Divinity

A Gandhi Reader

Compiled and Edited by
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Centre for Policy Studies
(GAYATRI VIDYA PARISHAD)
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*“When you had
taken your leave
I found God’s footprints
on my floor”*

Rabindranath Tagore to Mahatma Gandhi

Preface

Centre for Policy Studies was born on Gandhi Jayanti day in 1995. Gandhi Jayanti 2005 has a special significance as the Centre celebrates its tenth anniversary. The masthead of the Centre's bimonthly Bulletin carries Mahatma's picture. This compilation of articles, discussions and editorials on Gandhiji is a humble homage to that spirit that continues to illumine our path. There is very little that is original in this small work. It is a compilation inspired by some classics that have appeared during the last seventy years and more - Radhakrishnan's *Gandhi Reader*, William Shirer's *Memoir*, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Rajmohan Gandhi's *Good Boatman*, S. Gopal's *Jawaharlal Nehru - an Anthology*, among others, which contain a wealth of information. The aim is to remind ourselves of the inexhaustible treasure we have and to initiate the younger generation into it.

My thanks are due to Shri M. Varahalu Chetty, Prof. Mrs. Meena Rao and Prof. BSR Anjaneyulu and my son A.V. Ramamurthy for helping me with valuable suggestions and in proof-correction, to Sathyam Offset Imprints for bringing it out in time, and to Shri P.R. Narayana Swamy for presenting the cover graphics.

A. Prasanna Kumar

Centre for Policy Studies
Visakhapatnam
September 30, 2005

Preface to Second Edition

Centre for Policy Studies offers its grateful thanks to all those who warmly welcomed the small publication when it was released on October 2, 2005. Following requests from many for copies of the same, the second edition with a few additions in the chapter on *Gandhiji and Andhra*, is being released at the fifteenth anniversary function on October 6, 2010. Printing errors that had crept into the first edition have been corrected thanks to Shri V. Seetaramaiah, Prof. M.S. Rama Murty and Shri N. Lakshmana Rao.

Thanks are also due to Shri M.K.Kumar of Sathyam Offset Imprints and his assistant Smt. Kiranmayi for bringing out the book in time.

A. Prasanna Kumar

Centre for Policy Studies
Visakhapatnam
September 30, 2010

Why a Gandhi Reader?

When so many classics and works of great men on Gandhiji are available why Centre for Policy Studies chooses to bring out a small Gandhi Reader?

Not just because the Bulletin of the Centre for Policy Studies has Gandhiji's picture on its masthead or simply because the Centre organises meetings and seminars on Gandhiji's ideas and work and regularly publishes articles in the Bulletin but because like so many people in India and abroad we seek to understand Gandhiji and know him.

Why

Gurudev Tagore felt that when Gandhiji left his house after a visit he found God's footsteps at his doorstep,

Albert Einstein said that for generations to come people will wonder whether such a man as this in flesh and blood walked on the earth,

Jawaharlal Nehru called him 'a perfect artist' who looked 'kingly' in loin cloth and bare body,

Rajaji found a similarity in the death of Sri Krishna and Gandhiji,

Radhakrishnan wrote that nothing better has ever been lived or taught,

Rajmohan Gandhi called his grandfather the Good Boatman who like Rama went into exile when he should have been crowned,

Some Christian missionaries from Europe felt that in the twentieth century Christ lived in the form of Gandhi at Sevagram,

Lord Mountbatten called Gandhiji the 'one man boundary force' ensuring peace where thousands of soldiers failed to restore law and order,

Bertrand Russell and Arnold Toynbee, along with philosophers and scholars, thought that only Gandhiji's India would show the world a way out of darkness,

Andhra captivated the Mahatma and even amused him at times,

.....these and many such questions deserve to be discussed in every school, college and home, at least in India,

This humble offering on the 135th birth anniversary of the Mahatma does not claim to provide answers to the many questions raised. Nor is any claim made for originality or scholarly presentation or discussion here. The aim is to present a small compilation for the layman and to kindle the spark in the young minds, the custodians of the future, to know the inexhaustible and immeasurable treasure the Father of the Nation bequeathed to us. This is an effort in that direction and as Gandhiji said, satisfaction lies more in making the effort than in achieving the goal. Centre for Policy Studies feels honoured to have the opportunity of making this small offering on Gandhi Jayanti day.

Centre for Policy Studies
Visakhapatnam, September 30, 2005

A. Prasanna Kumar
Director

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GANDHIJI
on
HIMSELF
and
HIS WORK

If some visitors from Europe 'saw Christ living in Sevagram' Milton Mayer of Chicago thought that Gandhi "was the first Christian politician since Jesus Christ." "Nothing elates me so much", wrote Gandhiji, "as the music of the Gita or the Ramayana by Tulsidas." He considered the Ramayana as the greatest work and declared that "only in Rama can the weak find strength."

On Gandhism

“I have nothing new to teach the world.
Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills”.

“I have been truthful but not non-violent. It was in the course of my pursuit of truth that I discovered non-violence. There is no dharma higher than truth. Ahimsa is the highest duty”.

“All I have done is try experiments in truth on as vast a scale as I could do. In doing so I have sometimes erred and learnt by my errors. Life and its problems have thus become to me so many experiments in the pursuit of truth and non-violence. By instinct I have been truthful but not non-violent”.

“There is no such thing as Gandhism. I do not want to leave any sect after me. No literature or propaganda is needed about it. Those who believe in the simple truths I have laid down can propagate them only by living them”.



What kind of Man was he?

“Mine is a mad house and I am the maddest of the lot. But those who cannot see the good in these mad people should have their eyes examined”.

“Most religious men I have met are politicians in disguise. I, however, who wear the guise of a politician am at heart a religious man”.



From Gandhiji's Pen

Women's Status and Role in Society :

Of all the evils for which man has made himself responsible, none is so degrading, so shocking or so brutal as his abuse of the better half of humanity to me, the female sex, not the weaker sex. It is the nobler of the two, for it is even today the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge.

Not Weaker Sex :

To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength then, indeed, is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition? Is she not more self-sacrificing? Has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?

Had not man in his blind selfishness crushed woman's soul as he has done or had she not succumbed to the 'enjoyments', she would have given the world an exhibition of the infinite strength that is latent in her. The world shall see it in all its wonder and glory when woman has secured an equal opportunity for herself with man and fully developed her powers of mutual aid and combination.

The Plight of the rural poor :

Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking into lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and brokerage are sucked from the masses.

No economic reform, however intrinsically desirable, can lead to desirable changes in individuals and the society they constitute, unless it is carried through in a desirable context and by desirable methods.



On Freedom and Democracy

Freedom is a mockery so long as men starve, go naked and pine away in voiceless anguish.

Said the Mahatma : “Political freedom has no meaning for the millions if they do not know how to employ their enforced idleness. Eighty percent of the Indian population are compulsorily unemployed for half the year...”

There should be equality between cities and villages; - in food, drink, dress, habits and style of living. Villages should be self-sufficient... villages should be emancipated.



On Society and Politics

I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible; but I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. Human society is a ceaseless growth, an unfoldment in terms of spirituality. Technology feeds our pleasure centres but is squeezing out our human spirit, intensifying our search for meaning.

Politics cannot be a taboo for ever. Eschew politics of power; not politics of service. Politics without religion is mere dirt. True economics stands for social justice; it promotes the good of all equally including the nearest and is indispensable for decent life.

Make men free, they cease to be equal, make them equal and they cease to be free. There is a limit to the development of the intellect, but none to that of the heart.



People's Power and True Democracy

Power resides in the people and it is entrusted for the time being to those whom they may choose as their representatives. Parliaments have no power or even existence independently of the people.

Our weapons are those of Satyagraha expressed through the Charkha, the village industries, primary education, through handicrafts, removal of untouchability, communal harmony, prohibition. These mean mass effort and mass education.



Charkha

People have laughed at my spinning wheel, and an acute critic once observed that when I died the wheels would serve to make the funeral pyre. That, however, has not shaken my firm faith in the spinning wheel.



India of my Dreams

I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people, an India in

which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs; women will enjoy the same rights as men. This is the India of my dreams.



His last dream

A fortnight before he was assassinated Gandhiji wrote: “ I hope everyone who listens to me or reads these lines will forgive me if stretched on my bed and basking in the sun, inhaling lifegiving sunshine , I allow myself to indulge in this ecstasy”.

When I was young and never even read the newspapers, could read English with difficulty and my Gujarati was not satisfactory, I had the dream that if the Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Muslims could live in amity not only in Rajkot but in the whole of India, they would all have a very happy life.

If that dream could be realized even now when I, an old man on the verge of death, my heart would dance. Children would then frolic in joy.”



The Hindustan Standard
January 31, 1948

Gandhiji has been killed by his own people for whose redemption he lived. The second crucifixion in the history of the world has been enacted on a Friday - the same day Jesus was done to death one thousand nine hundred and fifteen years ago. Father, forgive us.

(Editorial Page)

India's One Man Army

My Dear Gandhiji,

In the Punjab we have 55,000 soldiers and large scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal our force consists of one man, and there is no rioting. As a serving officer, as well as an administrator, may I be allowed to pay my tribute to the One Man Boundary Force.

Lord Mountbatten's letter to Gandhiji in 1947.

The Inner Voice

“The inner voice is something which cannot be described in words. But sometimes we have a positive feeling that something in us prompts us to do a certain thing. The time when I learnt to recognize the voice was, I may say, the time when I started praying regularly. That is, it was about 1906”

- Gandhiji



“Let it not be said that we are a people incapable of maintaining discipline. Indiscipline will mean disaster and make one like me who is pining to see India independent perish in sorrow and grief. We are as determined as ever to rule ourselves. It is for us to make the effort. The result will always be in God’s hands”

- Gandhiji

**GANDHIJI'S
mentor and disciples**

The lasting contribution of a great father and worthy son

Philosopher - statesman Radhakrishnan and his historian son Gopal, the former on Gandhi and the latter on Nehru, brought out two superbly edited volumes. Radhakrishnan's *Gandhi Reader* is a book of great value. A moving incident was narrated by Gopal thus :

When Radhakrishnan saw Mahatma Gandhi in Delhi in December 1947, he told Gandhi that he intended to dedicate the book to him. Gandhi demurred, protesting that he was the seeker and Radhakrishnan the teacher: "Who am I? What is my service? You are my Krishna, I am your Arjuna", By the time the book was out, Gandhi was dead. Radhakrishnan, hearing at Oxford the news of the murder, was prostrate with grief for days.

If Radhakrishnan's book on Gandhi was hailed as a classic, Gopal's Anthology titled *Jawaharlal Nehru* (published by Oxford University Press in 1983) is no less valuable. These two books are the main source of some of the articles that follow.

Gurudev and Mahatma

Gandhiji on Tagore and himself : “The poet lives in a magnificent world of his own creation -- his world of ideas. I am a slave of somebody’s creation --- the spinning wheel -- But I may say in all humility that we complement each other’s activity. I do indeed ask the poet and the sage to spin the wheel as a sacrament.”

Exchange of telegraphic greetings between Gandhi and Tagore (on Tagore’s 81st Birthday in April 1941)

To Gurudev Shantiniketan

Four Score not enough may you finish five-Love-Gandhi.

Tagore’s reply :

To Mahatma Wardha

*Thanks message but four score is impertinence,
five score intolerable.*

- Rabindranath

Gokhale on Gandhi

“He is a man among men, a hero among heroes, a patriot among patriots and we may well say that in him Indian humanity at the present time has really reached its high water-mark”.

- Gokhale on Gandhi



Rabindranath Tagore on Gandhi

Occasionally there appear in the area of politics, makers of history, whose mental height is above the common level of humanity. They wield an instrument of power, which is almost physical in its compelling force and often relentless, exploiting the weakness in human nature—its greed, fear, or vanity. When Mahatma Gandhi came and opened up the path of freedom for India, he had no obvious medium of power in his hand, no overwhelming authority of coercion. The influence which emanated from his personality was ineffable, like music, like beauty. Its claim upon others was great because of its revelation of a spontaneous self-giving. This is the reason why our people have hardly ever laid emphasis upon his natural cleverness in manipulating recalcitrant facts. They have rather dwelt upon the truth which shines through his character in lucid simplicity. This is why, though his realm of activity lies in practical politics, people’s minds have been struck by the analogy of his character with that of the great masters, whose spiritual inspiration comprehends and yet transcends all varied manifestations of humanity, and makes the face of worldliness turn to the light that comes from the eternal source of wisdom.

(from Mahatma Gandhi (Ed) S. Radhakrishnan)



Rajendra Prasad on Gandhiji

Mahatma Gandhi laid stress on the purity of the methods, which had to be pursued for attaining our ends. Let us not forget that this teaching has eternal value and was not intended only for the period of stress and struggle but has as much authority and value today as it ever had before. We have a tendency to blame others for everything that goes wrong and not to introspect and try to see if we have any share in it or not. It is very much easier to scan one's own actions and motives if one is inclined to do so than to appraise correctly the actions and motives of others. I shall only hope that all those whose good fortune it may be to work this Constitution in future will remember that it was a unique victory which we achieved by the unique method taught to us by the Father of the Nation, and it is up to us to preserve and protect the independence that we have won and to make it really bear fruit for the man in the street. Let us launch this new enterprise of running our Independent Republic with confidence, with truth and non-violence and above all with heart within and God overhead.

(From the concluding address - The Constituent Assembly and the Constitution -
Dr. Rajendra Prasad, November 26, 1949)



Gems from Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Bapu - 'the perfect artist'

During his long life, full of hard work and activity and novel adventures out of the common rut, there is hardly any jarring note anywhere. All his manifold activities became progressively a symphony and every word he spoke and every gesture that he made fitted into this, and so unconsciously he became the perfect artist, for he had

learned the art of living, though the way of life he had adopted was very different from the world's way. It became apparent that the pursuit of truth and goodness leads among other things to this artistry in life.

As he grew older his body seemed to be just a vehicle for the mighty spirit within him. Almost one forgot the body as one listened to him or looked at him, and so where he sat became a temple and where he trod was hallowed ground.

Even in his death there was a magnificence and complete artistry. It was from every point of view a fitting climax to the man and to the life he had lived. Indeed it heightened the lesson of his life. He died in the fullness of his powers and as he would no doubt have liked to die, at the moment of prayer. He died a martyr to the cause of unity to which he had always been devoted and for which he had worked unceasingly, more specially during the past year or more. He died suddenly as all men should wish to die. There was no fading away of the body or a long illness or the forgetfulness of the mind that comes with age. Why then should we grieve for him? Our memories of him will be of the master, whose step was light to the end, whose smile was infectious and whose eyes were full of laughter. We shall associate no failing powers with him, of body or mind. He lived and he died at the top of his strength and powers, leaving a picture in our minds and in the mind of the age that we live in that can never fade away. (from Jawaharlal Nehru, (Ed) S. Gopal)

2. 'A True Representative of India'

What a wonderful man was Gandhiji after all, with his amazing and almost irresistible charm and subtle power over people. His writings and his sayings conveyed little enough impression of the man behind;

his personality was far bigger than they would lead one to think. And his services to India, how vast they had been. He had instilled courage and manhood in her people, and discipline and endurance, and the power of joyful sacrifice for a cause, and, with all his humility, pride. Courage is the one sure foundation of character, he had said, without courage there is no morality, no religion, no love. 'One cannot follow truth or love so long as one is subject to fear.' With all his horror of violence, he had told us that 'cowardice is a thing even more hateful than violence'. And 'discipline is the pledge and guarantee that a man means business. There is no deliverance and no hope without sacrifice, discipline, and self-control. Mere sacrifice without discipline will be unavailing.' Words only and pious phrases perhaps, rather platitudinous, but there was power behind the words, and India knew that this little man meant business.

3. 'The Light has gone out'

Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. I do not know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu as we called him, the Father of the Nation, is no more. Perhaps I am wrong to say that. Nevertheless, we will not see him again as we have seen him for these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him, and that is a terrible blow, not to me only but to millions and millions in this country. And it is a little difficult to soften the blow by any other advice that I or anyone else can give you.

The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many 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. For that light represented something more than the immediate present; it represented the living, the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom.

And while we pray, the greatest prayer that we can offer is to take a pledge to dedicate ourselves to the truth, and to the cause for which this great countryman of ours lived and for which he has died. That is the best prayer that we can offer him and his memory. That is the best prayer that we can offer to India and ourselves. Jai Hind.

(Nehru's Broadcast to the Nation, 30 January 1948)

4. 'A fitting memorial'

People talk of memorials to him in statues of bronze or marble or pillars and thus they mock him and belie his message. What tribute shall we pay to him that he would have appreciated? He has shown us the way to live and the way to die and if we have not understood that lesson, it would be better that we raised no memorial to him, for the only fitting memorial is to follow reverently in the path he showed us and to do our duty in life and in death.

Ours is a composite nation, as all great nations must necessarily be. Any narrowness in outlook, any attempt to confine the bounds of this great nation, will be a betrayal of his final lesson to us and will surely lead to disaster and to the loss of that freedom for which he laboured and which he gained for us in large measure....

(A Broadcast to the Nation, 14 February, 1948)

5. A Tribute

Nineteen-sixteen. Over thirty-two years ago. That was when I first saw Bapu, and an age has gone by since then. Inevitably one looks back and memories crowd in. What a strange period this has been in India's history and the story, with all its ups and downs and triumphs and defeats, has the quality of a ballad and a romance. Even our trivial lives were touched by a halo of romance, because we lived through this period and were actors, in greater or lesser degree, in the great drama of India.

6. True Homage

Great as this man of God was in his life, he has been greater in his death and I have not the shadow of a doubt that by his death he has served the great cause as he served it throughout his life. We mourn him; we shall always mourn him, because we are human and cannot forget our beloved master. But I know that he would not like us to mourn him. No tears came to his eyes when his dearest and closest passed away - only a firm resolve to persevere, to serve the great cause that he had chosen. So he would chide us if we merely mourn. That is a poor way of doing homage to him. The only way is to express our determination, to pledge ourselves anew, to conduct ourselves in a befitting manner and to dedicate ourselves to the great task which he undertook and which he accomplished to such a large extent. So we have to work, we have to labour, we have to sacrifice and thus prove, to some extent at least, worthy followers of his.

(Nehru - A Statement in the Constituent Assembly, 2 February 1948)

7. The voice of Truth

Our country gave birth to a mighty soul and he shone like a beacon not only for India but for the whole world. And yet he was done to death by one of our own brothers and compatriots. How did this happen? You might think that it was an act of madness, but that does not explain this tragedy. It could only occur because the seed for it was sown in the poison of hatred and enmity that spread throughout the country and affected so many of our people. Out of that seed grew this poisonous plant. It is the duty of all of us to fight this poison of hatred and ill will. If we have learnt anything from Gandhiji, we must bear no ill will or enmity towards any person. The individual is not our enemy. It is the poison within him that we must fight and which we must put an end to. We are weak and feeble, but Gandhiji's strength passed to us also to some extent. In his reflected glory we also gained in stature. The splendour and the strength were his and the path he showed was also his. We stumbled often enough and fell down in our attempts to follow that path and serve our people as he wanted us to serve them...

Gandhiji used to observe silence for one day in every week. Now that voice is silenced forever and there is unending silence. And yet that voice resounds in our ears and in our hearts, and it will resound in the minds and hearts of our people and even beyond the borders of India in the long ages to come. For that voice is the voice of truth, and though truth may occasionally be suppressed, it can never be put down. Violence for him was the opposite of truth and therefore he preached to us against violence not only of the hand but of the mind and heart. If we do not give up this internecine violence and have the utmost

forbearance and friendliness for others, we are doomed as a nation. The path of violence is perilous, and freedom seldom exists for long where there is violence. Our talk of swarajya and the people's freedom is meaningless if we have internal violence and conflict.

A Speech at the Immersion of Mahatma Gandhi's Ashes,
Allahabad, 12 February 1948.

8. Identity with the Masses

Gandhiji's conception of democracy is definitely a metaphysical one. It has nothing to do with numbers or majority or representation in the ordinary sense. It is based on service and sacrifice, and it uses moral pressure.

..... Whether Gandhiji is a democrat or not, he does represent the peasant masses of India; he is the quintessence of the conscious and subconscious will of those millions. It is perhaps something more than representation; for he is the idealized personification of those vast millions. Of course, he is not the average peasant. A man of the keenest intellect, of fine feeling and good taste, wide vision; very human, and yet essentially the ascetic who has suppressed his passions and emotions, sublimated them and directed them in spiritual channels; a tremendous personality, drawing people to himself like a magnet, and calling out fierce loyalties and attachments - all this so utterly unlike and beyond a peasant. And yet withall he is the great peasant, with a peasant's outlook on affairs, and with a peasant's blindness to some aspects of life. But India is peasant India, and so he knows his India well and reacts to her lightest tremors, and gauges a situation accurately and almost instinctively, and has a knack of acting at the psychological moment.

9. An Extraordinary paradox

People who do not know Gandhiji personally and have only read his writings are apt to think that he is a priestly type, extremely puritanical, long-faced, Calvinistic, and a kill-joy, something like the 'priests in black gowns walking their rounds'. But his writings do him an injustice; he is far greater than what he writes, and it is not quite fair to quote what he had written and criticize it. He is the very opposite of the Calvinistic priestly type. His smile is delightful, his laughter infectious, and he radiates light-heartedness. There is something childlike about him which is full of charm. When he enters a room he brings a breath of fresh air with him which lightens the atmosphere.

He is an extraordinary paradox. I suppose all outstanding men are so to some extent. For years I have puzzled over this problem : why with all his love and solicitude for the underdog he yet supports a system which inevitably produces it and crushes it; why with all his passion for non-violence he is in favour of a political and social structure which is wholly based on violence and coercion? Perhaps it is not correct to say that he is in favour of such a system; he is more or less of a philosophical anarchist.



Sardar Patel on Gandhiji

Just now my dear brother, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, has spoken to you. My heart is aching. What shall I say to you? My tongue is tied. This is a day of sorrow, shame and agony for India. Today I went to Gandhiji at about 4 p.m. and was with him for about an hour...

Hardly had I reached home when somebody broke the dreadful news to me that Gandhiji was shot at thrice by a Hindu young man in

the prayer ground. I immediately hurried back to Birla House and was near Gandhiji. His eyes were closed but his face was as calm and serene as before. I could even detect a streak of compassion and forgiveness over his ebbing face....

Friends, the occasion demands not anger but earnest heart-searching from us all. If we give vent to our understandable anger, it would mean that we have forgotten our beloved master's teachings so soon after his death. And let me say that even in his lifetime we only haltingly followed our master.

The burden which of late India has been called to bear is a tremendous one. It would have broken our backs if we had not the support of that great man. That support has now gone, but Gandhiji will live in our hearts forever... Tomorrow at 4 p.m. his body will turn to ashes but his imperishable teachings will abide with us.

The mad youth who killed him was wrong if he thought that thereby he was destroying his noble mission. Perhaps God wanted Gandhiji's mission to fulfil and prosper through his death.

(on January 30, 1948)



Sardar Patel on Ba and Bapu

Today I see before me the whole picture of life ever since I joined Bapu's army. The love which Ba bore me I never experienced from my own mother. Whatever paternal love fell to my lot, I got from Bapu and Ba.

Bapu gave life to a dead country. Ba lent him a helping hand.

Let the picture of both of them be constantly before our eyes. We may commit errors. They will always be there to take our account.

We were all soldiers in their camp. I have been referred to as the Deputy Prime Minister. I never think of myself in these terms. Jawaharlal Nehru is our leader. Bapu appointed him as his successor and had even proclaimed him as such.

It is the duty of all Bapu's soldiers to carry out his bequest. Whoever does not do so from the heart in the proper spirit will be a sinner before God.



Rajaji on Gandhiji

So it is all over! The world feels so empty! Dreadfully empty! Devotion made us see Bapu in the ashes. But the solemn wisdom of our ancestors called us to consign the ashes to the elements...

Do not demand love. Begin to love and you will be loved. This is the law and no statute can alter it. If we do not follow the law, and let the law die with the teacher, we shall indeed become accomplices to the murderer. But if we follow the law with our hearts, Bapu will live in us and through us.

Have there not been scores of occasions when he was in the greatest of dangers during these 40 years, in South Africa and India? Did the Government of India protect his life? During the last few years did not the greatest anger and highest passion develop like a storm, and did he not live? Did the Government of India protect him? Is it

not idiotic to blame the Government of India because God has taken him away?

Mahatmaji was very dear to me, but I do not grieve for him. No man can find a death so glorious. He was walking to join and lead a prayer... He was a few minutes late and so he was walking fast... How many of you would not like to die when running to pray?

Mahatmaji did not die in bed, he did not call for hot water or doctor or nurses. He did not die mumbling incoherent words in sickness, unable to identify the relatives and friends around him. He died standing, not even sitting down. The man who did him to death emptied a bullet into his belly and two into his chest, so that the pain lasted only one moment. He made up for his lost five minutes by going straightaway to his Ram.

We have been robbed of our greatest possession by a senseless lunatic. May God help India in this hour of her greatest distress. May all hatred, all suspicion end with this sacrifice of our dearest leader.



Votary of Truth

Mahatma Gandhi was a votary of Truth and non-violence. Truth and non-violence combined make what is called in our scriptures satyadharma. Gandhi was truly a satyadharma Parakramah.

October 2 and January 30 cannot be better observed than by a re-dedication to Truth and non-violence to the extent we are, each one of us, capable of and by a prayer for increased strength of heart in order to be more and more devoted to that ideal. There may be

external rituals of homage to Gandhiji, but they must be accompanied by dedication to satya-dharma, and a prayerful mind behind it.

(Rajaji Reader, P.No.17-18)



Vinoba on Gandhiji

Gandhiji's life was a perfect embodiment of this bhajan. When one thinks of this pure life one's eyes are filled with tears. Blessed are those to whom it was given to work with such a man. Consider the circumstances of his death. He was then preparing for prayer, which means he had no thought in mind but that of God. We saw how his entire life was composed of works of service. But here too the feeling for prayer and the time devoted to prayer should be considered as of chief importance. It was at such a time that God sent the assassin to release him. Sardar Patel said that at the time of death Gandhiji's face reflected not only the satisfaction of having found death while engaged in his work but also forgiveness and compassion for the man who was the means of his death.

To me it seems a perfect end. It is a mark of supreme grace to give up the body while pursuing noble thoughts. One who endeavoured all his life to follow the way of dharma, completes his day's work, goes for his prayer, accompanied by friends, and meets his end. What death could be better?

What did Gandhiji do at his last hour? When the bullet struck him the first thing he did was to fold his hands in pranam. Then calmly he uttered "Hey Ram!" and that was the end. Tulsidas has said : "In life after life men try, but in their last moments the name of Rama does

not come to them". But Gandhiji died with the name of Rama on his lips. What more can a devotee hope for?



Radhakrishnan on Gandhi

Civilization is based on a dream. Its codes and conventions, its ways of life and habits of mind are poised on a dream. When the dream prevails, civilization advances; when the dream fails, civilization goes down. When life becomes cluttered with things, when the vanities and follies of the world overtake us, when we see all around the murderous interplay of destructive forces and unnatural strivings, when we fail to see any purpose in it all, it is time that we probe the human situation and find out what is wrong with it. Though we have been warned by the last war that our civilization is fragile and will break down if the present trend of human cupidity wedded to scientific genius is not checked, we seem to be confused and hesitant about the need to change the direction in which human history has been moving. When a prophet soul who is not enslaved by his environment, who is filled with compassion for suffering humanity, calls upon us to turn our backs on the present world with its conflicts and competitions, class distinctions and wars and seek the upward path, narrow and difficult, the human in us comes alive and responds. To a world lost in error and beset by the illusions of time, Gandhi announced the value of the timeless principles of the truth of God and love of fellow-men as the only basis for establishing right human relationships. In his life and message we see the dream of civilization come true. Centuries have gone to his making and his roots are established in the ages. No wonder the world was shocked with horror and smitten with grief when it heard that the great soul, rare in any age but amazing in ours, was struck down. President Truman said

that a giant among men had fallen. This little man, so frail in appearance, was a giant among men, measured by the greatness of his soul. By his side other men, very important and famous men big in their own way, big in their space and time, look small and insignificant. His profound sincerity of spirit, his freedom from hatred and malice, his mastery over himself, his human, friendly, all-embracing charity, his strong conviction which he shared with the great ones of history that the martyrdom of the body is nothing compared with the defilement of the soul, a conviction which he successfully put to the test in many dramatic situations and now in this final act of surrender, show the impact of religion on life, the impact of the eternal values on the shifting problems of the world of time.



Gandhi does not reject machinery as such. He observes: "How can I be against all machinery when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery? The spinning-wheel is a machine: a little toothpick is a machine. What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour not for a fraction of mankind but for all. I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today, machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might. The machine should not tend to atrophy the limbs of man. Factories run by power driven machinery should be nationalized, state controlled. The supreme consideration is man."

“If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind the villagers plying their instruments and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the state would own power houses, just as the villages have their grazing pastures. The heavy machinery for work of public utility which could be undertaken by human labour has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the state and used entirely, for the benefit of the people.”

As a religious and social reformer Gandhi pricked us into a new awareness of the social evils from which we have been suffering. He exhorted us to rid religion of the many accretions with which in its long history it became encumbered, notably untouchability. Hinduism has paid a heavy price for its neglect of social responsibilities. The draft constitution for the new India aims at establishing an equitable social order in which ideals of virtue and freedom will inspire economic and political, social and cultural institutions.

We are too deeply entangled in our own past misdeeds; we are caught in the web we had ourselves spun according to the laws of our own twisted ethics. Communal differences are yet a wound, not a sepsis. But wounds have a tendency to produce sepsis. If this tendency is to be checked we must adhere to the ideals for which Gandhi lived and died. We must develop self restraint, we must refrain from anger and malice, intemperance of thought and speech, from violence of every kind. It will be the crown of his life work, if we settle down as good neighbours and adjust our problems in a spirit of peace and goodwill. The way to honour his memory is to accept and adopt his way of approach, the way of reconciliation and sympathetic adjustment of all differences.

(Excerpts from his lecture at Oxford)

- Professor S. Radhakrishnan



Gandhi's Martyrdom - S. Radhakrishnan

Gandhi has paid the penalty of all who are ahead of their time, misunderstanding, hatred, reaction, violent death. "The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not." The struggle between light and darkness, 'between love and hate, between reason and unreason which is at the heart of the cosmic is shown up by this most moving tragedy of our age. We made Socrates drink death; we nailed Jesus to the Cross; we lighted faggots that burnt the medieval martyrs. We have stoned and killed our prophets. Gandhi has not escaped the fate of being misunderstood and hated. He has met his death facing the forces of darkness, of ultimate unreason, and through it, has increased the powers of light, love and reason. Who knows if Christianity would have developed had Jesus not been crucified? Years ago Romain Rolland declared that he regarded Gandhi as a "Christ who only lacked the Cross." We have now given him the Cross also. Gandhi's death was a classical ending to his life. He died with the name of God on his lips and love in his heart. Even as he received the bullet wounds he greeted his murderer and wished him well. He lived up to what he preached.

Possessed and inspired by the highest ideals of which human nature is capable, preaching and practising fearlessly the truth revealed to him, leading almost alone what seemed to be a forlorn hope against the impregnable strongholds of greed and folly, yet facing tremendous odds with a calm resolution which yielded nothing to ridicule or danger. Gandhi presented to his unbelieving world all that is noblest in the spirit of man. He illumined human dignity by faith in the eternal significance of man's effort. He belongs to the type that redeems the human race.

If Gandhi was able to rid himself of all rancour and hatred, to develop that flame of love which burnt up all impurities, if he feared no evil even though he walked in the valley of the shadow of death, if he represented to us the eternal voice of hope, it is because he believed in the heritage of India, the power of the inward life of spirit. When problems material and spiritual crowded upon him, when conflicting emotions shook him, when troubles oppressed him, he retired at will into the retreats of the soul, into the secret corridors of the self to gain strength and refreshment. His life has revived and refreshed our sense of the meaning and value of religion. Such men who are filled with spiritual poise and yet take upon themselves the burden of suffering humanity are born into the world at long intervals.

We have killed his body, but the spirit in him which is a light from above will penetrate far into space and time and inspire countless generations for nobler living.

“Whatever being there is endowed with glory and grace and vigour, know that to have sprung from a fragment of My splendour.”

- Bhagavadgita



Gandhi's Religion and Politics - S. Radhakrishnan

The greatest fact in the story of man on earth is not his material achievements, the empires he has built and broken, but the growth of his soul from age to age in its search for truth and goodness. Those who take part in this adventure of the soul secure an enduring place in the history of human culture. Time has discredited heroes as easily as it has forgotten everyone else; but the saints remain. The greatness of Gandhi is more in his holy living than in his heroic struggles, in his insistence on

the creative power of the soul and its life-giving quality at a time when the destructive forces seem to be in the ascendant.

Gandhi is known to the world as the one man more than any other who is mainly responsible for the mighty upheaval of the Indian nation which has shaken and loosened its chains. Politicians are not generally reputed to take religion seriously, for the values to which they are committed, such as the political control of one people by another, the economic exploitation of the poorer and weaker human beings, are so clearly inconsistent with the values of religion that the latter could not be taken too seriously or interpreted too accurately. But for Gandhi, all life is of one piece. "To see the universal and all pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any fields of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion, has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means!" Again, "I have no desire for the perishable kingdom of earth, I am striving for the kingdom of heaven, which is spiritual deliverance. For me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and of humanity. I want to identify myself with everything that lives. In the language of the Gita, I want to live at peace with both friend and foe. So my patriotism is for me a stage on my journey to the land of eternal freedom and peace. Thus it will be seen that for me there is no politics devoid of religion. They subserve religion. Politics bereft of religion are a death-trap because they kill the soul." If man as a political being has not been much of a success, it is because he has kept religion and politics apart, thus misunderstanding both. For Gandhi there is no religion apart from

human activity. Though in the present circumstances of India, Gandhi happens to be a politico revolutionary who refuses to accept tyranny or acquiesce in slavery, he is far from the uncompromising type of revolutionary whose abstractions force men into unnatural and inhuman shapes. In the acid test of experience he remains, not a politician or a reformer, not a philosopher or a moralist, but someone composed of them all, an essentially religious person endowed with the highest and most human qualities and made more lovable by the consciousness of his own limitations and by an unfailing sense of humour.

In my travels in different parts of the world I have noted that Gandhi's reputation is more universal than that of the greatest statesmen and leaders of nations, and his personality more beloved and esteemed than any or all of them. His name is familiar to such a degree that there is scarcely a peasant or a factory worker who does not consider him to be a friend of humankind. They seem to think that he is likely to restore the golden age. But we cannot summon it, as we would summon, let us say, a passing cab. For we are subject to a thing more powerful than any nation, more humiliating than any conquest, and that is ignorance. Though all our faculties are designed for life, we have allowed them to be perverted in the cause of death. Though the right to happiness is clearly implicit in the creation of humankind, we have allowed that right to be neglected and suffered our energy to be used in the pursuit of power and wealth by which the happiness of the many is sacrificed to the doubtful satisfaction of a few. The world is in slavery to the same error to which you and I are subject. We must strive, not for wealth and power but for the establishment of love and humanity. Freedom from error is the only true liberty.

Gandhi is the prophet of a liberated life wielding power over

millions of human beings by virtue of his exceptional holiness and heroism. There will always be some who will find in such rare examples of sanctity the note of strength and stark reality which is missing in a life of general good will, conventional morality or vague aesthetic affectation which is all that many modern teachers have to offer. To be true, to be simple, to be pure and gentle of heart, to remain cheerful and contented in sorrow and danger, to love life and not to fear death, to serve the spirit and not to be haunted by the spirits of the dead, nothing better has ever been taught or lived since the world first began.



Shriman Narayan on Gandhi

Gandhiji was an idealist - a practical idealist - who had no use of any ideas if they were not capable of being implemented and being acted upon in life. And this is what we have to learn from him.

It has been said that Indian Swaraj will be the rule of the majority community, i.e., the Hindu. There could not be a greater mistake than that. If it were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it Swaraj and would fight with all the strength at my command, for to me Hind Swaraj is the rule of all people, is the rule of justice.



Gandhiji further asserted :

Our independence would be complete only if it is as much for the prince as for the peasant, as much for the rich land-owner as for the landless tiller of the soil, as much for the Hindus as for the Muslims, as

much for the Parsis and Christians as for the Jains, Jews and Sikhs, irrespective of any distinction of caste or creed or status in life.

Marxism repelled Bapu, because “it was based on violence and denial of God, in eradicating evil from the human breast at the point of the bayonet.”

He emphatically declared :

I entertain no fads in this regard. All that I desire is that every citizen of India who is willing to work should be provided with employment to earn his livelihood. If electricity or even atomic energy could be used without ousting human labour and creating unemployment I will not raise my little finger against it. I am, however, still to be convinced that this would be possible in a country like ours where population is large and capital scarce.

Bapu further remarked: “If the Government can provide full employment to our people without the help of khadi and village industries, I am prepared to wind up my constructive work in this sphere.”

Gandhi had no hesitation in burning his wooden charkha to cook one day’s meal. It is, therefore, highly unfair to dub Gandhiji’s ideas about khadi and village industries as ‘faddist and utopian’.

Whatever programmes were undertaken by him, Bapu injected down-to-earth seriousness in them. I very well remember how, in 1945, when the nation was faced with acute food shortage, Gandhiji made a number of suggestions in the columns of the Harijan for increasing farm production. He had indicated that all available land in the country,

including the spacious lawns of the then Viceregal Lodge, should be utilized for growing food crop. One day, as usual Kasturba was washing Gandhiji's feet after his return from the evening walk in Sevagram. The bucket of water after this wash was daily thrown into a bed of roses nearby. Babu looked at me and remarked. "These roses in the context of our food problem are, indeed a luxury for the Ashram. Why should we not replace them with a strip for growing wheat?" And I found the very next day that this had actually been done.

Babu had categorically declared that he would "prize every invention made for the benefit of all" and that he would "welcome the machine that lightens the burden of crores of men living in cottages." What he was really against was "the craze for machinery" and "its indiscriminate multiplication." He explained : Mechanisation is good, when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India.

"True economics", said he, "stands for social justice; it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life."

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"The Good Boatman" and his grandson

Rajmohan on his grandfather

To his grandson Rajmohan Gandhi, Gandhiji was 'both a wonder and weight' and Indian's 'Good Boatman' as the grandson described

him was 'a spark for consciences across the world.' If Rajmohan's other grandfather Rajaji wrote that Gandhiji " was like Krishna who died when a hunter's arrow pierced and sucked his life away. So also our Krishna has died," the grandson sees in Gandhiji something of Rama too sent into exile when he should have been crowned. (P 455)



On Police and Thieves

"As an Indian I have to make a choice between thieves and the police, and though both are alike unacceptable to me as a believer in ahimsa, I cannot divest myself of responsibility as a social being and, therefore, must continually make my choice. Whatever the case we have to be civil in the face of incivility. This is the secret of non-violence."

- Gandhiji

“Non-violence is the weapon of the strongest and the bravest. The true man of God has the strength to use the sword, but will not use it, knowing that every man is the image of God. If blood be shed, let it be our blood. Cultivate the quiet courage of dying without killing”

- Gandhiji



“The self-sacrifice of one innocent man is a million times stronger than the self-sacrifice of millions of men who die in the act of killing others”

- Gandhiji

**VIEW
from
THE WEST**

“I have not the slightest doubt that,
but for the pair, truth and non-violence,
mankind will be doomed”

- Gandhiji



“I am - a striving servant of India and
through her of humanity”

- Gandhiji

Mahatma Gandhi — Kingsley Martin

He died, I know, with a sense of failure. Too few of his followers understood ahimsa, and too few of them were sufficiently trained in its application. He has had many converts to non-violence, but with the departure of the British it has been made manifest that they had understood the passive resistance of the weak and not the nonviolence of the strong. That the British had left India without violence was, he admitted, a remarkable achievement. He had made, he told Edgar Snow in the last weeks of his life, "a kind of contribution" to the world by showing that nonviolence was a political means and not only a matter of personal ethics. He was aware that the forces of passion and violence were growing in the new India. Ahimsa, he said, could never be defeated since it was a state of mind which was in itself a victory and which could have only good spiritual results in others even if it did not win external victory. But the immediate challenge was the communal struggle. When he had recovered from his Delhi fast, he wished, to go to Pakistan and appeal to his friends there. He was well aware that he might not live to do this; the bomb that was thrown during his fast was sufficient warning of the fanaticism of the extreme sort of Hindu. He remarked only the day before his murder that it would always be easy to kill him at one of his prayer meetings. So it proved. But his death started a legend and Gandhi today stands among the celestial hierarchy in the minds of Indians. In his remarkable broadcast, spoken with deep emotion on the a night of the assassination, Pandit Nehru used the occasion to rally all the forces of tolerance and righteousness. For the moment at any rate the Mahatma's death confirmed the lessons of his fasts and reinforced the hopes of communal peace. Whatever happens in India and Pakistan, Gandhi's "contribution" will not be lost. There is a danger of course that his legend may be perverted; when the saint dies there are always those who glorify his memory in order that the

world may more readily forget what he taught. But they never wholly succeed. Even in the case of Christianity, where the wrangles of the Church and the pronouncements of Popes have done so much to pervert the lesson of the Cross, the contents of Christ's teaching have continuously broken through ecclesiastical obscurantism, inspiring and refreshing his disciples. Gandhi's life and death will similarly remain a witness to the faith that men may still overcome misery, cruelty and violence by Truth and Love.

(From Mahatma Gandhi (Ed) S. Radhakrishnan)



A Note on Gandhi — Aldous Huxley

Gandhi's body was borne to the pyre on a weapons carrier. There were tanks, armoured cars in the funeral procession, and detachments of soldiers and police. Circling overhead were fighter planes of the Indian Air Force. All these instruments of violent coercion were paraded in honour of the apostle of non-violence and soul-force. It was an inevitable irony; for, by definition, a nation is a sovereign community possessing the means to make war on other sovereign communities. Consequently a national tribute to any individual even if that individual be a Gandhi must always and necessarily take the form of a display of military and coercive might.

Nearly forty years ago, in his Hind Swaraj, Gandhi asked his compatriots what they meant by such phrases as "Self Government" and "Home Rule." Did they merely want a social organization of the kind then prevailing, but in the hands, not of English, but of Indian politicians and administrators? If so, their wish was merely to get rid of the tiger, while carefully preserving for themselves its tigerish nature. Or were they prepared to mean by "Swaraj" what Gandhi himself meant by it, the realization of the highest potentialities of Indian civilization by

persons who had learnt to govern themselves individually and to undertake collective action in the spirit and by the methods of satyagraha?

For the frame of reference within which one does one's thinking determines the nature of the conclusions, theoretical and practical, at which one arrives. Starting from Euclidean postulates one cannot fail to reach the conclusion that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. And starting from nationalistic postulates one cannot fail to arrive at armaments, war and an increasing centralization of political and economic power.

Gandhi found himself involved in a struggle for national independence; but he always hoped to be able to transform the nationalism in whose name he was fighting to transform it first by the substitution of satyagraha for violence and second, by the application to social and economic life of the principles of decentralization. Upto the present his hopes have not been realized. The new nation resembles other nations inasmuch as it is equipped with the instruments of violent coercion. Moreover the plans for its economic development aim at the creation of a highly industrialized state, complete with great factories under capitalistic or governmental control, increasing centralization of power, a rising standard of living and also, no doubt (as in all other highly industrialized states) a rising incidence of neuroses and incapacitating psycho-somatic disorders, Gandhi succeeded in ridding his country of the alien tiger but he failed in his attempts to modify the essentially tigerish nature of nationalism as such. Must we therefore despair? I think not. The pressure of fact is painful and we may hope finally, irresistible sooner or later, it will be realized that this dreamer had his feet firmly planted on the ground, that this idealist was the most practical of men. For Gandhi's social and economic ideas are based upon a realistic appraisal of man's nature and the nature of his position in the universe. He knew, on the one hand, that the cumulative triumphs

of advancing organization and progressive technology cannot alter the basic fact that man is an animal of no great size and, in most cases, of very modest abilities. And, on the other hand, he knew that these physical and intellectual limitations are compatible with a practically infinite capacity for spiritual progress. The mistake of most of Gandhiji's contemporaries was to suppose that technology and organization could turn the petty human animal into a superhuman being and could provide a substitute for the infirmities of a spiritual realization, whose very existence it had become orthodox to deny.

Decentralization in economics must go hand in hand with decentralization in politics. Individuals, families and small co-operative groups should own the land instruments necessary for their own subsistence and for supplying a local market. Among these necessary instruments of production Gandhi wished to include only hand tools. Other decentralists and I for one would agree with them can see no objection to power-driven machinery provided it be on a scale commensurate with individuals and small co-operative groups. The making of these power-driven machines would, of course, require to be carried out in large, highly specialized factories. To provide individuals and small groups with the mechanical means of creating abundance, perhaps one third of all production would have to be carried out in such factories. This does not seem too high a price to pay for combining decentralization with mechanical efficiency. Too much mechanical efficiency is the enemy of liberty because it leads to regimentation and the loss of spontaneity. Too little efficiency is also the enemy of liberty, because it results in chronic poverty and anarchy. Between the two extremes there is a happy mean, a point at which we can enjoy the most important advantages of modern technology at a social and psychological price which is not excessive.



GANDHI, AS BRIDGE AND RECONCILER

- Ernest Barker

(Professor of Political Science, Cambridge University)

I have vivid recollections of his visit to Cambridge. I joined with him and Miss Slade at prayers in his room and he came down to our sitting-room after his evening meal, and talked with us as he turned his spinning-wheel. Some of our talk was about simple things (I remember his being interested in what I had to say about the place of football in English life and about the curious social division between the Rugby and the Association game); but we went, in the main, into deeper issues. One of our themes was Plato. I thought that he had a Platonic feeling that governing and administrative persons should live on a simple pittance, content with the opportunity of service, and not expecting great rewards. I tried to argue that government had to carry prestige, and that in order to carry prestige it must be surrounded by a certain amount of pomp and circumstance. I do not remember that we reached any agreement; but I know that I felt that I was arguing on a lower plane. Another theme which I particularly remember was the theme of the defence of India. I was arguing that peace has to be kept; that the threat of invasion or of marauding bands had to be met; that this entailed a defence force; and that, for the time being, this defence force should be guaranteed its necessary expenses, and not be made dependent on the recurrent votes, which might be adverse or at any rate exiguous, of an Indian assembly. Mr. Gandhi used a metaphor in reply. "Imagine," he said, "a village which suffers from the depredations of the animals of the jungle. A benevolent authority offers to erect a great wall of defence around the village, to secure the lives and property of the villagers. But the villagers find that the cost of the wall entails a grinding taxation which depresses their life so low that it is hardly worth living. Would

they not say. 'Better the risk of the depredations, which we well know, than the certainty of a standard of life which: is below our capacity of endurance'?"

I have spoken of the St. Francis and the St. Thomas mixed with the man of practical affairs and legal training. I might have said, more accurately and more justly, that the mixture was one between a great Indian tradition of devout and philosophic religion and the Western tradition of civil and political liberty in the life of the community. Because there has been this mixture, Mr. Gandhi has been a great bridge. He has been able to commend politics to his fellow-countrymen in no secular form, and with no divorce from their mere religious tradition; he has been able to commend himself, and the cause of his country, to the British people, as something far beyond the stature of a political agitator or a matter of political agitation. Nor is it merely to his fellow-countrymen, or to the British people, that he has presented himself as a bridge and a reconciler. He has caught the attention and focused the interest of the Western peoples at large. One who could mix a spiritual and temporal devotion, without injury to either, could not but be a great; and arresting figure of our days.

I should therefore celebrate in Mr. Gandhi the man who could mix the spiritual with the temporal, and could be at the same time true to both. I should also celebrate the man who could be a bridge between the East and the West, and thereby could render to the cause of international understanding. Nor can I forget the man who could understand, and proclaim, the homely and Inter- national understanding. Nor can I forget the man who could understand, and proclaim, the homely and intimate necessities of his country's life. His spinning wheel is a symbol of that understanding. To visit an Indian Village (and India is a continent of villages) is to see the crying need of the villagers for a

fuller life and a wider engagement of faculties. If industry can be brought into the villages (and not merely established in the cotton mills round Bombay and the jute mills north of Calcutta), it will be the redemption of the villages, and, since the villages are the vastly preponderant part of India, the redemption of India-on the plane of secular economic life. It will always be counted as one of the great services of Mr. Gandhi that he laboured at that redemption.

These are the thoughts that come to me, from what I have seen or read or heard. I wish that I knew more. But, on such knowledge as I have, I should say that Mr. Gandhi has laboured to teach his countrymen, and has helped to teach the world at large, three things to work in love, and for love; to work without violence; and to work with the hands, and not merely with the brain, for the building of a full life which fully engages the faculties.

(From Mahatma Gandhi, (Ed) S. Radhakrishnan)



Rt.Hon. Philip Noel-Baker

For half a century his inspiration has been unfailing, and in the past year it perhaps attained its supreme expression.

His death must bring home to us all the peril in which we stand, from which the issue can only be won by following the precepts on which his whole life was founded.

No one in modern history has exercised such influence over the minds of men by his individual strength of character, his purity of motive and selfless devotion to the cause in which he believed.

I believe that like other prophets his greatest work is still to come.

New York Times (January 31, 1948):

A light has gone out. The rest remains for history's inexorable hand to write down.

A hush will go round the world to-day as Gandhi's frail body is borne to the banks of the sacred river Jumna, there to be turned to ashes.

Out of the ashes we do not know what flowers will spring. But this we do know: that saintly man, who preached non-violence, is dead by violence. Those who saw him cut down believe that with a last gesture of forgiveness he forgave his last enemy. His undying spirit speaks now to all India and the world.

He has left as his heritage a spiritual force that must in God's good time prevail over arms and armaments and dark doctrines of violence.

Rt.Hon.Lord Mountbatten :

Gandhi, man of peace, apostle of ahimsa, died by violence as a martyr in the struggle against fanaticism, that deadly disease that has threatened to jeopardize India's new-found freedom. He saw that this cancer must be rooted out before India could embark on the great task of nation-building which lies ahead.

Our great Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, has set us the high aim of a secular democratic State wherein all can lead useful, creative lives, and in which a genuinely progressive society can be developed, based on social and economic justice; and the best tribute we can pay to Gandhiji's memory is to turn our hearts and our minds and our hands to building such a society upon the foundations of freedom that he so

firmly laid during his lifetime. Gandhiji will have rendered his last and greatest service of all to the people he loved so well if the tragic manner of his death has shocked and spurred us into sinking all differences and joining in a sustained united effort-beginning here and now. Only in this way can his ideal be realized as India enters into her full inheritance.

Dr. John Haynes Holmes:

The Mahatma's secret was the spirit. He believed that spirit is a reality. He trusted it as more potent than the sword. He lived in it as love in the midst of hate, as forgiveness in the midst of vengeance, as good in the midst of evil. The spirit which is God within the soul of man - this can overcome the world. Here was Gandhi's secret, which he called "truth". In his own faith and practice he proved it to be truth; and we must accept it if we would live. It is the atom bomb or Gandhi - choose ye this day which ye will serve!



Richard B. Gregg on Gandhi

He is a social scientist because he follows social truth by the scientific method of observation, intuitional and intellectual hypothesis, and experimental test.

He is not a mere scientist: he is a great scientist, in the realm of social truth. He is great because of his choice of problems, because of his methods of solution, because of the persistence and thoroughness of his search, and because of the profundity of his knowledge of the human heart.

(S. Radhakrishnan Mahatma Gandhi, P No. 58)



C.E.M. JOAD : Moral Authority of Gandhi

“Hence the combination of the politician and the saint in Gandhi which has so puzzled observers; the adroitness in negotiation, the child-like simplicity which is seen in retrospect to have been the most astute political wisdom, the aptness at and the readiness for compromise are characteristics of a man who, firmly fixed in regard to his end, can be non-attached in regard to the means to that end.”

It is in this sense that Gandhi is a moral genius. He has announced a method for the settlement of disputes which may not only supersede the method of force, but, as men grow more powerful in the art of destruction, must supersede it if civilization is to survive. No doubt his method has for the moment failed; no doubt he has promised more than he can perform, but if men had never promised more than it was possible for them to perform, the world would be the poorer, for the achieved reform is the child of the unachieved ideal. Because Gandhi has believed, he is himself believed, and his authority in the world, though unbacked by force, is greater than that of any other man.

(Radhakrishnan Mahatma Gandhi, P No. 121 and 124)



Pearl Buck on Gandhi

India has become the symbol of a people freed from foreign rule, but in spite of continuing strife Mahatma Gandhi's recent fast won deep respect for India, Never had his spiritual prestige and India's risen so high in the U.S.A. as during the past month.

Mahatma Gandhi's death comes at a strategic moment, and respect

is increased to reverence for a martyr. Everything now depends upon the people of India. The world watches and waits.

(S. Radhakrishnan Mahatma Gandhi, P No. 436)



Gandhi and Bernard Shaw

He believed that in the absence of violent resistance “the wrong doer wearies of wrong doing”. When Bernard Shaw remarked that “the vegetarianism of the sheep makes no appeal to the tiger” Gandhi replied that he did not believe that the “British are all tiger and no man”.



Gandhi's Statesmanship - Albert Einstein

Gandhi is unique in political history. He has invented an entirely new and humane technique for the liberation struggle of an oppressed people and carried it out with the greatest energy and devotion. The moral influence which he has exercised upon thinking people throughout the civilized world may be far more durable than would appear likely in our present age, with its exaggeration of brute force. For the work of statesmen is permanent only in so far as they arouse and consolidate the moral forces of their peoples through their personal example and educating influence.

We are fortunate and should be grateful that fate has bestowed upon us so luminous a contemporary-a beacon to the generations to come.

(From Mahatma Gandhi, (Ed) S. Radhakrishnan)



A classic from William Shirer

William Shirer, the well known American historian, who wrote huge tomes like *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (pages 1248) and *The Collapse of the Third Republic* (pages 1082) brought out a masterpiece titled *Gandhi a Memoir* in just 200 pages.

On Gandhi Shirer writes :

After disavowing any pretensions to sainthood, Gandhi continues :

“But though by disclaiming sainthood I disappoint the critic’s expectations, I would have him give up his regrets by answering him that the politician in me has never dominated a single decision of mine, and if I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics encircle us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries,... quite selfishly, as I wish to live in peace in the midst of a bellowing howling around me, I have been experimenting with myself and my friends by introducing religion into politics”.

I have tried to put down, however inadequately, what I got from him. The whole wide world got a lot from him too. His impact on it may turn out to be as great and as lasting as that of Christ and Buddha, as many of us who crossed his path, including the last British Viceroy of India, believe. (PP 202-203)

The example of his life, like theirs, his search for Truth, as they sought Truth, his humility, his selflessness, which was akin to theirs, his granite integrity, and what he taught and practised and accomplished were bound to leave an indelible imprint on this earth. Satyagraha, his supreme achievement, taught us all that there was a greater power in life than force, which seemed to have ruled the planet since men first sprouted on it. That power lay in the spirit, in Truth and love, in non-violent action.

For those of us who glimpsed, however briefly, Gandhi's use of it, who had the luck, for however short a time, to be in his radiant presence and to feel his greatness - and not many of us are still alive, as I write - it was an experience that enriched and deepened our lives as no other did.

I am grateful that fate took me to him.



Edgar Snow on Gandhi

This small man, so full of a large love of men, extended beyond India and beyond time... there was a mirror in the Mahatma in which everyone could see the best in himself, and when the mirror broke, it seemed that the thing in oneself might be fled forever. (*William L. Shirer Gandhi A Memoir, P No. 190*)

Not all who came in contact with him saw him as I did: a humble seeker of the truth, who like Christ, chose to live among the poor and work for them, and who practised what he preached, and who even in the quicksands of politics was ruthlessly honest. (*Gandhi A Memoir, P No. 198*)

There was much else Gandhi taught me: the value of contemplation and how to achieve it in the midst of the pressures and distractions of life in the twentieth century. Also: the necessity to discipline your mind and body and to keep your greeds and your lusts and your selfishness and your worldly ambitions in check; the obligation to love, to forgive and not hate; to eschew violence and to understand the power of non-violence, grasping that the latter often demands more courage than the former.

“Especially the Sermon on the Mount,” he would say. “It goes straight to my heart. Like the Gita!” and he would sing out the words “whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.”



“In the midst of death, life persists,
in the midst of untruth, truth persists,
in the midst of darkness, light persists.
God is Life, Truth, Light”

- Gandhiji



“I do not believe that in the other world there are either
Hindus, Christians or Moslems”

- Gandhiji

"The Andhras have captivated me"

- Gandhiji

GANDHIJI and ANDHRA

"The whole programme of social reconstruction of Gandhi came to us with a certain familiarity and friendliness."

- Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya

“It is not proper that the name of
the donor should go with the charity”

- Gandhiji



“You must excuse my obstinacy
in writing with village ink,
village read on village paper”

- Gandhiji

Gandhiji's Visits to Andhra

Although he had visited Nellore in 1915 and Vijayawada a year later, Mahatma Gandhi regarded his sojourn in Andhra in 1921 as his first visit to this part of the country. He toured practically the whole of the coastal belt speaking at many places. His main purpose was to mobilize funds and support for the Congress and work for the eradication of untouchability. Andhra was then vibrant with the nationalist fervour. Bipin Chandra Pal's tour of Andhra in 1907 had 'a magical influence' on the people. Tilak's speeches had roused the Andhra spirit in its wake Gandhiji came to Andhra to organize the movement for Swaraj. He came again in 1929 and 1933 and all these visits were memorable for the people of Andhra.

"The Andhras have captivated me", said the Mahatma once. He praised the frankness and generosity written in the faces of the Telugus. Referring to the 1921 Congress Session at Bezwada he remarked that the national programme laid down here focused the attention of the whole country and 'Bezwada must feel proud of it'.

C.R.Das's call for 'men, money and munitions' was born here. The Mahatma found the Andhra people 'strongly powerful, instantly generous and loving. They have faith in the future of their own province and India'. Particular mention must be made of the happiness he derived when he visited Masulipatnam and its Andhra Jateeya Kalasala of that he said thus: "I have now passed two quiet days and that shall always remain with me. Sacred days on the sacred grounds of this great educational institution Andhra Jateeya Kalasala. I see method, 'organising ability and sacrifice written in every inch of that ground. As an Indian I feel proud of it. As the inhabitants of this great Andhra province, I hope that you all the Andhra friends are equally proud of it and I hope that you the citizens of Masulipatnam consider it a privilege that you

have an institution in your midst which is manned by men who are filled with the spirit of sacrifice.”

Gandhiji had high regard for the founder Kopalle Hanumantha Rao and Mutnuri Krishna Rao, founder editor of Krishna Patrika “my visit to Masulipatnam brought tears of joy to my eyes,” said Gandhiji. He had earlier requested Pattabhi Sitaramayya to ensure silence and quietude as it was his day of silence. The response was spontaneous. About that he said. “I appreciated the gentle love and I realised the capacity of the people for discipline and their quick response to varying demands on their patriotic spirit. I praised God for his abundant mercy with tears of joy.”

‘A Silent Worker’ : K. Hanumantha Rao

Andhradesha has lost one of its finest silent workers. K.Hanumantharao laboured for the great educational institution. (Andhra Jatheeya Kalasala) at Masulipatam which is the pride of Andhradesha. He lived for it and died for it.

Dr.Pattabhi Sitaramayya writes the following touching letter :

“The friends of the deceased have lost no time in issuing an appeal for one lac of rupees for a memorial to the deceased. It is not intended to use the money in vain show but to put on a sound footing the financial condition of the institution for which the deceased slaved day and night. I heartily commend the appeal not only to every Andhra patriot but also to many others who knew Hanumantharao or visited his noble institution”.

Gandhiji’s sense of humour

Gandhiji was well known for his sense of humour too. While he

always made his point in straight and simple terms he also mixed them with gentle humour and mild sarcasm. He found that in Andhra people wore a lot of jewellery and he did not hesitate to ask for it. "In Andhra Desh men wear jewels like women. It is fatal to show ornaments to me. Ladies are afraid of coming out to see me because when they come I look at their jewellery. When crores of people are starving there is no cause for them to wear jewellery. They must give away all jewellery to Daridranarayana."

Fight against Untouchability

Wherever he went, Gandhiji spoke mainly about the evil of untouchability. His speech at Rajahmundry on April 3, 1921 was memorable for the emotion with which he spoke on the need to eradicate this evil. "An Array of Hindu saints and sages have taught us that penance was the only way to protect and purify religions. Needless to say that there can be no place for selfishness and egoism in a penance. I hope and pray that those engaged in Harijan service will be guided by the purest of motives", he said.

"I expect much from Andhra Desha and I hope the Andhras will fulfil my expectations. This is my wish. Remove untouchability altogether, throw open the doors of all temples for Harijans, strive for communal unity, man kind."

Please tell all the workers that I expect great things from Andhradesha, not merely fat donations but also many pure-hearted and self-sacrificing servants of Harijans.

(Letter to M.Bapi Needu November 26, 1933)

Plight of Widows

She put into my hands also a note which asked me to take her to the Ashram. The parents were present when I met Satyavatidevi. And

they were agreeable to her surrendering her ornaments for khadi work. I told her I would gladly take her to the Ashram if the parents consented. I was sorry I was unable to bring any greater consolation to the widow. It was with a heavy heart I parted from her.

At Pedapadu therefore my speech was devoted to Satyavatidevi. It was their duty to break down the purdah and to help the parents of the widow to remarry her if she was at all so inclined. If a young man of 18 being widowed could remarry, why should not a widow of that age have the same right? Voluntary enlightened widowhood is a great asset for any nation as enforced ignorant widowhood is a disgrace.

Hindu society must make the way absolutely open for such widows to remarry whenever they like. The story of Satyavati is enacted in hundreds of Hindu homes every day. The curse of every widow who is burning within to remarry but dare not for fear of a cruel custom descends upon Hindu society to long as it keeps the widow under an unforgivable bondage.

That previous evening Gandhiji had a traumatic experience when some dancing girls came to see him. He asked them plainly if they could give up that profession and when they replied that they were doing it to earn their livelihood, he shed tears. In his speech the next day, he turned to the women in the gathering and said: "Do you suppose that Rama and Sita would rest for a single moment if they knew a single woman might have to sell her honour for lust of men and for a mess of pottage?" At another place he explained that cow protection to him meant the protection of the chastity of women. Eight years later, speaking at Hyderabad, Gandhiji complimented the Nizam for abolishing cow slaughter and for promoting Hindu-Muslim unity.

Another touching incident occurred when a young widow gave away her jewellery and money to Gandhiji. She was a widow of

Pedapadu near Eluru. Drinking too came in for criticism and at Nandigama he found that the “drunkard cannot distinguish who is his mother and who is his wife.” He referred to it at Masulipatnam and also said that “the curse of drink is eating into the vitals of the Indian society”

The Andhras are not easy to understand. Sarojini Naidu once remarked that the Andhras combined in themselves the intellectual agnosticism of the Tamils and the mystic quality of the Bengalis. Gandhiji was fascinated by the land and the people. Andhra has hardy men workers. It has resources. It has poetry. It has faith, it has the spirit of sacrifice,” he observed. Like the rest of India, Andhra pays every year its homage to Gandhiji on October 2.

How the Andhras impressed Gandhiji :

“The whole programme of the construction of Gandhi came to us with a certain familiarity and friendliness” wrote Pattabhi Sitaramayya who along with the other two ‘Masulipatam Musketeers’ initiated several social reforms. Except for the charkha, every item of the constructive programme was carried out by Pattabhi and his friends in Masulipatam. He echoed the Andhra sentiment when he declared that Andhra desa had anticipated the advent of Mahatma. Gandhiji himself said that the nation must feel proud of the fact that the programme laid down at Bezwada was accepted. “The Andhras have captivated me” declared the Mahatma.

Dr Pattabhi who later wrote huge volumes of Congress History, authored books on Gandhism too. Said the Mahatma with characteristic humour : “I am the Baniya Sutrakara and Dr.Pattabhi is the Brahmin commentator.” In his numerous writings Dr Pattabhi articulated the view that only in Gandhism are combined intellectuality and pragmatism. Interestingly such writings appeared in the popular Telugu journal *Krishna Patrika* and Pattabhi’s English journal *Janmabhoomi*, in the early twenties

when many were skeptical of the Gandhian approach.

The Andhras impressed Gandhiji with their spirit of sacrifice, as he described it. The Andhras also amused Gandhiji with their 'lavishness in conferring titles on their leaders' and the Andhra men in particular some of whom like women wore gold ornaments. Gandhiji was greatly pleased that some of the reform programmes he launched in 1919 had already been carried out in Andhra. Overall people of every town and village he visited impressed the Mahatma with their zeal for reform and social reconstruction. There was also an instance when an Andhra Maharaja irritated Gandhiji with a letter that earned for the Prince a prompt rebuke from the Mahatma.

Pingali Venkayya

At Bezwada I asked Mr. Venkayya to give me a design containing a spinning-wheel on a red (Hindu colour) and green (Muslim colour) background. His enthusiastic spirit enabled me to possess a flag in three hours. It was just a little late for presentation to the All-India Congress Committee. I am glad it was so. On maturer consideration, I saw that the background should represent the other religions also. Hindu-Muslim unity is not an exclusive term; it is an inclusive term, symbolic of the unity of all faiths domiciled in India. If Hindus and Muslims can tolerate each other, they are together bound to tolerate all other faiths. The unity is not a menace to the other faiths represented in India or to the world. So I suggest that the background should be white and green and red. The white portion is intended to represent all other faiths. The weakest numerically occupy the first place, the Islamic colour comes next, the Hindu colour red comes last, the idea being that the strongest should act as a shield to the weakest. The white colour moreover represents purity and peace. Our national flag must mean that or nothing. And to represent the equality of the least of us with the best, an equal part is assigned to all the three colours in the design.

It follows that the flag must be made of khaddar, for it is through coarse cloth alone that we can make India independent of foreign markets for her cloth.



1921 April 5, a Meeting with Pleaders in Masula

When the pleaders were asked by Gandhi for not giving up their profession, they said that they could not all of a sudden change over to other profession and they were used to a particular style of life. Then Gandhi referred to Motilal Nehru's and Chittaranjan Das' relinquishing their lavish spending in life and taking to simple living.



Bravery of Chirala - Perala People

After narrating the whole situation that was prevailing at Chirala-Perala, Gandhi wrote in 'Young India' (25-8-1921) thus:

"The brave people of Chirala-Perala have challenged the Government to do its worst and refused to have a municipality. They need not have done so. They might have waited for Swaraj. But they chose to do otherwise. The responsibility is entirely theirs. They may not now yield in any circumstance whatsoever. Nor must they under provocation, lose their heads. They must cheerfully let the Government subject them to any penalty it chooses to inflict upon them..."

1. An Andhra Hero :

"..... If the facts collected by Sri Annapurnaiah are true, Raju (Alluri Sitarama Raju) (if he is really dead) not a *fituri* but a great hero. Would that the youth of the country cultivate Shri Rama Raju's daring, courage, devotion and resourcefulness and dedicate them for the attainment of swaraj through strictly non-violent means..."

On Linguistic States

“As you know I have always aimed at a redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis. The cue was taken from the Andhra movement. I should therefore be more than glad if Andhra could achieve its status as a province recognized even now”

Demand for separate Andhra - Gandhi's response

Gandhi's letter to S. Radhakrishnan
Segaon, Wardha,
December 23, 1938.
Dear Sir Radhakrishnan,

As you know I have always aimed at a redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis. The cue was taken from the Andhra movement. I should therefore be more than glad if Andhra could have its status as a province recognised even now.

Yours sincerely,
M.K. GANDHI

A.I.C.C. Resolutions
June 23, 1939.

“.....”

“6. The All-India Congress Committee is strongly of opinion that immediate steps should be taken for the formation of a separate Andhra Province”.



Gandhi in lighter Vein

Gandhi said that he was following the technique followed by

Surendranath Benerjee in 1890 in England. Surendranath used to give the same speech at different places. On being asked as to why he was doing so, he said : “I want to give my precious/valuable lecture to all equally. I don’t want to give it in lesser value to some”.



Gandhi’s humour

In Anakapalli, some people of the town requested Gandhi to give permission to name the big market square after him. Gandhi gave permission, after cracking jokes on name-giving; about the possibility of appearing the boards such as ‘Gandhi Cigarettes’, ‘Gandhi Whisky’ and ‘Gandhi Country Liquor’.



Khadi for everyone

Gandhi asked for a barber. The one who was brought was in foreign clothes and was accustomed to use a silver bowl for doing shaving/hair-dressing. Gandhi waited till a barber came in khadi clothes. A dhobi too had to come in khadi to wash his clothes.



More for Indian languages

At the railway station (Ponneru) near Sullurpet, Gandhi along with his volunteers was collecting contributions for Harijan Fund. One lady, who disclosed her name to be ‘Rukmini’, gave a gold ring and a few rupees and asked for the receipt. Gandhi gave it with his signature in Hindi. She demanded his signature in English too. Then Gandhi signed in Tamil, saying that he would not do it English.



Beauty of Visakhapatnam (Waltair)

The much talked of arrest of Maulana Mahomad Ali took place at Waltair, whilst we were on our way to Madras. I am writing this in the train, just after writing out a few telegrams. The train halted at Waltair for over twenty-five minutes. Maulana Mahomed Ali and I were going outside the station to address a meeting. Hardly had we gone a few paces from the entrance, when I heard the Maulana shouting to me and reading the notice given to him. I was a few paces in front of him. Two white men and half a dozen Indian police composed the party of arrest. The officer in charge would not let the Maulana finish reading the notice, but grasped his arm and took the Maulana away. With a smile on his lips he waved good bye. I understood the meaning. I was to keep the flag flying. May God help me to prove worthy of the message of a comrade with whom it was a privilege.

I continued my journey to the meeting place. I asked the people to remain calm, and fulfil the Congress programme. I then retraced my steps, and went where the Maulana was being detained. I asked the officer in charge whether I could see the Maulana. He said he had orders to let his wife and secretary only meet him. I saw Begum Mahomed Ali and secretary Mr. Hayat coming out of the detention room.

Waltair is a beauty spot in Andhra. It is a sanatorium. I envied the Maulana his arrest at such a lovely place. He was contemplating staying at Waltair a few days to rest and complete his accounts of the deputation. But the unexpectedly long stay in Bengal and the Moplah outbreak had rendered it impossible.

(Maulana Mohammed Ali was arrested at the railway station on arrival - September 1921).



With freedom fighter K.S. Gupta

When the daughter of K.S. Gupta of Visakhapatnam gave away her golden bangles to Gandhi, the latter asked whether she took the consent of her father. She replied : 'Things you demanded need no permission of my father'.

K.S. Gupta introduced his son, who was named after Gandhi. Gandhi asked the boy : 'What did you bring to give to me?' - Gupta said : "He only came to take (instructions) from you but not to give anything to you'. Then Gandhi said in a lighter vein, "then I don't want this boy".



In Bheemunipatnam, when Gandhi was presented with a hand-stick, he immediately put it for bidding, saying 'people may mistake me for a violence-monger'.



Andhra and Orissa

"..... But the Andhras dispute the Oriyan claim to Berhampur. I have ventured to suggest some simple rules for their guidance. One golden rule of universal application that we must learn from our present struggle is that the stronger must yield to the weaker. In case of doubt the weaker must have the verdict".



"Andhra Desh is unlike Utkal. It is full of vigour, I could see no fleshless bones here. The people are strong, powerful, insistent, generous and loving. They have faith in the future of their own provinces and India. Men as well as women have plenty of gold ornaments. I made

no secret of the fact that I wanted them for the memory of Tilak Maharaj and for Sawraj. They gave gladly both men and women.



Joy at Masula

“I told the Andhra people that in frankness, nobility of bearing and freedom of movement combined with modesty, their women reminded me of the women of Maharashtra... The generosity of the men and women of Andhra was catching.”

“To turn to pleasanter things again. My visit to Masulipatnam brought tears of joy to my eyes. It was my day of silence. I had asked Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya to procure freedom from all noise and demonstration when I entered Masulipatnam. The people had, therefore, been warned before hand. It was early morning when we motored in. People lined the decorated streets, but not a sound was heard. All were noiselessly standing in their places. And as I entered the portals of the national college, no sound, save that of a beautiful hymn struck upon a violin accompanied by a flute, greeted me. I appreciated the gentle love, and I realized the capacity of the people for discipline, and their quick response to varying demands on their patriotic spirit. I praised God for his abundant mercy with tears of joy”.

A painful experience :

The Punjabi sisters must give the [pride of] place to the Andhra sisters in fine spinning. I thought there were no more lovable spinners than the Punjabi women. But the Andhra women spin 100 counts. They clean and card their own cotton. I have brought with me some specimens of fine woven yarn which would beat any from Japan, France, or Lancashire. The art was about to die when the swadeshi movement came to the rescue. Some of these ladies were good enough at Masulipatnam to give me a demonstration of their powers. It was a

soul-stirring sight in that leaf-cottage. They cleaned and carded and spun. For me the wheel gave the music of the spheres.

I must however descend from the soul-stirring to the soul-killing discoveries. At Cocanada, just after the great public meeting, on my return to the bungalow at about 9 p.m., I had a visit from some women and girls. The light was very dim as I entered. There was something uncanny about their movements and their looks. Somehow or other the usual greeting, "Do you spin? what will you give me for the Tilak Swaraj Fund?" would not come to my lips. On the contrary, I asked my host who the ladies were. He did not know. He inquired, and after some hesitation the answer came, "We are dancing girls". I felt like sinking into the bowels of the earth. My host soothed me by saying that there was a ceremony attached to the commencement of life. It made matters worse for me. It gave the damnable thing an air of respectability. I cross-examined. They said in the politest tones they had come to have darshan. "Will you take up some other occupation?" "Yes, if it gives us our livelihood." I had not the heart to close with them there and then. I felt ashamed of my sex. I spoke straight the next morning at Rajahmundry, the next halting place. It was the one most painful experience in Andhra. I suppose the sin is common enough in one shape or another in the rest of India. All I can say is that, if we will have swaraj through self-purification, we may not make women a prey to our lust. The law of the protection of the weak applies here with peculiar force. To me the meaning of cow protection includes the protection of the chastity of our women. We will not have a regenerate India unless we learn to respect our women as we respect our mothers, sisters and daughters. Let us cleanse ourselves of the sins that kill the man in us and make us brute.



Praise for Andhra

I was taken to a real parnakutir, a leaf-cottage. And whilst I was congratulating the teachers and managers on the method, art and industry, they showed in their appointments, I could not help remarking that their activity was not completely national until every one of the students and the teachers devoted practically the whole of their time and attention to spinning and weaving, and the making of their institution a spinning and weaving institute par excellence. Whilst I was developing my theme, Mr. Krishnarao, who was listening to me all the time and rarely partaking in the discussion, with a spiritual sparkle in his eyes said: "Then you consider spinning to be a sacramental rite". "I do," said I. "Thank you for the expression. I shall henceforth make use of it". Spinning is a visible, sacred symbol of national purity, strength, and prosperity. It is a duty enjoined upon all, whether Hindu or Muslim, Christian, Jew or Parsi. The Andhra National College is an old institution of which the Andhras have every reason to be proud. It is an institution which is a product of the Bengal awakening of 1907 and has weathered many a storm. I hope that it will emerge from the present awakening a purer and stronger body. It certainly possesses all the material for becoming a centre, radiating the purest activity in keeping with the present spirit.

Andhra Desh contains a fiery reformer and a warm champion of the suppressed classes. Mr. Ramchandrarao is a Brahmin whose pure soul will not tolerate the curse of untouchability. He has been slaving on behalf of his clients. He is rightly impatient to remove the serfdom of his pariah brother and would gladly advise him to non-co-operate with the other Hindus. Equally ardent as I claim to be on behalf of our suppressed brothers, I warned him against launching out on non-co-operation until a pure and selfless soul rose in their midst; for non-co-operation was a movement of self-purification, self-help, self-reliance; it compelled co-operation of *the right type*.

The Andhras have captivated me. Bihar has long been my favourite. I came to have faith in Bihar long before non-co-operation was born. Andhra Desh may come a good second, if it does not beat Bihar. Andhra Desh has a self-effacing leader. It has hardy, staunch workers. It has resources, it has poetry, it has faith, it has the spirit of sacrifice. It has many national schools, it has given many lawyers to the cause, it has the greatest possibilities in hand-spinning and hand-weaving, and grows fine cotton. It has two mighty rivers watering the hinterland. It has ports which were at one time famous. It easily takes the lead, or at least disputes it with Bihar. My conviction remains that even if the so-called major provinces fall, in the event of terrorism (as distinguished from repression) commencing, Bihar and Andhra will save the situation by outdoing the Sikhs in the bravery of the soul, i.e., suffering. I may be wrong in my estimate. Let us all strive to outdo the rest. It is a race in which competition is not only a virtue, it is a duty.

Of an experiment in civil disobedience forced on two beautiful villages and their leader, I must write on another occasion. I must also deal another time with the Hindu-Muslim problem of Nellore. I must close these impressions by noting with gratefulness the fact that in a neighbouring village near a spinning and weaving Ashram conducted by Mr. Hanumantrao and his associates, the Brahmin villagers invited me to walk through their village although I was accompanied by Panchama associates. It was a village whose Brahmin street had never before had Panchamas walking through it.



Carrying the Mahatma on shoulders

Kala Venkata Rao's privilege

During his hectic tour of East Godavari district in 1929 Gandhiji had to cross the river at Alamuru. The boat meant to ferry the Mahatma

across could not reach the shore and walking through knee-deep water to get into the boat became inevitable. Kala Venkata Rao and Narasimha devara Satyanarayana at once girded up their loins and raised Gandhiji onto to their shoulders and carried him to the boat. "Tears come to my eyes everytime I recall that great moment. What greater honour can there be for us both than to carry the Mahatma on our shoulders" said Kala Venkata Rao in a voice choked with emotion. Godavari is a part of the Ramayana lore in Andhra. Its tributaries bear such names as Gowtami and Sabari and on its banks is the famous Sri Rama temple at Bhadrachalam. *The Efficacy of Rama Nama* is one of Gandhiji's works.



Women and Gold

On March 7, 1925 Gandhi and Nageswara Rao met in the house of Srinivasa Iyyengar in Madras. Nageswara Rao's daughter too came there and was introduced to Gandhi. Seeing gold on her body, Gandhi as usual asked for the gold (ornaments) as a contribution to the public fund he was raising. She gave away all the ornaments to Gandhi. Gandhi then turned to Nageswara Rao and asked him to make a promise that he would not again have the ornaments made for her. Nageswara Rao without any hesitation said that such promise would be much against the wish of any woman in Indian society with the implication that 'women can part with gold but not with the idea of relinquishing the habit of possessing them.' Gandhi refused to take the ornaments. Nageswara Rao gave the amount worth the ornaments left behind.



Prakasam & Gandhiji

Prakasam's relations with Gandhiji became bitter from 1940 onwards. One such was in the A.I.C.C. meeting held at Wardha in

1940. His constant complaint against the Mahatma was that the latter was allowing himself to be guided by Prakasam's well-known opponents who invariably succeeded in securing Mahatmaji's support to involve him in some trouble or other. Prakasam was convinced that Gandhiji was unfair to him. In the course of the discussions Prakasam in an attempt to expose one or two of his leading opponents who changed their attitude suddenly and began to support the war effort, addressed Gandhiji who was listening to his speech while at the same time was experimenting his latest innovation in the spinning world namely Dhanush Charka, Prakasam characteristically pointing out his accusing forefinger at the Mahatma burst forth.

"That Jesus Christ who contributed his faith to a large part of the world had eleven faithful followers and only one Juda Iskarist but alas you, our modern Christ has only one faithful follower and eleven Judas". Perhaps Prakasam proved prophetic as judged by the subsequent events. Gandhism has been wiped out in India by his disciples themselves.

- Vennelakanti Raghavayya



Tenneti Viswanadham

Gandhi visited Madras in 1916 in his tour of South India to have first-hand knowledge of the people, their culture and way of life. Tenneti was studying B.A. (Hons.) in the Presidency College, Madras. He met Gandhi for the first time and invited Gandhi to address the students. Gandhi visited student hostels, interacted with them discussing several issues. He could gather information regarding the commonness and the differences in the ways of life of the South Indians. Gandhi was impressed particularly by the Andhra culture.

After completing M.A. (Hons.) in Madras and B.L. in

Trivendrum (now Tiruvananthapuram), Tenneti became enthusiastic of joining the Sabarmati Ashram of Gandhi. He wrote to Gandhi and the latter gave a green signal.

Gandhi took personal interest in welcoming Tenneti to the Ashram. Learning that the Andhras like mango fruits, they were served to Tenneti and Tenneti was not allowed to take away the leaf platters he used though the custom in the Ashram was that the diners were to take away their platters. Tenneti was exempted from following the Ashram rules and was treated as a guest.

Gandhi asked Tenneti to join the Gujarat Vidya Peeth / University to teach politics and law and the latter gladly accepted the offer. Tenneti worked there for about 13 months. J.B. Kripalani and Girglani were his colleagues.

In 1925 Gandhi visited Visakhapatnam and Tenneti was his host. Special arrangements were made to make Gandhi's stay with him (in Akella's house) more comfortable. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, who accompanied Gandhi, also stayed in the house of Tenneti - who took Gandhi to different places in Andhra in his own car.

In the meetings of the Indian National Congress held in Karachi, Gandhi announced the names of the members for the Congress working Committee. Tenneti expressed concern about the omission of names from the South. Gandhi, realising his mistake, added the names of Rajagopalachari and Tanguturi Prakasam. This incident hit the headlines of the dailies of the day.

Tenneti was attracted towards Gandhi for the latter's search for Truth, discipline, nonviolent means and revolutionary thoughts for bringing about changes in society, simple living and above all for showing the precept in practice.

Tenneti used to address Gandhi : 'Mahatmaji'. For Tenneti, Gandhi was an epoch-making leader, for, he could awaken the people not only to fight for political Independence but also to make efforts towards eradication of untouchability, gender bias and poverty. Tenneti realized how effective Gandhi's 'ethical' means were in controlling the violent/forceful power of the rulers and the rich exploiters. Gandhi's insistence on the steadfast adherence to the right means rather than on ends made an impact on Tenneti. The same principles Tenneti upheld in his long and distinguished political career.



Pat for Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya

"Swaraj has been variously defined. Mr. Gopalakrishnayya who has been tried a second time and sentenced to undergo further imprisonment to run concurrently with the first made a long statement before the magistrate. It is more a theological discussion of his belief than a statement of his political creed..... (But) I am concerned only with his interesting definition of Swaraj. Here it is :

"It is not the common political suffering that is to weld together the Hindu and the Muslim like the Greeks of old during the Persian invasions, but the mutual respect, regard and love for each other's dharma..... and the necessity for its individuated preservation that can and shall achieve it. Swaraj, therefore, means the preservation of Hindu dharma. Muslim Dharma, Christian Dharma, Parsi Dharma, Sikh Dharma, in short *swadharmas* of all and a coordinated federation of all, which are now being threatened with destruction by positivist godless philosophy, industrial anarchy and spiritual famine that beset the world at the present moment".

Surely we are nearing our goal when men of character are being imprisoned for their religious beliefs.

1. Gandhi suggested a few don't's to Andhra Nationalists/Congress Workers :

Don't give the body more than six hours work,

Don't make noises at meetings or anywhere else,

Don't have processions,

Don't go in for spectacular things,

Don't have too many engagements per day,

Don't take the body to places where there is no money or no business in terms of the objects of the tour,

Don't take it anywhere to satisfy anybody's whim and pride,

Don't take it to too many places,

2. Doing a 'bania' work :

"...Now, coming to the point, I am bent upon doing some work of a 'bania'. Wherever I might have been touring, I have not forgotten my 'bania' work. Out of the thirty crores of people in the country, over ten crores have not even a single meal per day. You cannot expect a sanyasi who is begging on their behalf, to easily satisfy his hunger. You have mentioned that Vizagpatam is a poor place. You also say that you have many zamindars in your district. Then, as a 'bania' I am entitled for a share in their riches...." (Speech at Public Meeting, Vizagpatam, April 28, 1929)

The affection I owe to Andhra Desha is supreme. (Speech at public meeting, Bezwada, April 10)



On Konda Venkatappayya and Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao

“Desabhakta Venkatappayya is older than I am. But he shows the same intellect and energy as before. May he live long and die in harness. He deserves it.”

“If millions took to Ramanama in real earnest there would be no riots, which were a social malady, and there would be no illnesses. The kingdom of Heaven would come on earth.

What a sad letter you have sent me. I appreciate the confidence you have given me. After all it is these domestic troubles which enrich one's life, for, they enable us to realize the vanity of worldly pomp, worldly riches and worldly happiness and enable us also to realize the true beauty of ahimsa, otherwise, love of the purest type.

It was, therefore, our duty to go to jail wearing pure white khaddar like Venkatappaya, the lion of Andhra, one of the staunchest workers in the cause of Congress and swadeshi.

I believe Konda Venkatappaya to be the pride of Andhra. He woke up in that great country when everyone else was asleep. He has great strength of character. He has accepted non-violence as his creed and he is fully living up to it.

The tour of Andhra Pradesh is strenuous, but the people here are very kind and Deshabhakta Venkatappayya takes such good care of me that he allows no one near me in the afternoons which are supposed to be the periods of respite for me and for that reason, I am able to deal with the director.

Gandhiji' in Andhra Desha –(VI) – The tour has been no doubt

exacting, the heat equally so. Nevertheless it has been for me a matter of great joy to find the villagers responding in a most wonderful manner. The rigour of the tour has been softened by the willing and unremitting attention of the volunteers, chief among whom has been Subbaramaiah who gave up Government service and has ever since remained in Congress service. But the one man who has been most responsible for my well-being is Deshabhakta Konda Venkatappayya. He is one of the gentlest of men it has been my privilege to be associated with. .. I would repeat tours like this a hundred times under the supervision of a superintendent like Deshabhakta and amid a people like the Andhras. Vol.40, pp.412.

Universal Provider :

Whilst writing of Deshabhakta Konda Venkatappayya I may not omit Deshoddharaka Nageshvarrao. I have always chaffed him about making money out of a patent ointment with a sweet name. And he always smilingly retorted, "Yes, it is bad, what can I do? I try to serve my country with the money I get from it. And it is an inoffensive ointment.' I have attended to the explanation with the same indifference with which I have joked about the patent ointment. I was therefore not prepared for the agreeable discovery I have made during the tour that his depot has enabled him to become the universal provider for the many public activities of Andhra. Wherever I have gone the addresses have made mention of his charities. If it is the Anand Ashram for the untouchables Nageshvarrao builds the substantial block of buildings for it; if it is a school that has needed assistance Nageshvarrao has been the helper; if it is Dr.Subrahmanian who wants a printery for his Ashram, it is again Nageshvarrao who comes to the rescue. He is never so happy as when he is giving. And so far as I have been able to understand, his left hand knoweth not what his right giveth. I do not wonder that a public worker remarked during the tour, in answer to my joke about the

'patent loot', "I wish he would be able to loot much more than he does. It will then all be used to help public activities." I have been secretly criticizing the Andhra lavishness of titles on national workers. But this Deshoddharaka has reconciled me to the title he had deservedly earned.

1. A letter to Konda, dated September 23, 1926 from Sabarmati:

Dear friend,

I have your letter. I shalln't hastily advise the Council to do away with the Andhra agency. But I have felt that both you and Seethrama Shastri are too soft-hearted. My own opinion is that softness and ahimsa go ill together. You have to be sometimes hard in order to be really and truly kind. But in Andhra, I have been watching with the greatest pain the indiscipline practised under the name of liberty and unprincipled men getting the upper hand and doing what they like with impunity. Not that these things have not happened elsewhere. But in Andhra, perhaps, the evil has been more accentuated...."

Praising Konda Venkatappayya to be the lion of Andhra, Gandhi wrote :

After all Konda Venkatappayya and his barrister and vakil friends have been arrested. When the news of the first two arrests of a well-known barrister and vakil came, I was prepared to hear that Mr. Venkatappayya was shot-dead. He had proclaimed a week's hartal over the arrests in anticipation of the Committee's sanction. I felt that the hartal was a bad move. And I think so still. His next telegram was that the hartal was going on peacefully. Then came the telegram announcing the arrest of his four associates and of himself.

Shri Sriramulu is an unknown poor Congressman and servant of humanity working in Nellore. He has been labouring-single handed for

the cause of the Harijans of that place. There was a time when high hope was entertained about removal of untouchability and other social work in Nellore. An ashram was built near Nellore, but for a variety of causes the activity received a setback. Deshabhakta Konda Venkatappayya was, and still is, though very old, the moving spirit in connection with these activities. It is in this place that Shri Sriramulu has been quietly and persistently working for the removal, root and branch, of untouchability.

He has been trying to have a temple opened to Harijans. He asked me the other day whether, in order to awaken public conscience in favour of such opening, he could, if all other efforts failed, undertake a fast. I sent him my approval.

Now the place is astir. But some persons have asked me to advise Shri Sriramulu to suspend his fast for removing legal difficulties of which I have no knowledge. I have been unable to give such advice.

As I am anxious that an unobtrusive servant of humanity may not die for want of public knowledge and support, I bespeak the interest of the journalists of the South, if not of all India, to find out for themselves the truth of the matter and, if what I say is borne out by facts, shame by public exposure the opposing parties into doing the right and save a precious life.

It is more honest to sell your yarn for the required quantity of khadi and take your food from your beggings and devote the rest to the Harijan cause. Let the people know your worth. Vol.80, p.202

(Statement to the Press, dated March 16, 1946)



EDITORIALS

To Nehru...

“For the external affairs you are my guide”

- Gandhiji

The Light that illumines our Path

Forty nine years ago 'the light' had 'gone out of our lives' - the light that had led us from bondage to freedom, the light the entire world looked to for 'a way out of the darkness. The dazed Jawaharlal quickly recovered from the shock to remind us that it was not ordinary light and the light that represented the eternal truths will illumine this country for many more years and a thousand years.'

As messages from all over the world poured into grief-stricken India, a moving tribute from a leading English daily of that time brought tears even to the stout-hearted. The Hindustan Standard of January 31, 1948 left the editorial page blank except for these few lines: "Gandhiji has been killed by his own people for whose redemption he lived. The second crucifixion in the history of the world has been enacted on a Friday - the same day Jesus was done to death one thousand, nine hundred and fifteen years ago. Father, forgive us."

Memorials in stone and metal have been raised and January 30 and October 2 witness rituals of homage to Gandhiji. Fifteen days after the assassination of the Mahatma, in a broadcast to the Nation, Nehru cautioned against memorials which 'mock him and belie his message' and exhorted the people to understand Gandhiji's way to live and the way to die and 'follow reverently in the path he showed us and to do our duty in life and in death.' As Rajaji observed "October 2 and January 30 cannot be better observed than by a rededication to Truth and non-violence to the extent we are, each one of us, capable of and by a prayer for increased strength of heart in order to be more and more devoted to that ideal. "

Gandhiji does not need to be propagated nor to be rescued from the many who claim to be his followers. Every one of us, including the millions who did not either see or read him, is his legatee. As Edgar

Snow beautifully put it “This small man, so full of a large love of men, extended beyond India and beyond time. There was a mirror in the Mahatma in which everyone could see the best in himself and when the mirror broke, it seemed that the thing in oneself might have fled forever.”

Rajmohan Gandhi summed it up all in just one line: “Our link with Gandhiji is not of blood but of spirit.” It is that human spirit that transcends the barriers of time and space. That light and spirit are not the preserve of a country or of a people. They are eternal. They illumine our path...

(February 1997)



The Greatest Treasure

“I have a sense of utter shame both as an individual and as the head of the Government of India that we should have failed to protect the greatest treasure that we possessed,” said Jawaharlal Nehru in the Constituent Assembly two days after Mahatma Gandhi was slain. In that moving speech Pandit Nehru also described Gandhiji as ‘the greatest symbol of the India of the past and of the India of the future.

History tells us that darkness cannot tolerate the ‘light’ in the great. It happened in Athens in 399 B.C. when Socrates was put to death. It happened again in 32 A.D. when in Golgotha Jesus Christ was nailed to the Cross. It was reenacted in Delhi on January 30, 1948 when ‘the Father of the Nation’, lovingly called Bapu, was killed by his own people for whose redemption he lived and died. What the dark forces extinguished then was only the body of Gandhiji. As Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan put it “We have killed his body but the spirit in him which is a light from above will penetrate far into space and time and inspire countless generations for nobler living.”

It is that spirit that India must recover and that light that India must seek with renewed vigour and determination in the golden jubilee year of Independence. It was no ordinary spirit and light. The whole world found in Gandhiji, a new hope for humankind battered within a space of thirty years, by two terrible wars. Scholars and scientists, statesmen and seers, poets and philosophers and millions of ordinary people too realised the power of love and non-violence.

Our leaders at the time of Independence, though shaken by the sudden and tragic exit of the Mahatma, stuck to the daunting task of nation-building, drawing inspiration from Gandhiji's life and message. The value system underlying the new policy was largely nurtured by him. And it is a solid and durable value system. Nonviolence is the only panacea for the ills of humankind. If it was Hindu-Muslim unity then, it is communal harmony or national integration now. If it was Harijan emancipation that Gandhiji crusaded for, it is social justice today meaning emancipation of not only the Dalits, but of all oppressed classes and women in general. No political party or government can question the essence of the value system that Gandhiji so steadfastly nurtured. Only by reaffirming our faith in the Gandhian approach and by renewing our pledge to pursue those goals, can we hope to free the Indian society from the malaise of apathy corruption and greed for pelf and power:

Gandhiji is India's greatest gift to the modern world. That is why October 2nd is an important day not only in India's calendar but for the world at large. The treasure he bequeathed to us is inexhaustible. It is not confined to India alone. It belongs to all those who believe in the uniqueness of the human spirit-all those who accept that love is greater than brute force and that man is more valuable than both machine and money.

It is necessary for us to remind ourselves that Gandhiji was not

opposed either to the use of machine or the growth of industry so long as it did not deprive the poor and the downtrodden of their livelihood. He knew, better than others, about the difficulties and hurdles that come in the way of the emancipation of the poor. Someone quipped that 'the meek shall inherit the earth but not its mineral rights.' It was for the poor and the meek that Gandhiji lived and died. Their number has not decreased. Probably it never will. To them all in particular October 2 is a day to remember.

(October 1997)



A Beacon for the whole World

Celebration of Gandhi Jayanthi is seldom confined to India alone. That day, October 2, when India gave birth to a 'mighty soul' is dear to the entire world and as Jawaharlal Nehru said the Mahatma 'shone like a beacon not only for India but for the whole world.' Sad but true the light that emanated from India is today not visible to the Indians. The message of the great Gautama Buddha is not as much known to the people of the land of his birth as to those living outside. Such things happen in India. Aldous Huxley lamented that 'Gandhi's body was borne to the pyre on a weapon carrier' and that 'military and coercive might' as displayed by the presence of soldiers, police and fighter planes, was paraded at the cremation of the messiah of peace! It was 'an inevitable irony,' Huxley felt. Today our leaders, at all levels, perform the ritual of paying homage to the Mahatma, flanked by gun-toting security men and the 'inevitable irony' is that the land that gave birth to apostles of non-violence from the Buddha to Gandhi is afflicted with mindless violence.

The Gandhian path is not hard to follow. We need not wear khadi. Such symbolic gestures do not enhance the credibility of our

commitment to the Gandhian ideals. An English writer who was fascinated by the Mahatma's life and message was amused that leaders in India, claiming to be the heirs to the Gandhian spirit, indulge in long speeches and lavish dinners donning huge garlands. That has been the bane of Indian politics since he left us, rather we sent him out of this world, fifty years ago.

We are a nation of small men. Small in every sense of the term small in thinking and small in not being able to understand the greatness of the Mahatma. Let us try to do only small things at our own level in a humble way like avoiding pomp and extravagance at public functions. Should we waste money, precious public money, on huge garlands, cutouts and processions, in honour of our leaders, elected, nominated or self-styled? Should we wait for hours for a VIP to arrive and start a meeting or function? Is not a common man's time as precious as that of a VIP? Is it necessary for us to be told by a minister or leader that we should keep our surroundings clean? Can we not organise citizens' welfare measures such as providing medical aid to the ailing poor and to victims of tragedies and disasters? Let us on this sacred day of his birth resolve to honour the memory of the Mahatma by following his advice at the local level. Only by serving the poor and the less fortunate brethren can we claim to be worthy of his legacy. The beacon that illumined the path for all humanity will continue to shine for ever. We, on our part, must strive to ensure that the rays of that great light bring cheer to every home and village in the land of his birth.

(October 1998)



No Ordinary Light

Gandhi Jayanti is a day of renewal of our faith in that spirit that moulded the lives of millions of Indians and led this great country of

ours from bondage to freedom. The light that has shone in this country, wrote Jawaharlal Nehru, was no ordinary light, the light 'that has illumined this country for many years, will illumine this country for many more years and will give solace to innumerable hearts a thousand years later.' The spirit, said RadhaKrishnan, 'is a light from above which will penetrate far into space and time and inspire countless generations for nobler living. It is a light 'that comes from the eternal source of wisdom' in the words of Rabindranath Tagore.

To those born in the recent past Gandhiji might mean just another great name and to the many trapped in the culture of consumerism, Gandhiji may not even appear relevant in the new millennium. When the goal is to become a millionaire or billionaire or crorepati — the disease being aptly called 'affluenza' — why bother about such values as truth, love and non-violence? Richard Attenborough's movie 'Gandhi' prompted many men and women in the west to ask the question which the great Einstein had prophesied "Did such a man really walk on this earth?" Neither the passage of time nor the awesome power of science and technology can corrode the indelible imprint he left behind on this earth.

Gandhiji was opposed, not to authority but to the misuse and abuse of power, not to the acquisition of property but to the needless accumulation of wealth, not to industrialization but to indiscriminate mechanization, the "craze" for machinery as he described it, not to the exercise of rights but to the shirking of responsibilities. From his 'unlettered mother' he learnt the importance of duties and responsibilities and from his noble wife the value of gender equality. His humility was disarming and selflessness amazing. His radiant presence was a source of comfort as much to his followers as to the numerous foreign visitors always seen around him.

In thought, word and deed, the Mahatma belonged to the poor

and the downtrodden. His mission was to wipe every tear from every eye. We may not have either the will or the capacity to wipe the tears of our suffering brethren. But can we not shed at least a tear for them? Gandhiji's 'swaraj' was for "those toiling and unemployed millions who do not get even a square meal a day and have to scratch along with a piece of stale bread and a pinch of salt." To quote his own words again, even God could not dare to appear before the poor and the hungry except in the form of a "bowl of rice". The weakest sections of the society were the closest to his heart. Recall, he exhorted the people, "the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him".

To him India's Independence would be complete only when the landlord and the peasant, the factory owner and the worker, people belonging to all religions, irrespective of any distinction of caste or creed or status enjoy freedom. Fifty two years ago Gandhiji left us. His spirit and vision have been a source of strength to us during these eventful, if not turbulent, years and they will continue to guide us in the years ahead. The light that led us from darkness to freedom is 'no ordinary light.'

(October 2000)



Gandhiji, UN and World Peace

Gandhi jayanthi is a day of renewal of our faith in, and rededication to, the values dear to the Father of the Nation. Gandhiji's life, work and death testify to the triumph of Truth and Love over hatred and violence. The spirit and light that emanated from him "extended beyond India and beyond time." India, the world and humanity at large need more than ever before that spirit and that power of nonviolent action.

“I worship God as Truth and there is no other God than Truth”, he declared. “God”, said the Mahatma, “never occurs in person but always in action”. His conception of God and religion transcended all faiths and frontiers. No one understood better than he the essence of every religion and none was more aware of its shortcomings. In his own words: “If I could not accept Christianity either as a perfect or the greatest religion neither was I then convinced of Hinduism being such.” The world of today needs the religion of Gandhi because it is not a religion that is being practised. It is not religion in the strict sense of the term. It is faith in innate human goodness and the invincibility of human spirit. It is religion based on Truth and Love and religion that thrives on nonviolence. It is religion that he preached and practised applying it in daily life to individual problems, to collective work and to political goals as well. Religion is a means to self-realization and politics a means of promoting social good. As such there could be no conflict between religion and politics. Gandhiji asserted the point thus: “Those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means”. Satyagraha “his supreme achievement” demonstrated that “there is a greater power in life than force”.

October is also the month in which the United Nations was born. At the end of the Second World War was created this world body to promote peace and cooperation among nations. The UN Charter declared that its object was to save succeeding generations of people from the scourge of war. The UNESCO proclaimed its goal as building defences in the minds of men, as war begins in the minds of men. Ironically as many people have been killed by violence since the UN came into being during the last fifty six years as in that terrible Second World War.

The strength of the United Nations lies in two things-its longevity and its numerical strength with all but four of the 193 countries of the

world being its members. Beyond that, the UN's claims to success are negligible. Its finances are weak, credibility low and influence limited. The UN has been functioning according to the commands of the big powers, especially the United States. Kofi Annan, the suave Secretary General of the United Nations, must be aware of the quip that the Secretary General is more a Secretary than a General! The UN's biggest failure is its inability to curb the arms race and proliferation of lethal weapons and to prevent local wars that have taken a heavy toll of life and property in different parts of the world.

The latest menace to world peace comes in the form of terrorism. IT means not only the exciting Information Technology but also the most dreaded menace-international terrorism. With money being available in plenty, thanks to the rise of drug mafia and legitimacy being provided by dubious religious doctrines and self-proclaimed leaders of bigotry and promoters of hatred, there has risen a global network of terrorists threatening world peace and security. The terrorist who kills innocent people is no martyr even if he kills himself in the process. Such a terrorist is a maniac and menace to society. Worse still he has acquired access to latest technology and most dangerous weapons. Therefore the fight against terrorism is a global fight. Weapons alone are not enough. Collective thinking and common effort at every level, both macro and micro, will have to be generated to fight the new menace.

The roots of violence lie in poverty, illiteracy and ignorance. This is where Gandhiji and the United Nations become more relevant now than before. We must turn to the message and mission of Gandhiji to wipe out poverty and injustice. As Pope John Paul II once said development is another name for peace. Who else but the United Nations can undertake such a massive work of eliminating want, disease and ignorance? The American President said that the century's first war is against international terrorism. But the real war should be against the

source of all violence and terrorism-poverty, bigotry, illiteracy and injustice. And everyone and every nation must join in that war to ensure world peace.

(October 2001)



Martyrdom of the Mahatma

January 30, every year, brings back poignant memories of the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi. Even though fifty-five years have passed since the Mahatma left us, people in every part of the world continue to derive solace and inspiration from his life and work. The poor and the meek, in particular, have an affinity with the Mahatma because in him they found an expression of their aspirations. Leaders paying homage to Gandhiji's memory at Raj Ghat, official functions and academic discussions are all a part of the annual routine and familiar ritual. It is amusing, if not annoying, to hear some discussing the 'relevance of Gandhi' to contemporary world. Gandhiji found himself out of place when India, for whose freedom he devoted all his time and energy, was celebrating her Independence on the 15th of August 1947. He was away in Bengal mourning the tragic partition of India into two countries and saving the lives of thousands of innocent people. Let us recall what Lord Mountbatten wrote on that occasion:

"My dear Gandhiji,

In the Punjab we have 55000 soldiers and large scale rioting on our hand. In Bengal our force consists of one man, and there is no rioting. As a serving officer, as well as an administrator, I may be allowed to pay my tribute to the One Man Boundary Force."

Gandhiji's first fast was for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. His last fast was also for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. A devout Hindu 'who sought spiritual communion with Christianity and Islam',

Gandhiji was hailed as the greatest Indian since the Buddha and the greatest man since Jesus Christ. The British saw in him their truest friend. His religion was devoid of ritual and dogma. It was based on faith in God and trust in human goodness. There is nothing stronger than the human spirit. "Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will", he explained.

Non-violence is the only panacea for a world dominated by greed, hatred, selfishness and violence. To quote Gandhiji: "Non violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed." He never claimed to have discovered a new religion or philosophy. He sought to synthesize the different and various streams of India's culture and heritage and present to the people of India a practical approach to tackle their numerous problems. "I am not a visionary," he said, "I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not merely for the rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well." That is why Jawaharlal Nehru saw in Gandhiji "the greatest symbol of India, of the past, of the present and of the future we could have." The revolution he launched was described as 'much more radical' than any of the revolutions ever suggested. Still, he knew better than anyone the difficulty of the task that lay before him. No one was more aware of his limitations than Gandhiji himself.

He was not opposed to either the machine or to modernization or to even large scale production provided they did not affect the people and the villages they live in. The benefits of the machine and of production must reach the people. The rich cannot prosper at the expense of the poor just as the cities cannot expand at the expense of the villages. Village development holds the key to national progress. His emphasis on discipline is no less relevant. Calling upon the youth to observe disciplined obedience he said: "I beseech you to realize the supreme importance of discipline. Let it not be said that we are a

people incapable of maintaining discipline. Indiscipline will mean disaster.”

His Satyagraha showed that there was ‘a greater power in life than force and that power lay in truth, love and non-violence.’ It is “not merely the negative virtue of abstaining from violence but the positive one of doing good.” That is why Gandhiji’s “sword of spirit pierces to the very heart of the moral problem with which modern civilization is confronted.” The New York Times in its tribute to Gandhiji wrote that “He has left as his heritage a spiritual force that must in God’s good time prevail over arms and armaments and dark doctrines of violence.”

When today’s world is threatened by ‘dark doctrines of violence’ and horrendous deeds of terror, the hope for humankind lies in the spiritual force and power of love the Mahatma bequeathed to us. As the great seer Sri Aurobindo said in his tribute to the Mahatma “the light which led us to freedom, though not to unity, still burns and will burn on till it conquers.”

(February 2003)



Remembering Gandhiji

Gandhi Jayanti is a day of peace and prayer; an occasion for renewing our faith in the wealth of values he bequeathed to us. The greatest tribute we can pay to his memory, wrote Jawaharlal Nehru, “is to follow reverently in the path he showed us and to do our duty in life and in death.” The Mahatma’s service and sacrifice secured freedom for India and held out to the war-ravaged world hope in the midst of darkness.

Gandhiji called himself a paradox. He was no ordinary paradox. He sought to blend the saint and the politician and establish the Kingdom of God through nonviolence. In combining intellectuality and pragmatism,

courage and compassion, wisdom and humour, correctness and courtesy and ethics and politics, he had few equals in history. By making an alliance of the inner voice and the voice of mankind he taught us the essence of spiritual realization. Milton Mayer observed that Gandhi “was the first Christian politician since Jesus - Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln not excepted.” Gopala Krishna Gokhale, Gandhi’s mentor, saw in him Indian humanity at its best. A western writer noticed three great modern influences on Gandhi - Tolstoy, a Russian, Ruskin an Englishman and Thoreau an American. He felt that Gandhi’s development took place not in India but in England and South Africa. In fact he read Edwin Arnold’s English translation of his favourite scripture Bhagavad Gita for the first time in England and that was a turning point in Gandhi’s life.

Gandhiji was both a puzzle and paradox. Observers were at times baffled but always fascinated by his words and deeds. To some he was a scientist - “not a mere scientist but a great scientist in the realm of social truth.” He was an artist at work, exulted one of his most trusted disciples. Nothing better has ever been taught or lived since the world first began, wrote Radhakrishnan. He was ‘a great bridge’ explained Ernest Barker “between a great Indian tradition of devout and philosophic religion and the Western tradition of civil and political liberty in the life of the community.” Aldous Huxley found in Gandhi a warning to people who thought that ‘technology and organization could turn the petty human animal into a superhuman being and could provide a substitute for the infinities of spiritual realization.’ Bernard Shaw, the sharpest literary mind of the last century, and a great admirer of the Mahatma, received from Gandhi a gentle retort when Shaw expressed his misgivings about non-violence saying that “the vegetarianism of the sheep makes no appeal to the tiger.” To which Gandhi gently replied that he did not believe that “the British are all tiger and no man.”

The poor and the exploited were Gandhi's main concern. His goal was the removal of poverty and human misery. Of India he once wrote that "eighty per cent of the Indian population are compulsorily unemployed for half the year". Political freedom, he declared has no meaning for the millions of Indians who had no food - and shelter. He wanted the village to become an equal to the town and the city. The village would provide the basis and the foundation for Indian democracy where every child and every woman would live and work on equal terms with man. Swaraj for him meant essentially Gram Swaraj.

It was India's great good fortune that such a man lived amidst us to lead us from bondage to freedom. His grandson, Rajmohan Gandhi, titled his grandfather's biography 'The Good Boatman' who ferried his people to the shore of safety and freedom. When Gandhiji once called on Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, India's first Nobel Laureate wrote "When you had taken your leave, I found God's footprints on my floor." Neither the passage of time nor pettiness of politics can erase those foot-prints that have adorned the entire land. They shall continue to serve as a beacon for India and humanity at large.

(October 2003)



Gandhiji - 'The Practical Idealist'

"I claim to be a practical idealist," said Mahatma Gandhi once. Explaining how life and its problems taught him many lessons, Gandhiji dismissed any claim of having discovered a new philosophy or message for humankind. "I have nothing new to teach the world," he declared, "truth and non-violence are as old as the hills." In his tireless pursuit of truth he learnt from his experiments and errors as well. Truth and non-violence constituted the main tenets of his philosophy. But in a discussion

with a Jain seer Gandhiji admitted that by instinct he was truthful but not non-violent. Said the Mahatma: “I have been truthful but not non-violent. There is no dharma higher than truth. Ahimsa is the highest duty”.

Cautioning his disciples and followers against making an attempt to promote ‘Gandhism’ and publicising his ideas, Gandhiji said: “There is no such thing as Gandhism. I do not want to leave any sect after me.” Nor was there any need to promote Gandhian ideals through propaganda. “No literature or propaganda is needed about it. Those who believe in the simple truths I have laid down can propagate them by living them. Right action contains its own propaganda and needs no other,” he explained. As Ronald Duncan put it Gandhiji was the most practical man who would always drive any thought to its personal implication and practical application.

Satyagraha or Sarvodaya, truth or ahimsa — every ideal he set for himself was first tested in the laboratory of his mind. Science was as important for him as religion. There was no conflict between them. His spirituality synthesized science, religion and philosophy. If Satyagraha ennobles the human spirit, Sarvodaya brings all people—the rich and the poor, the employer and the employee, the tallest and the lowest—together ‘in the silken net of love.’ The need is to control the root of all problems—the human mind. “The mind,” wrote Gandhiji, “is a restless bird; the more it gets, the more it wants and still remains unsatisfied.” Simple yet meaningful life is possible only when the mind is tranquil. Restraint holds the key to human development. Highest perfection is unattainable without highest restraint, he stated. Explaining the meaning of selfless action, the Mahatma quoted from the Gita and said: “The

sages say that renunciation means foregoing an action which springs from desire and relinquishing means the surrender of its fruit.”

Politics and economics are vital for human progress. Politics cannot be a taboo for ever. Eschew politics of power but not politics of service, he exhorted. Politics without religion (ethics) is dirt. True economics stands for social justice. It promotes the good of all equally including the weakest and is indispensable for decent life. The goal of both politics and economics is the welfare of all, not of a particular section or even the majority of the people for that matter.

In a land of paradoxes, Gandhiji conceded, he was the biggest paradox. The man with a modern outlook wore just a loin cloth and carried the spinning wheel wherever he went. His capacity for enduring pain and suffering insults and indignities was boundless. That was why Einstein called him ‘the miracle of a man.’ Gandhiji had also that extraordinary gift of laughing at himself. Referring to the spinning wheel he once said: “People have laughed at my spinning wheel and an acute critic once observed that when I died the wheels would serve to make the funeral pyre. That, however, has not shaken my faith in the spinning wheel.” But Gandhiji was quick to add that if “the government can provide full employment to our people without help of khadi and village industries, I am prepared to wind up my constructive work in this sphere.” A poignant endorsement of the Gandhian approach was made three years after Gandhiji’s assassination by Acharya Vinoba Bhave who declared that if the state could find other avenues of employment he would have “no hesitation in burning his wooden charkha to cook one day’s meal!”

The Mahatma was not against machines and modernization. He

would welcome the machine that lightens the burden of the people living in cottages and would 'prize every invention made for the benefit of all'. What he opposed was the craze for the multiplication of machinery and accumulation of wealth without any concern for the starving millions. He practised what he preached and preached ideals that can be acted upon. His 135th birth anniversary is an occasion for us to reflect on the everlasting relevance of his work and ideals and offer our gratitude to the Mahatma for bequeathing to us such a treasure. May we grow to be worthy of it !

(October 2004)

Homage to the Mahatma

"The Light which led us to freedom, though not to unity, still burns and will burn on till it conquers," prophesied Sri Aurobindo in his tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. Hailing it as no ordinary light Jawharlal Nehru said that " the light 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 will give solace to innumerable hearts." That light represented eternal truths, showing us the right path, according to Nehru. Nothing better has ever been lived or taught since the world began, wrote Radhakrishnan. To Rabindranath Tagore it was "ineffable, like music, like beauty".

When homage is paid to the memory of the Mahatma on October 2 every year those who were fortunate to bask in the glory of that Light have now a duty to tell the younger generation about the significance of that Light. Gandhiji who led the greatest mass movement and the most peaceful revolution in human history was killed by his own people for whose redemption he lived. Einstein wrote that future generations

would find it difficult to believe that such a man in flesh and blood walked on this planet. Four decades after he left us many, as Einstein said, would rub their eyes in disbelief when told about the mesmerizing hold of Gandhiji on the masses during the freedom struggle. As many, if not more, would doubt the relevance of his message in the 21st century.

The answer to the questions cynics and skeptics raise is contained in a simple explanation Gandhiji himself gave. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills, he said. “No literature or propaganda is needed about it. Those who believe in the simple truths I have laid down can propagate them only by living them,” he said. There is no dharma higher than Truth and no duty higher than Ahimsa. He rejected the suggestion that he propounded a new theory or philosophy. There was no such thing as Gandhism, he asserted.

He was a practical idealist who, as Shriman Narayan put it, had no use of any ideas if they could not be implemented and being acted upon in life. He was in a hurry to liberate his people not only from political bondage but also from social injustice and economic exploitation. “I entertain no fads in this regard,” he declared and clarified that even atomic energy could be used for the benefit of the people. Human labour and dignity should be respected. Unemployment should give way to full and rewarding employment. True economics, he explained, stands for social justice. It promotes the good and equality of all including the weakest.

Every minute of his life was spent for the welfare of the people. His dream was to wipe out every tear from every eye. His dream was communal harmony based on equal respect for all faiths. He talked of

that great dream when he launched his movement around the twenties of the last century. Two decades later he again spoke about that dream and poignantly stated that “If that dream could be realized even now when I an old man on the verge of death, my heart would dance. Children would then frolic in joy.” Fifteen days later he fell to the assassin’s bullet with God’s name on his lips. As Radhakrishnan wrote “We have killed his body but the spirit in him which is light from above will penetrate far into space and time and inspire countless generations for nobler living.”

When President APJ Abdul Kalam exhorts school children to translate their dreams into vision and vision into reality, he is reminding us all of the Mahatma’s dream. The best homage we can pay to the Mahatma is to promote those ideals that liberated us politically to be taught in every school and college. The custodians of the future need to be educated about the legacy they have inherited and its imperishable value. Not in schools and colleges only but in every home an effort should be made to know about it. Gandhiji himself said that he learnt his first lessons in civic responsibility from his uneducated mother.

(October, 2005)

Debt of Gratitude

October 2 is a different day. Not just in the lives of the billion plus people of India. In every home and every part of the world where people think and talk of peace and compassion, Gandhi Jayanthi is an occasion to pay homage to the memory of Mahatma Gandhi. Humanity, wrote a famous scholar, owes a heavy debt of gratitude to Gandhiji . The greatest minds of the last hundred years tried to explore and explain

the mind, the message and the mission of the Mahatma even if the attempt was fascinating, puzzling and even frustrating to some. But all were agreed that no one, no saint for that matter, "has done so much to lighten the misery of the oppressed and restore their self-respect". Among the extraordinary qualities of his head and heart were humility and humour which endeared him to millions all over the world. "I have nothing new to teach the world," he declared in utmost humility, "Truth and Non-Violence are as old as the hills." These two were the guiding principles of his life, the pursuit of which was his mission till his last breath. Men can overcome misery, cruelty and violence by truth and non-violence. That is the message of his life and death. Satyagraha is both a science and an art of overthrowing evil with good. Happiness does not lie in possessiveness and victory is not success. Gandhiji explained the evolution of Satyagraha and his own travails in propagating it when he referred to the five stages -indifference, ridicule, abuse, repression and respect. It is the soul force that triumphed over an empire on which the sun was expected not to set.

He could laugh at himself and make fun of his own persona. "Mine is a mad house," he once said, "and I am the maddest of the lot. But those who cannot see the good in these mad people should have their eye examined." In a land of paradoxes he described himself as the biggest paradox. Religion to Gandhiji was 'not a Sunday show, but hourly, minutely mentor and monitor.' His religion begins where doctrine ceases, explained a scholar. An authority on psychology Erikson described Gandhiji as 'a religious actualist' who made 'an alliance of his inner voice and the voice of mankind.' His attitude towards religions was 'not one of negative toleration but positive appreciation.' He respected all religions though no religion was perfect. "The Allah of

Islam is the same as the God of the Christians and Isvara of the Hindus. Even as there are numerous names of God in Hinduism there are names of God in Islam. The names do not indicate individuality but attributes. God is above all attributes, Indescribable, Immeasurable. It would be height of intolerance and intolerance is a species of violence to believe that your religion is superior to other religions.” To him there is no God other than Truth and that can be realised through Ahimsa or non-violence. Death has no terror to the God-fearing. He found no incompatibility between man’s physical and intellectual limitations and his capacity for spiritual progress. People of all faiths attended Gandhiji’s prayer-meetings and an instance of the Mahatma’s hold over them was what a visitor from abroad wrote: “The best Christian in the world today is a Hindu and he lives at Sevagram.” Gandhiji undertook fasts for causes big and small. His idea was not to embarrass anyone or authority but ‘ to sting people’s conscience into action.’

Violence confronted him, as his grandson narrated in his biography, at every stage in his long life, right from the hard struggles in South Africa till his last breath on January 30 1948. The answer to violence is non-violence, only non-violence. A week before his assassination Gandhiji told Edgar Snow that non-violence is a political means, not only a matter of personal ethics. That was a few days after a bomb was hurled at his house and seven days before Godse’s bullets did what the bomb could not. The frail body gently bled to death and the mortal remains were consigned to holy flames in the midst of inconsolable grief. No one can ever silence that spirit. As Radhakrishnan summed up “nothing better has ever been taught or lived since the world first began.”

(October, 2006)

Mahatma's message

“My life is my message,” said Gandhiji when asked to give a message. “I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills,” he declared with characteristic humility and gently warned against any attempt to convert his ideas and actions into a creed or doctrine. “There is no such thing as Gandhism. I do not want to leave any sect after me,” he said.

Rajmohan Gandhi, the Mahatma's grandson and a scholar of repute, brought out last year *Mohandas —A True Story of a Man, his People and an Empire*, a masterly study of 745 pages. Explaining why he has chosen to write another book on Gandhiji, having already written one volume, Rajmohan says “*The Good Boatman* was not a biography. This one is.” Gandhi the individual is not sufficiently felt, or seen or understood though “he looks at us from currency notes, postage stamps and billboards,” says the author adding that familiarity is not knowledge. Quoting Einstein's famous words that “generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth” Rajmohan agrees that in ‘some ways it is an unbelievable story.’

Gandhi's battles, fought first in his mind, began early in his life. “At the time that communal unity possessed me I was a lad twelve years old,” wrote Gandhi. The Congress was not yet born. Along with eradication of untouchability, the boyhood dream of ‘amity’ between Hindus, Muslims and Parsis became his life's mission. His resolve to fight falsehood and violence in all walks of life was strengthened in South Africa where he was insulted and assaulted. Satyagraha, ‘truth-force’ or ‘love-force’ or ‘soul-force’ was born. Non-violence implied

non-possession. Service and sacrifice must begin at home and accordingly he made his wife give up, not without an argument, gold and ornaments. Kasturba nobly stood by him in the long and hard struggle the Mahatma fought to liberate his people politically, socially and economically. "If I had not her cooperation I would have been sunk," he admitted. When he opposed partition of India Muslims saw in Gandhi 'their enemy number one.'

But when he walked hundreds of miles to save their families and raised crores of rupees for Muslims traumatised by communal riots they found in Gandhi their true saviour. At the stroke of the midnight hour when Jawaharlal Nehru was making his famous 'tryst with destiny' speech amidst celebrations in Delhi Gandhiji was praying in the house of a poor Muslim family in Calcutta. Five lakhs of Hindus and Muslims attended his August 15 meeting at Calcutta which he described as 'the joy of fraternization between the two communities.'

An Andhra Dalit/Chakrayya, who lived in Sevagram was dear to Gandhiji who was upset by Chakrayya's premature death. Gandhiji suggested that a Dalit be made the President of India with Nehru, Patel and Rajendra Prasad as ministers, offering his own services as private secretary without salary. Why not a Bhangi girl as the President of India? If a Princess could become the Queen of England why not a Bhangi girl as the President of Indian Republic, he asked? Gandhiji wanted the world to know that in India no one was high and no one low. What the Buddha had taught humankind and what Ashoka had done through his emissaries of peace, Gandhi wanted independent India to convey as her message for universal peace and harmony.

The Arab poet Mikhail Noema's lines find a place in the biography: "The spindle in Gandhi's hand became sharper than the sword; the simple white sheet wrapping Gandhi's body was an armour plate which guns from the fleets of the master of the seas could not pierce and the goat of Oandh'i became stronger than the British Lion."

Gandhi's message to the Bengal Ministers led by Prafulla Ghosh who called on him on August 15, 1947 heeds to be recalled: "Be humble; be forbearing. Now you ; will be tested through and through. Beware of power; power corrupts. Do not let yourself be entrapped by its pomp and pageantry. Remember you are in office to serve the poor in India's villages." How necessary it is today to have these lines displayed prominently in ;all government offices and corridors of power'.

(October, 2007)

What Gandhiji Means to us

India was an infant democracy, having won independence only five and a half months earlier. Still, it was a nation that was thrown into a state of shock and disbelief on that fateful Friday evening, January 30, 1948, when the news spread about the assassination of the Father of the Nation. Mahatma Gandhi was a different father. He had little time for his own family. His family was the largest in the world. It had no caste or religion. It transcended boundaries and borders. Three hundred and thirty three million people of India wept and many of them went without food that night. The radio, the only available medium for quick transmission of news those days, wept throughout broadcasting doleful music and messages of grief.

We were boys then who did not immediately understand the reason for such mourning and overwhelming grief when we returned home from the playground after a game of cricket. Some of us even heaved a sigh of relief as the sun set on the horizon as there would be no school the following day. Shocking it was to see our elders crying, glued as they were throughout that night to the radio set. Food was not cooked in the house and almost all the elders fasted in grief. Tears rolled down everyone's cheeks when the radio broadcast a sobbing Jawaharlal Nehru's "Light has gone out of our lives" speech. Friday, January 30, 1948 was the gloomiest day in every Indian home. 31st was no less. Millions of people cried inconsolably hearing, Melville de Mellow's commentary, broadcast live by All India Radio, on the funeral of Gandhiji that Saturday evening.

Sixty years after that, raising the question '*what Gandhiji means to us*' might sound odd if not ridiculous. Still it has its own relevance even though some question the 'relevance' of Gandhiji for today's India of a billion plus people most of whom do not know much about him. We have seldom been a nation during the last sixty years to know the value of the Father of the Nation. We are still a backward country, fragmented socially and culturally with a large percentage of population, larger than the population of the United States, living below the poverty line. There are, of course, islands of prosperity where people feel people differently from the mainstream.

Romain Rolland called Gandhiji "A Christ without a cross." Gandhi bore a greater burden, a heavier load of human misery and suffering and for much longer time, than Christ had done. He also led as pure and hard a life as the heroes of our epics had supposedly done

to protect righteousness. Gandhiji's religion was for the entire humanity, not for a region or set of people. "Not a Sunday show", as he himself declared, "but an hourly and minutely mentor and monitor" emanating from a belief "in the ordered moral government of the universe" that is "subject to the acid test of reason." In short 'a religion that would free the world of all ills.'

True economics stands for social justice and Swaraj means freedom in terms of empowerment of the weak. Ernest Barker wrote that Gandhiji "had a Platonic feeling that governing and administrative persons should live on a pittance, content with the opportunities of service and not expecting greater rewards." Such ideas would be considered weird and 'uncivilized' in today's India where the salaries of top leaders and civil servants get revised steeply and regularly as they too have to compete with those in the affluent private sector. Gandhiji may not mean much to those in politics, especially those in power. But to the vast majority of people not only in India but all over the world he means a lot. Because "he stirred up loving hearts to action" and "lived *for* as well as *in* mankind."

(October, 2008)

Gandhiji's idea of Independence

As we celebrate the 140th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, apart from the official ritual so routinely and uninspiringly performed on October 2 every year, our minds are filled with sadness over the utter disregard shown to Gandhiji's ideals during the last sixty two years and considerable anxiety about the future of India. In this age of globalization, reckless spending and lavish living those who talk

of Gandhian ideals, even if it is for an hour before a small gathering, might be labeled uncivilized and medieval in their mindset.

But the bright new younger generation who constitute more than fifty percent of India's billion plus population and who are ordained by destiny to shape India's future in the first century of the new millennium would certainly love to know about the legacy the Mahatma bequeathed to us and the relevance of Gandhian ideals and values. Today's youth may be in a great hurry to achieve their goals through hard and innovative work despite being hard pressed for time. But they are also sensible enough to apply their sensitive minds to learn about the roots of our culture and the value foundations of our system so that course correction, wherever and whenever necessary, can be done without further delay. The younger generation would feel proud to know that the greatest minds of the last century, scientists like Einstein, philosophers like Russell, literary giants like Bernard Shaw and Nobel laureates of different hues, saw in Gandhi a beacon, an extraordinary light that would show humankind a way out of the darkness.

Likened to the Buddha and Jesus Christ, Gandhi lived and died for the poor, the entire humanity. The words of an Arab poet, Mikhail Noema quoted in Rajmohan Gandhi's classic *Mohandas*, sum it up : "the spindle in Gandhi's hand became sharper than the sword; the simple white sheet wrapping Gandhi's body was an armour plate which guns from the fleet of the Master of the Seas could not pierce and the goat of Gandhi became stronger than the British Lion."

We need to answer the basic question that every youngster is asking today six decades after India became free. Is this the Independence

for which Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders fought and which we celebrate pompously twice a year on August 14 and January 26? What are our leaders so religiously praying for on October 2 and January 30, sitting in front of the Rajghat in Delhi and Gandhi statues all over the country? What according to Gandhi was Swaraj or Independence? Would the Father of the Nation have rejoiced at India's achievements if he were living in our midst today?

They need to be told that Swaraj for Gandhi was empowerment of the weak and the disadvantaged sections of the society. Sad but true almost as many people as those who woke to freedom on August 15, 1947, about 330 million, are today living below the poverty line! Independence, Gandhi defined, means 'self- mastery, self – discipline', not the greed and selfishness that permeate every walk of life and every branch of government. Commending the Gandhian philosophy of simple living and high thinking Aldous Huxley had warned not only India but the entire world not to suppose 'that technology and organization could turn the petty human animal into a superhuman being and could provide a substitute for the infinities of spiritual realization.'"

From May 1893 on that cold night in Pietermaritzburg in South Africa when he was thrown out of a railway compartment till that fateful Friday, January 30, 1948 when the treacherous assassin's bullets killed him, Gandhi's life was a fight against violence, greed, injustice and exploitation. Probably no single individual in human history suffered and sacrificed for so long and so intensely as Gandhiji did. That is why young minds of today, like the great Einstein prophesied, would rub their eyes in disbelief hearing the Gandhi story. And we, the fading

generation, have a duty to tell the younger generation of what little we know and how much we all and the future generation owe to Mahatma Gandhi.

(October, 2009)

‘Servant of Humanity’

“Let me remain what I am - a striving servant of India and through her of humanity,” wrote Gandhiji in his reply when he was likened to rishis by Andhra leader Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao. “Rishis are made of sterner stuff,” said the Mahatma in his reply to Kaleswara Rao’s letter in 1944. This was among the many lessons in humility and civility that his disciples learnt from Gandhiji’s tours, lectures and letters. Writing to Pattabhi Sitaramayya in 1946 Gandhiji said “Whatever the case we have to be civil in the face of incivility. This is the secret of non-violence.” It is the lack of civility and humility that leads to violence, be it the home or the society or the world at large.

Despite the world looking at him with awe and veneration, even disbelief, he did not claim to be the mythical Atlas carrying the burden of humanity on his shoulders. Instead he vowed in utmost humility and unwavering faith to remain the servant, a striving servant, of India and of the entire humanity. Rajmohan Gandhi saw in his grandfather the epic hero, Rama, who went into exile when he should have been crowned! Like the Buddha and Christ centuries before him Gandhi lived and died for the poor.

He never preached what he did not practise. Social and religious equality would be impossible to achieve without gender equality. To deny women equal status is to reject *ahimsa* and *abhaya* the two key

concepts of Gandhian philosophy. "A woman's intuition has often proved truer than man's arrogant assumption of superior knowledge," he declared and narrated instances of Kastur Ba correcting and guiding him. "Ba was in no way weaker than I;" he wrote, "in fact she was stronger. If I had not had her cooperation I would have been sunk. It was that illiterate woman who helped me to observe all my vows with the utmost strictness and kept me ever vigilant. Similarly in politics also she displayed great courage and took part in all the campaigns." (Rajmohan Gandhi *Mohandas* p619)

History accords exaggerated importance to the exploits of conquerors and rulers and the accumulation of wealth by the rich while poets and writers consume 'oceans of ink and forests of paper' to flatter them in huge volumes. Governments and politicians excel them all by raising statues and memorials all over. But seers, savants, saviours and servants of humanity do not need memorials and monuments to be reverently remembered by humanity.

Gandhiji's first fast was for Hindu-Muslim unity. His last was also for communal harmony. On his last birthday, October 2, 1947, he said: "With every breath I pray God to give me strength to quench the flames or remove me from this earth. I, who staked my life to gain India's independence, do not wish to be a living witness to its destruction." There seemed to be no end to his agony. On January 12, 1948 he spoke again of the only solution to "the rot that has set in beloved India". "Death for me would be a glorious deliverance rather than that I should be a helpless witness of the destruction of India." Only eighteen days he had to wait for the fulfillment of his wish.

Jawaharlal Nehru saw in Mahatma Gandhi the 'greatest symbol of the India of the past and of the future' and said that the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light, light that illumines the path of India and entire humanity, showing the way out of darkness. As Sri Aurobindo prophesied "the light which led us to freedom, though not yet to unity, will burn on till it conquers."

(October, 2010)





Dr.S.Radhakrishnan who wrote that
“nothing better has ever been taught or lived since the
world began” prophesied that Gandhiji
“represents the conscience of the future man.”

“The Gandhi story is inexhaustible like the Ramayana,
Mahabharata combined and like the epics
it is equally amenable
to revered study and mercenary exploitation.”

- K. Swaminathan

