

BASA - BASI SERIES - 1



HIGHER VALUES OF LIFE



Dr. G. RAMACHANDRAN

Basa - Basi Series — No. 1

**MUSEUM OF CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME
OF MAHATMA GANDHI
GANDHIGRAM RURAL INSTITUTE
GANDHIGRAM - 624 302**

**Ten Lessons being
Reflections on
Higher Values of life**

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Gandhigram.

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*To my wife and best of comrades
Dr. (Mrs.) Soundram Ramachandran*

INTRODUCTION

A young person caught in a net of prejudice and malice, lost self confidence and was plunged into mental agony. A senior guide and teacher watching this predicament of the young student, drew out of his own *Sadhana* a series of reflections which he presented to the sufferer in brief lessons. The idea was to offer moral and spiritual strength in the sufferer. Even a casual reader will find inspiration from a study of these reflections. That they helped the sufferer to recover mental poise and courage was only natural.

The teacher in the present case was none other than Dr. G. Ramachandran, now the Vice-Chancellor of the Gandhigram Rural University. In these reflections he recalls the image of a Triveni or the Confluence of some invisible Saraswathy of Truth, the Ganga of Gandhi and the Yamuna of Tagore. It is well known how he had received his baptism in the purifying fire of the Gandhian revolutions in India and at the same time in the currents of our Cultural Renaissance in which the poetry and philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore flowed like a golden stream. He had the unique privilege of being the disciple of both Gandhi and Tagore. Rarely are we allowed to get such a

glimpse of the meditations of such a person as in these reflections. We are fortunate to share in a spiritual dialogue enshrining the *Satya Sodhana* of Gandhi and the poetry and philosophy of Tagore. We should be forgiven if we look forward to Dr. Ramachandran sharing with us more of the gleanings of his *Sadhana*.

Dr. T. P. Meenakshi sundaram
Ex-Vice-Chancellor
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FOREWORD

These ten brief lessons were written two years ago to give courage and comfort to a young friend who was distressed and in mental pain in the face of unmerited slander. It occurred to me that the best remedy in such a case would be to lift the mind into a consideration and understanding of the higher values of life. I therefore set about to write down my reflections drawn from my own Sadhana of half a century and more. The titles under which these reflections were written strike me even now as fairly appropriate for the situation with which I was then concerned. They were Fearlessness, Wisdom, Honour, Compassion, Love, Truth, Non-violence, Beauty, Worship and Life. I have no recollection why I chose these titles in this order. These reflections came to me out of the abundance of my affection for and my faith in my young friend's innate spirituality and rectitude. I felt rewarded when this young person, meditating on these thoughts, came out of despondency and recovered lost self-confidence. May be, other young minds in the same plight might also draw comfort and strength from a study of these reflections. I have, therefore, ventured to collect them in this booklet. May it bring solace and courage to some at least of those who deserve and need the same. Only the light and the radiance of the lamp of the higher values of life can dispel the darkness which seeks to pull down human minds from the heights where alone they might seek and find their redemption.

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LESSON 1

FEARLESSNESS

You will remember the beautiful Gandhi Pillar in Gandhigram. At the foot of it, is inscribed a quotation from Mahatma Gandhi. It reads :-

“Fearlessness is the first requisite of Spirituality.
The coward can have no morals.”

No other religious prophet has held up so clearly the virtue of fearlessness as our Master. He never wrote one unnecessary word and never added any frills to Truth. He was the greatest economist of the spoken and written word. We must therefore take the lesson from this quotation without reservation.

You will also remember a quotation I gave you long ago from a German poet. The meaning of this quotation is that a man or woman might lose wealth, power, position and even the love of their dearest and yet if they strive as hard and long as necessary these things can be recovered and can come back into their lives. But once courage is lost, all is lost for ever.

But what is courage? Is a lion or a tiger or a serpent or a goonda or even an assassin truly brave? They are not. They will run away in the face of superior force. The only true courage is moral courage. Moral courage does not take stock of the power or the size of the enemy. It will never bow its knee before might. Its strength is from within. Moral courage always tends to grow more and more, and can become invincible. Moral courage is gentle but unbreakable. Bodily pain, loss of all we hold dear and even mental agony cannot defeat moral courage. It is this moral courage which our Master says is the first requisite of spirituality. A coward who is afraid and does things out of fear is neither moral nor spiritual.

Let us base all our conduct therefore on moral courage. Let us tell no lie nor act a lie out of fear. The greatest moral courage is that which rejects every lie and every wrong.

There is no one without some sin or other. Even so, the way to redemption lies open through the fearless acceptance of responsibility to withdraw the lie and to correct the wrong done.

You see, therefore, what is the core of spirituality, i. e., moral courage. Like the soul within the body, it is the core within spirituality. Both are linked together inextricably.

Be unafraid therefore whatever happens.

1-4-77

LESSON 2

WISDOM

We have not concluded our thoughts on Fearlessness. Being foundational it will entwine itself in the consideration of every other moral value. This entwining may be imperceptible but it will be a constant factor. Without it, other values will shrink and perish.

Let us now look at wisdom. Fearlessness and wisdom are like the two sides of the coin of spirituality. Courage without wisdom degenerates into recklessness. Wisdom without courage will be hesitant and fruitless. Wisdom is certainly not the mere acquisition of knowledge. We may be full of knowledge and still be without wisdom. Knowledge is essential for wisdom, but knowledge and wisdom are not the same. Knowledge is part of the nutrition of wisdom. But wisdom, even while it is built on knowledge, is above and beyond knowledge. Knowledge itself, however, is as broad as the sky and deeper than the ocean. One life here on earth is insufficient to gather all knowledge. Innumerable persons working ceaselessly at different points can pile up knowledge. We can

secure knowledge often only collectively and then use it for great purpose. If this is the breadth and depth of knowledge itself, how much more difficult is the attainment of wisdom which is the distilled essence of all knowledge including experience. Experience is a great ingredient and is as important as fearlessness for the making of wisdom.

While, on the one hand, wisdom founded on knowledge is most difficult to attain, it can, on the other hand, when looked upon as an attribute of the spirit, be simple and easy to secure. Shri Ramakrishna proved this when he expressed the highest wisdom without attaining complete knowledge of everything. His wisdom was intuitive and came out of a mind, child-like and simple and sweet. His wisdom came like a mountain stream gushing out of his pure mind. But this is intuitive wisdom which comes only to very rare mortals. We are concerned more with the wisdom that comes in the normal way from study of facts and realities and from the depth of experiences. Without study, meditation and experience, no wisdom will ever come to use. A person with ample knowledge and experience can move towards wisdom more quickly than the ignorant and the inert.

Now what then is this wisdom? There is no easy definition possible. Intellectuality is not wisdom. Cleverness is not wisdom. Much knowledge is also not wisdom. All these are necessary for wisdom but by themselves they do not constitute wisdom.

Wisdom is the quality or the ability of mind to decide what must be thought, spoken, or done in regard to every issue of life in such a manner that, without evading the issue, we find truthful, good and practical solutions to each one of them. Even a truthful person may offer a wrong solution. So can a very clever person. But a wise man is capable of considering every aspect of a problem, balancing the rights and wrongs carefully and offering a solution which is practical and in the highest interests of all concerned. Wisdom therefore is spirituality functioning in and through life at the highest level. Who can attain such wisdom? Only those who acquire knowledge as fully as possible, who become selfless and who act with fearlessness. The call of wisdom therefore is a call to the highest living and functioning we are capable of. It looks as though the aim of our life thus becomes the attainment of such wisdom. Having attained it, we live vitally, effectively and in peace and harmony with all life.

4-4-77

LESSON 3

HONOUR

Nothing written about wisdom should create the impression it is just high level opportunism. Wisdom is never opportunism. Wisdom is rooted in knowledge and experience, and growing upward reaches the borders of spirituality. Knowledge and experience are both dynamic and self growing. Drawing nourishment from these, wisdom moves towards a noble synthesis. This synthesis is honour. Wisdom will never stoop nor crawl. Wisdom aims high and ever grows upward. That is where honour enters the field of spirituality or where spirituality posits the cream of honour.

What is honour? Again, no easy definition is possible. Honour is high and noble conduct. Honour holds on to truth at the cost of everything. Honour thinks, talks, and acts at the highest level a person is capable of. It turns from deceit and subterfuge. It never betrays. When spirituality arises from fearlessness and becomes wedded to wisdom, honour is born. It is thus the progeny of high parenthood. Honour establishes a high and noble relationship among persons. Every person holding

on to honour rises upward and Godward. Spirituality and honour are blood kins. One is impossible without the other.

In the ancient world, the courage of the warrior, the holiness of the saint and, in later centuries, the knowledge of the scholar or the intellect of the thinker were the hall-marks of greatness. In the modern world, in the welter of crashing values and the confusion of ideals, honour emerges as the radiant attribute of the highest distinction and value. When you say today that someone is a person of honour, then you pay that person the highest tribute. It means such a person will be fearless, truthful, wise and can be trusted fully to act in the highest manner. Not piety, not even faith and devotion, nor goodness and virtue but honour alone is today the hall-mark of the truly great. Let us be men and women of honour, never stooping low, never betraying, always ennobling and uplifting ourselves and others around us.

This is the challenge of honour to each one of us.

5-4-77

LESSON 4

COMPASSION

As we dig into the subjects of Fearlessness, Wisdom and Honour, there comes to us something so gentle and soft and sweet that it is like the touch of rose petals. It soothes and comforts and beckons to us to notice it and understand it. It pleads, "Put me not away. You may be fearless, wise and full of the sense of honour but without me you will not know how to assist and save life, where it is slippery and dark. I am the nector that revives, saves and puts hope where only despair rules. I am like the rain that falls on drought-dried earth. I am the breeze that revives the lost and the dying. It is my hands that stretch out to pull up the drowning. When life is sick and swollen with suffering, it is I who will come to your aid. Mine are the eyes that look upon you with pity when you are in agony. I am the messenger of the Divine Spirit, wherever you are and whoever you are and whatever is your predicament. I nourish alike the serpent and the dove. I wash alike the stone and the blossom. I am hope when all hope is dead. I am the angel of mercy. I am compassion".

We can only listen and wonder. We can only open our ears and our hearts to this voice. We need this voice and truth behind the voice, the truth of compassion. However fearless we may be, and however wise and honourable, it is impossible to attain total blamelessness. We all can slip and fall. We all can err and sin. Not one of us can arise, when we fall and atone, when we err, without the nectar of compassion coming to us. This gift from the mansion of spirituality is God's grace to the mind of man; to receive and give compassion, to seek and offer mercy. Here, suddenly man steps beyond his animal base and steps out towards the Divine. Man comes nearest to God when he makes himself the embodiment of compassion.

Life can be harsh and cruel even with all the fearlessness and wisdom and sense of honour we can gather. Life becomes truly human and humane only when compassion enters into it. Compassion is the sympathy and pity which transforms the brute in man into the image of God. Compassion forgives, tolerates, redeems. It destroys nothing and hurts nothing.

Let no man or woman be without compassion. For, no man or woman can survive without compassion.

6-4-77

LESSON 5

LOVE - Part I

We have so far been taking our sacred bath in the Indus of Fearlessness, the Ganga of Wisdom the Brahmaputra of Honour and the Cauvery of Compassion. But the moment we think of "Love" we are looking at the ocean itself, the ocean to which all rivers come, pouring their waters into it and still the ocean does not rise or overflow. But the Ocean of Love, we are looking at now, is greater than all the oceans in the earth. The earthly ocean itself is a marvel, and standing on the white shore we look at the waters stretching out into the infinity of space. When the sun shines, the waters blaze like molten metal, when the moon shines the waters shimmer and when the clouds gather the waves rise and rush towards the shore. Every mood of the sky is reflected in the waters of the ocean. But how greater a marvel is the Ocean of Love: No one has fathomed its depth nor measured its length and width. But this is Prema Sagar, the Ocean of Love.

Just as the numberless rivers of the earth pour their waters into the ocean of the earth, all life plunges into the Ocean of Love. And how infinite is life! Every shade and colour, every surge and sway, every movement of life and death become

enmeshed in the waves of this Ocean of Love. It takes and gives, throws out and absorbs, sifts and cleanses, washes and purifies everything in life everywhere and all the time. The Ocean of Love beneath and the infinite Sky of God above together make a picture that fills the mind with wonder and awe beyond all words.

The manifestations of love are as infinite as love itself. Just like the earthly ocean reflects every mood, colour and tone, of the sky, the Ocean of Love reflects human and Divine nature in countless manifestations. We have mother love, father love, friend-love man-woman love, child love, gentle love, cruel love, redeeming love, destroying love, beautiful love, ugly love, and above all Divine love. But within this infinite variety of the expressions of lover something fundamental and inescapable runs like a golden thread through them all. We understand instinctively that all life is held together, shaped and moulded, motivated and directed by this fundamental love. All of us become instruments in its hands in some way or other, at one time or another and we surrender to it more willingly than to anything else. Love therefore reveals its inner nature as the Power of God which touches and shapes and guides every human being.

God comes down to man and man climbs upto God only through the luminous ladder of Love. Between them there is no other line of communication!

7-4-77

LESSON 5

LOVE – Part II

In the Indian spiritual tradition, one of the most cherished names of God is *Prema Sagar* meaning Ocean of Love. Who can count the waves of this ocean and who can understand how and why the waves rise, move, dance, flow and rush on unceasingly? Just as the air surrounds and sustains the earth, so love surrounds and sustains life. We know not its ways but we know it is there all the time and our hearts turn to it like the million leaves and flowers turn to the sun. The man or woman is yet unborn who has not in some inscrutable way or other called out to love and for love and received it and passed it on to others needing it.

What then is love? Love too is indefinable. Is it some profound emotion? Is it the innate movement of spirituality? Is it the air which the soul breathes eternally? All we know is, it is kindness, sympathy, fellow-feeling, even pity and much more than all these put together, because love is compounded out of the rare substances of the human spirit reaching out to the Divine Spirit. The whole of civilisation and culture is the attempt

to capture love and its hand-maid compassion and to press them into every relationship of life. It pervades not only the life of mankind but even the animal and vegetable kingdoms. The saint or the artist who looks at the innocent beauty of a blossom and refuses to pluck it, becomes the symbol of a high civilisation and culture. Children grow up only in the sunshine of love. All human relationships are purified and enriched by love.

It is totally untrue that the power of love cannot be harnessed to revolutions for the transformation of life into higher and higher altitudes. People believe generally hate is powerful and can be harnessed collectively to effect great changes. Man has generally delved into the depth of individual love and only very rarely into the depth of collective love. The task awaiting the man of this century and onward is that of proving that collective love and compassion is more powerful than collective hate or anger and that its creative sources of power are inexhaustible. We should bring up our children to understand the potency of love at every turn and all the time as they grow up. When love prevails, all things become possible with man. We are now in the world discovering the sources of even more incalculable spiritual power, which is love, remains yet to be discovered. The Prophet who came nearer to this discovery more than any other was Mahatma Gandhi.

15-4-77

LESSON 6

TRUTH – Part I

And now finally, we stand facing Truth. Truth is the sun of the solar system of the ethical values, which we have looked into so far. We have looked into fearlessness, wisdom, compassion, honour and love. Every one of these values arises from the blazing sun of Truth. Without it, these values will shrivel and perish. But these values coming like great beams from the sun of Truth share its eternity, omnipotence and omniscience. Truth represents the majesty and totality of the Divine. In fact the Divine may be defined as *Sathyaswaroopan*. Truth burns and illumines our inner selves like the sun, the solar system and the physical universe. This imagery lifts the whole picture of the solar system into a spiritual system. In enumerating the six values till now, we were practically beating about the bush of reality. But in looking at Truth, we are looking at the core of the ultimate reality. If Truth is like the sun, no one can go very near to it. We can only absorb the light and the heat of this sun, also only from afar. And even what we can absorb,

becomes like a fire within us. All those who tried to go too near the sun were burnt to ashes like the Christ, the Buddha, Gandhi, Lenin etc. We can only absorb from Truth its distant beams. Truth is universal and total. No mind of man can comprehend its universality and totality. This is not surprising, for Truth ultimately is coeval with God. Has anyone comprehended the totality of Godhood fully? No one can comprehend the totality of Truth. Everything in the physical and natural sciences, everything in spiritual reality is within Truth. Nothing is outside Truth. It is therefore impossible to define Truth. We can only get glimpses of Truth to the extent we have perfected our preception. Even the greatest mind will recoil when it nears Truth. The soul within, will have to cry out *Neti, Neti*.

We must, therefore, not attempt the impossible i. e., to get at the totality of Truth. Each one can only get a glimpse of Truth. If we are wise, we can sit together in peace and good will and add up all our glimpses and thus get a fuller realisation than our special individual experiences. Votaries of Truth must make a united family. We must put together and not put asunder. Even when we have done this, we would still be far away from the totality of Truth. What then can we do ?

Let us, by purifying and perfecting our individual lives, open the door to realise the Truth in our measure. But if Truth is an over-all integrated reality, then as each one of us rises upwards with

our own experience of Truth, we will find that we are all moving in the same direction. Votaries of Truth will thus become companions in the greatest pilgrimage of man. While this pilgrimage is inescapable, what is imperative is to hold on to Truth, to the extent we know it, with all our strength. When we do that, other beams of Truth will reach us and enrich us without our even knowing it. If Truth is totally integrated, wherever we touch it, we will get the feel of the whole. If we take care of our own perception of Truth and live up to it, the whole will take care of itself, and make us more and more complete as we move onward and upward along our own path. This is the greatest mystery of life.

Let us therefore stand erect. Let us hold on to the Truth which we realise with all our might, and be sure then that every other facet of Truth will stream towards us irresistibly. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all else shall be added unto you". Here, we also get a glimpse of the Grace of God.

16-4-77

LESSON 6

TRUTH - Part II

There was probably too much abstract thought on Truth and too little of elucidation of the practical implications of Truth in Part I. It is necessary to descend to the level of earthly life in relation to Truth. To begin with, Truth is the opposite of the false. Everyone wants every other to speak the Truth and to act in accordance with Truth. This means avoiding lies, exaggerations and inaccuracies. This also means action must be righteous. Is it necessary to explain this statement? No one is so degraded or so fallen as to not to know the distinction between Truth and falsehood, right and wrong action, and a high and noble life and a low and deceitful life. We all know the distinctions. But the crux of the matter is that even while we know, we do not act in accordance with what we know. Then, a fact is often equated to Truth, the factual becomes the truthful. In these considerations we are in the area of ethics as distinct from the area of metaphysics. But it is the metaphysics of Truth which becomes the ethics of Truth. Truth, as the ultimate reality, and Truth in human

conduct, are closely related but not identical. One is the idea and the other is the practice of the idea. Generally mankind is more preoccupied with the ethics of the Truth than the metaphysics of the Truth. But there can be no ethics without the background of ideas and values. It may become more and more necessary in the future for man to relate truthful conduct to Truth itself. If this is done, the level of ethics will rise upward.

Perhaps the Buddha, more than any other world teacher, understood that the practice of Truth has to be rooted in the understanding of the Moral Law which governs all life. Buddha called the law of life, *Dhamma*, which is the Pali word for Dharma. In his unmatched search for Truth, Buddha discovered the Law but no law-giver. He accepted the Law without a law-giver. His religion itself became based on the wheel of Law. Like the Cross for Christianity, the Wheel of Law became the symbol of Buddhism. Gandhi however saw beyond the quality of the Law and the law-giver. He made the revolutionary affirmation that the Law and the law-giver are one. He thus established the identity of Truth as an idea and Truth as conduct. These were the two sides of the coin of Truth.

To live simple and pure lives, to speak and act truthfully, to love all fellow-creatures and to serve them, to do good and to avoid evil may be considered the simple meaning of truthful

conduct. This is within the reach of every man and woman, even if the metaphysics of Truth may not be really clear to them. There is then the glowing concept of conscience. It is held that no man or woman in any state of existence is without a conscience. It is like a lamp lit from within to show the distinction between Truth and untruth, the good and the evil and love and hate. The greatest challenge of Truth to man is not to let this conscience become atrophied but to purify and make it vitally active. Truth is not merely the absence of falsehood. Truth is not a negation but a positive affirmation of the ultimate good. There should be no difficulty in realising God as the Truth we understand. Gandhi said more than once that he had for a long time held that "God is Truth", but towards the end of his life his thought was that "Truth is God". The unattainable totality of Truth need frighten nobody. We do not reject life because we do not know its original beginning or its final end. We take life as it is, to live it well, abundantly and devotedly. More than this we may achieve but less than this no one should be satisfied with. We hold on to Truth as we understand Truth with all our strength, that will lead us on. We can complicate and mystify our Truth too much and lose it. It is better to realise that part of Truth which we can understand and practise. Truth is therefore not an impossible goal but the companion holding our hand as we move onward to our destiny.

18-5-77

LESSON 7

NON-VIOLENCE – Part I

Once I was shown round a big distillery which produced concentrated alcohol. It contained complicated machinery with big boilers and twisted pipe lines and different apparatuses. Alcohol was being distilled from black-palm jaggery. Vast quantities of this jaggery were boiling in huge vats. Finally I was shown where the concentrated spirit arrived through a small tube. I asked the question if the big building and all that machinery, the vast quantities of raw materials etc., finally brought forth concentrated spirit only through such a small tube which was being caught in strong glass jars. It was explained to me that before the spirit thus distilled was given out for human consumption, it had to be mixed with hundred-fold quantities of water. Even then it would be strong liquor! I have drawn this picture to show how vast quantities of raw materials, complicated machinery etc. were required to produce a small flow of concentrated spirit was so powerful that hundred-fold quantities more of water had to be added to make it consumable.

As I think of non-violence, it strikes me that in the same manner, vast quantities of mental and moral resources will have to be put through intensive processes of training before a drop of genuine non-violence can appear in the mind of man. Even one such drop will gather hundreds and thousands of human minds to absorb it and to live up to it. We have in our previous lessons dealt with the values of fearlessness, wisdom, compassion, love, truth etc. All these have to be pressed into service to produce non-violence in society, but when such non-violence is produced, it can be multiplied a hundred-fold because of its inherent potency. Non-violence has to be drawn from all the values of the human mind we have dealt with so far. Only the fearless, the wise, the compassionate and those holding on to love and honour can ever be non-violent. May we not therefore define non-violence as the ultimate distilled essence in practice of all the moral and spiritual values to which men and women have not unoften given their loyalty and allegiance in human history?

In the Indian tradition of thinking, it has been stated again and again, pointing to non-violence, *Ahimsa Paramo Dharma*. This means that non-violence in thought, word and deed is the ultimate distilled essence of all moral and spiritual values and therefore the highest Dharma. Non-violence has also been defined as truth and love in action. Truth and love when they act, do so inevitably in terms of non-violence. Violence is wholly alien to truth

and love, just as non-violence is inherent and inevitable in them. It is impossible for truth and love to function within the core of human life except through non-violence. Gandhiji therefore held that the ultimate test of love and truth was non-violence. Truth and love must generate non-violence in individuals and in society, or be swept away. No man of truth can be violent in thought and action. No man of love can act except non-violently. Even where some violence becomes inescapable, as for instance in a surgical operation or in protection of the innocent and defenceless, such violence also can be justified only in terms of truth and love, as motivating such action. The prophet who in the history of mankind perfected the techniques of non-violent action as capable of totally transforming the individual and society was undoubtedly, Mahatma Gandhi. Even Jesus Christ whipped the money changers out of the temple of God. Gandhi's non-violence was more thorough and comprehensive. He would not even allow the snakes in the compound of his Ashram to be beaten to death but trained young people to catch them and take them away to distant fields and other uninhabited places. As Jesus who taught and lived the law of love more than any other teacher, was fated to die on the cruel cross, so was Gandhi fated to fall before the bullets of an assassin. The death of Christ on the cross and of Gandhi at the hands of the assassin only proved the final validity of non-violence in the face of the challenge of violence running a race with non-violence. These martyrdoms streng-

thened the fibre of non-violence in human life and history.

Let us make up our minds that if we are votaries of truth and love, it is imperative that we become non-violent in thought and action. Such thought and action can generate tremendous creative forces which can transform and uplift the individual and society. Gandhi showed the possibilities of this beyond doubt in his life and work. Let us follow in his foot-steps to the utmost of our understanding and capacity and become harbingers of a peaceful society based on truth and love. This is the paramount duty of the citizen of today in every land and clime, faced as the world is with the terrific peril of total annihilation from a war fought out with atomic weapons of incalculable destructive power.

25-4-'77.

LESSON 7

NON-VIOLENCE – Part II

Non-violence can never remain in the air but must come down into life it is worth the name. If this is so, let us study how non-violence can come into our lives. It must come first into our individual lives, then spread to the community of which we are members and then go on spreading into wider and wider areas of life. It is something like what happens when we throw a stone into the water of a tank or a lake. The ripple goes on extending into wider and wider circles. Let us then go step by step, very simply and without complicating the issues involved towards non-violence. The first step is to control anger and hate and to act temperately. Some people find this easy and some others difficult. In any case this should be done consciously. We shall come up against violence in many situations of life. Someone or other is angry with us and hates us and attempts to indulge in violence against us. The second step is not to retaliate but to calmly face the situation and to help to cool the anger and hate coming up against us with our own good temper and calm conduct. If we experiment with ourselves in this manner we

shall win many victories for non-violence even if we might lose sometimes. It will be our duty to persist in non-retaliation. The non-violent man or woman, knowing the challenges of life to the contrary, should become an educationist in non-violence, persuading others also to adopt non-retaliation. When there are even a small number of people standing firm on non-retaliation and calm conduct, it may become possible for us to face collective anger, hate and violence from others. Consciously or unconsciously we become Shanti Sainiks, trying to meet every difficult situation non-violently. The educational process involved will not be difficult if the votaries of non-violence are honest and sincere. We must firmly believe that it will be easier to persuade people to behave non-violently than incite them to violence. It will be very demonstrable that violence will create counter-violence whereas non-violence will arrest violence. The theory and practice of this can not only be explained but demonstrated every day in life. This is more or less the processing of non-violence in daily life.

We have already seen that people who are brave, honourable, compassionate, truthful and sincere can handle non-violence as something which is natural and possible. If a group of boys and girls will ask the question, "What is non-violence and how can we practice it?", the answer will be something like this:-

1. Speak the truth and be sincere in your words and actions.

2. Do not lose your temper and shout angrily at anyone even if the other fellow is angry and shouting at you. Behave calmly and speak and act gently.
3. Create an atmosphere of sunshine and love wherever you are by being good to others and serving others to the best of your ability.
4. Make more and more friends and less and less enemies.
5. Do not be a party to any injustice towards anyone. To begin with, this would be on a personal and individual basis and later on in an ever-growing collective basis.
6. Let others see we are not greedy and do not aim at snatching anything from them.
7. Fearlessness is essential to non-violence. Do not tolerate injustice, stand up to it bravely but gently, irrespective of consequences.
8. The votary of non-violence must love his neighbours, help them in their need and cultivate their goodwill. This means we must share with our neighbours what we have and take from them what they produce and are willing to share with us. This is the spirit of Khadi and Swadeshi. Liquor and intoxicants abet violence and must be eschewed.

9. Let us make no difference between the rich and the poor. But we shall insist that no one continues to be rich at the cost of another and that the poor has the same right as the rich to work, earn and live happily.
10. The Shanti Sena will be the symbol of collective non-violence. Either we ourselves initiate small units of the Shanti Sena or join and help others doing it.

These are simple and straightforward thoughts on non-violence beginning with individuals and spreading to society. If this happens steadily, even if slowly, we shall be laying the foundations for a peaceful just, prosperous and happy human society. Can there be a greater privilege than lending a hand in the creation of such a society? Let us all say inside our minds with faith and conviction, *Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai*.

28-4-77

LESSON 8

BEAUTY

Let us realise that Beauty like Truth is a reality. Beauty in life is essential to life itself. Just as Truth is more understood when juxtaposed with untruth, so too Beauty is better understood as distinct from ugliness. Like Truth, Beauty is not easily definable. It can have different connotations in different contexts. Nevertheless we shall have to have a working hypothesis on what Beauty is. Just as Truth is essentially attached to the spirit, Beauty is attached to matter. To put it more simply, Truth indicates values and Beauty indicates form and colour. To identify Truth and Beauty completely will be sometimes inaccurate. Beauty and Truth can become one in some very special context. But normally, we see the distinction between Truth and Beauty. There is no gainsaying, however, that Truth can be beautiful and Beauty can be truthful. Even so, it would be straining the definition too much to make them into one.

For a common man beauty consists in the form, in the shape, in the colours and in all the intangible things arising from form and colour. A painting is

beautiful but not necessarily truthful. A sculpture can be beautiful without being spiritual. Music and poetry can be beautiful even if they are not material. Will it be too much to say, Beauty is what gives to our eyes and mind pleasure and even a deeper joy through forms and colours and the rhythm and cadence of words? Some magic of imagination interpenetrates all things beautiful. Let us concern ourselves more with the beauty of living than anything else in this study of Beauty. Life must be lived not only truthfully, wisely, honourably etc., but also beautifully. Beauty of living should become the crown of all good life. When we achieve this combination, life rises to the noble heights of culture. After all the culture of an individual or a society is the ultimate measure of their greatness. Is it too difficult to understand how life can be lived beautifully? Life is lived both at the material and spiritual levels. Beauty of living is largely attached to the material level. Tagore in one of his immortal poems wrote about the Divine :—

“Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well”.

It is when the bird of life builds its nest that the beauty of living comes into the picture. The nest of our life should be beautiful without any ugliness. The nest must be beautifully located and constructed. There must be in the nest the beauty of forms and colours and smells. Everything should conduce to happiness and concord within the nest and in relation to all other nests. This is where the family

and the house, the landscape and the gardens, the mountains and the rivers, beauty of furniture and vessels, painting and music, all come in one by one. Civilisation has largely been the process of this nest-building by man for his own happiness and wellbeing. Cleanliness will naturally be at the core of the beauty of living. Let us decide therefore that life should be based not only on truth, love, honour etc., but equally on the beauty of living. This will nearly complete the circle of the life of man at the heights of his aspirations and accomplishments. To look upon beauty as evil is to confess that the looker has evil in him or her. Beauty can enhance moral values. It is not Beauty but the degradation of Beauty which degrades life. This lesson may end with the following quotation from Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore addressed to the child of his vision :—

“When I bring you coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colours on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints - when I give coloured toys to you, my child.

When I sing to make you dance, I truly know why there is music in leaves, and why waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth when I sing to make you dance.

When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands,
I know why there is honey in the cup of the flower.
and why fruits are secretly filled with sweet juice-
when I bring sweet things to your greedy hands,

When I kiss your face to make you smile, my dar-
ling, I surely understand what pleasure streams
from the sky in morning light, and what delight
the summer breeze brings to my body - when I
kiss you to make you smile."

29-4-77

LESSON 9

WORSHIP

Let there be no mistake about this subject. What is meant by worship is worship of God. That this worship goes on even in our time under many names and forms and rituals only emphasises the fact of the worship of God by countless millions of people all over the world. However much science has progressed, many of the vital issues of life, including cultural and political issues are even today not only swayed by religions but even settled in accordance with their trends. But let us concede at once that there can be worship outside religion. There are the great ideologies of democracy socialism, communism, etc. which also imply near-worship of them by millions of people. Sometimes this secular worship and the religious worship go together and sometimes they go opposite ways. Nevertheless vast numbers of people can and do owe allegiance to secular ideals and ideologies and having set up their own symbols, worship them in one way or another. The *Hammer*

and Sickle is as much intrinsically the subject of worship as the *Cross*. Looked at in this broader perspective, there are few human societies which can be shown to be devoid of any form of worship. We must therefore accept the reality of worship by most human beings of some God or ideologies and ideals and their symbols. It is our duty therefore to look at the phenomenon of worship as something inalienable from human societies. We are also face to face with the fact that conflicts between and among religious systems can be and have been often as bloody and destructive as any conflicts between empires and political systems. The war between Catholics and Protestants for many centuries, between Islam and Christianity and in our time between Muslims and Hindus and between Capitalism and Communism are outstanding examples.

Without forgetting this background, let us confine ourselves in this study to a consideration of the worship of God. Let us not lose ourselves in the research into the concepts of God held by different religions and peoples at different times in history. For the purpose of this study, the vital question is how this worship of God may and can add to the richness of human life and to the heights to which the human spirit can climb in making the world into an area of peace, goodwill, justice and prosperity reaching down *Unto the last*. So long as religious and social systems compete with each other to achieve at any cost their own

ends and purposes, God will only be a helpless witness of His betrayal by His votaries. Long ago there came out a book entitled *The Betrayal of Christ by the Churches* by John Middleton Murry. This was courageous criticism by a Christian thinker of Christian Churches. Unfortunately we have no similar courageous thesis from Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim writers. It would be good if we had books entitled, *Betrayal of Hinduism by the Pundits and the Acharyas*, *Betrayal of Buddhism by the Monks and the Viharas* and *Betrayal of Islam by the Mullahs and the Mosques*. Here we are stressing the need to turn the searchlight inward into the religious systems, which are now holding the soul of man to ransom almost everywhere. It was Mahatma Gandhi's supreme teaching that unless every religion underwent a relentless process of self purification, thus discovering their own inner meaning and unity, religions will continue to play only a destructive and diminishing influence on mankind. In our worship therefore let us accept unreservedly the Gandhian doctrine of *Sarva Dharma Samanawa*. (I have known even leading Gandhians avoiding the expression of *Samanatwa* and replacing it by the word *Samanawaya*.) To Gandhiji no religion was completely perfect. Every religion had its heights and depths. Hence the challenge to self-purification. For the votaries of Truth and Love, all religions will be and are worthy of equal reverence. This approach will become valid in every religion, the moment the searchlight is

turned inward into them. More and more, the worship of the personal God or gods is giving way to the worship of the Divine Spirit, which has created and sustained this Universe and is immanent and vibrant in every atom of the Universe. To this Divine Spirit which has no name and no form or to which belongs all names and all forms, let us bow our heads in worship and dedication. If God is the God immanent and vibrant in every atom of Universe, then God is acting every moment of time, creating, shaping, directing, motivating and uplifting. If we can cultivate faith in such a God and worship Him in spirit and in truth, our worship becomes not only meditational and prayerful but impregnated with Kriya or action all the time. We have thus the concept and practice of Kriya Yoga. No concept of Truth and Love which does not come into the life of man in terms of high and dedicated action will be worth our worship. Let us meditate by all means and pray with all our sincerity but let all meditation and prayer, lead to action to serve, uphold and elevate our own lives and the lives of others with whom we come in contact. Here is the highest consummation of life which looks death in the face and finds no sting in it. This completes the circle of man's highest aspirations in thought, word and deed. Life without worship becomes barren and self defeating. Life linked to

true worship finds its own way ever upward to,
wards its own richest and completest fulfilment.
The concluding prayer, may then be aptly:-

Lead us from untruth to Truth
From darkness to Light
From death to Immortality

1-5-77

LESSON 10

LIFE, THE ULTIMATE TEST

The ultimate test of all we learn, know and cherish is life itself. All morality and spirituality must enter into life and elevate it to be worth their names. The world will not care or tarry to study our thoughts and ideas but will all the time look at our deeds and the way we live. So will the world judge us and in no other way. We may affirm all we hold in our minds as sacred but the world will not look into our minds which may remain closed to outside scrutiny. Only our deeds and lives will speak out for us. Our spoken words become in some intangible way part of our deeds. No one can mistake our deeds as our deeds will be self-revealing. Our good deeds and good lives alone can testify whether we are fearless, wise, honourable, compassionate, love-filled, truthful, non-violent and if we are wedded to true beauty and if our worship is genuine. However thorough may be our comprehension of the great values we have enumerated, if our deeds and our lives contradict these values, then we become hypocrits who betray what we profess to believe. Let our lives and deeds therefore shine out with the lustre of these values. Then alone will our fellowmen trust and honour us. It has often been said that it is not enough that we are good but the world must look at us and

know we are good. There is the great teaching of one of the Human spirits, Jesus Christ, that many will be called but only few chosen. Mahatma Gandhi put it in a different way when he said, "I see Light persists inspite of all darkness, Truth persists in spite of all untruth and life persists in spite of death". Darkness, untruth and death typify the imperative contradictions of Truth and Love and Life. We need not tremble at the thought that though many are called only few will be chosen. Chosen by whom? Chosen by the Divine Spirit which creates and sustains life and leads it on ceaselessly and eternally towards nobler and higher ends. Our aim must be that we shall all the time be in the minority of the good and the just, but never giving up the hope that as we ourselves remain true to the great values of life, more and more companions will join us in the never ending pilgrimage onward and upward. We may falter and fall on the way but every time we shall rise up with renewed faith, strength and devotion to advance further, holding other hands in high companionship and strengthening each other. It is the minority of today which becomes the majority of tomorrow. But in the tantalising panorama of earthly life, the majority might sink again into the minority and then renew itself so that the cycle of life advances like a spiral, advancing, receding and yet advancing. The eternal flow of life proves the validity of *Paradises Lost* and *Paradises Regained* again and again. The final word is not one of despair but of hope.

3—5—77