

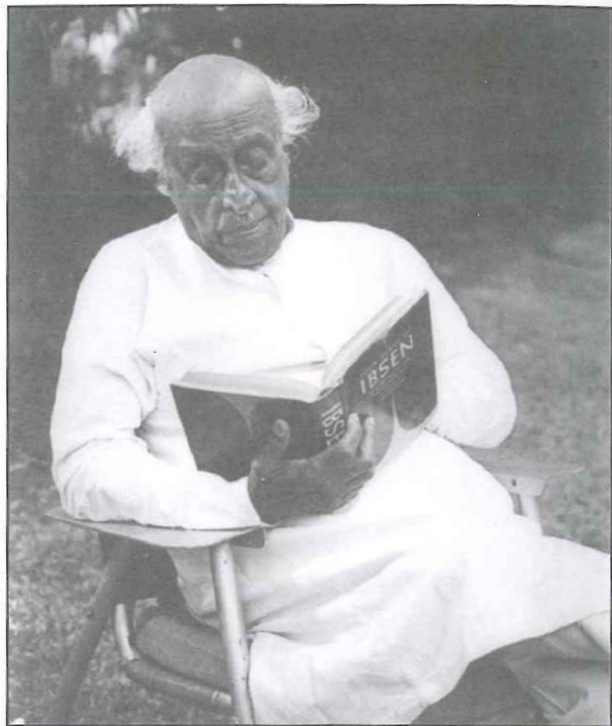
SPOTLIGHT ON  
GANDHIAN IDEAS,  
AIMS AND METHODS



Reflections of life  
by  
**DESIKOTHAMA  
DR G RAMACHANDRAN**



The Madhavi Mandiram Loka Seva Trust  
Neyyattinkara



Dr. G. Ramachandran

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Dr G.Ramachandran



**MADHAVIMANDIRAM LOK SEVA TRUST**

Dr. G.R. ROAD, NEYYATTINKARA - 695 121

Phone : 0471-2223217 e-mail : mythili1@vsnl.com

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## FOREWORD

“Spotlight on Gandhian ideas, aims & Methods” is one of the series of booklets, “Reflections of Life” written by Desikottama Dr G. Ramachandran. Even a casual reader will find inspiration from a study of these reflections. How a person or society should be in their lives as per Mahatma is defined clearly by GR in his efficient language

In these reflections he recalls the image of a Triveni or the Confluence of three 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 the currents of our Cultural Renaissance in which the poetry and philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore flowed. 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 Dr GR shares with us more of the gleanings of his Sadhana in these book lets.



# Spotlight On Gandhian Ideas, Aims & Methods



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## THE SIMPLE LIFE

Truth and Ahimsa were the foundations of Gandhian ideas. To Gandhiji the Isha Upanishad embodied eternal truth. To accept life in the world as God's highest gift without reservation and then to use it fully to reach God through conscious renunciation was the teaching, which fascinated Gandhiji.

Here there was neither rejection of life nor an attitude of negation towards it. Accept life with both your hands, but do not merely seek to grasp its gifts. Move upward through renunciation was the challenge of the higher life. This at once combines both acceptance and sacrifice.

Gandhiji however, was never satisfied with ideas only, even if they were at the highest level. Like Sri Aurobindo, who did his Tapasya



to bring the "Supra Mental" down into earthly life, Gandhiji wanted to bring the Isha Upanishad right into human life. He aimed at preparing human life, to absorb the teaching of conscious acceptance of life and then the conscious sacrifice of it to attain salvation. It is this preparation for the higher life on the earth itself that became his great Constructive programme. There were steps to climb within this Programme.

**The first step might well be called the Simple Life.**

This perhaps is what is meant by the well-known phrase "Simple living and high thinking". Gandhiji saw that modern civilization meant endless multiplication of wants and then the equally endless expenditure of energy and wealth to satisfy those wants. Up to a point Gandhiji agreed this was inevitable and **within limits**, even desirable. But if this process escalated all the time, then civilization would be

tied up into impossible knots producing greed, competition and social conflicts.

Therefore, conscious and wise limitation of wants is the first step in simple life, which again was the first step towards truly higher life. Here are Gandhiji's own words "Civilization in the real sense of the term consists not in the multiplication but in the deliberate and voluntary limitation of wants.

This alone promotes real happiness and contentment and increases the capacity for productive work." He then added, "I suggest we are all thieves in a way. If I take anything I do not really need for my own immediate use and keep it, I thief from somebody else. I venture to suggest it is the fundamental law of Nature without exception, which Nature and man can produce enough for our legitimate wants from day to day and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no suffering or death from starvation in this world. But so long as we have

this inequality, so long we are thieving.

Gandhiji received confirmation from Einstein, perhaps the greatest Scientist of this century when he said, "The fate of the human race was more than ever dependent on its moral strength toady rather than on material strength. The way to a joyful and happy life is through renunciation and self limitation in our entire life,"

Pandit Nehru also gave a further intensification of Einstein's idea when he wrote, "I am absolutely convinced that no wealth in this life can advance humanity upward even in the hands of the most devoted workers in the cause. The example of the great and pure workers is the only thing that can lead us to a higher and better life."

It is not merely, in words that Gandhiji and Nehru subscribed to the ideals of austerity and service. Their lives were like a blazing torch for us and the generations to come. It was their

exemplification of these ideals in their own persons that gave them their power and influence over millions of people.

Gandhiji's loincloth became the emblem of his total identification with the poor and the destitute. It is not generally known that Pandit Nehru also in his own way lived a simple and open life.

Let us therefore cultivate simple life along the lines laid by our Mahatma.





## **NON-EXPLOITATION**



If “The Simple Life” is fundamental for a life of truth and love, then “Non-exploitation” in our conduct under all circumstances is the next fundamental on the Gandhian way.

Let us understand the meaning of non-exploitation very simply and without any flourishes. Take nothing which your neighbor needs, enjoy nothing which your neighbor can never aspire to get, do not make anybody your servant on whose labour you depend for living your life except on conditions equally fair to both sides. In the simplest words, do not ride on the back of any one else. This idea of non-exploitation is intimately connected with simple living. This should not need any elaborate explanation.

**A simple life and non-exploitation** are spiritual twins. Exploitation in the world to-day can take a thousand forms. When Gandhiji once in the Sevagram Ashram refused to ask a little girl to go and bring him his small spittoon but got up himself to fetch it, he was setting a significant example of non-exploitation. Asking a child to fetch things for you may be the very thin end exploitation in the home but at the farthest end exploitation can and does mean conquest, suppression and even slavery.

The world today is full of exploitation of every kind. If only we keep our moral eyes open, we can witness every hour and all around us varied but unmistakable exploitation by individuals and groups of other individuals and groups. In the result anger and hatred are generated leading to violent confrontation. This is how the home and the world are closely inter-linked. What begins as a trickle of exploitation in the home explodes finally into wars

and destruction of life and property on an immense scale.

Non-Exploitation does not rule out inter-dependence on conditions, which can be proved to be fair and equitable to all those concerned. Interchange of products of every kind between parties freely consenting to the interchange and deriving equal benefit from it is the anti-thesis of exploitation.

The European races have exploited more than half the world for some centuries and thus enriched themselves while impoverishing Brown and Black races. That is why we have today one half of the world angry with the other half and hating it beyond redemption.

The British exploited India for more than 200 years with what results we all know. The European Nations once tore China to pieces and fastened their claws on the people China. But the most telling example of exploitation is that of Africa by the Whites, which still

continues in diabolical forms and shapes. If the strong and the affluent give up exploitation we create at once a new world of complete justice and lasting peace.

Mahatma Gandhi's doctrine of non-exploitation is thus a great moral challenge before the world today. Non-exploitation is the ethical essence of spirituality of true religion. Gandhiji taught that only non-exploiting individuals would make a non-exploiting society. He would not tolerate the idea of any man or woman riding on the back of any other man or woman. Here then we have a dynamic philosophy enshrined in a dynamic ethics.

Let us cultivate the sense of Non - exploitation in ourselves consciously.





## FEARLESSNESS

We had listed two steps on the Gandhian way. The first was "The Simple Life", and the second was "Non-Exploitation." The Simple Life and Non-Exploitation were shown to be intimately connected. They were both the ethical expressions of spirituality. After these two steps comes the third step i.e. "Fearlessness'." There is in Gandhigram Rural University a beautiful Gandhi Pillar rising like an aspiration upward into the sky with a great quotation from Mahatma Gandhi, i.e.

**Fearlessness is the first requisite of spirituality;**

**The coward can have no morals."**

No religious prophet has so vividly given fearlessness the first place among the virtues as Gandhiji. Fear is the enemy of truth;

that is why a coward can have no morals worth the name. Fear is anti-ethical and therefore anti-spiritual. Fear is the root cause of violence. A man or a woman who is afraid, takes recourse to violence to escape from what is considered to be a danger of one kind or other. It is astonishing to remember that cowardice leads more than anything else to anger and hate and violence.

Therefore Gandhiji was never tired of repeating that non-violence can belong only to the brave. Fearlessness and non-violence are as closely inter-related as fear and violence. You have only to watch the conduct of animals to understand this. The animal attacks only when it is frightened. Fearlessness is thus the great third step on the Gandhian way.

Fearlessness is not something negative. It is not the absence of fear. It is something very positive. **Fearlessness means courage under all circumstances.** But this courage in men and women has to become a spiritual

quality. It is no longer the courage of the brute, which attacks out of fear. A spiritual quality has an indefinable link with our faith in God. Mahatma Gandhi therefore pointed out most clearly that only those who have complete faith in God could possess the fearlessness of the non-violent.

Faith in God presupposes reckless surrender to the Divine-Will, as we understand it. It was because Gandhiji was always moved by this faith in God that in the great nonviolent revolutions he led, he could take a leap into the utter dark irrespective of consequences.

In the first Non Co-operation Revolution, the British in India ridiculed the idea that any non-violence can shake the foundations of the mighty Empire.

In the Salt Satyagraha Revolution, the same people proclaimed that Gandhi was a fool to believe that by breaking the Salt law and picking up salt on the seashores, he could break

up the Empire. On both the occasions Gandhiji took a leap into the dark, so to say, with his firm faith in God and the people.

The Gandhian way was one on which millions trod sharing in the faith & fearlessness of the Master.

In daily life, fearlessness is the only way to noble action. It is also the only way to the mansion of Truth and Love. Pandit Nehru put this idea in his won words when he said that only the brave could be free. For him fearlessness was the key to freedom.

We must however recognize that the violent can also be brave. **When a man takes his life into his hands and fights for his freedom against heavy odds, he also proves that bravery and violence can go together.**

Gandhiji himself admitted this when he characterized the resistance of the Polish people to the German invasion under Hitler as

near Non-violence. The Poles knew that they would die to a man and yet they stood up and fought. Gandhiji called this “almost non-violence.”

Fearlessness is not for application only on big and national issues. It must come into our daily life. If we cultivate the fearlessness of the non-violent we shall be able to solve every problem individual and collective. If Ahimsa is the highest virtue, fearlessness is the only way to it.

Let us at any cost cultivate fearlessness of the non-violent in the sense Mahatma wanted and be free.



## RURAL CIVILIZATION

At the core of Gandhian political philosophy is the unashamed recognition of the value and significance of Rural Civilization. In the cities of Europe, India and South Africa Gandhiji saw the failure of moral and spiritual values. It was not as though Gandhiji did not know that the civilization of cities has created a tremendous upsurge of scientific and technological advancement. Such advancement had captivated the mind of man and this has given an impetus to urbanization and the development of cities.

Gandhiji wondered if there could be a healthy balancing of urban and rural civilizations. He was not quite sure if such a balancing was possible except with the cities surrendering a great deal to the villages Gandhiji realized that the cities would not easily make such

surrender. He therefore turned his attention to the development of rural civilization in India with a message for the whole world.

It was his conviction that for a very long time to come many more millions of people will continue to live in the rural areas of the world than in the cities and towns. He was not at all ignorant of the increasing tide of people in our time moving from the villages to towns and cities. Curiously this phenomenon is more prominent in the undeveloped countries where without thinking or planning people move into the towns seeking employment and entertainment. The crux of the matter is undoubtedly employment.

Gandhiji therefore aimed at increased employment in the rural areas by confirming old but viable village industries and adding new ones. This was the meaning of the Khadi & Village Industries Movement, which he initiated and sustained throughout his life. At the

same time he wanted to develop in the villages a modernized culture with roots in the past and cherishing valuable old values but at the same time reaching out to new expressions of culture and ethics. As he said to Poet Rabindranath Tagore in a famous controversy, it was his dream that music and poetry, painting and sculpture etc. must reach the villages from the towns and cities through men and women dedicated to a new-rural civilization. It is astonishing that the trend to ruralism is gathering strength in the highly developed countries while the insensate march to urbanization is more apparent in the less developed countries.

Whatever may be in store for mankind in the distant future, we have to reckon with the Gandhian approach to this problem as a matter of relevance. In the most highly industrial areas of the world there is the growing phenomenon of the decentralization of great industrial complexes. This urge has come from



the very heart of industrialization itself and is based on practical and economic motivation. Perhaps here at last is the coming together of economic and moral values, which have long remained utterly separate. Gandhiji's political philosophy of ruralism is pre-eminently Indian in origin. But Gandhiji knew enough of the world of Asia and Africa to note the validity of ruralism in these two continents and even elsewhere in the world.

Ruralism does not rule out smaller townships. This is perhaps true of almost all Gandhian plans for the future of mankind. His experimental base is India without a doubt. India however furnishes the same problems as elsewhere in the world. In India itself vast rural areas confront hundreds of towns and scores of big cities. The challenge of the situation therefore in India has yielded plenty of data for Gandhiji to predict that the world will have to move more towards ruralism and decentralization if there is to be a new civilization of

peace, contentment and prosperity within restraints.

We thus see that rural civilization is fundamental to the Gandhian approach to the future.



## A CASTELESS AND CLASSLESS SOCIETY

The Hindu religion and the caste system had remained linked closely together through many centuries. The caste system hardened and became stratified as a fortress for self-preservation. While perhaps it originated even much earlier as outlines of specification of work to be carried out by different sections of the people, in later years it broke up into innumerable divisions, each division seeking to preserve social privileges as against other sections. It would be no exaggeration to say that what was intended to be a fortress or a series of forts became one vast prison house with innumerable close prisons within. This led to endless conflicts perpetuating cruel vivisection and regimentation of life.

For centuries therefore social life was

poisoned leading to the crime of untouchability attaching to those in the lowest caste who became outcastes. In his analysis of Indian society Gandhiji discovered that the caste system with untouchability at one end was the greatest obstacle to national unity and progress. More over he himself had suffered the tortures of another terrible type of caste system in South Africa where Christianity had become degraded into vile racism.

He had known how in a modern State the educated and the prosperous could create a system of diabolic distinctions. And so, as Mahatma Gandhi looked at the Indian scene, he vowed he would destroy casteism and untouchability in his own country. He created a mighty movement against the evils of casteism and struck at untouchability with all his might. As the leader of the political revolution in India he carried immense weight and succeeded in a large measure in creating the vision and practices of a casteless society.

During the partition of India, which ended in the creation of Pakistan Gandhiji realized that casteism and classism had become inseparable. This challenge came to him in Noakhali where single handed he was fighting with all his moral momentum to restore Hindu Muslim amity. In Noakhali he discovered casteism directly promoting class distinctions. In line with his practice of fighting a social evil the day he came up against it, he declared perhaps for the first time, that his aim was not merely a casteless society but also a classless society. Here Gandhiji was approaching the borderlands of Communism.

But he was absolutely clear in his mind that a classless society can be achieved in India only through non-violence. There was some consternation among the bourgeois supporters of the Congress at this declaration by Gandhiji, just as there was earlier consternation among the so-called high cases when Gandhiji struck at casteism and untouchability. From now on

Gandhiji was steadily taking the Indian people towards a casteless and classless society.

This was no easy task but Gandhiji never wavered once he had made up his mind. Till then Gandhiji had agreed to Socialism as the distant goal. But now he wanted everything possible to be done to peacefully abolish class distinctions. He did not however live long enough to accomplish this purpose.

It is against this background that we must study Acharya Vinoba's Bhoodan and Gramdan Movement. As this gentle but revolutionary Gandhian walked from village to village, there came out of his mouth such utterly radical economic propositions which could well make any Communist sit up. The more one studies Vinobaji's utterances, the more will one be astonished at the depth and height of his non-violence. In fact the student of non-violence will understand Gandhiji better the more he studies Vinobaji While it is true that Vinobaji

obtained considerable support from the people and a measure of moral support from the Central and State Governments of the day, it is sad to reflect that everyone concerned put together did not accept in practice Vinobaji's radical non-violence adequately to bring about the social revolution of his dreams.



## THE DYNAMICS OF DECENTRALISATION

Decentralization of power and wealth supplies the key to the Gandhian vision of the future of man's organized life. There are glaring misconceptions about decentralization. It is sometimes taken for granted that decentralization is a veiled process of weakening the apparatus of social organization. Weakening or strengthening a process is intimately related to the objectives we have in view.

If our aim is accumulation of power and wealth without limits, then centralization becomes inevitable. It is this phenomenon, which is raging in the world today. And it is this world that is moving steadily towards the total and incalculable disaster of civilization and life in a nuclear war.



If our aim on the contrary is the wise balancing of power and wealth to produce a just and peaceful social order, then decentralization becomes equally inevitable. These are basic ideas from which we often seek refuge in the escapism of thought and action. But if we have the quality of true courage, selflessness and wisdom then only are we ready to accept the challenge of decentralization.

The ultimate and fatal question is whether mankind aims to live or die. Can there be any doubt that the choice finally will be that mankind will want to live and not to die? The dynamism of decentralization is not a process of weakness but of strength. Power and wealth concentrated beyond redemption invites concentrated attack and destruction.

On the contrary, when power and wealth are distributed in hundreds of thousands of centers, each center vibrating with life, conviction and tentacles of resistance, then their

destruction will be a colossal effort, the price of which no nation or people will be able to pay. If the civilization and culture of India have not been wiped out by invasions and conquests, it is entirely because life persisted in the several lakhs of Indian villages. While conquerors and imperialists lived in the cities enjoying luxuries and plenty, the villages persisted to live even if under exploitation and tutelage.

Centralization might flourish for a time but will perish in the long run by attacks of other centralized forces. A nation or country living under the vitality of decentralization of power and wealth can never be conquered in the full sense of the term. Neither the Greeks nor the Afghans, nor the Mughals and Mongols could rob India of its culture and life values.

Mahatma Gandhi drew tremendous strength from this reality of the life of India. Counter forces from within and without have destroyed centralized political or economic organizations of oppression. The world picture

even today teaches us the same lesson. National States representing concentration of power and wealth are at loggerheads everywhere and are engaged in fierce competitions of violence and selfishness. If mankind is surviving in the continents of Asia, Africa and South America etc. it is largely due to their decentralized social and political life. This is not to deny the vast pulling power of centralization in world politics and economics.

The point is that such over-centralization drives mankind steadily to death and destruction. We have not minded such death and destruction for a long time because they were partial and affected only regions here and there. But now the dark and cruel shadow of total destruction of all civilization and life itself brings us to the realization of the futility of violence, which is the child of centralization.

Mahatma Gandhi saw this reality staring at him from the heart of modern civilization and so gave us the philosophy of decentraliza-

tion, which represents the true science of power and wealth. We must not turn away from this message of our Master.



## TRUSTEESHIP INHERENT IN NON-VIOLENCE

Trusteeship is inevitable in the philosophy and practice of Gandhian Non-Violence. Non-violence has no meaning as a historic reality without Trusteeship. The Communists rely on violent seizure of all that the propertied classes hold as their own by right.

The masses must fight and seize violently all the properties of the rich. This is violent dispossession by revolutionary forces. This is undoubtedly the logic of violent Communism. Once you accept Communism you must accept also such violent seizure.

Equally, Trusteeship is the final logic of Non-violence. No truly non-violent society can tolerate the differences between the rich and the poor. How can non-violence obliterate the

terrible gap between the so-called calluses and the masses? A classless society is the ultimate goal of Communism and Sarvodaya. Non-violence moves towards a classless society of equality and justice by the voluntary surrender by the classes of their privileges and possessions to a People's Trust, which ultimately becomes part and parcel of the Sarvodaya State.

The question naturally arises whether the propertied classes will ever consent freely to surrender their properties as a Trust under a Sarvodaya Government, which will not use force to implement Trusteeship. This is equivalent to asking if there can ever be a Non-violent State. Our allegiance to non-violence will crash the moment we disown such a possibility.

Mankind is thus caught between the trap of a Marxist State operating on the basis of violent seizure or a Sarvodaya State operating on the basis of voluntary surrender. The votary of non-violence will thus be inevitably

driven to the climax of Trusteeship. The idea of Trusteeship is not altogether new. What is new is the possibility of non-violence achieving Trusteeship. Co-operative Societies under State pressure in every department of social action represent Trusteeship under Communism. Several Gandhian Institutions in India and voluntary Co-operatives in other countries represent Trusteeship under Non-violence.

But we have not achieved Sarvodaya Government even in India. This has kept Trusteeship only as a possible dream. This dream can be achieved, if at all, only through the universalisation of the Gandhian Constructive Programme with such modifications and additions as the passing of time calls for. Those who believe in the efficacy of Satyagraha and the possibility of Sarvodaya must never give up the hope that what they stand for can and will be achieved in fullness of time.

If the Communist can and have achieved

a classless society through violently enforced State Trusteeship, why should we despair that with the break down of violence and war and the resurgence of disarmament and peace, the way will not become open for [non-violence and war and the resurgence of disarmament and peace, the way will not become open for] non-violent Trusteeship.

Let us not forget that the aim of Satyagraha and Sarvodaya is to create a new society altogether of justice and peace. We have already some evidence on our hands that these developments are possible. What is required is a scientific, consistent and continuous effort by all those who swear by the name of Gandhi to promote Non-Violent Trusteeship.

Every Gandhian Institution, by whatever name they may be called, must take up this idea and join hands to create a sizable picture of Gandhian Trusteeship. A thousand such centers can make it possible for a truly Demo-



cratic Government to help produce a total result. No State will ordinarily assume the responsibility for such a mighty and peaceful revolution. Only the people can build such a movement, which finally might well convert the State. People elsewhere have paid a terrible price to achieve a Communist State.

Let us also be ready to voluntarily pay the price to set up a Sarvodaya State.



## PURIFICATION OF POLITICS

As a realist Gandhiji had only one choice before him in regard to politics. He must either discard politics or purify it. In a way, this was the same problem he faced in regard to religion itself. If religion cannot be purified he would discard it. We have put the matter somewhat lightly. But, Gandhiji on innumerable occasions made his meaning crystal clear.

He was first and last a votary of Truth. If anything in religious practices or in politics offended the Truth, he would have none of it. For an intensely religious man this was an attitude of supreme courage. Had not Gandhiji taught that fearlessness was the first essential of spirituality? He found that politics was an inevitable preoccupation of human life in the time in which he lived.

No man of Truth could turn away from

politics without committing moral escapism. Politics included almost every issue of life and death in the world, which surrounded him. In his own words politics was like a mighty snake holding the people in its coils. He was essentially a man of religion and yet politics cannot and should not be discarded and so inescapably he arrived at the position that he must purify politics. This was a stupendous task.

Politics in the twentieth century has often become the last refuge of the scoundrel. Could not the same thing be said of many practices of religion? Was it conceivable, therefore, that religion can be discarded? Religion too must therefore, be purified. Religion and politics came under the all-embracing philosophy of his ethics. But just now we are concerned with Gandhiji's mighty effort at the purification of politics.

India after centuries of political subjection was heaving itself up to snatch freedom and

independence from the mightiest empire in history. This brought in politics into every single matter affecting the nation. It was at a time when nations indulged in lies, cheating and exploitation of every kind that Gandhiji proclaimed it was his aim to spiritualize politics. This was moral courage of the highest order. Gandhiji accordingly shaped Indian politics after his own heart's desire.

Non-violence was the rock bottom of his proposals. He made politics the platform for sacrifice and suffering for constructive work among the millions in the villages, for the purging of society from the mighty evil of liquor and for the freedom and equality of women. Politics largely became the politics of Constructive work and for taking the message of non-violence into every town and village.

The British rulers watched the dynamic scene with perplexity and grave misgivings. They saw that Gandhi's purification of politics meant that the people would become

fearless, self-reliant and willing to pay the price for their freedom. Purification of politics and the development of the spirit of Satyagraha generated by constructive work baffled the British.

How could they obstruct the cleansing of politics and the elevation of the character of the people? Gandhiji proved that the only way to strengthen the will of the people for freedom was this purification of politics.

One astonishing result was that women in their thousand joined in freedom's battle based on truth and non-violence. The world in India and outside saw how the purification of politics thus assumed a revolutionary character. The people quickly understood the power of non-violence because it was on this power that the great Indian revolution depended for its success. Irresistible mass strength based on non-violence stood before the world unmistakably.



## MORALIZATION OF ECONOMICS

We wrote about “Purification of Politics” in our previous issue. But Politics and Economics are intertwined inseparably. It has been proved beyond doubt that political conquests were often for the purpose of economic exploitation. The economic motive has always been at the center of politics. From the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Western Nations acquired colonies throughout the world not for mere pomp and show of power but to extract raw materials and to capture markets. We have therefore not only gunboat politics but also gunboat economics.

England did not acquire possession of India for mere Imperial grandeur but for imperial exploitation. Who does not know that the great wave of industrialization over took

England through a vast process of sucking the vitals of Indian economy, which had made India a prize beyond compare in the then known world?

India became the brightest jewel in the British Crown because British trade captured every raw material worth the name and all kinds of manufactured materials were thrust back to India at the cost of India's economic ruination. England became the biggest Nation of shopkeepers and India became a vast sub-continent sunk more and more in poverty, disease and death.

Just as politics became the last refuge of the scoundrel, economics became the hunting ground of dacoits and plunderers clothed in very civilized grabs. The story of how England fattened at the cost of India is found in many books of which the authors are both British and Indian. We have no space to furnish here a list of these authors who spoke the truth even

whole there was massive support for colonization and exploitation. In the analysis of history made by Mahatma Gandhi, he discovered that economics developed in the Western world accepted no such thing as morality in their transactions.

In fact economics and morality appeared to have nothing in common with each other. As in the politics of colonialism, so also in the economics that followed, might was right and might justified any exploitation anywhere as part of the science of economics.

The more Gandhiji studied the economics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the more he became convinced that the world will stand divided as the world of exploiters and that of the exploited for all time, if this most dangerous situation was not attacked with all the power of the human spirit.

Therefore, along with the purification of politics he took up the challenge of moraliza-



tion of economics. What exactly did this mean? It meant that the exploited should stand up for their rights whatever the cost. Wherever the exploited thus stood up for their rights, the exploiters employed every weapon, including military power, to suppress them. When therefore, Gandhiji started the moralization of economics and his message caught the mind of India and the world, he became a force against all colonial economics.

Within India itself Gandhiji created the mighty Swadeshi movement aimed at establishing self-reliance in the area of our economics. We must not allow raw materials we needed to be snatched away. We must learn to convert our raw materials into products we needed by our own industry. The Swadeshi movement gained added momentum through Khadi and Village Industries becoming an essential part of it. The British rulers were once again astonished and baffled. How could they prevent the people of India making use of their

own resources to build up a Swadeshi economy opposed to Imperial economy?

As in politics they often lost their heads and struck against Swadeshi economics through repressive legislation and through measures enforced ruthlessly to suppress Indian industries. Have we not heard on the authority of British writers themselves how they cut the thumbs of weavers of Dacca muslin, the finest cotton cloth then known in the world?

Moralization of economics like the purification of politics strengthened the fibre of the Nation. This was part of the strategy of Satyagraha in the widest sense of the term.



# TRANSFORMATION OF EDUCATION

All those concerned know only too well that Mahatma Gandhi wanted radical changes in Indian Education as one of the main items in his total non-violent revolution. He knew that without such a transformation in education, his Constructive Programme for rebuilding India would drag its feet.

While every item of his constructive programme was one of educating the mind of India in regard to innumerable problems affecting the life of the people, it became necessary that he should initiate a direct and comprehensive educational programme, which would help to consolidate and co-ordinate every other item. That was how he produced Basic Education.

He carefully and slowly explained Basic Education, as he conceived it, in innumerable

talks and writings. As he went on doing this, he secured warm support from leading educationists like Dr Zakir Husain, Prof Saiyidin, Acharya Kripalani and from leaders like Sri C.Rajagopalachari, Babu Rajendra Prasad and Sri B.G.Kher. In fact, Dr Zakir Husain became his right hand man in developing Basic Education.

Conditions were favourable for a time for the spread of Basic Education as Congress Ministers ruled most of the States. Let us for a moment consider what exactly is Basic Education. We have the explanation from Gandhiji Himself.

“The views on Education that I am now setting forth have been held by me right from the time of founding of the Phoenix Settlement in South Africa in 1904. I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise of the bodily organs, hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose etc. In other words an intelligent use of the bodily organs provides

the best and quickest way of developing the intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor, lop-sided affair.

By spiritual training I mean education of the heart. A proper and all-around development of the mind can take place only when it proceeds with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties. Therefore, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that they can be developed piece-meal or independently of one another.

Today we are taking care of some intellectual training. But this is unrelated to manual or physical work. Young people who come out from the system can in no way compete in physical endurance with the labourer in the field. As for the faculties of the heart they are simply allowed to run to seed or to grow anyhow in undisciplined manner. The result is moral

and spiritual anarchy”.

He therefore, pleaded that “The skills of the hand and head must be brought together in Basic Education. This meant that boys and girls should learn some productive and socially useful work as an integral part of education. The acquiring of all knowledge must be correlated to such productive work. A proper and harmonious combination of productive skills, intellect and the soul is required for the making of the whole man and constituted the true economics of education”.

This was nothing less than a total revolution in Indian Education, which was heavily book-centered and cut away from the realities of life. The natural environment and the social environment of the school must be linked together through suitable productive work. The immediate problem was to train teachers to conduct Basic Education. A tremendous effort was made to train a vast number of teachers and this training had a profound

impact on education in the Basic schools.

Later on however with the resignation of Congress Ministers, Basic Education was neglected. After a lapse of many years Basic Education is now limping back in the shape of work-oriented education. What we must remember is that Mahatma Gandhi realized that without the transformation of education there could be no transformation of the nation. Let us now at least catch up with what we have lost through the new educational policy of the Rajiv Government.





## **RECOGNITION OF THE ABSOLUTE EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN**



This was a matter in regard to which Mahatma Gandhi was utterly uncompromising. Through his non-violence he discovered that there was nothing good in the world which a woman could not do like any man. If Gandhi's battle for freedom had been violent with dreadful weapons of mass slaughter, he would have put men first and women only second. But in his non-violent battles he found that men and women could be and were an absolutely equal.

In fact he made the discovery that in the area of non-violence, women could and were one step ahead of men. Man was of course a better killer. Every woman was a potential mother and thus the embodiment of non-kill-



ing. This discovery brought a revolution in the mind of Gandhi. He studied the character and conduct of women with the earnestness of a Social Scientist. It was a profound research into the depth a human character. The more he studied women the more he realized that without women walking with men and working with them in every area of life, the Kingdom of God or Maharaja would never be accomplished.

More than once Gandhi confessed that he had learnt the meaning of non-violence more fully from his wife Kasturba. Like any man he had lusted for her in earlier years and treated her sometimes cruelly. But she was patience itself, forgiveness itself and that without any weakness or surrender. She was equal to her husband in almost everything that mattered.

And then in his non-violent revolution he found that women came out in their thousands responding to his call. In the terrible struggle between Hindus and Muslims in the wake of

the partition of India, he saw women embracing death in preference to dishonour. Their courage astonished him. Gandhi thus came to the unalterable conclusion that Indian society needed nothing less than a revolution in men's attitude to women. He became convinced that women could and must be fully co-partners with men in securing the freedom of India and maintaining that freedom unbroken through time. He spoke and wrote tirelessly on this subject again and again.

The people of India thus received a great and unforgettable lesson in this regard from the Master. When India became free and independent, there were brave and selfless women, who had passed through the fire of suffering along with men, and who were prepared to shoulder every responsibility in the making of a great India. It was not merely the question of a few outstanding women leaders but the whole mass of Indian womanhood becoming alert and eager to share all the burdens with men. We

of course remember the great personalities of Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Nehru, Kasturba Gandhi, Rukmini Lakshmi pathy, Durga Bai, Basanti Devi, Akkamma Cherian, Kuttimalu Amma and a host of others who did great spade work in the making of new India.

But more than these heroic women leaders was the mass of Indian womanhood touched into new life by Gandhian non-violence. Thousands of our women who had never come out of the shelter of their homes went into every area of National Reconstruction.

Our women got the vote the very day our new Constitution was drawn up and as per this Constitution the Government of India and the people of India are now unalterably committed to the recognition of the absolute equality between men and women.

Let us not however forget that the education of our women and their training to

undertake every responsibility is a duty, which still awaits us. But we have a firm foundation to build on thanks to Mahatma Gandhi.



**IMPERATIVE NEED OF BREAD-LABOUR  
FOR A JUST AND PEACEFUL SOCIETY**

Both from his own experience and his careful study of Tolstoy, Gandhiji became convinced that every man and woman should understand the philosophy and practice of Bread-Labour. The teaching of the Gita is that any one who eats his food without making a contribution to food production was a thief. The ramifications of this idea spread to such things as clothes to wear and homes to live in. The Bible had laid down that man can and must live by the sweat of his brow. This undoubtedly meant that man must labour hard to earn the right to live.

Perhaps all this was far more relevant in times when man had to labour with his hands to produce whatever he needed. But then came the machine age. This brought Industrial Capi-

talism. The rich alone could own the big machines and the poor had to become wage slaves. Never-the-less Gandhiji insisted that man should practice Bread-Labour within the limited areas left aside by industrialization. He advocated without reservation that hand spinning on the Charka could well take the place of Bread-Labour or some suitable agricultural work. In the Satyagraha Ashram in Sabarmati there was a large Farm producing vegetables and fruits and large scale hand-spinning and weaving. All of us who had privilege of living and learning in the Satyagraha Ashram became fairly good farmers and Khadi producers. Even in the midst of hard and crowded work day after day, Gandhiji never missed his hand spinning. He looked upon this as "Sutra-Yagna".

Bread-Labour created a sense of unity and equality in society. It also could and did, to the extent it was practiced, reduce unemployment. Every-body had something to do even

if the profits were small. If tiny drops of water can cumulatively make the ocean Bread-Labour by large numbers of people can keep the demon of unemployment at bay. It is fascinating to remember that Gandhiji began his life in South Africa as a Labour leader. He was the leader of the indentured Indian labour in South Africa. He loved labourers and served them with all his heart and soul.

It was in South Africa again that Gandhiji established the Tolstoy Farm in which those who lived in it practiced Bread-Labour. Everybody did some productive work or other. We thus see that the twin ideas of Bread-Labour and organizing Labour Unions were with Gandhiji from his South African days. In India later he established at the same time the Satyagraha Ashram and also one of the best-known Labour Unions in Ahmedabad. At the root of both Bread-Labour and the Labour Union was the same philosophy of love, justice and truth. In the Ahmedabad Labour Union

his aim was not class conflict but class reconciliation. If a just re-conciliation was made impossible by the obduracy of the capitalist, then the remedy lay in Satyagraha, which again was the weapon of love to over-come that obduracy.

If we can work out all the implications of this Gandhian approach to problems of labour and unemployment, we shall get a solution for class conflict through class reconciliation. The day will come when labour and capital will find a more life-giving solution than found in class conflict, which ultimately must end in violence, cruelty and hatred between different sections of the people.





# *Desikottama Dr G. Ramachandran*

Blossomed: 07-10-1904

Withered: 17-01-1995

Desikottama Dr G Ramachandran, one of the giants of those who were privileged to be moulded by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Rajaji, represented a rare synthesis of the values the great men stood for, all their lives. GR distinguished himself as an authentic interpreter of the first two and set himself up as a practical reformer who sought to harmonize Gandhi and Tagore; in constructive Ventures and act as a bridge between the two.

Sri G. Ramachandran met Gandhi at Dilkush in 1921, during Gandhiji's famous "21 days fast". He was then a student of Mr. CF Andrews at Santiniketan. The discussions GR was privileged to have with Gandhi on the occasion drew him closer to the Mahatma. Ramachandran soon became an inmate of Gandhiji's ashram at Sevagram and under Gandhiji's direct guidance and supervision plunged himself into the national movement and the Gandhian Constructive Programme.

Gandhi chose him as a close disciple and entrusted to him several important missions. He was sent to Jamia Millia Islamia as per the request of Dr Zakhir Hussain where he served a lecturer and taught spinning Khadi work

brought him closer to the common man and the distinguished Rajaji.

During the Freedom struggle, he courted arrest eleven times and spent seven years in jail.

He began Khadi work Khadi work selling Khadi yarn and cotton and became the Chairman of All India Khadi And Village Industries Commission of India. During his tenure as Chairman, started the People's Education Programme for poor.

His contribution to education, both Basic Education and higher Education, Khadi and community Development needs special mention. Gandhigram Rural University of which he became the Founder Vice Chancellor is a reflection on GR as an educationist and a constructive thinker. His experiments in Gandhigram showed us how rural children and women could be provided with facilities for growth and all-round development from birth to higher education.

Along with his wife, Dr (Mrs.) Soundram Ramachandran, he founded the "Institute of Rural health and Family planning Center", institute for 'Sanitary Inspectors' Training and Kasturba Hospital which won recognition and awards at the National level (especially for services in Family planning and women & child-welfare).

He was a powerful Orator and a brilliant writer. His Autobiography, "Adventuring with life" is a true

reflection of his times and the aspirations of the millions who dedicated their lives for their motherland.

After 60 years of service in various cadres before and after independence, Dr GR came back to his hometown Neyyattinkara in 1980 and started an institution in the name of his beloved mother Smt Madhavi Tankachi. He donated all his landed properties to this charitable society "The Madhavi mandiram Loka Seva Trust". The Educational wing of this institution is "Mahatma Gandhi Vidya Peedom". We have Dr GR Public School under this wing with CBSE Affiliation.

This is his last venture especially for women and children.

The milestones in the eventful life of this multifaceted personality and man of conviction and humour may be summarized as follows:

- Joined Non Cooperation movement in 1920 and participated in the Tilak Swaraj Fund.
- Become one of the earliest Honours Graduates of the Visva Bharati in 1924 and joined the Sabarmathi Ashram.
- Took part in the Salt-Satyagraha Revolution in 1930 together with Rajaji at Vedaranyam. Sentenced to imprisonment for one year and a fine of Rs.500/-
- Functioned as the Provincial Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh in Tamil nadu and Kerala and member of the Central Executive Committee of Harijan Sevak Sangh.

- Took active part in the Temple Entry movement in Tamilnad and Kerala (Vaikom) Spent six years as one of the general Secretaries of the Hindustani Talami Sangh in Sevagram and actively promoted Basic Education in Tamilnadu, Mysore and Andra.
- Was appointed the Chairman of the Basic Education Assessment Committee set up by the Government of India.
- Became the General Secretary of the All India Village Industries Association, Maganwadi.
- Appointed Educational advisor of Rajaji Government of Madras State.
- Joined the Pattom Tanu Pillai Cabinet (in Travancore) as a Minister.
- Served the Indian Express as an Editor.
- Along with his wife Dr (Mrs.) Soundram Ramachandran founded Gandhigram in 1947 and was its Director for 15 years.
- Was the member of the Rajya Sabha for 6 years.
- Served on the Balwant Ray G Mehta Committee on Community Development.
- General Secretary of the Gandhi Smark Nidhi for 3 years.
- Founder Secretary of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, Editor of Gandhi Marg (English Journal)
- Conferred the Degree of D.Litt by the Kashi Vidya Peeth, title of "Desikottama" by Viswabarathi University and Doctorate by Gandhigram Rural University.

- Traveled widely: lectured in the universities in England, Germany, United States, Soviet Union, Poland Yugoslavia, Ceylon etc. spreading the message of Mahatma Gandhi.
- Was a member of the delegation sent to Moscow by the Gandhi Peace foundation along with the Congress President UN Debar to take the message of peace and to prevent the use of Nuclear weapons.
- Authored Several Books: Thought and Talks, Village Reconstruction Step by Step, The Man Gandhi, A Sheaf of Gandhi Anecdotes, Higher Values of life, Adventuring with Life etc.
- Several Poems, drawings and handicraft-items to his credit.
- Received peace awards from Grambling University, USA and the Soka Gakkai International, Tokyo.
- As a last “venture” founded the Madhavimandiram Loka Seva Trust, at the age of 76 bequeathing all his ancestral property (to the Trust) in memory of his mother Smt Madhavi Tankachi. The Trust has Mahatma Gandhi Vidya Peedom and is involved in other activities mainly for women and children.





Step by step, this small organization grew into various production units in Khadi and Village Industries, winning good name for its products- GR Sarees and GR Fibre fancy articles.

At present Sister Mythili is our Managing Trustee. There are 15 members in the Board of Trust.

The Trust has two wings:

One for Social work and

Another for Education

Soundram Farm; Paramahansa Yogananda Computer Lab; Sakthi Mandiram - for Socially handicapped women; Khadi and Village Industries; Welfare of mothers & children; are some of the works under the **Social work** wing of the Trust.

Crèches 3; Dr GR Play Home for children below 5 years; Dr GR Public School affiliated to CBSE, New Delhi; Continuing Education Centre & People's Education Programme are the works under the Mahatma Gandhi Vidya Peedom for **Education**.

The Birth Centenary Year of Desikottama Dr G.Ramachandran is going to be celebrated as a year long Programme With seminars and workshops Literary and cultural activities

From 7<sup>th</sup> Oct 2004 to 7<sup>th</sup> Oct 2005.

We thank Smt Maya Sinha, Commissioner for KVI for providing all possible help to make this GR Centenary Celebrations well organized.







Separate  
attention and  
co-ordination are not  
**contradictory**  
but **complimentary**.

Understand this  
relationship.

In it you will find  
one of the keys to  
efficient  
management.



Reflections of life  
Series No : 5