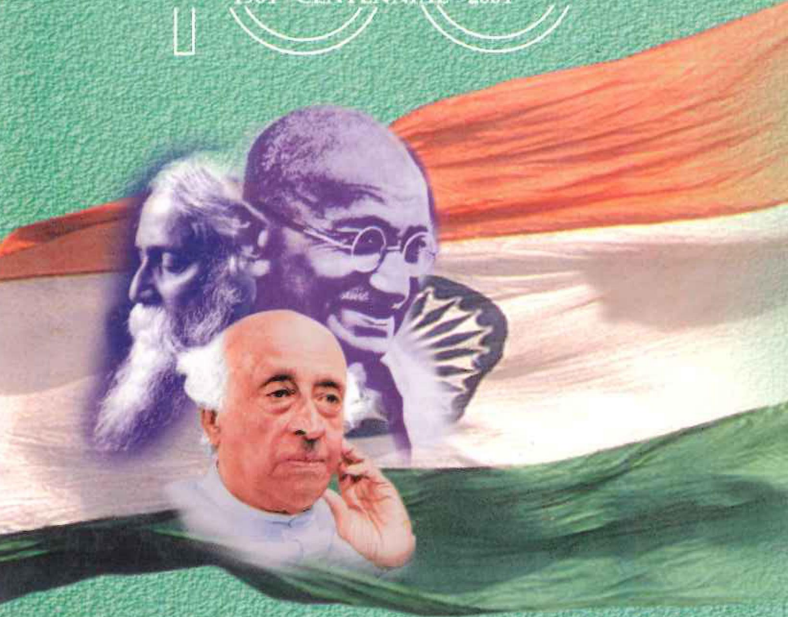


VOLUME VI

DESIKOTTAMA
DR G RAMACHANDRAN
1904 - CENTENNIAL - 2004



HIGHER VALUES OF LIFE

By
G. RAMACHANDRAN

Edited by
N. RADHAKRISHNAN
&
SISTER MYTHILI

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Edited by
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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>Preface</i> - Editors | I |
| <i>Introduction</i> - T.P. Meenakshisundaran | III |
| <i>Foreword</i> - G. Ramachandran | V |
| 1 Fearlessness | 7 |
| 2 Wisdom | 9 |
| 3 Honour | 12 |
| 4 Compassion | 14 |
| 5 Love | 16 |
| 6 Truth | 20 |
| 7 Nonviolence | 28 |
| 8 Beauty | 35 |
| 9 Worship | 39 |
| 10 Life, The Ultimate Test | 43 |
| <i>After word</i> : Ramachandraji, Nonviolence and mentor - disciple relationship - N Radhakrishnan | 45 |

PREFACE

Higher Values of Life is the sixth book in the 24 volume centenary tribute to Desikottama Dr. G. Ramachandran, affectionately addressed 'Mama' by his close friends and admirers.

The present volume, if read along with the Volume III *G.R., The Poet* will offer the readers an exquisite glimpse of the spiritual side of this great Gandhi disciple who was immersed in the gigantic task of interpreting Gandhi's vision of constructive work in the light of the emerging realities in the post-Gandhian era. *Higher Values of Life*, as a spiritual treatise belongs to a class by itself. We proudly present this volume to the diligent readers with the hope that this will enhance their understanding of GR's remarkable talent to reduce abstract principles and ideas to simple language.

Sister Mythili

N. Radhakrishnan

INTRODUCTION*

A young person caught in a net of prejudice, 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 *Sadana* 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 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

*Original introduction written on 1-3-1979 when this appeared as a book.

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 Sadhana* 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 gleaning of his *Sadana*.

Madurai
1-3-1979

Dr T.P Meenakshi Sundaram
Ex-Vice-Chancellor
Madurai University

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 Sadana 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 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

*Foreword written by Ramachandranji on 1-3-1979 to the first edition of these lessons when they appeared in book form.

these reflections. I have, therefore, ventured to collect them in this booklet. May it bring solace and courage to some at least to 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 their redemption.

Gandhigram

G. Ramachandran

1-3-1979

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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 def. article the 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 forever.

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 become⁵ 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 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.

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 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 together 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 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 illiterate.

Now when 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 it 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 thus becomes the attainment of such wisdom. Having attained it, we live vitally, effectively and in peace and harmony with all life.

Lesson 3

HONOUR

Nothing written about wisdom should create the impression it is just high-level opportunism. Wisdom can never be 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.

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.

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 nectar 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 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, whatever 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 can steps beyond this 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.

Lesson 5

LOVE

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 love 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 up to God only through the luminous ladder of love. Between them there is no other line of communication!

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 wave 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 civilization 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 civilization 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.

Lesson 6

TRUTH

And now finally, we stand facing Truth. Truth is the sun of the solar systems of the ethical values, which we have looked into so far. We have looked into fearlessness, wisdom, compassions, 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 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 tries to go too near the sun where burnt to ashes like the Christ, the Buddha, Gandhi, Lenin etc. We can only absorb from Truth its distant beams. Truth is universal total. No mind

of man can comprehend its universality and totality. This is not surprising, for Truth ultimately is coeval with God. Has anyone comprehend 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 perception. 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 realization 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 should 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 realize 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 realize 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.

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There was probably too much abstract thought on Truth and too little of elucidation of the practical implications of the 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. Every one 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 distinction. 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 become the truthful. In these consideration 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 man kind is more preoccupied with the ethic 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 if man to relate truthful conduct to Truth itself. If this is done, the level of ethics will rise upwards.

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, *Dharma* 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 become based on the wheel of Law. Like the Cross for Christianity, the wheel of Law become 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 it from within to show the distinction between Truth and untruth, the good and evil and love and hate. This 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 practice. Truth is therefore not an impossible goal but the companion holding our hand as we move onward to our destiny.

Lesson 7

NONVIOLENCE

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 process

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 detail 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 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, Ashimsa 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. Non-violence is wholly 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 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 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 in the face of the challenge of violence running a race with no-violence. These martyrdom's strengthened 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 climate, faced as the world is with the terrific peril of total annihilation from a war fought out with atomic weapons of incalculable destructive power.

Non-violence can never remain in the air but must come down into life if 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 some others difficult. In any case this should 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 help to cool and 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 women, 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 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 Sainikas, trying to meet every difficult situation non-violently. The educational progress 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 more or less the processing of non-violence in daily life.

We have already seen that people who are brave, honorable, 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 we are not greedy and do not aim at snatching anything from them.
7. Fearless is essential to non-violence. Do not tolerate injustice, stand up to it bravely but gently, irrespective of consequence.
8. The votary of non-violence must love his neighbors, help them in their need and cultivate their goodwill. This means we must share with our neighbors what we have and take from them what they produce and are willing to share with us. This is the sprit of Khadi and Swadeshi , Liquor and intoxicants abet violence

and must be eschewed.

9. Let us make no difference between the rich and poor. But we shall insist that no one continues to be rich at the cost of another and that the
10. The Shanti Sena will be the symbol of collective non-violence. Either we ourselves initiate

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 leading a hand in the creation of such a society? Let us all say inside our minds with faith and conviction, *Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai.*

Lesson 8

BEAUTY

Let us realize that Beauty like Truth is a reality. Beauty in the 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 connotation in different contexts. Nevertheless we shall have to have a working hypothesis on what Beauty is. Just as Truth is essentially 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 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 consist 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 word?. 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, honorably 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 above the Divine:-

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

It is when the bird of life builds its nest at 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 of beauty of forms and colours and smells. Everything should conduce to happiness and concord with in the nest and in relation to all other nests. This is where the family and the houses, the landscape and gardens, the mountains and the rivers, beauty of furniture and vessels painting and music, all come in one by one. Civilization has largely been the process of this nest

building by man for his own happiness and wellbeing. Cleanliness will naturally be at the care of beauty of living. Let us decide therefore that life should be based not only on truth, love, honour etc., but also equally on the beauty of living. This will nearly complete the circle of the life of man at the heights of his aspiration and accomplishment. 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 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 cap 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 darling. 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”.

Lesson 9

WORSHIP

Let there be no mistake about this subject. What is meant by worship is worship of God. That is worship goes on even in our time under many names and forms and rituals only emphasize 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 issue are even today not only swayed by religious 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. Some times 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 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. 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 Acharays*, *Betrayal of Budhism 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 surpreme teaching that unless every religion underwent a relentless process of self purification thus discovering their own inner meaning and unity rligions 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 samanatwa*. (I have known even leading Gandhians avoiding the expression of *Samanatwa* and replacing it by the word *Samanwaya*.) 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 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 by 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 towards its own richest and completest fulfillment. The concluding prayer, may then be aptly:-

Lead us from untruth to Truth
From darkness to Light
From death to immortality.

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 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, and non-violent and if we are wedded to truth 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 hypocrites 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 god 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 companiship and strengthening each other. It is the minority of today which becomes and 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 piral, 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.

After-word

RAMACHANDRANJI, NONVIOLENCE AND MENTOR-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP

N. RADHAKRISHNAN

These ten lessons, however, brief they be, have a history, which this writer was aware of. Life, with all its sunshine, has dark patches which very often weaken the resolve of even the mightiest or the bravest. In one's spiritual journey, many of the decisions taken cannot be explained in the normal context. Spirituality itself is neither a process or phenomena or state of affairs nor a matter of faith and belief but of personal experience and how a person responds to his or her inner call. This is purely personal and cannot be explained. In the entire "Guru-Sishya parampara" of Indian or Japanese tradition this is so. Spiritual seekers are concerned with experience, knowledge and truth.

For a young, educated woman in her thirties, to move away from the beaten-track of a secured job, married life and such considerations, is a difficult choice. And if she is from an aristocratic family with high connections and reputation for having participated in some

of the momentous movements for social justice, the choice becomes all the more difficult. Vaidyanatha Iyer in Madurai had become a legend in the thirties of the last century for challenging unjust and unacceptable practice of shutting the doors of places of worship to the so-called untouchables. His son, Advocate V. Shankaran, twice elected to the State legislature and who had the privilege to head for many years the Tamilnadu branch of All India Harijan Sevak Sangh, proved to be a worthy son of a great father who was inspired by Gandhi. To Sankaran's daughter Mythili, who preferred the title 'sister' in conformity with her resolve to dedicate her life to the ideals which her grand father and father espoused was perhaps a natural choice. What surprised many was her choice of the institution and the person whom she had identified as her 'Guru' in her pilgrimage of service to fellow human being. Her 'decision' created ripples of surprise in several orthodox minds who tried to persuade her to see 'reason'. The steel in her character ultimately forced these 'so-called well-wishers' to retract and leave her alone. But they did not leave her alone. They continued to slander her and naturally this resulted in great anguish in her. Ramachandranji stood behind her like a solid rock of support and comfort in this hour of crisis.

The ten lessons this book contains were written as part of her education in nonviolence. What many did not know was the fact that Ramachandranji himself was

passing through a period of deeper mental agony at the same time following subtle but well-orchestrated moves led by some of his one-time confidants and disciples whom he groomed. Taking advantage of the change of political guards in New Delhi, these forces unleashed a vicious and immoral attack on Ramachandranji. Sister Mythili on her part offered him great spiritual companionship befitting of a true disciple and in turn he took her into his fold as a “comrade-disciple and grand daughter”.

The ten lessons under the caption, ‘Higher values of Life’ Ramachandranji offered in 1977 constitute a very important glimpse of both his personality and vision of life, particularly the caring aspects of his personality. Even those who disagreed with him politically or on certain aspects of either his style of functioning or emphasis he laid on the mode of implementing Gandhian philosophy would agree whole-heartedly that beneath the steely determination which he would often display or a seemingly rough exterior of his personality the essential G.R. was a kind-hearted man. Internally, in every sense, he was a soft person who would not harm even a fly. The essential Ramachandran, was a very lovable human being. The uncommon manner in which he cared for those who were around him and the extent to which he would identify himself with those who were in distress were proverbial. This aspect of his character landed him in very serious and sometimes awkward situations but this did not deter him from his efforts to bail out his friends or

continue to support them in difficult time, no matter what others felt about the positions he took. He amplified the proverb a “friend in need is a friend in deed”.

Those who knew Ramachandranji from close quarters would vouch the unusual tender quality of his disposition which he inherited from his mother. He had a personality which was awe-inspiring. Many are those who benefited immensely from his boundless love and overflowing kind of caring. From his days with Gandhi in Sabarmati in his twenties to his last days in Madhavimandiram Lok Seva Trust in Neyyattinkara he displayed a remarkable kind of concern for fellow human beings and their welfare. This was no streak or sudden development. All through his life one could see this in his activities as a running stream.

Ramachandranji was just twenty years when he first met Gandhi and had the privilege to hold with Gandhi, what is now known as the historic conversation on science, technology, beauty and art. One could see a rare kind of creativity and originality in the young Ramachandranji who was in dialogue with Gandhi.

The greatest privilege I have had in my life, perhaps, is that I could work more than three decades with Ramachandranji from 1968. By the time I joined him in Gandhigram he had become an icon, legend and one of the most authentic Gandhi disciples. His passion

for *Shanti Sena* and the bold initiatives he took to weave nonviolence into the curriculum and community life of the dynamic educational experiment he initiated in Gandhigram on instructions from Gandhi is proverbial. While the walking saint and Bhoodan leader Vinoba Bhave and his disciple Jayaprakash Narain concentrated, by and large, on establishing *Shanti Sena* units in villages and areas of conflicts with considerable success, Ramachandranji through innovative and daring experiments brought large number of students and teachers into Shanti Sena. The emphasis of the Shanti Sena training programme in Gandhigram was on nonviolent conflict resolution. For sometimes it appeared the heavens were being opened up and everything highly promising.

One of the factors that took me to Gandhigram besides the leadership of Ramachandranji was my interest in *Shanti Sena*. I gratefully acknowledge the encouragement and inspiration I received during my student days from my principal Prof. M.P.Manmathan and two Sarvodaya leaders Sri. Janardanan Pillai and P.Gopinathan Nair in participating and organizing a variety of youth programmes related to rural development and conflict resolution. My areas of specialization such as literature, language and communication, however attractive they be, gradually took a second place in my scheme of work and *Shanti Sena* became gradually my first and foremost love and involvement in conflict became

the focus of my interest. Notwithstanding the fact that on several occasions I had to risk my life in the most trying and complex situations of conflicts, I learned profitably under the loving care of Mamaji. To learn under him was a joy and to work under his watchful eyes was a real privilege.

Ramachandranji offered me a series of rare opportunities to involve myself in conflict management initiatives in some of the endemic violent situations in different parts of Madurai District. It was a life-time learning and enrichment at the foot of the master. The 'Guru-Shishya tradition' at its best was in operation. While in Sister Mythili's case, they were growing together spiritually, in my case it was a bit different. My adoration of him, though complete and unadulterated, was often had a tint of criticality while Sister Mythili because of her special nature and affable character could establish a true mentor-disciple relationship which was nurtured by spirituality.

It was Will Durant who wrote in his famous book, *Story of Civilization*, that Faith and Reason have been at war from the dawn of civilization, with victory changing hands alternately. It appears that with the rapid advancement of science founded on reason, faith seems to have been driven to the wall and is at the receiving end. While the trumpeting of the victory of science over faith continues to be heard all over, the man of faith has,

by no means, lost his heart and he sings on confidently contending that appearance and shadows are not always the ultimate reality. Goethe was correct when he sang:

*If I tell you must, tell the wise alone who know
For the others will but call if folly, not faith:
I only worship the great souls who glow
To hail the fire as kin, defying death.*

Sri Aurobindo put this dilemma in an equally forceful language:

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"Faith is the soul's witness to something not yet manifested, achieved or realized, but which yet the Knower within us, even in the absence of all indications, feels to be true or supremely worth following or achieving ...But there is something that sustains him and goes on in spite of himself, because it feels that what is followed after was yet true and it more than feels, it knows".

Mentor - disciple relationship : basis

It will be useful in this context for us to remember that our mind, with all its faculties for thinking, feeling love, hate, is a substance. Our thoughts, feelings and will are like waves in the mind and are things real.

Plato, the ancient Greek philosopher had realized these intricacies. In his *Republic* he speaks of three active principles, which he calls *Epithumia*, *Tamas* and

Logistikon, corresponding, the Upanishadic ideals of *Tamas* (black) *Rajas* (worldly activity) and *Satva* (Purity). The first force, *Epithumia*, is a multiplicity of blind appetites or desires which dominate the votaries of sensuous enjoyments, and whose chief aim is to gratification of animal appetites. *Tamas*, dominates the man of action who works with frenzied zeal for distinction or worldly position and power - grasping and greedy, such a man is filled with restless unhappiness. *Logistikon*, represents as the rational elements characteristics of the philosopher and sage, such as detachment moderation, purity and harmony. These three types of forces are at work within us at all times. When we say that a person has too much *Tamas* we mean that the dull, dark forces overshadow, for the time being, the other two types. When a person is ruled by passion and desire we say that *Rajas* is predominant. If his life is peaceful and harmonious, if he seems to have detached himself from worldly desires, we say that *Satva* rules. These are the three Gunas or qualities of human mind, which shape our character and attitudes.

The Upanishads also tell us that there are three rates of vibration or modes, corresponding to the three primary colours white red and black. While black stands for *Tamas* or dull forces; Red represents *Rajas*, the tense forces of passion, desire and greed; and white indicating *Satva*, the harmonious force of purity; *Tamas* produces

darkness, negligence and delusion; Rajas worldly activity, enterprise and ambitions, marked by restlessness and dissatisfaction and Satva brings about knowledge, compassion, right-mindedness and devotion. The mentor - disciple relationship has its basis here.

Let us look at the following story :

One day a sage came to the court of a king. The King asked :

“What can I offer you?”

“Offer me whatever is your own.”

“Good. I offer you ten thousand cows”

“Maharaj, they are not yours, they belong to your empire. I can accept only something which is your own”, said the sage.

“OK, then I offer you one of my sons”.

“Maharaj, your son is also not your own”

The discussion between the king and the sage continued.

The latter could not accept any of the offers made by the former on the ground that none of those things he was offered belonged to the King and one could offer only what truly belongs to one.

The king at one stage said "OK, I offer myself to you?"

"What do you mean by that", the surprised sage asked him. "You probably do not know who you are and how can you offer yourself to me?"

A puzzled king then replied: "In that case I offer you my mind, that's my own".

The sage was not convinced. He left the court saying that he wanted to give more time to the king.

He returned after a few months and asked the king. "Please tell me honestly whether you are ready now to give me your mind. I am not interested in hearing about your empire, queens, children, property and other attainments".

The king looked puzzled and said, "Excuse me, oh sage, I am not yet ready".

The sage left at this time, but came back after some time.

The king by this time thought about his offer seriously and conditioned his mind through rigorous practice. On seeing the sage he said :

"Sir, I am prepared now. I will give you my mind. Blame me no if I fail."

The sage accepted the king as his disciple. He was so devoted to the sage that he did not care for his own welfare or his Kingdom. On being complained by the people about the neglect of the King on matters of state governance, the sage told the king:

“Oh king, now it is time that you got back to your routine work”.

The story gives a glimpse of the extraordinary and total identification to the extent of surrender which characterizes the Guru / disciple or mentor / disciple relationship. The disciple over a period, offers his / her self to the mentor or to the cause identified with the mentor. In this process though there is a merger of the two minds initially, they later remain separate entities. It is almost like the gold emerging from the goldsmith in shining and shaped forms.

The theory of dependent origination, one of the important philosophical constructs of Buddhism also needs to be understood in its proper perspective if one wants to understand how inter - related every phenomenon, both natural or social is. It is inconceivable to believe that anything can exist in total isolation. Interaction is generally believed to be in spatial terms. As opposed to this, the Buddhist conception is multidimensional.

A mentor verily helps to find the gold hidden in our own hearts about which we do not know. We must

search for that gold and find it. Through our striving new powers are unfolded and we continue our journey to the domain of the spirit, and finally the soul reaches its goal, the Ultimate Reality.

Budha, the Enlightened, gave to this goal a definite name; he called it *Nirvana*, the destruction of craving. Nirvana is passionlessness; being the cessation of selfish existence, it is a transcendental state beyond existence and non existence. Certainly it is not annihilation.

The illumined souls of other religions, while speaking about the Ultimate Reality as transcendental, also speak of it as immanent. It is something in which all contradictions meet.

Modern scientific thought has revolutionized our conception of matter. An atom is no longer believed to be the ultimate constituent, not is itself composed of electrons, protons, neutrons – all forms of electrical waves. What was once considered as inert matter is now known to be a structure of energy units, revolving with immense velocity in space – time'. Thinkers go to the extent of holding that "*this universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine*". And again, they say, "The stuff of the world is mind stuff".

To the unillumined man, deluded by ignorance, the Supreme Reality is non-existent. To him it is the physical world is all that exists. But to the enlightened

soul the infinite Spirit is the only Reality. The world, and even human personality to be a shadow of the Reality. Krishna tells his friend Arjuna in *Bhagavad Gita* :

“Know the self to be the Master sitting in the chariot, and the body the Chariot. Consider the intellect as the charioteer, and the mind as the reins. The senses are the horses and the sense - objects, the roads. He who is always of restrained mind and possesses right understanding has his sense controlled like the good horses of a charioteer. He, who has wisdom for his charioteer and the mind as the well - controlled reins, reaches the end of the spiritual jourey – the realization of the Supreme, all - pervading Spirit”.

The mentor - disciple spirit manifests in different forms and it is not one - dimensional, rather it operates at different levels. It is multi-dimensional and multi-layered. It is also intrinsically connected with the evolving cultural, philosophical milieu of both individuals and society. The temperament and disposition of both the mentor and disciple are also important when one talks about this. In one sense, the mentor and disciple are not separate, provided they are able to enter into each other's mind.

The lives of several successful men and women from different walks of life reveal amazing aspects of this intrinsically spiritual and organic relationship in their life's journey. Mentor - disciple phenomenon is not confined to religious fields alone.

There are examples from political fields across the world where this phenomenon is very much in evident. The Marxian philosophy as it is known today is not exclusively the text book formulations and observations Karl Marx made in his 'Das Kapital'. In the hands of Lenin, the Marxian view of society and the role of human beings in shaping history found economic question was at the root of all human activity and that human history was built at all times around it. Marx asserted that every fundamental historical development regardless of the character on the surface is the result of change in methods of production and property relations on the particular time.

The Communist view of religion, man and society invited very strong response and even stronger opposition to the violent methods they espoused to usher in a world order as Marx envisioned. Their view of history, religion, man, ethics, social order, means and ends they propagated and justification of violence to end oppressive social and political orders found supporters in several parts of the world and the credit of giving of proper direction, developing appropriate tools, designing of acceptable strategies and ways and means to put them into practice and to a considerable extent making communism one of the most potent forces of modern history which changed the course of history and influenced a considerable segment of humanity to adopt a new style of life and political thinking owes considerably to Lenin. Lenin's commitment to the Marxian philosophy, his dogged

devotion and determination were the main source of strength for the Communist movement in the forties. The relationship that existed between these two communists may not be the spiritual type of mentor - disciple or any such expression would not be acceptable to them for fear of being ridiculed on the grounds of their total opposition to the moral, religious, ethical overtones of any such phenomenon. But in its essence the secret of Lenin's success was his devotion to Marx and his philosophy and the enlightenment he received from Marx.

A look at the persons, factors and forces that influenced the life and philosophical outlook of several great men and women who moved the world also help us to understand the sources of strength and support each of them would have received in their life. There are very often visible support and guidance men and women of action and creative persons receive constantly in their life. It might be sometimes an idea, an insatiable urge to move forward and work ceaselessly towards their goal or a person of eminence and vision.

The philosophy and vision of inspired souls constantly undergo evaluation and re-evaluation and in fact no formulation remained the same forever. This undeniable fact of history is reinforced by the creative and critical support extended to germination and subsequent branching of any idea including the revelations or teachings of the Great Ones – whatever it represents

in a manner acceptable and comprehensible to the emerging situation.

It is said that the mentor - disciple spirit is a running stream in human endeavors and while in some parts of the planet this tradition has taken strong roots and very much in evidence, it is not that much evident in some other traditions. With the growth of science and technology and several other philosophical streams particularly in the West and other European regions the important tradition is even highlighted against reason. It is viewed as something against one's self-respect to be subservient. Individualism and self respect have been misconstrued to mean that independence of one's attitude to oneself, society and his fellow human beings should not be clouded or influenced by one's excessive loyalty or adherence to a person, however high and mighty, they argue.

The Mentor as a Fountain

The mentor is a fountain of inspiration and source of hidden strength, which will manifest in proportion to the extent to which a disciple will be able to discover his mentor. The disciple will have to develop faith, devotion, egolessness, humanity, sincerity and complete and total obedience to his mentor, though the mentor does not demand any of them. The disciple in due course of time is able to unfold his potentials.

This does not mean that the disciples are counterfoils of the mentors and the mentor and disciple relationship is a camouflage for psychic or charismatic union or undue hold over a gullible disciple by any overbearing mentor.

A mentor does not ask for a disciple. Very often they choose each other unconsciously and one can see here a karmic connection operating diligently. The mentor helps his disciple to throw away the fetters that bind him so that the full personality of the disciple might blossom forth.

The Mentor and Disciple as Adventurers

There is a proverb, "*He who seeks adventure finds blows*". Though this is true, adventurers have never been deterred in their efforts. Emerson has said "The thirst for adventure is the vent which Destiny offers; a war, a gold mine, a new country, speak to the imagination and offer swing and play to the confined powers." A well directed spiritual life is indeed like waging a war between the higher and lower tendencies. It is like a crusade. We want to reach out to our Holyland, avoiding the enemies on the way. We must also feel that we are all fellow servants. We must also feel that we are all fellow - souls, eternal portions of the Supreme Spirit. If we consider that the Ultimate Truth is unity, our neighbours and nay, all beings, we, are one. Our love

towards our fellow - creatures must be based on this fact; and to love is to serve.

There is no such thing as religion by proxy. So we must be spiritual and realize the Truth for ourselves. If each one of us will try to live our life with earnestness and sincerity we can discover the harmony with in ourselves and transform our warring world into a veritable garden of peace and happiness.

There must be discrimination between the Eternal Spirit and the non-eternal changing phenomenal existence. There must be the spirit of dispassion, without which one can never succeed in spiritual life. The anchored boat cannot move until the anchor is lifted and similarly, if the soul is anchored to objects of desire it cannot move towards the spirit. We need a calm mind, controlled senses, mental peace that will not allow us to be affected by outside stimuli. We need a great faith in realizing the instructions placed before us by our teachers.

Swami Vivekananda, who electrified a generation, emphasized that effusion of sentiment, which is not attended by a corresponding transformation of character, is not strong enough to destroy worldly cravings and awaken spiritual life. Ignorant people think that outward symptoms are indications of deep spiritual fervour, and instead of practicing restraint, devotion and renunciation, they cultivate emotional states with the result that their weakened nerves respond to the slightest

emotional stimulus. If this is allowed to go unchecked the result may be physical and mental disaster. Out of a hundred aspirants, eighty may become charlatans, fifteen may go insane and only the remaining five may be blessed with a vision of the real Truth. The great teachers urge their disciples to strive first for purity of mind and attain that transformation of character and life, which is the first essential prerequisite for spiritual realization.

The spiritual aspect of training in nonviolence

Ramachandranji used to say that the *Shanti Sena* was his first love and mission of life. He continued to develop it in his own way even after he left Gandhigram for Delhi and later back to his own native town to found the Madhavimandiram Lok Seva Trust which incidentally began with a three month *Shanti Sena* training programme. I had the privilege along with my colleagues Dr. William Baskaran and Raveendran to organize this programme. While Sri. Raveendran was the resident coordinator of the programme I was the Director of the programme under the general guidance of Ramachandranji. I still remember even after many years the excitement with which he guided us in our programmes. He specifically wanted me to discuss with the *Shanti Sena* trainees the various lessons I learned personally from every involvement in conflict management. It will not out of place here to discuss a few of them from my own note books which I keep even

today, for those notes were prepared on specific instructions from Ramachandranji:

“We learnt that every peace activist has to remember that conflict management is a complex activity. Perseverance, imagination, tolerance, skill and creativity are respect and to be displayed at every stage. The following aspects should guide every peace activist:

1. A peace worker will be an agent, a promoter, a counselor, a sympathetic listener, a sentinel to prevent the outbreak of further violence, a bridge builder, a torch bearer when all around her/him is dark.
2. He should try to seek a solution by negotiations, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.
3. Don't wait for disputes to come to you.
4. Don't adopt a partisan attitude.
5. Don't adopt a high and mighty or all knowing attitude.
6. It takes time to restore sense in those who are involved in a conflict. Matters move slowly. Hence one has to be patient and attempts should not be given up.
7. Peace work is a very delicate task. Don't expect others to accept all your suggestions and don't press your idea too far.

8. Even when you differ with people, show courtesy and state points on which you differ as clearly and cheerfully as possible. Remember that all people had ideas of their own.
9. Since peace work is time-consuming don't become worried and harassed
10. Remain cool and don't lose your sense of humour.
11. Don't think you alone know the answer.
12. While talking to the parties involved in a conflict let them do most of the talking. Should enter into conversation only when others seem willing to hear you.
13. One should be familiar with the locality and should have read all literature on the conflict and should approach the subject specialists, research workers and others to acquaint himself with up-to-date ideas and way of solving problems.
14. You should always welcome suggestions.
15. Take criticism and praise with equal frame of mind. Similarly don't be elated there may be some suggestions for improvement.
16. Don't become alarmed when people lose maturity. Regression to childish behaviour is common to all humanity.

The childishness will probably pass, if not taken too seriously. Even community educators have their moments when maturity slips. We are convinced that Peace education and peace action should go hand-in-hand and they need each other. As Maasen has put it, peace education needs peace action more than the reverse. It is a fact that the peace movements have influenced considerably the peace education and mostly, it has been peace activists who started peace education. While peace education which includes the development of knowledge, insight, and skills as well as the building up of opinions and attitudes, departing from norms and values embedded in peace and directed to the realisation of a human and peaceful world will mentally prepare people for peace action. In short peace education addresses itself to the preparedness of peace action. For this as Lennart Vriens and Robert Aspeslagh say, Peace Education has to start and should start in early childhood, in particular in the domain of norms and values. When children are very young, they can learn the directedness of people to peaceful relationship. In the family circle children can learn that violence is not acceptable and they can experience power and powerlessness to their cost. If the earliest educators don't make a choice for values and norms of peace, it will be very difficult to start peace education in schools and other educational institutions. You cannot tell children to trust people if they have not experienced trustworthiness in their very early years.

The way we deal with the information and mass-media in the family will play an important role too. All of us know youth is but a child in transition and it is not difficult to initiate the youth into the marvelous world of peace action. They are human volcanoes and if opportunity is given they work miracles. What they need is encouragement and appreciation. The joy of participation inspires them to take up higher things. While it may be conceded that exposure to theoretical aspects are necessary to prepare psychologically and to enable him to work-out appropriate strategies, it cannot be ignored that there are certain areas and aspects that leave indelible impression on his personality by direct participation. Peace action is one such area. The different types of conflicts whether they are sporadic or widespread, intentional or unintentional, have one thing in common, the dangerous portents to do incalculable harm unless they are tackled in time. Let me mention a few of them:

- * conflicts arising out of clashes between different religious groups,
- * between political party workers, student groups civilians and police,
- * Something that erupts as the result of deep rooted animosity and accumulated fury,

Higher Values of life

- * as a result of social and racial discrimination,
- * economic injustice,
- * over a local dispute, or altercation between two individuals,
- * political disputes,
- * extension of a private quarrel
- * wage disputes,
- * election disputes,
- * conflict arising out of refusal on the part of a government to grant civil rights to people,
- * conflict arising out of protest against proscription and pre-military training in educational institutions,
- * conflict as a result of press censorship,
- * conflict out of military basis,
- * conflict out of military occupation.
- * conflict out of colonization and apartheid,
- * conflict out of government's mounting military expenditure,
- * against stock-pile of arms,
- * against nuclear tests and acquisition of lethal weapons.

Richard B. Gregg in one of his perceptive studies

on the power of non- violence has said, "In a conflict" what needs to be done is to change not people as such. but their attachment to certain ideas, sentiments, desires, and assumption. Such changes are not effected by killing or wounding the opponents. Usually being wounded and having friends or fellow countrymen killed does not cause people to abandon their ideas, sentiments and so forth, but only to stiffen them or to postpone trying to carry them out. The growth of communism in Russia, China and elsewhere inspite of violent attacks on it, is a clear example of this. One cannot prescribe same strategy for all the types of conflicts and tensions though outwardly there may be similarities in the symptoms and manifestations. Persuasions and mediation would go a long way in a conflict situation. The part of love, truth and gentleness have a great role in our dealings. William Grigon Me Clelland suggests a few points on the role of mediation in a conflict:

- a) The Mediatory machinery should be adapted to the circumstances of each particular case, preferably in consultation with the parties as to both the design of the machinery and the selection of the personnel.
- b) Public debate may help to mobilize public opinion in favour of a settlement, but if prolonged may make the parties attitudes more rigid.
- c) Timing of the mediation effort is most important:

- should if possible coincide with the point at which the parties' positions are least rigid.
- d) The mediator should be given broad terms of reference and operate with great flexibility. This suggests a single mediator. Where a subsequent public rapport is likely, however, there are advantages in a commission.
 - e) The techniques for getting agreement include; getting the parties together, building up confidence, getting at the facts, widening the perspective in which the dispute is viewed, and expanding the area of agreement even on minor points.
 - f) Cooling-off periods are of limited usefulness.
 - g) Informal agreements, once arrived at, should be carefully formulated and registered.

All said and done, success depends on several facts the foremost being the human element in each situation.

Let us consider a few suggestions in this context:

- a) Peace Education and Peace Action and training in non-violence should become central to all education. Right from childhood it should begin.
- b) Self-generating and creative programmes for the youth be incorporated in the curriculum.
- c) Instead of giving pre-military training in educational

institutions, training in non-violent resistance, conflict-resolutions should be offered.

- d) The official obligation to serve in the army must gradually be removed, leading eventually to the abolition of national service.
- e) Right to free expression of views should be guaranteed.
- f) All restriction on travel be removed as travel is one of the essential things that widens the horizons of understanding.
- g) Meetings and assemblies of young people as a basic prerequisite of a comprehensive exchange of views and information be encouraged.
- h) Freedom from fear and want.
- i) The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion be guaranteed in every country.
- j) Tapping fine arts in Peace Action & Conflict Resolution.

I have heard some people arguing that resolution of disputes or conflicts being the 'end-result', should we talk of different strategies or methods or put them in water-tight compartments? Well, I don't want to go into this at this point. I have been concerned with Gandhian strategies of conflict management, which also is intrinsically linked to the core of Gandhian formulations and essentially to his insistence on the complementarity

of means and ends- A victory at any cost was not what Gandhi strove for.

At one of the *Shanti Sena* training programmes Ramachandraji had spoken about the “Nine-Pillars” of life. He identified them as *Fearlessness, Wisdom, Honour, Compassion, Love, Truth, Nonviolence, Beauty and Worship*. All these attributes have to manifest and nurture one’s character and empower him to face the problems of daily life, he argued. These attributes, again, should enable one to manage the various conflicts inside and outside. At no stage a person should be encouraged to slip into the abyss of despair. All thoughts should elevate him to realize that life, is the ultimate test. Surprisingly, in the lessons that he offered to his ‘comrade-disciple’ he made a highly thought-provoking garland of ideas out of the ‘nine pillars’ of life. Whether it is fearlessness or compassion the running stream in all his arguments is the relevance of nonviolence. A free thinker Ramachandranji was, he had creatively adapted the ideas of both his masters, Tagore and Gandhi. He invested his own original ideas with those of his masters and he stood out in the crowd as a daring experimenter. Gandhigram complex of institution, particularly the Gandhigram Rural Institute on which the Government of India and the University Grants Commission conferred the status of a University is a living monument of what could be described as creative leadership.

The spirituality of Gandhian Constructive work

Quoting Gandhi, Ramachandran argued,

“We have to make truth and nonviolence, not matters for mere individual practice, but for practice by groups and communities and nations. That at any rate is my dream. I shall live and die in trying to realize it. My faith helps me to discover new truths every day. Ahimsa is the attribute of the soul, and therefore to be practised by everybody in all affairs of life”, Mahatma Gandhi said.

Can Ahimsa and Sathyagraha be moral equivalents to wars and other conflicts that corrode human survival? It is claimed by both Western and Indian scholars that Ahimsa and Sathyagraha can be resorted to any situation involving injustice that in some situations of this kind armed resistance is impossible and hence Sathyagraha and Ahimsa are better adapted than armed resistance to the role of ultimate instrument of justice. This assertion is partially ambiguous.

As Horsbough said, the prospects of non-violence in the sphere of International conflict may be brighter than is commonly supposed inspite of our continued belief in armed force. As Gandhi demonstrated through his work, a conscientious effort to make Ahimsa a way of life and not to keep it as a creed is the need of the hour. “Man either progresses towards ahimsa, or

rushes to his doom”, Gandhi said. Analysed against the background of all what the great teachers of humanity and votaries of Ahimsa did Gandhi’s contribution to the cause is second to none. An incredible optimist that he was, Gandhi believed in the essential goodness of all. He said, ‘one step enough for me’.

As in Gandhiji’s own times, his notion of nonviolence continues to be diversely interpreted and discussed in different parts of the world. While to some it is an ideal that all men should cherish to an over whelming number of others it is a value-guiding thought and action. Many view it as a policy which is desirable and effective only in certain given circumstances. Quite a good number of people all over the world find in it a practical tool to be used according to the capabilities of the user, while some view it only as a technique suggesting one range of actions which may be supplemented or even substituted by other techniques if the situation so demands. Each one of these different interpretations usually is supported by quotations from Gandhiji’s words and citing Gandhiji’s actions.

Hurbert Humbrey, Rev. Jesse Jacksons, Senator Diakno, Johan Galtung, Gene Sharp, Erik Erikson, Prof. Richard Keyes, found in Gandhi’s concept of nonviolence a great opportunity for humanity and which will enable mankind to take a fresh look at the problems man has created for man disregarding the Laws of

Nature. Francie Huthchins and several others find Gandhi's approach as non-absolutist. To them Gandhi's view of nonviolence explicitly or implicitly included motive as well as act, so that ahimsa or nonviolence was both psychic and corporal.

Thomas Clark and several others find great scope for the practical application of the nonviolent mode. William Robert Miller, James E. Bristor, William Stuart Nelson, A.J. Minto, Ted Duncan, Willock, Micheal W. Sonneleitner, Glenn D. Paige and a few other scholars and pacifists find in the Gandhian nonviolence a model that can well become the basis for the Twenty-First Century man to experiment with while the SGI President and one of the most profound thinkers of our times Dr. Daisaku Ikeda views Gandhian nonviolence as a potent force and an instrument to secure justice and peace.

A cursory glance reveals that during the last five decades since the assassination of Gandhi a very considerable degree of intellectual effort went into the appreciation and understanding of the concept of non-violence than ever before in different parts of the world. This ranged from deep sociological analysis of the dimension of the conflict to the policy implications of the Gandhian mode. Many see in the Gandhian nonviolence clues to ways of dealing with national problems of tensions, conflict, arms race and war. Inevitably what most of the

analysts, critics, followers or admirers have seen in Gandhi is a "Challenge rather a stereotype".

It is natural that different levels of perception developed as it spread globally. Since Gandhi represented a model value system it is quite natural that people viewed Gandhi from different social, political and territorial position. Berlin's Mayor Klaus Scuts was categorical in his assertion "Non-violence does not mean passivity or political vegetarianism", It is an active attitude, it permits fight for justice, challenges the opponent to declare himself. "Gandhian concept of nonviolence never visualised surrender to evil or injustice, but 'pitting of one's soul against the will of the tyrant'. The philosophy of soul force visualises three kinds of persons. The first category is that of the coward who supinely submits to injustice in order to save his skin. While the second category is that of the brave man who is eager to redeem injustice by brute force methods willing to kill and ready to be killed. The third is the superior person, the Satyagrahi, the believer in and practitioner of non-violence, who in the fulness of his strength using soul force method forgives the deer and attempts to convert him to right-during through nonviolence and love.

South Africa was the social laboratory of Mahatma Gandhi. The twenty one years Gandhi spent in South Africa witnessed great changes both in his private and public life and also much of what Gandhi did later in

India had been tempered by the South African experiments.

His ashram life and its beginning in the phoenix ashram in South Africa while non-violent resistance, simple life, Charkha spinning, non-violent struggle, insistence on simple life, all had their origin there. Infact Gandhiji had already become the Mahatma in the making by the time he left South Africa for India. His was a heroic struggle involving several millions of people over a long period. And when Gandhi was doing all this how did the local populations of the Blacks react to it? There is no doubt that by and large that Gandhi was fighting the inhuman and discriminatory laws enacted by the Pretoria regime. But Gandhi was equally fighting a system that was perpetuating racial discrimination and inhuman treatment to fellow human beings in the name of colour and nationality: The general situation facing the blacks in South Africa was not very different from that of the Indian settlers. It would be naive to believe that the Black population was insensitive to what was happening in South Africa under the leadership of Gandhi. Though he was concentrating on the Indian population, the issue he was fighting for had importance far beyond what the Indians in South Africa were trying to secure. But it can not be said that Gandhi influenced them considerably when the Gandhian struggle was on in Natal, Pretoria and other places. But then as the law of nature teaches us, the

seeds sown always take some time to sprout. The Gandhian pattern of non-violent resistance had to wait until Nelson Mandela came to the scene. There again, one cannot deny that the ANC was considerably influenced by Gandhi. By and large, as accepted by many historians and political commentators if the ANC movement remained within manageable limits of violence though quite on a few occasions the movement became very violent it is largely due to the influence of Gandhi. Two points arise here: was it the brute force of minority white regime that kept the blacks at bay or their incapacity to rise in revolt and finish off their opponents? One thing that emerges from their experience is the difference in the manner in which they conceived nonviolence as a creed and a strategy. It was conceived as creative and positive and in their own way the Black majority wanted to give it a fair trial.

The ANC leadership and Nelson Mandela seem to be familiar with and appreciative of Gandhi's worth and the success of his campaign. Mandela's speech after two days of his release from jail on 11-2-90 was significant in the sense that besides referring to his indebtedness to Gandhi, he said "Another strand in the struggle against oppression began with the formation, right here in Natal Indian Congress founded in 1884, begun a tradition of extra parliamentary protest that continues with the present. The next decade saw the increasing radicalisation

of Indian politics under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi... In 1906, at the time when Bambatha led sections of Africans in a war to destroy the poll tax, our brothers who oriented from India, led by Mahatma Gandhi, fought against oppression of the British Government". Another passage Mandela had quoted before his arrest was from Jawahar Lal Nehru "There is no easy walk (over to freedom) anywhere and many of us will have to pass through the shadow again and again before we reach the mountain tops of our desires" also indicates that Mandela was studying the Gandhian option carefully. Though the release of Mandela and legalising of ANC cannot be viewed as concessions, they are definite indications of qualities and wisdom of president De Clerk which none of his predecessors had displayed. Of course there were other ground realities which prompted De Clerk to adopt an attitude of reconciliation despite the stout opposition from the minority die-hard whites. There was a resurgence in the people's movement despite the imposition of emergency in 1985 and the the banning of the UDF and other organisation. The upsurge of 1980 open defiance of the segregation laws, made it practically impossible for the De Clerk to govern South Africa which had almost become a pariah among the community of nations. Further, its economy was showing signs of crumbling following the strikes by COATSU and mine workers. The sanctions also shattered the economy. The so-called military supremacy of South Africa was proved

to be a myth when Angola gave a hard knock at the military might of South Africa. It appeared still there was many hurdles to be crossed. Yet there was the silver lining as was revealed from the manner in which both the government and the ANC denounced criminals and violence. No doubt, despite many setbacks the ANC and the government moved closer. The lifting of emergency except in Natal helped large number of refugees returning and the signing of the Pretoria minutes also augured well. Repeal of discriminatory legislations, release of political prisoners, acceptance of the principle of one man - one vote was very central to transfer of power and restoration of peace. The deep scars of apartheid and the legacy of distrust and the cynical attempts being made by the apologists of apartheid, the growing internecine war among the blacks and the stridency of the Neo Nazi groups made the process of change painfully slow. But ultimately it was the triumph of will - sustained and well-crafted.

Martin Luther King (Jr.) in USA in the sixties had in his own way added new dimensions to the Gandhian non-violence in order to make it an effective instrument of fight against evil. But then, as was seen both in South Africa and in USA when the fight derived its strength from moral and spiritual considerations and depended on the quality of suffering it took quite a long time to effect what we call the change of heart which is the aim in a

non-violent struggle as opposed to an armed struggle where the result is quicker. Let us remember even in an armed conflict now-a-days victory to either of the party is not assured and it is not easy as it used to be. The recent racial violence which Los Angeles and some other parts of the USA witnessed speaks volumes how fragile our civilisation is. It is actually an ominous portent and a disturbing reminder to what has been simmering underneath the welter of modernity and 'progress'.

It also shows how skin-deep our pretensions of equality of human beings is. And that such racial disturbance should occur in the land of Abraham Lincoln, Thoreau, Emerson, Walt Whitman, Kennedy and Martin Luther King, that too after several decades of the physical killing of the demon of racial discrimination is surprising. It means that the dream of Martin Luther King who dreamt of a day when "on the red hill of Georgea, sons of former slaves and sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood" is still far away. No doubt, the American Blacks have won several rounds with remarkable success yet as the Los Angeles violence suggests the dream of Dr. King when "when my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character", remains a dream. Gandhi warned humanity as early as 1909 when he published the only book he ever wrote "Hind Swaraj".

that a civilisation bereft of human considerations is 'satanic'.

Dr. King was greatly influenced by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi even from his schooldays. And it was natural that Dr. King adopted the Gandhian doctrine of nonviolence as the most effective weapon against racial segregation in the US. He once said in explaining his philosophy:

"I believe in a militant, non-violent approach in which the individual stands up against an unjust system, using sit-ins, legal action, boycotts, votes and everything else-except violence or hate".

Dr. King acknowledging his indebtedness to Gandhi said "from my background I gained my regulating Christian ideals, From Gandhi I learned my operational technique".

Acknowledging his debt to Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. King explained the Montgomery bus boycott programme: "This is a protest of passive resistance depending upon moral and spiritual forces. We will return good for evil. Christ showed us the way and Mahatma Gandhi showed us it could work".

Explaining why the US Negro has not taken to more radical ways to gain civil rights, he said: The basic reason is that the American Negro has faith in that he can get justice within the framework of the American

democratic set-up”.

That Gandhi continues to inspire a considerable section of the American opinion is a fact which cannot be wished away. What E. Stanly Jones, himself a great pacifist said about Gandhi assumes significance, “I bow to Mahatma Gandhi, but I kneel at the feet of Christ and give him my full and final allegiance. And yet a little man, who fought a system in the framework of which I stand, has taught me more of the spirit of Christ than perhaps any other man in East or West”. There are quite a few among the liberal pacifists in the West who found in Gandhi the argument against the inevitability of the deterministic social order dominated by Darwin and Marx. Albert Einstein, Aldous Huxley, Oswald Garrison Villard, Roger Baldwin and many others were able to see in Gandhi a reinstatement of the Renaissance faith of the perfectability of man. In contrast to this group there was the religious pacifists such as AJ Maste, John Nevin, Haynes Holmes, Norman Thomas who found in Gandhi “a moral equivalent of war”. There may not be a Martin Luther King now in the USA but the number of votaries of nonviolence both as a political strategy and as a creed has increased and there are several internationally famous pacifists who are champions of nonviolence. Johan Galtung, Homer Jack, Dr. Glenn D. Paige and Gene Sharp are some of the ardent supporters of nonviolence.

The spilling of blood in both the former Yugoslavia and Checkoslovakia and the uncertainties created by the events following the dismemberment of the USSR should be viewed as the inescapable result of incongruities grown around a philosophy which by and large did not care about the pure means in achieving ends. Here comes the relevance of the Gandhian insistence of purity of means and ends. Something which the communist blocks always scoffed at. The Gandhian concept of nonviolence seems to have attracted the attention of the youth of Checkoslovakia. There is an awareness alround that nonviolence which is as old as hills and which is based on primordial instinct of man to live happily and let live would be an answer to the seething problems they face. Following Soviet invasion of 1968, there was a Gandhian protest mainly organised by the youth. From the youth the message gradually spread to the elders. It may be of interest to note here that the Czechs organised extremely useful programmes during the Gandhi centenary. The Speaker of the National Assembly of Checkoslovakia said in a message, "Gandhiji's thought is of special Significance". The hapless victims who were caught up in the cross fire of dismemberment and vaulting ambition of political leaders of Checkoslovakia looked up to the Gandhian concept of non-violent social transformation more than ever before. In Yugoslavia also the fast emerging political scenario offers very disturbing pointers. the USSR, Checkoslovakia, Yugoslavia, the three main

pillars of communism in Europe face very serious crisis, a crisis that needs some humanitarian touch to defuse. And as reports indicate the Gandhian alternative is very much being examined in these countries which are faced with the threat of political extinction and internecine killings.

There is no doubt that the present century has been a glorious one in terms of man's continued conquest of nature including the outer space. Materially man has reached the zenith of his achievements. The rapid technological strides that have changed the life style of man has also induced in him a new sense of both insecurity and hope. Hope on his ability to rise like the phoenix to reconstruct from the ruins and the indomitable spirit of never to yield. The insecurity stems out of the profound understanding that unless material progress is tempered with the waters of spiritual values and concerns humanity will land itself on the desert sands of its creation.

Europe overawed the rest of humanity with its superior might through an intelligent harnessing of the fruits of Science and Technology while other continents particularly Africa and Asia continued to be enveloped in spiritual and philosophical pursuits. The appeal of the Buddha despite the tidal wave of material progress swept almost the whole of the South East Asia while the Indian civilisation and the Chinese civilisation made feverish

attempts to come to terms with the new challenges. The Asian continent was condescendingly described as 'developing' while the African region with its infinite natural resources and tremendous man power was described to be 'dark' and 'underdeveloped' continent because it suited the colonial exploiters to keep it so. But it did not escape the notice of the impartial observers that Africa is only a sleeping giant who when awakes will be a formidable force to reckon with. Though the hang-overs of the centuries old colonial exploitation still hampers the different countries, there is no doubt that a rejuvenated African continent which would be self confident of its inherent strength will play a crucial role in the 21st century. Brushing aside these seething problems Africa and Asia which have several common features in between would challenge the West and as and when this happens it would mark a new phase in human history.

Gandhi, Johan Galtung points out, has become a part of the world political culture and Gandhi is bound to influence the course of Twenty first century. This is amply made clear from the manner in which the fast-spreading Soka Gakai movement under the presidentship of an unbelievably energetic and creative person Dr. Daisaku Ikeda has been emphasising the Gandhian method for world peace. The SGI leadership has shown remarkable awareness of this factor as is evident from the thrust SGI President Dr. Ikeda gives in recent times to the

propagation of Ahimsa as enunciated by Shakyamuni Buddha.

The growing awareness of a world without war which is one of the cherished goals of humanity could not be a distant dream. A spiritual awakening supported by cultural, educational and social movements is on the cards as we moved close to the twenty first century. Then, what kind of changes are we expecting? It cannot be anything other than a non-exploitative and just society where no man will die of hunger, where everyone's self respect will get prime place and where none will be segregated in the name of the colour of his skin. Well, are we dreaming of an Utopia? Even then, to dream is a pleasant experience. The tragedy of the legacy of the Twentieth Century is that a large segment of our followmen is still denied of opportunities for growth. Luckily, the winds of change that has set in thanks to the remarkable work in this field by several motivated groups hold out promise. As Keats sang, 'If winter comes, can spring be far behind?'

It may look refereshing and inspiring to the votaries of peace and nonviolence all over the world to realise that the epoch-making changes in South Africa signalling the death of apartheid owe their inspiration to Mahatma Gandhi's heroic work in South Africa at the beginning of the 20th century as Nelson Mandela acknowledges. It was precisely a hundred years ago that Gandhi

set his foot in the soils of South Africa. Gandhi who was invited to South Africa as a lawyer to fight a court case found on his arrival situation highly mortifying and humiliating for any human being to tolerate. He was aware of the inhuman segregation a section of Indians were facing back in his home country in the name of untouchability. But what faced Gandhi in South Africa was beyond his understanding. That man could be segregated in the name of colour of his skin and could be denied of his basic rights came to him as a rude shock. Millions of the local black population and the Indian settlers (most of them indentured labourers) were languishing in inhuman conditions. Gandhi too became a victim of this dehumanising practice not once or twice but several times. On June 7th of 1893 a few months after his arrival in South Africa Gandhi while travelling by a train in a first class compartment was thrown out of the train at the Petermauritzburg station: The 'crime' of Gandhi was that he was black and the blacks were not permitted to travel first class. On another occasion he was denied travel by a coach along with white passengers. He was denied hotel accommodation once and taking pity on him a kindly soul offered him accommodation in the hotel on condition that he would not come down to the dining room, instead would remain in his room and take his food also there. On another occasion he was pushed down by the guards for having dared walk along a road in the vicinity of the residence of some important white government official.

Later Gandhi knew that the blacks and 'coolies' were not allowed to walk along that road. Gandhi could also see that the children of the blacks were also not allowed to study in the school along with the white children. These were only a few of the visible symptoms of the dreaded apartheid practice and there were many more and more humiliating aspects the foundations of which were too strong and which defied any attempts to uprooting. That a satisfactory solution to this vexed issue could be found in 1993 which marked the centenary of Gandhi's work in South Africa was good news to the freedom-loving citizens of the world and more so to the peace activists.

Ramachandranji had watched with interest the developments in South Africa and told this writer on hearing the agreement between D'Clerk and Nelson Mandela, "this is the second big political triumph of nonviolence as an effective strategy to conflict management in international and inter-racial relationship after Gandhi's assassination. The first being the glorious harnessing of people's energy to fight under Martin Luther King (Jr) the evil of segregation. Both had spiritual ramifications".

The ten lessons Ramachandranji offered his "comrade-disciple" Sister Mythili besides discussing the strategies to internalise spiritual truths enshrined in the inspiring mosaic of nonviolence, is a brilliant exposition of the contemporary relevance of '*Karma-Yoga*' as transmitted by Lord Krishna to his disciple and *bhakta*, Arjuna.

“He who serves true mentors feet, obeys,
Leaving aside his whims and views,
He knows the truth, what mentor says,
Ascertains his own self abstruse”.

Thus, wrote Raichandbhai in his classic commentary on life, '*Atma-Siddhi*' (Self Realization). It will be interesting to know who this Raichandbhai was. He was a great Jain religious teacher whom Gandhi acknowledged as his mentor in religion. Gandhi has written extensively about the manner in which this Jain scholar influenced him in his life and thinking, Gandhi also identified two others—Tolstoy and Ruskin for their influence on him. Gandhi wrote:

“I have drunk to my hearths content the nectar of religion that was offered to me by Sri Raichandbhai. Raichandbhai hated the spread of irreligion in the name of religion and had condemned lies, hypocrisy, and such other vices which were getting a free hand in his time.”

Gandhi wrote this seven decades ago indicating the need for sustained efforts on the part of those who care for values and those who strive to liberate religion from the hands of those who misuse it. This is yet another example of how seers and great men and women are able to see through the womb of time and predict future correctly. Nichiren Daishonin in Japan was prominent among them. And it is but natural that the disciples of the Daishonin have declared their intentions to fight evil

uncompromisingly and suffer, if need be. And in this the running stream which ensures continuity of vision is the mentor-disciple relationship.

One of the invisible but highly creative and strong links in human relationships is the mentor-disciple bond which transcends almost all other existing relationships. Its nearest could be the mother-child relationship. The mother-child relationship is one of undeniable facts of life. A look at the great men and women who shaped history and who are achievers would reveal the amazing fact that each one of them had a mentor in life. While some acknowledged it, others did not. In quite a few societies this tradition became a precious part of heritage. And it became a precious heritage to be proud of. It may also be noted that at the same time in several societies with the spread of values associated with industrial revolution and disappearance of traditional values and attitudes, this took a back seat.

Change is the law of life. While this is true, does this in any way indicate that in the name of change we should forgo all traits and habits which enriched human life all along and sustained it? Healthy traditions and conventions constitute the fibre and texture of human life.

The great teachers also reveal the truth that true greatness reflects humility to acknowledge the boundless support and guidance received in one's life and work

from higher and noble souls who acted like beacons and light houses. There is nothing unscientific in this. In our efforts to translate our dreams into reality the impetus provided to us by our mentors, though not present physically, is immense.

A true mentor has no death, he lives through his disciple and a genuine and inspired disciple is both the mirror image of his mentor besides being his own self. A true and genuine disciple is thus both a reservoir and receptacle effectively articulating the mentor's voice and dreams.

Higher Values of Life is a veritable hymn on this truth.



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G. Ramachandran personifies to me many of those ideas and ideals which were wrought out of India's struggle to free her from British rule.

Reverend Michael Scott
(Peace Activist, USA)

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