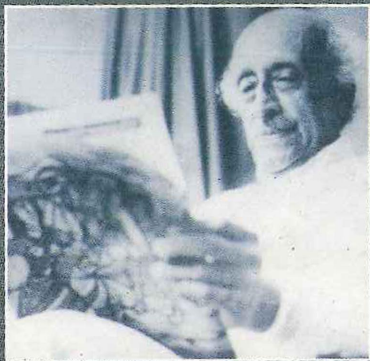


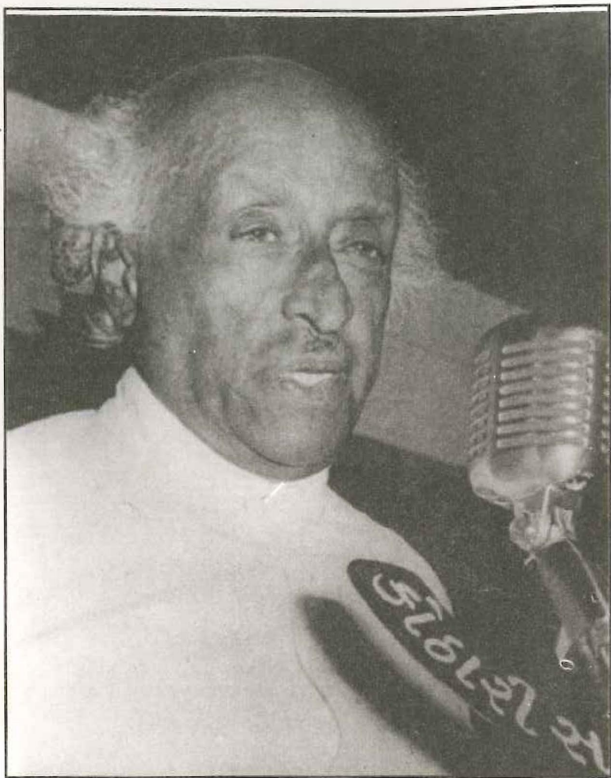
GANDHIAN Heritage



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



The Madhavi Mandiram Loka Seva Trust
Neyyattinkara



Dr. G. Ramachandran

THE GANDHIAN HERITAGE

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FOREWARD

“Gandhian Heritage” is one of the series of booklets, “Reflections of Life” written by Desikottama Dr G. Ramachandran. Even a casual reader will find inspiration from a study of these reflections. How Gandhian Heritage was formed step by step was explained in GR’s own efficient language.

In these reflections he recalls the image of a Triveni or the Confluence of three invisibles; Saraswathy of Truth, the Ganga of Gandhi and the Yamuna of Tagore. It is well known how he had received his baptism in purifying fire of the Gandhian revolutions in India and at the same time the currents of our Cultural Renaissance in which the poetry and philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore flowed. He had the unique privilege of being the disciple of both Gandhi and Tagore.

Rarely are we allowed to get such a glimpse of the meditations of such a person as in these reflections Dr GR shares with us more of the gleanings of his Sadhana in these booklets.

Gandhiji's Talisman

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test:

Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *swaraj* for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?

Then you will find your doubt and your self melting away.





THE GANDHIAN HERITAGE - 1



Master, your 115th Birth Anniversary is being celebrated in India and in many countries outside. The world will thus remember once more your fragile but volcanic personality, your deathless courage and radiant heroism, your tremendous sacrifices and sufferings, and above all your discovery of the power locked up inside ahimsa.

Throughout India and the world outside, millions of people will recall now you harnessed the power of ahimsa to the greatest revolution of the 20th century, which ended a mighty Empire without violence and bloodshed. It is altogether good that the world will remember you once again. But will this seething remembrance help in achieving your great dream of a human society based on non-violent sanctions of political and social conduct? The remembrance of mankind can

often be fleeting and illusory. Will the present wave of remembrance prove to be the same?

While on the one hand it will be foolish to build our hopes on present remembrance alone, it will, on the other hand, be cynical to brush away such remembrance as worthless. There is also in the present context an additional factor of immense significance making remembrance more potent than usual. The people of the world know fully well how they stand on the brink of the greatest peril of all time.

The possibility of a nuclear war has already appeared on the horizon like an immense thundercloud. People everywhere are seeking for a way of escape from the terror of such a war. Non-violence, which was just a word before, has assumed substance and reality. Gandhian non-violence has now a message for every human mind. To die through violence or live through non-violence is the choice before mankind.

Political ideologies and economic theories are no longer as relevant as before. They pale into insignificance before the terrific threat of nuclear weapons in the hands of enemy states determined to subjugate each other. The Russian and American super powers appear to be in the grip of impossible and stupid dreams of conquests and victories. The immense industrial-cum-military complexes buttressed by science and technology are running their course without any reference to moral or spiritual values which ought to govern any civilization or culture worth the name. It is at such a time that Mahatma Gandhi's 115th birthday is being observed in India and outside.

The deeper implications of the Gandhian Heritage are not yet clear to the millions everywhere who are seeking for the power of non-violence to overthrow the imperialism of violence. But these implications are as clear as crystal. No one has explained and taught these implications more unambiguously and in such utterly simple

language than Mahatma Gandhi. He wanted the spiritualization of politics and the purification of economics. He thus asked for the end of all colonialism and the liberation of subject peoples throughout the world. When he brought the mighty British Empire to an end through non-violent revolution, the signal was given for the freedom of the people everywhere.

In the wake of Indian independence, several other imperial systems crumbled and throughout Asia and Africa a cluster of nations arose which have today taken their place in the world of liberty and fraternity. The new independent nations of Asia are now pulling their weight in the affairs of the world. The once Dark Continent of Africa is now bright with fires of freedom everywhere. The gentle but mighty spirit of Gandhiji is still alive and moving within the heart of humanity. It will not cease till people everywhere are politically free and under no economic suppression. Gandhi's India has showed the way, partly at

least, but sufficiently clearly, for the world to understand and follow. May the worldwide celebration of Mahatma Gandhi's birthday take mankind one step further to freedom, prosperity and peace!

This is the meaning of the Gandhian Heritage today.



non-violence is thrown into peril by what has happened. But any study of history will show that violence has met with as great shocks and defeats and yet continued to flourish. Let not the present terrible blow to non-violence shake our faith in it as the only antidote to crime and violence at every level.

We have often written about the impending peril to mankind from nuclear weapons but suddenly, here and now, we have the eruption of terrorism from within our own society. If nuclear weapons are the ultimate in international conflicts, terrorism has become the ultimate in violence inside our own societies. A diabolic chain of terrorism by individuals and small groups of people has already swept through the world in recent times. There was first the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by a religious fanatic.

We have had since then the assassination of President Kennedy and the attempted assassination of no less a person than

of His Holiness Pope John Paul and then of Reagan and Thatcher and the killing of Akino. These are only some outstanding examples of the chain of terrorism. There are of course innumerable other cases of political murders in many other countries of the world.

We in India have lived under the illusion that with the martyrdom of Gandhi we have seen the last of political terrorism. It is high time that civilized Governments came together to plan to defeat this rising tide of international terrorism.

The terrorists who assassinate are not merely individuals or isolated little groups of extremists. They are often the agents of deep-seated conspiracies involving even hostile Governments. There are two major drives required to meet the grim situation. To begin with security forces should be impeccably organized to frustrate terrorism. Secondly, social forces should be generated through education and propaganda to discover and cut out the roots of the ideology and practice of

terrorism. In any case terrorism must be treated as the cancer in the soul of modern political adventurism. There is no other way to deal with it except to stamp it out root and branch. The division of the modern world into armed and hostile camps drawing strength and sustenance from ruthless industrial cum military complexes is the fertile soil in which terrorism grows. But let us not make any mistake about it; the terrorists are wonderfully organized and supported by almost undiscoverable forces. Many terrorist assassinations still remain without our laying hands on the real culprits.

The question may well be asked what remedy non-violence has in reply to terrorism. Just as organized violence and terror appear in the world, non-violence and fearlessness must be cultivated as part of the life training of every citizen. There is no shortcut for achieving this result. As we have stated education and the higher values of civilization and culture is the only answer. The Gandhian Heritage embodies

these sovereign remedies for violence and terror. We in India that never accept defeat in this matter. We have already stood very grace shocks in this regard.

Let us what with all our strength to make the Gandhian Heritage function in the present crisis also.



THE GANDHIAN HERITAGE - 3

A highly intellectual friend & co-worker writes a significant letter. He asks if we do not know that the followers of Mahatma Gandhi in India are the least effective peace-workers in the world today and that in many Western countries tens of thousands of people, mostly women, are fighting against their own governments to disarm and induce others to disarm. These peace workers come under attack by the police in the different countries. Such peace-work is considered unworthy of patriots, involving risk to National security! Thousands of such peace-workers are beaten up and cast into prisons. The writer wants us to realize that there is far more concern in outside countries than in India about preventing another World war which is bound to employ terrible nuclear weapons of destruction of all human life and all that

civilization has created through uncounted centuries. We are also told to understand that there is yet plenty of wisdom and concern in the Western World, which will never allow a nuclear war. How we wish we could implicitly believe all this!

We have seen two world wars breaking out unexpectedly even when such wisdom and concern were then also available in Europe and America. It is neither lack of wisdom nor concern, which can become incapable of preventing total disaster. Is there not much planning and courage even in the prosecution of great military adventures? What is required more than anything else is faith in the moral Government of the world and the imperative need to forsake mass violence for the redress of grievances real or imaginary. What is needed is the realization that violence will always escalate and reach a point from which there will be no return. The history of modern civilization is that of militarism devastating the

world again and again. Today it will not be merely devastation but total annihilation of human life and civilization, which a third world war might well entail. While, therefore, we are happy that our intellectual critic holds on to so much optimism, we would point the finger of warning to all those to whom delusions come with mere brain power.

The world situation today is more complex and the dreadful accumulation of violence is more than the world can hold anymore. Luckily, there is perhaps something to be said in favor of our optimistic critic. And that is, the slight softening of relations between the USSR and the USA on the one side and China and the USA on the other. Added to this is the welcome fact that the USSR and China are also moving a little closer together. All this is due to the increasing awareness that no nation participating in a nuclear war, can ever succeed against any other employing the same weapons of total destruction. Surely,

President Reagan and the Soviet Leader Konstantin Chernenko are not going to be parties to the destruction of all the millions of their people and what they have achieved through the centuries for themselves and the world. It is also a good portent that China is on increasingly friendly terms with the two Super Powers. Among these three great powers, the moral responsibility of the USA is by far the greater, because it is a Christian Nation believing at least in theory, in the moral government of the world. France, Germany and England certainly do not want another world war. The time is, therefore, ripe for firm International Agreements to put away nuclear weapons and to proceed steadily, to disarmament and peace. It has been claimed repeatedly that the Soviet people want nothing more than peace. President Reagan has also been considerably sobered during and after the elections by the pressure of public opinion in the USA against war and for peace. India too,

due to its leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement has a role to play in the making of world peace. Indiraji has given a consistent and powerful lead in this matter. It is good to note that Rajiv Gandhi has already repeatedly affirmed his allegiance to the path of peace opened by his great mother.

The Gandhian Heritage calls in all the people of India to add strength to his elbow.



had undertaken for some years visiting countries in every continent, which has no parallel. Everywhere he had raised his voice for peace and non-violence. Whether it was in the countries of Europe or Asia or in America or Africa his message rang out in clear tones reaching the human conscience pleading for cessation of all armed and even unarmed conflicts and warning mankind against the imminent peril of a nuclear war which has already appeared as a dark and threatening cloud on the horizon. Warmongers everywhere have begun to look upon him as their greatest moral enemy. Did not the world witness the terrible crime of his attempted assassination a few years ago? His escape from death was nothing less than a miracle and what was more he went about the world thereafter with the same relentless message against violence and war anywhere in the world.

After the passing away of Mahatma Gandhi and when we were all missing his mighty and gentle voice pleading for truth and non-

violence the voices of Pope John Paul I and now Pope John Paul II filled up the moral vacuum. After Gandhi the one great moral voice, which has challenged the evils of violence and suppression everywhere were these two voices speaking with calm spiritual fervors.

There is a rare and high-souled message from the present Pope for the celebration of the "World Day of Peace." The central challenge of this message is that Peace and Youth must go forward together. Here is an illuminating paragraph from this message "Violence and injustice have deep roots in the heart of each individual, of each one of us, in people's every day ways of thinking and behaviour. We have only to think of conflicts and divisions within families, between married couples, between parents and children, in the schools, in professional life, in the relationships between social groups and between the generations. We have only to think of the cases

where the basic right to life of the weakest and most defenseless human beings is violated. Faced with these, and many more evils, it is still not right to lose hope-so abundant are the energies that continually spring to in the hearts of people who believe in justice and peace. The present crisis can and must become the occasion for conversion and for the renewal of mentalities. The time we are living in is not just a period of danger and worry. It is an hour for hope.”

The message while it takes stock of the many evils with which the world is filled is no message of despair. On the contrary it pulsates with courage and hope for the future. We must quote another paragraph from this noble challenge issuing from the Vatican city: “In the midst of many siren calls of self-interest, the man and woman of peace must lean to heed first the values of life and then move with confidence to put those values into practice. The call to the peacemakers will then rest

firmly on the call to conversion of heart.” “The conversion of heart” was a phrase, which Mahatma Gandhi used often. Even in the battle for freedom, which he waged against the British Raj, he did not hesitate to say that his aim was to bring about “a change of heart” in the rulers. We thus discover the historic identity of the two messages.

This is part of the Gandhian Heritage as we look at it today.





THE GANDHIAN HERITAGE - 5



There certainly is a silver lining in the dark cloud. The meeting in Geneva between the United States Secretary of State and the Foreign Minister of the USSR was a breakthrough in an impossible situation that has lasted for several years between the two Super Powers. Here at last their accredited Representatives were talking together on issues of peace and disarmament. We have no detailed report of the talks. But we remember what Pandit Nehru has often said, "Let contending parties talk and talk instead of fighting!" It is of course a far cry from such opening talks to peace and disarmament. Nevertheless it is a good sign. The latest utterances from Washington and Moscow strengthen the feeling of optimism. President Regan in his brief and pointed speech at his oath-taking ceremony as President of the

United State for a second term has said that he would strain every nerve to avoid a nuclear war with the USSR. Moscow has all along presented the idea that it would go all the way to disarmament and peace. It would be cynical to reject outright the earnestness of purpose underlying these statements. Both the parties are equally sure that much sorting-out work will have to be done before their present aims can be promoted. We must now look forward to 1985 with a little more optimism than in 1984 and earlier.

What are the forces compelling them to promise to work for peace? It is too much to hope that it is the challenge of moral idealism, which is moving them. Deep within their minds is the terror of destroying millions of their own people and civilization itself. Perhaps even terror is operating as a chastening corrective. The fantastic question arises in the minds of thinkers as to what and why should the Super Powers be willing to face mutual

annihilation. What exactly do they want to achieve against each other? Surely it cannot be world domination. Such domination is totally impossible under world conditions today. It is no longer as though Africa or South America or even Asia is lying open to be dominated.

All these Continents are bristling with independent Nations, large or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, which would fight unto death to preserve their freedom and their way of life. One mighty and imponderable factor is the Peoples Republic of China, which will never tolerate the domination of the world by either the U.S.A or the USSR. The jigsaw puzzle of world politics is no longer open ground for domination of the world by any Power or Powers however mighty.

Historic realities more than any moral idealism might well be the forces driving the Super Powers to agree not to attempt to destroy each other for nothing really worth such

sacrifice. Enlightened minds everywhere are on the contrary looking forward to a world full of freedom, happiness and prosperity for every people. Peace, prosperity and happiness have all become indivisible. Mahatma Gandhi throughout his work for freedom in India never failed to proclaim that his aim was the freedom of all people everywhere. He of course built his dream on moral and spiritual realism. But the future is not going to wait for a Regan or a Chernenko to decide the ultimate fate of mankind.

Historic forces are at work shaping man's future destiny. The voice of the people and the will of the people will become increasingly irresistible. Mahatma Gandhi represented their voice and their will more than those who are holding in their hands the power to unleash a nuclear war. This is stark reality and not mock idealism. The voice of the people is rising everywhere unmistakably and we can also discern the sharpening of their will

for peace. The Non-Aligned Movement representing more than a hundred nations stand solidly for peace and against a nuclear war. The will to peace is equally strong among the people of all the other big and armed powers. All these put together will make a powerful combination for peace.

The Gandhian Heritage brings us firmly on their side.



THE GANDHIAN HERITAGE - 6

The centuries of man's domination are perhaps slowly coming to an end. These centuries were full of conflicts, battles and wars. Man has essentially been a creature of violence. These centuries were full of conflicts, battles and wars. Man has essentially been a creature of violence. This violence grew from century to century till at last are facing the possibility of the total destruction of mankind and civilization in a nuclear war. Interspersed through the centuries, we have had occasional pockets of peace and respite from violence and war. But generally speaking, ever since the Christian era of history, we have slaughtered millions of human beings in wars of conquest and exploitation. For the first time, in the 20th century there came into existence the League of Nations, which ended ingloriously with the rape of Abyssinia by Italy. This was after the

First World War. Then came the Second World War in which again millions of human beings were slaughtered by so called World Powers trying to destroy each other in their attempt to secure world domination. After the Second World War came the United Nations. This was certainly far ahead of the League of Nations. But this magnificent Organization has also begun to totter under the grim rivalries of the U. S. S. R.

While this colossal tragedy is stalking mankind, a new Power has become visible on the horizon. This comes from the awakening of women all over the world. This power of women is rising steadily in a tidal wave. Millions of women in many countries of the West and the East appear to realize at last what a terrific peril is over-shadowing their own lives and the lives of their children. They see a world in which men have gone mad and have become incapable of seeing that day by day the world in which they dominate is drawing closer to its

doom. The women of the world appear to be determined not to let the world destroy itself. The women are waking up everywhere and marching and demonstrating against nuclear weapons and war.

The arrogance of man is now confronting this new challenge of womanhood. How often did not Mahatma Gandhi speak and write that the only power, which can save the world, is that of resurgent womanhood protecting their homes and children from total destruction. More than any other leader of the modern world Gandhiji put his faith on the moral and the spiritual power of women. Gandhiji considered that women alone could today lead the world to peace and non-violence. The next epoch in world history might well be that of women. Gandhiji of course was not thinking of the assertion of feminism. His faith was that women would work with men to save the world from impending doom. The woman as mother and wife might well transform the

world. He has learnt the great lesson how in India, millions of our women helped him to keep his revolution firmly rooted in non-violence. The longer he lived, the greater grew his faith in women and his hope that they would usher in the world's first great era of peace. He has discovered that women were not the weaker but the nobler sex.

Before Gandhiji came, the world had never witnessed such a resurgence of the power of women to fight the hardest battles for freedom and justice wholly non-violently. He also discovered that women could answer the call of Non-violent Revolution even more readily than men. The world is today facing an unparalleled moral and spiritual crisis from which has arisen the dark and terrible threat of a nuclear war. We do not forget that there are women soldiers on the ground and up in the air within modern armies. But their numbers are few and the men bear the brunt of slaughtering each other and destroying civilization and

culture without even knowing why. Women are more conscious of the reasons and the consequences of mass slaughter.

The Gandhian Heritage is a clear call to women to help in making the world a safe place to live in.



THE GANDHIAN HERITAGE - 7

That a tree is known by its fruits is part of the ancient wisdom. We do not judge a tree by the luscious foliage or the abundance of its branches, but only by the sweetness and utility of its fruit. It would be fascinating to transfer this imagery to violence and non-violence in history. The tree of violence has grown and developed through the ages. Its fruits constitute a mighty portion of history. These fruits are political power, economic exploitation, cultural and religious expansion and physical victories and conquests by force of arms. We have thus the unfolding picture of great kingdoms and empires, of political and economic systems capturing large areas of the earth and the rise and fall of the culture of many peoples.

Curiously history has largely been an account of these fruits of the tree of violence. But the fruits of the tree of non-violence are

those, which have always added to the beauty and glory of life and to all those graces of arts and culture, which make up the substance of civilization. There were wars and heroes of wars throughout our own history. Ancient Greece was however more known for its sculpture, poetry and philosophy than even its conquests and victories of war. While warring and conquering Greece disappeared from history, the philosophies, arts and culture of Greece swept over the whole of Europe creating a Renaissance of everlasting beauty. In India also while we do remember our own warriors and conquerors, those who have laid the firm foundations of our immemorial culture and arts are our poets, philosophers, sculptors and musicians.

Both the trees of violence and non-violence have stood erect and tall throughout the ages. The genius of man has from time to time sometimes accepted the fruits of one tree or the other. The time has come for mankind

to make a final choice. It is a terrible choice. The fruits of the tree of violence are now nuclear weapons of every kind with such destructive power as can annihilate the whole of civilization and mankind with it. The tree of non-violence has on the other hand produced, the instruments of Satyagraha and the sociology of Sarvodaya. These are the richest fruits that this tree has ever borne till now. It is open to man to accept the fruits of the tree of violence and commit the suicide of the race or to accept the fruits of the tree of non-violence, donning the weapons of Satyagraha and consciously moving toward a Sarvodaya society. It is astonishing how today more and more millions of people are seeking the way of Satyagraha as the only way out of the impending doom of mankind in a nuclear war. The gentle but inflexible voice of Mahatma Gandhi is being heard above the din of weapons and bombs. He is calling mankind to live and not to die. He has discovered the

secret of the power of non-violence, which is irresistible, and lifesaving. It can solve every problem of man providing strength where necessary and equally providing love and gentleness where necessary. Buddha and Jesus stand with him in proclaiming once again the law of love and compassion against the law of hate and killing. We have put aside the Buddha and the Christ during the many centuries of the past. But now in our own time has come Gandhi, who not only preached his doctrine of love and redemption through non-violence but has given historic demonstration on a vast scale of the practical efficacy of his doctrine.

Two factors contribute today the overwhelming pressures, which come upon mankind. The first is the terrific challenge of the nuclear war, the significance of which is now known throughout the world. The other is what we have from Mahatma Gandhi, i.e. the twin truths of Satyagraha as the method and Sarvodaya as the goal.

The Gandhian Heritage leaves the choice to mankind save its acceptance.





THE GANDHIAN HERITAGE - 8



The more we advance into the next century the more the Gandhian heritage becomes relevant. Mankind is poised between a nuclear war which the super powers might make inevitable and an era of renunciation of nuclear weapons and going towards disarmament and peace. President Reagan and the Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev are still pushing against each other even while proclaiming that their aim is to prevent a nuclear war. What is clear beyond a doubt is that peace will not result like a miracle because these mighty men of history shake hands and talk to each other. Behind each of them, is the long history of different political ideas and systems. These ideas and systems cannot be brushed away even with the best will in the world. Each of these leaders is bound fast to their own political ideas and systems.

The Soviet leader however appeared to have an impressive familiarity with things of Americans. Gorbachev said recently that he has studied U.S. law and he claimed to have read a 600-page Hoover Institute book and added that he has noticed many ideas that his Administration was adopting. He was not impressed however with the men surrounding the President, calling them narrow minded and self-seeking. Again and again Gorbachev urged America to deal with the world, as it exists and not to attempt to reshape the Soviet Union. If the evil of the Communist State existed, let the Americans leave it there. He also said that he has told Mrs Thatcher, the British Prime Minister, that he was nursing no hope of turning her into a Marxist, implying that no one need hope of turning him into a non-Marxist. This was a straight plea for co-existence of different political ideas and political systems.

Unfortunately, the President of the United States still indulges in the illusion that

the Soviet Union will come to good sense sometime or other, meaning that Communism would cease to be in the future. Is the idea of co-existence and opportunist one for America and equally, is it only a temporary solution before the emergence of world Communism for the U.S.S.R? This is a question, which admits of no easy answer.

But the big question marks before the world today is whether Christian America or un-Christian Soviet union will give the lead in ridding the world of the fear of the annihilation of the human race by the diabolic use of nuclear weapons in a war which both do not want and yet do not know how to avoid.

It is here that Mahatma Gandhi the prophet of non-violence enters into history. He had discovered the tremendous power of non-violence when organized on a massive scale as in the non-violent revolutions which he led in India and which finally shattered the mighty British Empire. His clarion call to abandon

the massive use of armed forces to settle international problems is ringing across the world as never before. In one sense he was the supreme idealist of the 20th century and at the same time its supreme realist. There is idealism ingrained in non-violence but Mahatma Gandhi proved that in releasing the power of non-violence and harnessing it to revolutionary action, there was in it unassailable realism. Did he not call himself to be a "Practical Idealist"? In fact, the power of non-violence is the highest example in all history of practical idealism.

Gandhiji wrote the power of non-violence into the history of 400 millions of people. He was the great demonstrator of the truth that millions of men can understand and practice non-violence, if someone with undying faith in it gave the lead. In his historic dialogue with Romain Rolland he never once yielded the point that the power of organized non-violence could be more effective than that of armed rebellion.

This is why we take the view that the more we advance into the next century the more becomes the relevance of the Gandhian Heritage.



by the Gujarat Vidya Peeth. We would find it difficult to discover another thesis to equal the analysis of Anasaktiyoga contained in this volume.

In an illuminating introductory note by the publisher we find the following paragraph: -"Mahatma Gandhi was essentially a man of Dharma. His entire life and thought have a spiritual base. In spite of his heavy pre-occupation in the political life of the country, he never under-stressed Dharma as the basis of entire human life including political life. He even went to the extent of attempting spiritualization of politics. He never thought of Dharma as a sectarian creed. He was wedded to Universal brotherhood based on love and non-violence."

Gandhiji attempted spiritualization not only of politics, but, of all life. This was his Karmayoga. In the Sevagram Ashram in Wardha he often elucidated his concept of Karmayoga. There was no differentiation of big and small

items in Karmayoga. Just as in a locomotive, every bolt and nut is as important as the mighty piston or the propelling wheel, every work we have to do to make life beautiful and great is of equal value. If one meditates on this truth, it may be possible to discover the deep roots of equality in society and in the widening branches of true Democracy.

Gandhiji was fearless in his quest of the ultimate logic of the ethical and pragmatic positions he took up as he built the India of his dream. How well we remember Gandhiji saying often that the work of a municipal scavenger is as important as the work of a Doctor or an Engineer or a Minister. Here was a trend of thought affecting the whole range of values, in political and economic Democracy. No one has attempted to work out the details of this philosophy except perhaps Acharya Vinoba within his limits. In his Bhoodan and Gramdan movements Vinobaji brought back into the daily life of those living

and working with him this comprehensive view of Karmayoga. But neither Gandhians nor Sarvodaya workers have done justice to Gandhiji's profound concept. In our daily life the distinctions between big and small matters create not only confusion but also dismay in our minds.

It is the challenge of the Gandhian Heritage that we must realize that big and small matters are entities within our limited minds. The moment we overcome these distinctions we shall arrive at the truth that will transform our lives.



The Gandhian Plan for India arose step by step from the grass roots of the people. It was not a borrowed plan even if Gandhiji had tried to understand Planning in advanced countries. He knew instinctively that planning in these countries derived its substance from the grass roots of the life of the people in those countries. No advanced country borrowed from other advanced countries. The Khadi Movement came to Gandhiji only after he dugged deep into the Indian soil and understood the staggering realities of the poverty of the people living in the villages. Something had been universal in the life of the rural people in every part of India, which was part of their economy and this had disappeared under political conquest and suppression, leaving behind a vacuum. Khadi alone could fill that vacuum.

No one had made this discovery earlier; even the keenest minds in the country had not dug so deep to find it. Quickly in the wake of this discovery came another closely related one — the steady and relentless ruination of many village industries, which were blood relations of Khadi. The Gandhian Plan therefore started with the revival of Khadi and Village Industries. With the mighty momentum of his genius for Constructive Work, he organized the All India Spinners Association and the All India Village Industries Association. At his call hundreds of educated youth of India plunged into these two movements. Even high intellectuals and well-known scientists came into the movements.

Gandhiji thus opened the vast and dark vista of village India to the gaze of the educated and politically minded sections of the people. Once the rural vista was thus opened, several other vital items of the Gandhian plan came one after another. These included Harijan

liberation, Adult and Basic education, the great
emancipation, Hindustani Prachar, 1
Raj and above all the stress on Non-
as the fundamental force behind every
change. There is a splendid book entitled
"Principles of Gandhian Planning" by
Shriman Narayan with a foreword by Rajendra
Prasad. This is the best guidebook we have on
the subject of Gandhian planning.

This book has the following quotation
from Mahatma Gandhi: -

"I am convinced that if India is to attain
true freedom and through India the world also,
then sooner or later the fact must be recognized
that people will have to live in villages. Not in
towns, in cottages not in palaces. Crores of
people will never be able to live at peace with
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No one had made this discovery earlier; even the keenest minds in the country had not dug so deep to find it. Quickly in the wake of this discovery came another closely related one — the steady and relentless ruination of many village industries, which were blood relations of Khadi. The Gandhian Plan therefore started with the revival of Khadi and Village Industries. With the mighty momentum of his genius for Constructive Work, he organized the All India Spinners Association and the All India Village Industries Association. At his call hundreds of educated youth of India plunged into these two movements. Even high intellectuals and well-known scientists came into the movements.

Gandhiji thus opened the vast and dark vista of village India to the gaze of the educated and politically minded sections of the people. Once the rural vista was thus opened, several other vital items of the Gandhian plan came one after another. These included Harijan

liberation, Adult and Basic education, Women's emancipation, Hindustani Prachar, Panchayati Raj and above all the stress on Non-violence as the fundamental force behind every social change. There is a splendid book entitled "Principles of Gandhian Planning" by Shriman Narayan with a foreword by Rajendra Prasad. This is the best guidebook we have on the subject of Gandhian planning.

This book has the following quotation from Mahatma Gandhi: -

"I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognized that people will have to live in villages. Not in towns, in cottages not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live at peace with each other in towns and palaces. They will then have no recourse but to resort to both violence and untruth. We can realize truth and non-violence only in the simplicity of village life and this simplicity can best be found in the

Charka and all that the Charkha connotes.
I must not fear if the world today is going the wrong way. It may be that India too will go that way and like the proverbial moth burn itself eventually in the flame round which it dances more and more fiercely. But it is my bounden duty up to my last breath to try to protect India and through India the entire world from such a doom”.

Here are prophetic words from the Master himself. We have to reckon with the moral realism in the Gandhian plan. We are however faced with the problem of modern technology, which like a force of nature has taken possession of modern life. We have to work out the appropriate synthesis of science and spirituality. We can do so only if we can keep our minds open and free of all prejudices for or against rural and urban development. There is a sentence of Shriman Narayan that Village communism based on Cottage Industrialism is not a Gandhian fad but the synthesis of science and spirituality.

Does not this represent part of the great Gandhian heritage?



There was constantly one issue, which critics brought up against Gandhian non-violence. This referred to what was considered impossibility i.e., the defense of the country against any foreign invasion. This was not surprising, because when people's faith in non-violence was only skin deep, it was certain they would not believe that the country could be defended non-violently. Mahatma Gandhi himself knew very well that without far more training of the common people in non-violent resistance, it would not be possible to resist non-violently any foreign invasion or armed aggression across the border. Gandhiji was not simply a visionary but a practical idealist. He therefore undertook all the time the programme of training the people in active non-violence.

His entire Constructive Programme was a programme of training Satyagrahis. Just as the training of soldiers for the army takes

several years and passing through innumerable disciplines, so also Gandhiji put millions of people through a long process of training in the Constructive Programme. In the great national organizations he built up for Khadi, Village Industries, Harijan Liberation, Women's participation in non-violent revolution, communal unity and in Basic Education, his whole attempt was to accustom the masses of the people to understand and practice non-violent action and to turn away from all violence.

When the Japanese attack was expected in the Second World War, Gandhiji plunged into the work of organizing the people of Orissa, where the attack was expected, to resist and paralyze any armed invasion. He sought to train the people to disobey the invaders and never surrender. He of course ruled out any retaliation in terms of violence. If an actual invasion had taken place, Gandhiji himself would have led the masses of the people to

resist and paralyze it. What we emphasize is that Gandhiji had a non-violent solution even for resisting an invasion. If he had lived longer, he himself would have demonstrated this in independent India.

What happens to day is that when armies are defeated the people surrender. In Gandhiji's Satyagraha the process is reversed. When the enemy has broken across the border, the non-violent resistance of the people will begin and it will take the form of complete "Non-cooperation" with the invaders. Civil disobedience will become the order of the day. The people will supply nothing to the invaders. No taxes will be paid. No surrender, no obedience will be the cry of non-violent resistance of people.

Let us not forget the veritable facts of our history. The Gandhian revolutions, which ended the British Empire were directed against the enemy already entrenched in the country and in possession of all powers. If the rule of

such a Power could be ended by non-violent non-cooperation, surely such a movement could paralyze an invasion. Gandhiji had great Generals of Non-Violence in his army in whom the people had implicit trust. Sardar Patel in Gujarat, Pandit Nehru in Uttar Pradesh, Baby Rajendra Prasad in Bihar and Rajaji in Tamilnadu had already led mass movements of non-violence, which destroyed the roots of the Empire.

The British ultimately quit India when they realized that they could no longer rule the country except through daily savagery and that at impossible cost. This was the lesson Gandhiji kept ready for the Japanese invasion. Japan needed political power to further economic exploitation. The Japanese would have found the cost too heavy to hold any part of India; Political conquests are no longer relevant in our time. Economic interpenetration is today the aim of all great powers seeking raw materials and profitable markets. Gandhiji's whole

programme was meant to defeat these very purposes of an invader.

This challenge is at the core at the Gandhian Heritage. Hence the relevance of the heritage in our time.



Desikottama Dr G.Ramachandran

Blossomed:07-10-1904

Withered: 17-01-1995

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He was a powerful Orator and a brilliant writer. His Autobiography, "Adventuring with life" is a true reflection of his times and the aspirations of the millions who dedicated their lives for their motherland.

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

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

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

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

University and Doctorate by Gandhigram Rural University.

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



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

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

The Trust has two wings:

One for Social work and

Another for Education

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

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

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

From 7th Oct 2004 to 7th Oct 2005.

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





Effort with most
of us is Sporadic.
Our intention is good
but our effort is
not sustained.
Sustained effort alone
can give us any Victory
worth the name.



Reflections of life
Series No : 4