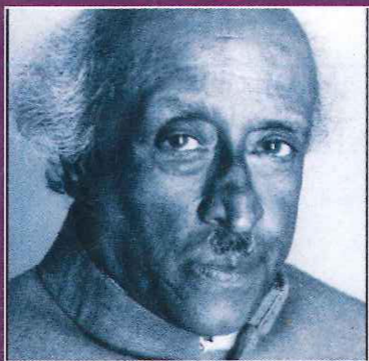


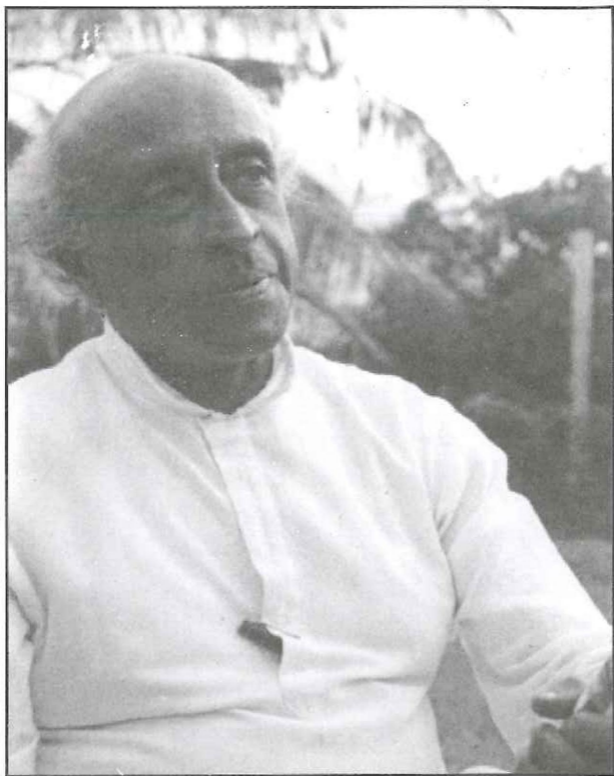
WHAT MAHATMA GANDHI EXPECTS US TO DO HERE AND NOW



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



The Madhavi Mandiram Loka Seva Trust
Neyyattinkara



Dr. G. Ramachandran

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FOREWARD

“What Mahatma Gandhi expects us to do here and now” 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. What all Mahatma Gandhi want us to do or expects us to do here and now in this era were explained in GR’s own efficient language.

In these reflections GR recalls the way and method in which he was trained and drilled by Mahatma. He believes unless we follow these mandates the independence we achieved will go waste. It is well known how he had received his baptism in the purifying the fire of the Gandhian revolutions in India and the same time the currents of our Cultral Renaissance in which the poerty and philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore flowed unique privilege of bring the disciple of both Gandhi and Tagore.

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

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What Mahatma Gandhi Expects us To do here and Now

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To Love India with all our heart and soul

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This is the primary and basic demand of Gandhiji to every Indian. The demand is to love and serve India with all our heart and all our soul. But this has to be understood in the proper Gandhian perspective.

It is known to everybody that to Gandhiji India meant far more the people in the villages, than those in the towns and cities. It was his firm analysis of the Indian situation that our towns and cities were living on the toil and sweat of those living in the villages. The villages had decayed almost beyond redemption.

He once characterized the villages as so many dunghills, full of poverty, ignorance, unemployment, disease and slow death. When therefore he demanded

that the educated and the well-to-do people should learn the truth about the villages and then love and serve the villages, he was making no small demand. It was the biggest demand under the current circumstances.

We are here reminded of some words of the great French thinker and writer Romain Rolland. He wrote that there is no heroism greater than to know life fully and yet to love that life. His meaning was profound and devastating. Life is so much full of terrors, of crimes, of cruelties, of social tragedies and exploitation that when one knows these realities of life, the human mind would recoil in horror from the contemplation of such a life. Therefore to love that life would become the greatest heroism of all. Gandhiji did not use Romain Rolland's words. But his meaning was the same.

To know the poverty, the ignorance, the starvation and the physical and mental nakedness of life into which the masses had sunk would drive anyone who studied these facts into despair and disgust. And so Gandhiji asked for the heroism to push back such despair and disgust and cultivate a moral and spiritual patriotism that would transform the life of the people.

His Constructive Programme embodied such a vibrant patriotism. Gandhiji did not fight shy of the concept and practice of patriotism. His patriotism however was not confined to India but overflowed to every people and nation; for to him all mankind were brothers.

After his return from South Africa Gandhiji discovered how much the people lacked the dynamic patriotism which would create a new India. He found people living

under a cloud of fear of the British rulers, which created climate of mental and moral slavery. He therefore gave a ringing call to love and serve the common people of India. He identified himself with the poor and disinherited and thus laid the foundation of a companionship of the classes and the masses, which became the backbone of his non-violent revolution for the freedom, prosperity and growth of India.

He himself loved India with a passion beyond description and served India with a devotion unsurpassed in our history. Again and again his voice rang across India, reaching every section of the people.

“Love India, Serve India”.

People heard the clarion call of the gentle and mighty man who had unhesitatingly taken over the leadership of the nation. Today also the soul of Gandhi

cries out to all of us,

*“Love India with all your heart and
serve India with all your soul”.*

To Gandhiji India was the most beautiful and morally and spiritually the most potential country in the world. He threw that India into the crux of the world, to love and serve the whole of mankind.

must serve the village. This is contained in the tiny word Seva.

During the 200 years of British rule India had moved away from the villages into hundreds of towns and some great metropolitan cities. India had come to mean Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, and Allahabad etc.

The Gandhian revolution aimed at reversing this process. Gandhiji first created great pity in the mind of young India that in the lakes of our village's ignorance; insanitation, hunger, disease and death were taking away our very kith and kin. Out of this vast reservoir of pity he created the will of the people to serve the villages.

It is thus that Gandhiji formulated his great Constructive Programme of Khadi, Anti-untouchability and Anti caste, the Revival of Village Industries, the Awakening of women, Prohibition, Basic

Education etc. The call of this gentle but mighty man was that to love meant to serve.

He fired the imagination of educated India with this resounding call. At the same time he created fearlessness and self-reliance in the mind of village India. He brought scholars, scientists and the intelligentsia to the doors of the village people. From the educated and well to do sections of the people he raised a wave of rural service. He himself became Constructive Worker No 1 in the India of his time. He lived the life of a simple villager in a mud hut in Sevagram. This mud hut became the hut of destiny to which most minds in India turned for inspiration and guidance.

Here was a new philosophy and a new revolution the like of which the world had never known before. Here was dynamic

progress through the recon-ciliation of the classes and the masses instead of through, what has been called, the inevitability of class conflict for revolution and progress.

Gandhiji attended to every detail of this Nationwide Programme. He collected vast amounts of money of finance the Programme. He asked the people and the people gave what he asked.

The Gandhian Constructive Programme embraced every aspect of life in rural India and the towns and cities did their duty to the villages under Gandhiji's supreme guidance. India began to vibrate with a new determination and courage to rebuild rural and national economy.

At the outset of this little essay, we asked the question, how to love India in Truth and in Action. We have answered that question as clearly as possible but very briefly.

In doing so we were obliged to reveal how the Gandhian revolution was born and how it developed under Gandhiji's leadership.

We were in fact opening up the story of the greatest peaceful revolution of our time. Under the titanic pressure of world politics and economics India has slowly lost the ground prepared by the non-violent genius of our great leader.

We are poised today between our own recent past and the compelling future. No one can prophesy which way India will travel in the coming years. We can only pray that our country will not desert the Gandhian Way altogether but will discover a new synthesis enshrining the moral values of that great tradition.



Political Freedom



We had been an Independent Sovereign Republic for three decades. We have not however established economic freedom in the wake of political freedom.

To say we have done nothing in this regard will be a travesty of truth. It will be nothing less than dishonoring the great leaders of India who handled political freedom during this period. They were our best men and directly trained by Gandhiji himself over a period of years. Pandit Nehru was very much in this picture. So were Sardar Patel, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachariar, Moulana Azad and others.

They knew without a doubt that political freedom must create economic freedom. They did carry out innumerable

measures for establishing economic equality among the different classes. It was not so much class distinctions as caste distinctions, which stood in the way of economic freedom.

Caste distinctions were put on the anvil of legislation and they were proscribed under the law. But the roots of the caste system were deep down in the soil of India and they are there still. We are fighting to pull out the caste system by the very roots and we have succeeded in a measure. We are discovering every day, that caste is fundamentally an economic proposition and religious colors are adopted only to cheat the people.

The more employment we create and the people secure higher and higher income. We shall see the demon of the caste system laid low. So even while reformers may talk of the caste system as

a religious or moral evil we can go ahead with economic reconstruction with a clear conscience.

We live in an era of scientific and technological development. There is no escape for India from this development.

Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel built up a strong foundation of big industries in which India has done very well. In fact visitors from abroad have been astonished at the progress we have made in the production of steel electrical goods, in machine tools, railways and ship building and in fertilizers etc. apart from the old well established textile industry.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi is all the time trying for modernization. And yet curiously, in some of his latest utterances he is strongly pleading for the revival on the most extensive scale of village and cottage industries utilizing all the advantages of modern technology.

If you look deep into the matter there is no contradiction in this economic approach. It simply recognizes the existing realities of the Indian economic situation. People live scattered in lakhs of villages over a sub-continent. This makes it imperative that large industries and small industries must live together under the Indian sky.

This can be done under wise planning. It is a good sign that such planning is now available. The 20-point programme is the Gandhian Constructive Programme with such modifications as have become imperative. The 20-point programme came from Indiraji and Rajiv Gandhi is crusading for it throughout India. It is not possible in this brief note to go into the details.

The fact however is that economic freedom is steadily developing in the wake of our political freedom. It is always open for economic freedom is steadily developing in the wake of our political freedom.

It is always open for economic pandits to point out some flaw or other in what we are doing. Let us have all the criticism from the Pandits but let us all join together in pushing the Jaggannath Chariot of economic freedom with all our strength and all our honesty.

One very striking example of this peaceful revolution is the abolition of bonded labour with which we are still struggling. Bonded labour is nothing but camouflaged slavery. There is no more time to loose. Surrounded as we are by imminent external and internal dangers it is our inescapable duty to strengthen the foundations of our National Freedom.



Peace is a much greater issue



1986 was a bad year for the world. 1987 holds no clear and firm promise for anything better. The troubles in the world have only increased. There is eruption of violence within nations and between nations as never before in our history.

Everyday drags the world nearer and nearer to a catastrophe without a parallel. No national Government is able to stop the drift to disaster. It is becoming clear beyond doubt that Nation-States are incapable of bringing peace to the world. They only know how to make war and not to make peace.

Peace is a much greater issue than war. The world is accustomed to the mighty problems of war. It is yet to know how to tackle the mighty problems of peace.

Peace inside Nation-States and peace between Nation-States are intimately linked together.

When there is violence within a Nation-State it incapacitates itself from making peace between Nation-States.

Peace, like war must begin in the minds of men. In other words peace must begin in the home and spread to society. This was the essential teaching of Mahatma Gandhi. Here are Mahatma Gandhi's own words in this connection. "Be truthful, gentle and fearless". In these three simple words the great Prophet of Non-Violence sums up his message to the modern man.

It is not easy to be truthful, but it is possible. It is not easy to be gentle, but it is possible. It is very difficult to be fearless but it is possible.

Violent men can only make war. Non-Violent men alone can make the

peace. The non-violence of the individual is thus the foundation of the non-violence of the people as a whole.

Just as tremendous preparations are necessary for making war, profound preparations are necessary for making peace. But the preparations for peace are not that costly. What they involve are moral changes and not all the incalculable physical and material changes required in war. In one sense, therefore, preparations for peace are very simple. But, they call for moral transformation and spiritual change. These are cultivated through the Gandhian Constructive Programme.

This Programme will help to meet the material needs of the people and at the same time elevate human character. Mahatma Gandhi told the people of India step by step through the Constructive Programme to produce not only a measure

of material prosperity but also even more a measure of elevation of the character of the masses.

This image of the Master in Constructive Work and in peace making is emerging clearer in 1987. While the Governments of Nation-States are preparing for war the masses of the people in these very countries are calling out for peace and preparing for peace.

The time will come when under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi's ideas the masses of the people will refuse their own Governments to take up arms in new wars. This is the new world revolution on the horizon of our history.

Ultimately only the people can stop wars by refusing to kill each other in mass slaughter. But, the question is one of timing. Will the will of the people prevail in time to prevent the next World War?

Mahatma Gandhi's hope was great that the people will win against their own Governments in time.

His faith was great that human nature nurtured through many centuries of culture will not fail in the race against total annihilation. We therefore, think that 1987 will be very probably Mahatma Gandhi's year. That will naturally mean it would be the year of Buddha and Christ who were before Gandhiji the great voices calling for the moral and spiritual transformation of the people. Gandhiji has only added the mighty momentum of his spirit to those prophetic voices.



The Return Of Prohibition



Something has happened unexpectedly in line with what Mahatma Gandhi Expects Us to do Here and Now. The Tamil Nadu State Government has with one stroke closed down thousands of toddy and arrack shops in the State with effect from the first day of the New Year.

Our readers many not at once understand the significance of this step taken by the Tamil Nadu Government. It is not total Prohibition. There will still be hundreds of shops in cities and towns selling more costly liquor to the rich and the well to do. They will sell brandy, whisky, and several brands of wines made in the country or imported from outside. If this is so how will the closure of toddy and arrack shops become a gain for prohibition?

Toddy and arrack shops sell the cheapest drink to the poor in the rural areas and that almost right at their doors. The wealthy and educated people eat good food and then pay heavily to get drunk.

The poor villagers drink almost on empty stomachs and thereby hurt themselves piteously. They can never afford the costly drinks in the shops in cities and towns. Logically therefore the Tamilnadu Government have taken away a dreadful temptation from the rural areas. There is however a snag in the whole matter. Critics would say that what the Tamil Nadu Government has done is an invitation to widespread illicit manufacture of toddy and arrack.

A great deal of preventive work will thus fall into the hands of the Police

and the Excise officers. Every time Prohibition has been introduced in any part of India, this problem has come up unfailingly. It need not and must not be outside the capacity of the Government control this illicit traffic up to a worthwhile point. But beyond that nothing can be done.

We remember some caustic words of the Father of the Prohibition Movement in India, the late Sri C. Rajagopalachariar who was a great Reformer and a great Administrator. He once said to a Prohibition Delegation who waited on him to seek his advice as follows: -

“With our best effort we can probably save most of the younger generation from the curse of intoxicants. We can also probably save some sixty percent of those who drink to day. We can

do nothing about the rest. Even God almighty cannot save them. I therefore say, let them drink and be dammed”.

The position now created by the Tamil Nadu Government in closing down thousands of toddy and arrack shops is something like what revered Rajaji foresaw. Those who stand for total prohibition to save the millions in the rural areas and smaller towns can only draw poor consolation form what was happened.

Let us with both hands accept this gift from the State Government. We must now redouble our efforts to press on without demand for total Prohibition. Let us keep our faith that the people of India in a very large measure will stand with us in the demand we make.

Some day the dark and devastating evils of drink as a destroyer of family happiness and social morality will become

so apparent that the Government and the people will join hands to listen to the voice of Mahatma Gandhi pleading for Prohibition here and now.

In the immediate years after independence and few entire States of the Indian Union like Tamilnadu, Bombay and Gujarat had introduced total prohibition. Successive Governments of these States slowly fell away from prohibition to fill their Treasures with the cast wealth garnered from legitimatising liquor traffic.

The introduction of Prohibition is a matter entirely in the Hands of the Governments of the States. The Central Government can only help by making good part of the loss due to Prohibition. This, the Central Government is still willing to do. For after all no Government at the Centre or in the State can ever forget Mahatma Gandhi's passionate insistence on

total Prohibition as the first step in our economic redemption.

That mighty hear of love and compassion for the poor is still hovering over our land. This is just reality.

General Elections Of The Indian Union

Mahatma Gandhi as a true democrat wanted the people to consider the vote as a sacred trust. What did that mean? It meant that the people should vote without fear or favor and uninfluenced by money or power. It is of course inevitable that when there are political parties people will vote for one party or other. Even so no vote should be sold or commandeered.

The vote is a symbol of freedom and its sanctity must always be preserved. All this is apart from Gandhiji's distrust of the present voting system. He was afraid of money and power would influence voting. Hence his extra cautious approach to the whole subject of voting. India has accepted the Parliamentary Democratic

system with open eyes. We must therefore now take the best out of it.

India has the distinction of having held six general elections without a break, while adjacent countries in Asia have failed to do so. In the result we see military dictatorships surrounding India. Our elections have generally been very well conducted even if occasionally here and there we have had out-breaks of local violence and corruption.

The leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru was the force, which guaranteed that the basis of the democratic system would be maintained inflexibly. We have however noticed in recent years how the moral foundations of the democratic system have somewhat weakened in our country.

Why are vast amounts of funds collected by political parties even while

under the law of the land election expenses cannot exceed certain limits? Why are there so much unworthy manurings in the political arena? Why are political parties making bombastic promises in their election campaigns? Why are thousands of candidates jostling for securing nominations?

Today nothing counts like political power for accumulating wealth and seizing places of importance. In other words, politics alone can open the door today to wealth and power and therefore the mad rush to get through the door at any cost. This is perhaps so in all modern Democracies.

That does not however justify our own degradation. This does not mean that all our politics have become degraded or shameful. There are our Laws preventing that to an extent. The electorates i.e. the

people are also wide-awake and are swayed by loyalties that admit of no betrayals.

In a broad analysis the Indian National Congress of Gandhi and Nehru on the one hand and the Communist-Marxists on the other, are the great contenders for the capture of power. By now the people understand the differences between these parties and there is a clear crystallization of thought regarding the issues. This is hopeful sign. The future of any democracy is in the hands of the people. Leaders come and go but the people go on forever.

In our ancient Indian politics the will of the people was equated to the will of God Himself. That might appear today a far-fetched ideas but it holds the kernel of the truth of the matter.

In a final analysis we are facing the challenge if the future of our Democracy

is to be peaceful and non-violent or violent and through terror. All other issues are secondary. If the spirit of Gandhi And Nehru prevails, our Democracy will grow through peaceful methods and through the willing consent of the people.

If on the other hand Communist-Marxist leadership succeeds we are moving towards a bloody revolution, the only aim of which will be the seizure of power by any means. The latter type of action has succeeded in creating the great Soviet Union. There will therefore be some temptation before the people to go that way. Till now the peaceful democratic process of Gandhi and Nehru has held the ground.

Let us hope it will continue to do so.



Ritualism And Fundamentalism



The springs of action in Mahatma Gandhi's life and work were profoundly religious. This must be accepted without any reservation. Without action there will be no Gandhi. But all action must be fearless and selfless. Neither ritualism nor what has now become known as fundamentalism had any place in his spiritual ethos.

If he had cared he could have established and consecrated hundreds of temples all over India. He not only did not erect a single temple but he was not even a temple worshipper. He undoubtedly revered the genuine faith of those who worshipped in the temples. But that was more due to his faith in man than in the temple. That Mahatma Gandhi conducted

congregational prayers every morning and evening is known to every body.

But only to those who loved and worked closely with him is it known that he had his own personal meditations. Even his meditations were not rituals but spontaneous, rising up in his mind from time to time as he faced the terrific problems of his life and work.

Fundamentalism did not come within miles of his religious life. But what is happening in India today? During the last thirty years or more we are witnessing a mighty revival or ritualism, mostly superstitions without any bearing on man's inner growth. Every religion in India is in the grip of this mighty upsurge of revivalism.

We have seen recently how an old and neglected temple full of monkeys has become once again a place of worship,

white monkeys having become special objects of worship. Could anything be more ridiculous in the culture of modern India? Fundamentalism has also raised its cobra-head with fatal poison for those who would hug it.

Places of worship have become commercialized and hands of young men go round extracting money from gullible people in the name of an endless variety of gods and goddesses. All this is not taking India forward in religion or spirituality. On the other hand they are pushing back our country into a past, which is best forgotten.

No true Gandhian Institution indulges in idol worship or blind ritualism. Every true Gandhian Institution on the other hand believes in morning and evening congregational prayers. In fact hundreds of their meetings are often called prayer

meetings even if political and social matters are discussed at these meetings.

Those of us who have dedicated our lives to make Gandhi live everlastingly in the minds of fellow men must discard ritualism and resist fundamentalism where on earth we find it. We have seen in the Punjab how a small but fanatical priesthood is attempting to put politics and religion into one crucible. While all over the world the attempt is to keep religion and politics apart, we see in the Punjab something unbelievably opposite. The result is an explosion without precedent.

Not a day passes without the Prime Minister of India warning the people against equating ritualism to religion and fundamentalism to religion and fundamentalism to spirituality. The parliament of India is also deeply concerned and irrespective of all other

differences most of the political parties are utterly united in discarding ritualism and resisting fundamentalism.

Mahatma Gandhi's message to the youth of India in regard to this matter is absolutely clear. That message is a ringing call to the youth of India to rise in a tidal wave and cast exaggerated ritualism and absurd fundamentalism into the Bay of Bengal.

We have before us other ringing calls also from the great leaders of India's Cultural Renaissance. The voices of Swami Vivekananda, of MahaYogi Aurobindo Ghosh and of the Poet and Philosopher Rabindranath Tagore also come ringing in our ears.

Let all of us give our ear to these great voices coming out of the depth of our history. This is undoubtedly what

Mahatma Gandhi would expect us to do here and now at the present time.



Politics: a Part Of Life's Total Dharma



Gandhiji was certain in his mind that even politics must be part of Life's Dharma. We have clouded our minds with utterly wrong notions of Politics and Religion. Gandhiji would certainly agree that politics and religion must be kept apart.

Here religion would mean organized religion, which is always denominational and sectarian. Adherence to such religions and mixing them with politics would be suicidal. We must therefore be clear in our minds that what Gandhiji meant by Dharma was something totally different from organized and sectarian religions.

For him Dharma was righteousness or moral conduct. Under Dharma, politics must be governed by morality and spirituality. If we do not take care of this

distinction we shall be in danger of making politics immoral and even a terrible evil. In fact the world is today everywhere in the grip of immoral politics.

Today politics has come to mean exploitation, greed and endless conflict. The roots of war are all the time within this situation. In such a world Gandhiji had the courage and unhesitant vision to declare that his aim was to spiritualize politics.

This thought of Gandhiji raised laughter and ridicule in many high places but was welcomed and applauded by a thinking minority everywhere, which was dedicated to justice and peace for all peoples. Even in India, intellectual highbrows joined in the laughter and ridicule. And as in other places outside India there was a minority in our country also which accepted the idea without reservation.

Luckily a whole generation of great leaders backed Gandhiji and in turn influenced large masses of our people. This was the rock bottom of India's struggle for freedom from the British Empire. That Empire held India down for nearly two centuries through the brute power of the army and the police. A ball of fear hung over the people and they became accustomed to a life of subjection.

Then came Gandhiji into the life of India with his gentle but mighty call of Dharma and the people listened to his voice and shed their fear and rose in rebellion against British rule.

If the politics of convenience and tame acceptance had continued, Gandhiji would never have succeeded in his revolutionary movement of non-violent and non-cooperation. Dharma was not only a call to up grade politics but to purity our

national life. This meant astonishing social changes in the life of the people on every side.

Caste and untouchability had to go, the freedom and equality of woman must be guaranteed, the liquor traffic must close down, education must be nationalized and the programme of a Secular Democracy must inspire the people. This was the politics of Dharma transforming the life of the people and not merely fighting elections and securing morsels of freedom.

The concept of Dharma thus became revolutionary at the hands of Gandhiji. He himself became the supreme exemplar of such Dharma, living a life of simplicity and dedicated service of the people. He fought social injustice wherever he found it and never compromised with evil.

For the first time India saw the possibility of righteousness incarnating itself in a non-violent transformation of society. This phenomenon confounded the British rulers who struck out wildly in every direction wherever the new life created by Gandhiji appeared on the scene. Non-violent Non-cooperation thus plunged the people into the politics of Dharma.

There was something in the soul of our people, which spontaneously responded to the call of the politics of Dharma. This something was the priceless heritage of our history. It is this heritage, which became courage, sacrifice and selfless devotion to the cause of freedom in our time.

It is this heritage to which we must cling with all our might today and tomorrow.

This is what Gandhiji expects us to do here and now.

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## The Challenge To Non-Violence

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The challenge to non-violence from Sri Lanka can baffle most of the present day Gandhians of whom there are more in Tamilnadu than perhaps in any other State of India.

Thanks to the life and teachings of Sri Rajagopalachariar, whom we all fondly called Rajaji, and to the undying inspiration from Thiruvalluvar, Tamilians have drunk deep at the well of non-violence. And yet amazingly it is the Tamilians who are now tremendously moved to anger at what is happening to fellow Tamils who have long settled in Sri Lanka and become citizens of that Buddhism dominated island. In fact Sri Lanka is always considered to be a Buddhist country. The whole world knows by now what is happening to the Tamils in

Sri Lanka. The Government is trying with all the brutal power of its army to exterminate the Tamils.

What we witness is genocide without parallel in any country in this century. Sri Lanka had long admitted the legitimate role of India in settling this ethnic problem. The Governments of India and Ceylon have long tried to find a proper solution though negotiation.

But suddenly Ceylon has broken away and has acted in a most unaccountable and diabolic manner. Is a non-violent solution possible at all under the present circumstances? It is easy to say no. No one has however suggested an alternative solution than a non-violent one. We have also written on this subject with indignation and horror.

We have now asked ourselves what Gandhiji would have done in the situation.

We may be incapable of doing the same. Nevertheless it will be good to think of what Gandhiji might have done.

To begin with he would ask India to control her anger. He might well suggest that India tries to understand more fully Ceylon's case for military action. He might plead that the Prime Minister of India and the President of Ceylon should meet in a neutral territory agreed to by both for a full and thorough discussion. The major aim of the meeting would be to prove beyond doubt that India and Ceylon are not enemies but friends.

Once this is achieved, it would not be too difficult to take one after another-necessary steps to work out a political solution instead of a military one. To restrain the Tamil rebels on the one hand and to convince the Sri Lankan Government on the other, that it will be

impossible to exterminate the Tamils on the Island without incurring International intervention, might not be impossible.

The savage refusal to allow unarmed Indian peace-boats to take food and medical relief to Jaffna has sufficiently already damaged, almost beyond repair, the good name of Ceylon throughout the world. There is only a little margin left for the island to recover its balance. It is at this point that India can prove her friendship beyond doubt.

Let all true Gandhians realize that if a violent military solution cannot and must not be allowed to succeed, equally let it be realized that a non-violent solution through negotiation is also not going to be easy after all that has happened. It will need infinite patience and genuine good will before a solution can be reached.

A Buddhist Sri Lanka and a Gandhian India must not accept defeat in this matter. Buddha and Gandhi is fellow Prophets of non-violence. If the Sri Lankan problem is incapable of being solved through non-violence, how can the far more major problem to the international level. What Ceylon and India cannot achieve non-violently, the super powers will never be able to achieve through non-violence.

The ultimate test is therefore whether non-violence has a future in the world at all or whether violence must destroy man and all his civilization. We are convinced that there is enough wisdom left in the mind of man not to embrace self-destruction and to remember God is great.

To Change Radically Our Educational
System

In the whole of the Gandhian Constructive Programme nothing was more important than Basic Education. As Gandhiji built up, one plank after another, in this mighty and open conclave of National Reconstruction, he found that nothing would stabilize his manifold programme like a radically new system of education, which would enshrine with itself all the vital values, which he cherished.

Today luckily our Prime Minister is also profoundly concerned about the reshaping of our Education. His plan for the Navodaya Schools, while it may be open to some criticism in regard to the details, is undoubtedly a step in the right direction. Some of the States in the Indian

Union have put down their disagreement with the new proposals. But they are willing to work them if all expenses are met by the Central Government.

We must not now create a pause over these differences. We must take time by the forelock and push on with the programme confident that we shall have the courage to make changes if required.

There was much opposition to Basic Education when it was introduced. Educational Pandits sitting on the rocks of tradition raised their voice against it. In the different States of the Indian Union it is very difficult to evolve a consensus over National Educational Policy. No national scheme of education will be acceptable to every one at any time. We must therefore provide for differences and at the same time carry out implementation, as nothing will be done otherwise. We talk of National

Integration and the unity of our culture in spite of diversities.

The famous philosophic expression “Unity in diversity” is an essential part of our composite culture. The diversities in India can drive any one mad. Different castes and communities, different languages, different historical backgrounds, different religious affiliations, different innate characteristics of regions, stare us in the face. It is equally true of course that there has always existed an undisputed unity behind this diversity. But this unity has again and again been sub-merged under the diversities.

It was under Mahatma Gandhi’s mighty guidance that this unity was projected more than at any time after the era of the Buddha.

We have today to fall back upon our collective wisdom and collective will to

effect the changes we need in our Educational System. The System was created under British rule to serve imperial purposes. We have now to change from imperial to national purposes. It is a mighty change and it has to come from the depths of our minds. It would be worthwhile to study the failure of Basic Education and to draw lessons from it to avoid a similar failure in the changes now visualized.

It is a pity we have no longer an Educationist of the stature of Dr Zakir Husain with us. Our anchor today is only the vision of our Prime Minister with his passion for vital changes. We are not sure of the caliber of the Prime Minister's Educational Advisers. Let us then take only one instance to ponder over.

There is violence everywhere in this country. Every demand is preceded and accompanied by violent eruptions. There

is nothing in the present Educational System teaching and demonstrating the imperative need of non-violence for any progress or development. In fact the present System of Education is unashamedly productive of violence in the minds of our students.

Basic Education on the other hand deliberately cultivated non-violence as one of the cardinal aims of education. We are not pleading that we should look back even to Basic Education. Let us look forward to achieve our aims through the changes, which are now proposed. The inevitability of change must inspire us and our wisdom must dictate the propriety of the change.

happy human society will be defeated and frustrated.

The cruel joke we are witnessing is the attempt to do many good things without giving up this basic and all pervasive evil. We are thus caught up in an ever mounting circle of evil from which there appears to be no escape for the modern man.

Unless we take the sharp sword of Non-Violence of Gandhiji and cut out this basic sin, we shall only exhaust ourselves in pouring our energy over the solution of problems, which are the results of Violence. The world needs a great Constructive Programme for peace, justice, prosperity and happiness with all its roots deep in Non-Violence. We live under the illusion that non-violence will take too long a time to achieve results and the price to pay will be too heavy even in terms of self-inflicted suffering.

We shut our eyes to the fact that violence has held the field for more than 2500 years of recorded history since the time of Buddha and the cost of armaments and war has been incalculable. Equally immeasurable has been the burden of human suffering.

We need to study the dynamics of Gandhian Non Violence more fully than we have done so far. The more we understand the power generated by Gandhian non-violence, the quicker and more real will be our advance to the new world of our dreams.

As we have pointed out in our earlier writings, Non-Violence has to be put deep into the entire philosophy and practices of the World's Educational systems. Boys and girls of our generation must be taught as they grow into men and women that there is nothing good and

beneficial that we cannot achieve through organized and collective non-violence.

Non-violence thus becomes the symbol of hope for the future of man. Some great International Institute in the U.S.A or in the United Kingdom must take up the task of taking Gandhiji's ideas to the people of the world, not in a broad and general way but in a thorough and detailed manner. In fact in the case of Gandhiji and his ideas and work, details are more important than a broad sweep of the subject.

Gandhiji's own words come to us today far more searchingly than ever before. His words were, "My life is my message". Not what he wrote and not what he spoke but what he did every day of his life constituted his message for us.

Luckily in Sri Pyarelal's magnificent biographical volumes and in the "Collected

Works of Mahatma Gandhi” which has now run into more than 80 volumes, we have a detailed record of what Gandhiji did almost every day of his life. The Gandhian record is thus unmatched except only in the case of Lenin whose record is also now part of history. We have thus all the material we need to study and understand Gandhiji. We can do nothing better in the Fortieth year of our Independence than to take the details of all that marvelous life to the people everywhere.

This history of how Gandhiji and his Comrades liberated subject India without bloodshed from the British Empire is a miracle which no intelligent man or woman of our time can neglect to study. No leader of the twentieth century is better known throughout the world even today than Mahatma Gandhi. Even so, the world has yet to know the illuminating details of

what he did before the bullets of a religious fanatic cut short his great life.



To Reckon With The Law Of Karma



Few Western thinkers have really grasped the meaning and challenge of the Law of Karma. Most of them have dismissed it as 'fatalism'. Christ put the matter straight when he taught, "As you sow, so shall you reap,"

Sow what? The seeds of your thoughts and deeds sow where? In the fertile soil of your life. These seeds grow in the soil of life and come up as plants and trees giving us good fruits and bad fruits depending on the quality and nature of the seeds.

It is for us to sow good and rewarding seeds, as bad and harmful seeds will produce only what is evil and poisonous. Karma therefore represents the moral law, which governs life.

The modern man understands physical laws and their imperatives. Many physical laws dictate the conditions of human life. We know them and accept their validity. No one considers them as "fatalism". In the same way there are moral and spiritual laws, which dictate the conditions of human existence.

These laws are today less understood and accepted than the physical laws, which are more obvious. Moral and spiritual laws require study and research. Saints and sages throughout the ages have conducted this study and done this research. It was not merely an intellectual exercise. It was undoubtedly a spiritual exercise, the intellect merely playing the role of an instrument in the hands of the spirit. The spirit is the soul in man and the overlord of the intellect based on the senses. And, so God has made man the maker of

his own destiny. Man is free to move upward or sink downward. God is thus the unsurpassed and universal Master Democrat, whose glory shines through history.

Mahatma Gandhi grasped the entire meaning of the Law of Karma and distilled out of it his supreme teaching that only Truthful and Non-violent means can really achieve the liberation of man in the highest sense. The truly liberated man was Gandhi's aim. His whole constructive Programme was formulated to produce the liberated man, free from every untruth, every evil and all that corrupted life. He did not deny that violence and untruth could achieve some of the things man most cared for. But he was absolutely certain that the victories of violence would be only short lived.

It has been asked by religious thinkers that if the Law of Karma is unalterable, where then is room for God's Grace to operate? The answer to this question is also unmistakable in Indian philosophy. That answer is God's Grace is the only spiritual force that can affect even the Law of Karma. But, for this to happen the human heart has to open itself unreservedly in penitence. Even the Law of Karma is thus subject to God's Grace. Mahatma Gandhi accepted the law of Karma only in this manner.

Desikottama Dr G.Ramachandran

Blossomed:07-10-1904

Withered:17-01-1995

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

Sri G. Ramachandran met Gandhi at Dilkush in 1921, during Gandhiji's famous "21 days fast". He was then a student of Mr. CF Andrews at Santiniketan. The discussions GR was privileged to have with Gandhi on the occasion drew him closer to the Mahatma. Ramachandran soon became an inmate of

Gandhiji's ashram at Sevagram and under Gandhiji's direct guidance and supervision plunged himself into the national movement and the Gandhian Constructive Programme.

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

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

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

His contribution to education, both Basic Education and higher Education, Khadi and community Development needs special

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

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

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

After 60 years of service in various cadres before and after independence, Dr GR came back to his hometown Neyyattinkara in 1980

and started an institution in the name of his beloved mother Smt Madhavi Tankachi. He donated all his landed properties to this charitable society "The Madhavi mandiram Loka Seva Trust". The Educational wing of this institution is "Mahatma Gandhi Vidya Peedom". We have Dr GR Public School under this wing with CBSE Affiliation. This is his last venture especially for women and children.

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

- Joined Non Cooperation movement in 1920 and participated in the Tilak Swaraj Fund.
- Become one of the earliest Honours Graduates of the Visva Bharati in 1924 and joined the Sabarmathi Ashram.
- Took part in the Salt-Satyagraha Revolution in 1930 together with Rajaji at Vedaranyam. Sentenced to imprisonment for one year and a fine of Rs.500/-

- Functioned as the Provincial Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh in Tamil nadu and Kerala and member of the Central Executive Committee of Harijan Sevak Sangh.
- Took active part in the Temple Entry movement in Tamilnad and Kerala (Vaikom) Spent six years as one of the general Secretaries of the Hindustani Talami Sangh in Sevagram and actively promoted Basic Education in Tamilnadu, Mysore and Andra.
- Was appointed the Chairman of the Basic Education Assessment Committee set up by the Government of India.
- Become 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 Smarak Nidhi for 3 years.
- Founder Secretary of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, Editor of Gandhi Marg (English Journal)
- Conferred the Degree of D.Litt by the Kashi Vidya Peeth, title of “Desikottama” by Viswabarathi University and Doctorate by Gandhigram Rural University.
- Traveled widely: lectured in the universities in England, Germany, United States, Soviet Union, Poland Yugoslavia, Ceylon etc. spreading the message of Mahatma Gandhi.
- Was a member of the delegation sent to Moscow by the Gandhi Peace foundation along with the Congress President UN Debar to take the message of peace and to prevent the use of Nuclear weapons.
- Authored Several Books: Thought and Talks,

Village Reconstruction Step by Step, The Man Gandhi, A Sheaf of Gandhi Anecdotes, Higher Values of life, Adventuring with Life etc.

- Several Poems, drawings and handicraft-items to his credit.
- Received peace awards from Grambling University, USA and the Soka Gakkai International, Tokyo.
- As a last “venture” founded the Madhavimandiram Loka Seva Trust, at the age of 76 bequeathing all his ancestral property (to the Trust) in memory of his mother Smt Madhavi Tankachi. The Trust has Mahatma Gandhi Vidya Peedom and is involved in other activities mainly for women and children.



The Madhavimandiram Loka Seva Trust

After 60 long years of service, in various cadres the old “young man” Dr G. Ramachandran returned to his birthplace in Kerala-Neyyattinkara.

Sister Mythili accompanied him to help and serve him as instructed by Dr (Mrs) Soundram Ramachandran.

Schumacher's famous words “Small is Beautiful” inspired GR in starting a small adventure, at this place in the name of his beloved mother Smt Madhavi Tankachi donating all his landed properties.

Thus “The Madhavimandiram Loka Seva Trust” was born as a registered Charitable Society on the 2nd Octr 1980.

The founder & the first Managing Trustee of this Trust was

Desikottama Dr G. Ramachandran.

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.



Do not be
satisfied with good
intentions and ideas.
These are utterly useless
unless you **practise** them.
Truth, Beauty, Goodness,
these must also
be practised.
Otherwise you
betray them.



Reflections of life
Series No : 6