

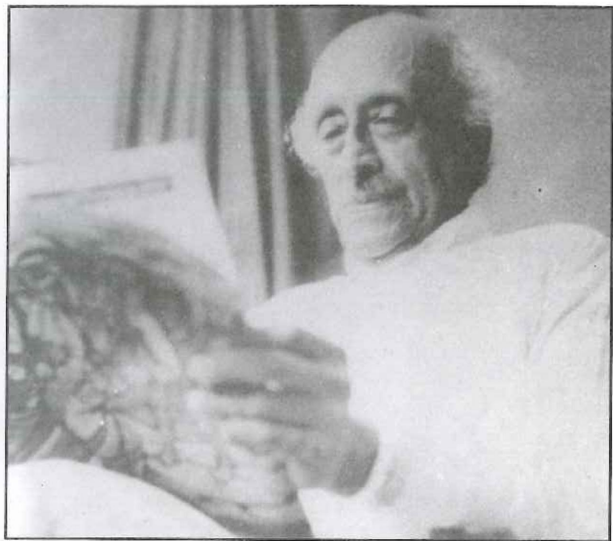
Glimpses of GANDHIJI'S Personality and Character



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



The Madhavi Mandiram Loka Seva Trust
Neyyattinkara



Dr. G. Ramachandran

**Mahatma Gandhi:
Glimpses of His Personality &
Character**

Reflections of life

By

Desikottama
Dr G.Ramachandran



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FOREWORD

“Mahatma Gandhi:Glimpses of His Personality & Character” 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. GR had watched his Master in depth and assesses his character in a phrase “Soft as a Rose - Hard as a Steel”. No one else in this world can explain about any other person so vividly and deeply.

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

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



MAHATMA GANDHI:

Glimpses of

His Personality & Character



Chapter headings

1. His Physical Presence
2. He moulded Heroes out of clay
3. His inflexible Time Sense
4. His ennobling & Creative sense of humour
5. Alone with millions behind him
6. Sofe as a Rose - Hard as Steel
7. Small & Big Things of equal Validity
8. Poverty & Plenty reconciled
9. The Sublimation of Sex & Anger
10. The conclusion



dignity. He has often been compared to the traditional figure of Christ.

Gandhiji was a complete contrast. Though photographs in his earliest years show him as a fairly tall and well-built figure, in his later years, with which we are more familiar, shows him as physically thin with long lean legs and a shaven head. But there are innumerable testimonies of eminent writers that Gandhiji in his loincloth and Khadi shawl had about him some unmistakable air of royalty. This might appear astonishing.

Those of us however who knew him personally and saw him lost in thought or engaged in heroic action can testify truthfully that Mahatma Gandhi possessed a magnetic personality. Something spiritual and lofty touched every feature of his face and body with an indescribable attraction.

Where Tagore was gracious and condescending, Gandhi was forth-coming with friendliness and courtesy. Though possessing

different qualities of personality they were equally impressive in their physical presence. If one saw Tagore coming down the Sal-avenue in Santiniketan he was like a full masted ship sailing towards you.

As Gandhi came out of his Ashram for his morning walk with his long and thin bamboo walking stick he was like a racehorse held firmly back by the reins. Gandhi would walk so quickly that his companions had to run to keep pace with him. He had a peculiar and attractive way of shaking his head and talking in a crisp voice with his laughter ringing out every few minutes.

Tagore in Santiniketan and Gandhi in Sevagram have become immortal figures in our history. Both were profoundly fond of children who adored them both without reserve. This writer has seen Tagore surrounded by children in Santiniketan and Gandhi surrounded by children in Sevagram. If anyone studies this common phenomenon a little deeper than usual,

it will become clear at once that Tagore and Gandhi looking so differently has in common mental and spiritual affinities beyond any doubt.

Tagore was essentially a poet and Gandhi a saint. Tagore looked at Beauty and found Truth embedded in it. Gandhi looked at Truth and found Beauty embedded in it. It would be particularly interesting at this point to remember the words of Keats that Beauty is Truth and Truth is Beauty. Tagore approaching life through the path of Beauty and Gandhi approaching life through the path of Truth came together at last on the Everest of Godliness. The body and the spirit are inseparably put together by divine wisdom and what this wisdom has put together let no man put asunder.

Let no one however make the mistake of taking Tagore for Gandhi or Gandhi for Tagore. They were separate and yet ultimately one.



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himself without fear and dedicated to truth and freedom. This discovery changed the whole of his life.

Gandhiji became the champion of the illiterate and poverty stricken Indian coolies in South Africa and found from among them heroes of non-violent faith and action. Nagappa and Valiamma were among the conspicuous exemplars of this historic discovery.

When he returned to India Gandhiji came with this discovery in his own heroic hands. In Champaran in Bihar and later in Bardoli Gandhiji found abundant proof that the masses of the people of India could become with proper guidance heroic soldiers of non-violence.

In the three great Non-Violent Revolutions, which Gandhiji led, he raised tens of thousands of Satyagrahis who knew no fear and were prepared to face any suffering to win

the freedom of India and at the same time cleanse the many evils contaminating our society.

Who remembers today the heroism of the women of Bardoli, who refused to obey the police order to disperse and were beaten down by lathies and whose sarees were drenched in their own blood?

We have also before us individual examples of heroic action by men and women like Pyarelal, Sushila Nayyar Sucheta Kripalani, Tirupur Kumaran, Ganga Behn, Bibi Amtus Salam and a host of others. What was the secret of this miracle that Gandhiji performed throughout his life?

On the one hand there was Gandhiji himself fearless unto death and with his unalterable faith that truth, and non-Violence alone will succeed in the end and on the other, there were the Indian masses in whose blood and bone there was always present the genius of Indian spirituality and culture.

During the two centuries of British rule the masses and leadership in India had drifted far away from each other until Gandhiji came on the scene and put the two together as never before in our history. It was in this phenomenon that Gandhiji achieved his own self-realization and the freedom of India at the same time.

The present generation of Indian youth knows very little of this vital part of our history. The existing system of education teaches us no history of the tremendous purificatory upheavals under Gandhiji's leadership. Even today with so much talk going on, there is hardly any sign that our students in schools and colleges will be taught the true history of India's freedom movement.

Gandhiji had taught us that a mighty political and social revolution could be non-violent and that our people would come into it heroically.

We have however forgotten this supreme lesson and we have shamelessly wandered back into the pre Gandhian era in which every revolution worth the name was based on violence and hatred. After Gandhiji's death we too are again lost in the valley of violence and hatred in some parts of our country. We do not want to end on a note of despair.

God is great and the spirit and culture of India are indestructible. Even as it is we have some signs of the rebirth of the Gandhian spirit and his supreme method of non-violence. We are sure that this rebirth of our people will come again sooner than later.



so punctuality has taken its place in the East as in the West.

Gandhiji during his time in England and later in his very busy days as a lawyer in South Africa adopted western punctuality as a matter of course. He earned a reputation among Indians in South Africa and later in India for his punctuality. The only ornament Gandhiji wore was his pocket watch, which hung from his neck by a hand-spun yarn chain and was tucked into his loincloth at the waist. Some one who lived and worked with Gandhiji has left on record that Gandhiji attended every conference or meeting correct to the minute.

In fact in the Sabarmathy Ashram and later in Sevagram there were people who set their watches looking at the presence of Gandhiji at different functions and in different places. This writer from the first floor of the "Chatralaya" in the Sabarmathi Ashram remembers how he corrected his watch more than once watching Gandhiji coming and going.

Later in Sevagram there was another interesting story related about Gandhiji's punctuality. The British leader and Statesman, Lord Lothian had come to meet Gandhiji who had given him 10 a.m. for the meeting, which was to close at 11 a.m. when Sardar Patel was expected. But the conversation between Gandhiji and Lord Lothian went on and on. Lord Lothian was fascinated with Gandhiji's analysis of the developing situation in India. Suddenly Gandhiji pulled out his watch and with a courteous smile turned the face of the watch towards Lord Lothian: it was 11 O' clock and Sardar Patel's car had turned in. Lord Lothian took the hint and stood up to say goodbye. In another minute Sardar Patel appeared at the door. Later on Lord Lothian told a friend in New Delhi that Gandhiji was the first man who showed him the watch to keep his time!

This article however is headed by reference to Gandhiji's **TIME SENSE** and not only to

his punctuality. We must understand the difference. Punctuality related to the events of the day but time sense related to history. Gandhiji was the master of time sense in his revolutionary programmes for the freedom of India.

He knew exactly when to light the fire of a revolution and when to withdraw. Many of the leaders and fighters for freedom would raise the cry for revolution and Gandhiji would have none of it. He held the pulse of the masses in the hollow of his hand and when his time sense gave the signal; he would start his revolution and carry the masses with him. This was proved again and again in the history of our time.

Gandhiji would busy the masses in constructive work for rousing the will of the people in the rural areas and his unerring time sense told him when the people were ready and then without hesitating for a moment he would give the call to the battle for freedom and

justice. He waited ten long years after the Non Co-operation Revolution before he threw the country into the Salt Satyagraha Revolution and another ten years before his final Quit India Revolution. It has often been said that Pandit Nehru embodied the sense of history.

Gandhiji however embodied the **TIME SENSE** and became the torchbearer of our revolutions, which brought India to Freedom and Independence.



gentle correction of others' mistakes and even sometimes his own. Who does not remember Gandhiji confessing he has sometimes been guilty of Himalayan blunder?

It might appear to be a bit of impertinence to point out some typical instances of the humour of some of our great men. Acharya Kripalani's good humour was always to cut people to shape. He enjoyed seeing people squirming before his jokes. This writer himself has been more than once his victim.

Then we have had Sri Rajaji's cynical humour, which was well known in Congress circles. While we were all prisoners in the Vellore Central Jail one of our great delights was to listen to Rajaji's cynical jokes. He was a past master in exposing other's pretensions.

Then there was Sardar Patel whose biting humour was vented indiscriminately, at one moment against a colleague, at another against

the Viceroy and sometimes even against Mahatma Gandhi whom he adored.

Pandit Nehru's good humor was generally reserved for women and children and he could be occasionally very sarcastic against some of his political companions.

But let us come back to Gandhiji and his sense of humour. Let it not appear absurd if Gandhiji's sense of humour may be put down as always, 'non-violent' In every expression of life, he was non-violent and so his good humour was also consistently nonviolent. There are one or two instances that may be mentioned.

One of his Indian visitors was once a well-known writer of novels in English who came dressed in a beautiful mill cloth dhoti and a fine silk juba and sporting a scarf with gold thread border. Some Ashramites warned him against going to meet Gandhiji in such ostentatious dress.

At the interview this gentlemen told Gandhiji how some of the Ashramites had warned him. Gandhiji smiled and looked at him and said, "You look grand in your dress and it fits you well"!

Here was Gandhiji complimenting him and asking him to wear what he chose! He was reported on another occasion as telling Sardar Patel "Your affection and devotion is like that of a jealous wife"! The Sardar quipped in return "Bapu you have always been a difficult husband!"

We all of course remember Gandhiji's jokes while he attended the round table conference in London. When he came out of St. Jane's Palace after meeting the King Emperor George the Vth, Press reporters crowded round him and asked him how he managed to get into the St. Jane's Palace in his loin cloth and Khadi shawl! He laughed uproariously and said, "Don't worry. I met the

King Emperor and he had enough clothes on him for both of us together!"

Those who have lived close to Gandhiji in his lifetime knew how when Gandhiji cracked joke there was in it always something to purify and enrich their life. This was but natural. He lived a life from which all selfish aims were absent. He was never prompted to utter or write words arising from his egoism.



ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

ALONE OR WITH MILLIONS BEHIND HIM

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

More than once Mahatma Gandhi had stated that even if he were alone he would oppose tyranny or fight some evil or lay down his life to achieve justice. Behind it all was his unalterable faith that the voluntary suffering and sacrifice of one true Satyagrahi will win whatever might be the physical power of the opponent. One single purified soul can arrest history and country an event, which might appear inexorable.

This readiness to stand all one for a cause came wholly from his faith in God and his faith that truth will never fail. Even so nobody understood and valued as he did, the power of collective non-violence of the millions of his people. While on the one hand he challenged every satyagrahi to have the courage to stand alone, he on the other hand organized the

collective non-violent power of the people as no one else ever could.

We have his classic utterance at the Round Table Conference in London. Aptly he was the sole representative of the Congress at the Conference. Ranged against him were individuals and party leaders from India who had been carefully brought together to oppose him and his demand for the independence of India. He was almost beaten down to his knees by this conspiracy and was confronted with a communal award, which was double distilled in the crucible of British imperial policy.

He struggled to his feet and said in a voice which resounded gently but with indomitable firmness that he would resist the communal award as it sought to cut the nation into two on the issue of the future of the depressed classes even if he stood alone in resisting it. The British Government failed to grasp the full implication of Gandhi's challenge. Returning

to India Mahatma Gandhi was arrested and cast into prison. It was within the prison that Gandhiji was told that the British Government had imposed the communal award on India.

From within the prison this solitary satyagrahi took up the challenge and went on a fast unto death against it. The British of course knew what a Gandhian fast would mean in India. They took every measure to suppress his protest. But within a few days India was on fire and the millions of her people for whom Gandhiji was the only final arbiter joined in the protest. Gandhiji threw his life into the fire all alone. But he could never be alone in his India.

A mighty national conference met in Poona and planned the strategy to save Gandhiji's life and to win the freedom of the depressed classes in a manner worthy of India and their own destiny. Padmaja Naidu described what then happened in words, which will be remembered

always in our country. Here are some of her words, "And even as a world, grown sad and gray with unbelief, watch in awed, incredulous rapture, a great religion passed through a catharsis so immense that within the space of six days and nights it was cleansed of the accumulated corruption of more than six centuries, and there blossomed for myriads of unhappy human beings who had lived for generations trodden into the dust, a renaissance into freedom."

The final result was amazing. The British Cabinet met in London and altered the communal award in tune with the wishes of Gandhiji whose fast had in the meantime won over even Dr Ambedkar. Gandhiji accordingly broke his fast and the nation remained undivided.

Here we have the tangible record of how one who can stand alone in his fight unto the end for freedom and justice will ultimately bring the whole world to support him in his battle.

The eternal message is, "Stand alone without fear or favour for Truth and the world will uphold you". Courage and faith combined in righteousness can know no defeat.





SOFT AS A ROSE: HARD AS STEEL



More than fifty years ago when I was a student of the Visva Bharati University in Santiniketan there appeared a remarkable new Journal under the title "Current Thought". Its editor was the then famous Sri S. Ganesan. He had come close to Gandhiji as the printer and publisher of sets of "Young India" volumes. Well known persons like the late Sri Mahadev Desai, Sri Pyarelal and Sri Kaka Saheb Kalelkar encouraged him in his publications work. He went round friendly circles all over India canvassing for his new journal.

In this connection he came to the Visva Bharati University and secured promises of articles from Rev. C.F. Andrews, Prof. Bose and others including me. So it came about that an article of mine entitled "The inescapable voice of Mahatma Gandhi" appeared in the first volume of "Current Thought".

In this article I wrote that Gandhiji's character was an amalgam of soft roses and the hardest steel. How could there be such an amalgam? I had explained my meaning in the article. Somehow the phrase "an amalgam of soft roses and hard steel" came up later in the course of something which Gandhiji himself wrote in "Young India". I knew he had read my article for he had written to me a post card on the matter. Evidently my phrase caught his eye and he had liked it. He therefore took it over in explaining something in "Young India".

I felt awfully proud but mentioned nothing about it to others except just once to my professor Rev C F Andrews. His comment was "That was a good phrase you coined". Now after more than 50 years, I keep on thinking of Gandhiji's personality and character. I cannot describe it better even today than that it is an amalgam of roses and steel. My meaning is not just a poetic effusion.

In his love of children, his tenderness to women, in his compassion for all living things he showed a mind as soft as a rose petal. Many of those who once lived and worked with Gandhiji have a clear memory of this aspect of his character. His eyes would fill with pity and love for those in suffering. Mr Pollack had testified that his eyes would become wells of love and sympathy on such occasions. On the other hand, there are those who lived and worked with Gandhiji who testify that there would come into his eyes, the stern look of a man who demanded fearless action unto death when the cry of battle for freedom and justice rang in the air. He would become suddenly relentless in his call to Satyagrahis to advance courageously in the face death itself without flinching.

Some of us still remember how when it was reported to Gandhiji that in the Akali struggle for regaining possession of their Gurudwaras from the Agents of the British,

the Satyagrahis were falling down in pools of their own blood, he said in a voice vibrant with emotion that unless there were hundreds of thousands of Sikhs to continue thus facing death, there could be no freedom for the Sikhs or for the rest of India. Suffering voluntarily undertaken even at the cost of life brought joy to his heart. There was then no longer the rose-petal heart but only the heart of steel.

One had only to see Gandhiji playing with children or washing the wounds of a leper to discover the rose-petal heart. But when the trumpet of non-violent battle for freedom and justice sounded in the air, his whole demeanor changed into that of a valiant Commander. Let us understand that there was no contradiction in him in this matter. They were the two sides of the same coin of selfless love and fearless allegiance to freedom and justice.

There is also the story of how once a body of Hindus from Kohat came running to see him with the story of how their women were

captured and taken away to be raped by the Muslim Tribes men. Gandhiji sprang up like a wounded lion and asked the Hindus "How are you alive to bring me this story. Every one you should have died in defending the honour of the women".

For Gandhiji non-violence was always of the brave. Such non-violence was for him both rose petal and steel.





SMALL & BIG THINGS OF EQUAL VALIDITY



Mahatma Gandhi took extraordinary care of details even while he could plan out a great national struggle for justice and freedom. While this writer lived in the Satyagraha Ashram in Sabarmathi in the early nineteen twenties, this was the one thing that caught his eyes over and over again. Nothing was too small to escape his attention even while his mind was engaged on very big issues.

Gandhiji was once returning from his morning walk and as he passed by the fruit garden inside the Ashram he suddenly stopped in his walk and I saw him bending down to pick up quite a small amount of garbage lying on the footpath. He put his walking stick aside and collected the garbage with both his hands. As he did so one of the Ashramites came along and Gandhiji beckoned to him to fetch one of

the small baskets kept for collecting garbage. He put the garbage he had collected into the basket and went to the nearest water-tap and washed his hands. He said nothing to anybody and least of all found fault with anybody. He quietly walked away to his own cottage.

At the evening prayers one of the young Ashramites stood up to admit he was guilty of not clearing the garbage on the footpath and to beg pardon of the community. Gandhiji again said nothing, knowing that what he had done would do much more than any spoken words.

Another time he found a spot of ink on his writing table and at once called for some water and soap. He carefully washed away the spot of ink and again found fault with nobody. But a few minutes after one of the little girls in the house ran up and begged pardon of Gandhiji saying she was the one responsible for the ink-spot on his table. Gandhiji lifted

up the little girl and gave her a kiss and asked her to be more careful in the future.

I was myself the culprit in another incident. For some weeks I was in charge of giving Gandhiji his morning cup of hot lemon squash with a spoon of honey. That morning I could not find the honey bottle in the kitchen and so I put a spoon of jaggery in the cup and took to Gandhiji. He drank the whole cup quietly and asked me, "Why did you put jaggery into my cup"? I hesitatingly told him what exactly had happened. He smiled and said, "You took a short-cut. You should have asked Ba for the honey. She always keeps a bottle of honey. A short cut like this is an act of falsehood". I never forgot that lesson. Even not at my very old age I avoid short cuts.

For Gandhiji there was nothing too small to escape his attention. But do we not know how his mind was given to total national regeneration of the people of India. He made

mighty plan for this and involved millions of people in executing them. Even when doing so, he kept his eyes on every detail. When he took a post card from Sri Jamnalalji's office he at once paid for the card. Jamnalalji never mentioned this incident without his gentle voice trembling with emotion.

Let us now take a quick flight to a mighty event. This was during the Second World War and the Japanese were conquering the whole of South East Asia. The sympathy of Indian national Congress was with the Allies headed by the United Kingdom and the United States. But the United Kingdom would give no promise that India would be given freedom even if it gave all its support to the Allies in the war. Even so, Gandhiji wanted India to resist the Japanese come what might.

A section of the Congress on the other hand and specially Subash Chandra Bose and his followers thought that Japan would help to liberate India from the British Empire. Even

Pandit Nehru was hesitant for a while as to what to do. But with a mighty effort Gandhiji swung India morally against Japan saying that he did not want to exchange British dominion for Japanese domination. This was one of the biggest decisions of Gandhiji.

But even in such a crisis Gandhiji took tender care of sick children and other patients in the Ashram. His mind could thus swing from small to big things with complete balance of mind because to him both were of equal validity.



mechanized vehicles and in case of illness naturopathy were the broad features of Gandhiji's poverty.

But no one worked more than he to bring plenty into the lives of the millions of village people in India who lived in utter poverty and want. Rabindranath Tagore in his writings has more than once referred to this wonderful contradiction in Gandhiji's philosophy of life. So has Pandit Nehru and Rajaji and Vinoba.

Gandhiji advocated voluntary poverty for any one becoming a true leader of the people. But for the people themselves he did everything in his power to bring plenty into their lives. Voluntary poverty for those aspiring to leadership and plenty for the poor millions thus became a great reconciliation.

Here was Gandhiji's attempt to produce truly pure and selfless leadership and also at the same time the practical programme of

keeping plenty within limits, as it had to spread among millions of people.

Let us look at the leadership that Gandhiji created in his lifetime in India. We can only quote a few outstanding examples. Chittaranjan Das of Bengal gave up his princely practice as a lawyer before he could follow Gandhiji. It was the same case with Babu Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachariar. Motilal Nehru had to go the same way. And so did Sardar Patel and Dr Ansari and Hakkim Ajmal Khan. George Joseph had to do the same thing. They all had to embrace voluntary poverty to qualify for leadership under Gandhi. They had all equally to engage themselves in the Gandhian Constructive Programme to bring plenty to the millions in the villages and slums of our country.

The whole Gandhian revolution based on non-violence thus created a vast national picture of the reconciliation of voluntary poverty serving the cause of people's plenty. We have mentioned only a few examples at the

highest levels. The Gandhian revolution however depended on tens of thousands of local leaders who too had to qualify for leadership by embracing voluntary poverty. A phenomenon like this has never been known in a political revolution anywhere in the world. We can perhaps see such a thing only in the great religious traditions of the world in which innumerable saints accepted poverty as the first step to serve God.

Let us also note that all this was possible in our country because the revolutions led by Gandhiji were non-violent. Non-violence alone could have created such moral compulsions of conduct in the political arena. At the top of the column of leadership in India stood Gandhiji who lived in a mud hut, wearing only a loincloth and reducing his material wants to the barest minimum. He set the supreme example and thousands of others followed him. It was no blind following. Among Gandhiji's followers were many of the great intellects and

thinkers of India. They were ordinarily no 'yes-men'. Gandhiji in the words of Romain Rolland was thus a great reconciler of what appeared as impossible opposites.

This was possible only because of the undiluted non-violence, which was the fundamental basis of Gandhian thinking and action.



THE SUBLIMATION OF SEX AND ANGER

Gandhiji suffered from strong sex urges in his early manhood. He had himself confessed this in his Autobiography. We also know how he took the vow of Brahmacharya before he was 40 years of age. Tolstoy also suffered from the pangs of sex and he had children through women other than his own wife. Even in his final act of renunciation, sex was one of his unsolved problems.

Tagore in the course of his writings on Gandhiji has pointed out the differences between Tolstoy and Gandhi in regard to this matter. Tolstoy finally hated and cursed sex. Gandhiji sublimated his sex instinct into a higher life of devotion to God and man.

In the life of sacrifice and suffering into which he was thrown in South Africa he discovered the imperative necessity of

conserving his physical energy for the service of the poor and illiterate countrymen of his who were compelled to live like slaves in South Africa. The urge to give up sex altogether arose in a deeper devotion to God and man. This was entirely outside the ken of Tolstoy, however much he too was seeking a higher life.

The sublimation of sex was one of Gandhiji's greatest achievements in his early life. The same was the case with his passion of anger or indignation. His mind caught fire as he looked at the indignities and cruelties of the White Christians who held all political and economic power in South Africa. Gandhiji with his spiritual perception was sure in his mind that uncontrolled anger and even indignation would serve no purpose in the redemption of man.

Slowly and steadily he not only learned to control anger but to sublimate it in order to draw from such sublimation the fearless power to resist evil without retaliation in kind.

We see here the germs of Gandhiji's non-violence, which he later called Satyagraha.

Every step he took to fight the terrible racist tyranny, which surrounded him, proved that mere anger and even indignation would serve no useful purpose. Conquest of anger gave him the key to non-violent action. Again and again he tested this sublimation of anger and found it good and filled with the power of action. Once he was convinced of this there was no going back for him.

The first great personal test, which came to him was when he brutally assaulted by a Pathan, when he nearly lost his life. He not only refused to resist but also refrained from taking legal action against the assailant. This was something utterly new not only in South Africa but in the whole world.

It astonished the Whites and even the Pathan was shocked into some sense of penitence the like of which he had never felt

before. The Indians who were mostly unlettered coolies also received a lesson in Non-Violence, which they never forgot.

Later in India, Gandhiji did something, which reverberated throughout the world. His Non co-operation Revolution was shaking the foundations of the British Empire in India, but there was suddenly an out-break of violence from the Indian side.

With unerring instinct Gandhiji felt that this outbreak of violence would disrupt his non-violent revolution. And so unhesitatingly he withdrew the movement to teach the people that violence and non-violence could never go together.

There was a terrible uproar against this decision of Gandhiji who stood his ground against every attack from within the Congress and outside. Here again Gandhiji proved beyond any doubt that uncontrolled anger will inevitably lead to violence and self-defeat.

There are many great achievements to Gandhiji's credit but this sublimation of sex and anger in his personal life will stand out as among the most important of them all.

Let us also remember that Gandhiji never drew any distinction between personal and public virtues in the life of a leader wholly dedicated to the service of God and man.



transformed their life from pettiness to some measure of greatness. Millions were affected by your character and example.

We were timid and hesitant before you came into our life. We then shed fear and stood up as men and women to work out our own destiny and to seek our freedom. We turned away from superstitions like caste and unsociability and helped to redeem the down-trodden. We forgot communal and religious differences and became united as a Nation.

For the first time in centuries we sought freedom with our entire moral and spiritual might. There were many other miracles your life wrought in our life.

In the above series of brief notes on your personality and character our aim was to bring to the present generation the inspiration of your thoughts and deeds. We are conscious we have done this, only feebly and inadequately. When you returned from South Africa bringing with

you the invincible weapon of Satyagraha, you opened the door for the liberation of our country from the clutches of the Empire, which had reduced the masses of our people to utter penury and moral collapse.

But your magic touch awakened the conscience of our people. We have tried to the best of our ability to bring this message of yours to the present generation in this series.

The Freedom of India and the emergence of our Republic were like impossible dreams when you took up the leadership of the nation. Most people in India and the world were certain that there was nothing you could do to liberate India from the mighty British Empire. You were however equally certain that the moment you could snatch away fear from the hearts of our people, the Empire would crumble into ashes and dust.

Throughout the brief notes under the above series it was our humble aim to reveal to

our readers your moral and spiritual power in the redemption of enslaved India.

The British Empire was built on the force of arm and your battle for freedom was based on your faith in God and in Truth. Truth and non-violence were your weapons in individual and collective regeneration. They are still the only weapons in our hands to make India into a great and powerful Democratic Republic.

We have still many evils in our country from which the people have to be saved. This can be done only through Truth and Non-violence. A nation wedded to Truth and Non-violence becomes invincible. To achieve this invincibility was your great aim. We have, alas, forgotten for the time being your supreme challenge of Non-violence.

There is violence in our country wherever problems have arisen. Forgive us, oh! Master! and lead us back to the pathway of Non-violence and Truth. There are certainly some

new forces at work to save our country from rushing head long to destruction through violence.

We are certain in our minds that your great Tapasya of a lifetime will not go in vain. We shall still continue to strive to follow your teachings.

Our Democracy needs imperative corrections. Let us not build our Democracy on brute majorities but on the willing consent of every man and woman who love India and are willing to make sacrifices to create and sustain her true greatness.

Let us never forget that our ultimate aim is to establish a "Sarvodaya India".



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 Smark Nidhi for 3 years.
- Founder Secretary of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, Editor of Gandhi Marg (English Journal)
- Conferred the Degree of D.Litt by the Kashi Vidya Peeth, title of "Desikottama" by Viswabarathi

University and Doctorate by Gandhigram Rural University.

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



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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.





Character is the
foundation of
personality.
Character will show
on the face, echo in
what we speak and
reveal in all
our actions.



Reflections of life
Series No : 2