

Practices of Peace

Contemporary Forms of Gandhian Spirituality

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Preface

*Ravindra Kumar**

Gandhi and a Peaceful World of His Dreams

“For me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country (India) and there through of humanity. I want to identify myself with everything that lives.”

–Mahatma Gandhi



The Mahatma: having faith in the salvation of the world through the service of India

One wishing to have familiarity with Mahatma Gandhi’s vision of the world, or the world of his dreams, he, first of all, needs to comprehend the core spirit of his ideas in relation to humanity reflecting in the statement of the Mahatma himself (originally appeared in *Young India* on April 3, 1924 AD) quoted in the beginning of discussion in hand as well as his declaration, “*My life is an Indivisible Whole, and all my activities*

run into one-another; and they all have their rise in my insatiable love of mankind.” (Harijan, March 2, 1934)

In a nutshell, the basic spirit of both the above-mentioned short statements of Mahatma Gandhi is on priority the service of the entire humanity – all the people, men and women, living on the planet Earth. Getting man to realise the truth that ‘*Nar-Seva Narayan-Seva*’, i.e., service to man without any kind of discrimination is the service to God Himself – the only way to become one with the Indivisible Totality. Considering one and all as equal, because of all existing in the periphery of the same Indivisible Totality and being an integral part thereof, this service is indicative of the prime human duty in this regard.

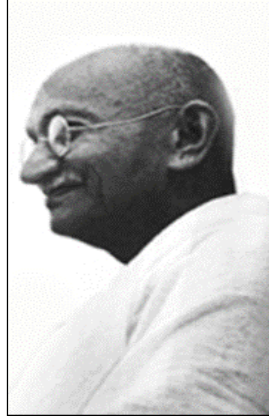
After getting familiar with the basic spirit of these two short statements, one needs to comprehend the essence of Mahatma Gandhi’s thought in this (the basic spirit) also. It has to be understood that Gandhiji’s thought is eventually dedicated to the truth of Indivisible Totality. Since all the movable and immovable emanate from that one Indivisible Totality, therefore, all of them exist in the periphery of that very Indivisible Whole, which is the evidence of the reality of Universal Unity. This is proved through the second of the quoted statements of Mahatma Gandhi himself (March 2, 1934 AD).

The acceptance of the truth of the Indivisible Totality and the reality of Universal Oneness is, in fact, the acceptance of the law of cosmic unity. It is the dedication to the highest truth. After this, all search for truth ends. There is no need for dedication to anything else.

Gandhian thought is, thus, a straight concept as opposed to a horizontal thought. It is, as Martin Luther King Jr. rightly stated that it (*Gandhi-Vichar*) remained associated with inescapable universal moral values. The world of Mahatma Gandhi’s dreams can be properly analysed by keeping this truth as the nucleus.

II

There is a direct-indirect mutual dependence of the entire humanity – each and every one, male and female, living on the planet Earth. Not only this, but all living beings are also interdependent in some form or the other. In the broad perspective, all the movable and immovable things present in the universe are also associated with each-other. This is the Law and the Order of the Creator.



A firm believer in the proclamation of ‘Satyamev Jayate’

All achievements – gains or losses in the world, big or small, are common. The *Vedas*, the interpreters of the *Sanatana* system, make it clear that in the universe, in which innumerable worlds beyond human imagination (subjects of creation-destruction) exist, all the elements are complementary to each-other, and they are made for mutual co-operation. The *Mantras* of the 129th *Sukta* of the Tenth *Mandala* of the *Rigveda* make it clear that space, and everything in this universe is emanated for the One and the Same source – the Indivisible Whole (*Brahman*) – ‘*Asyaadhyakshah –अस्याध्यक्षः*.’ The Indivisible Totality and Universality are, along with inter-dependency arrangement, for that very ‘*Asyaadhyakshah –अस्याध्यक्षः*’ sake. Everything is based upon one Indivisible Totality, has one (Indivisible) form, and is unified.

Making this eternal truth the basis of his thoughts and also keeping it at the centre of his actions, Mahatma Gandhi proceeded further in his life. Standing firm in his confession, “*I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all...that lives*”, he called upon fellow beings (all women and men, the superior and most capable creatures of the universe) to realise and accept this truth in their thoughts and actions. He also said, “*Mankind is one, seeing that all are equally subject to the moral law; all men are equal in God’s eyes*” (The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi, page 439) and expected them to make human service on priority an essential part of their life without any kind of discrimination, taking it as the best way of building the world of his dreams. In other words, Mahatma Gandhi wished to build a world dedicated to the greatest possible welfare of all through the way of service to humanity.

III

Service to everyone in general and to the needy and downtrodden in particular, without any kind of discrimination is, in fact, the service to the Creator. Respect the Creator by respecting His Creation and whatever is there in it. This is an act of worshipping the Lord. It is the pathway of realisation of the Indivisible Whole (the One and the Same source of origin of all and everything) and the establishment of oneness with this (Indivisible Whole). It is a prime expectation from a human being who is the possessor of unique qualities like intellect and creativity and is, thus, the best-known creature in the universe. It is the acid test of humanity.

Service has been declared as the '*Dharma*' in the basic Indian philosophy. "*Sevaa Paramo Dharmah – Service is the Dharma in grandeur.*" This is the best – the highest *Dharma*, *i.e.*, the human duty. Service is the pathway to God's realisation. *Brahman* is attained by service to His creation. Mahatma Gandhi made this proclamation a cornerstone in his life. He kept service as the nucleus of his actions with persistence and determination and urged for human *Purushartha* (for, the Mahatma said, "...*most strenuous and constant endeavours entirely dedicated to the service of humanity*", Mangal Prabhat, pp 53-54) to pave the way to *Sarvodaya*, in briefest the "*Universal Uplift*" or "*Progress of All*".

Especially, service to the poor entered his heart. Gandhiji has written in his Autobiography (page 120), "*Service to the poor has been my heart's desire and it has always thrown me amongst the poor and enabled me to identify myself with them.*"

Tolerance is clearly manifested in selfless and pure-hearted service. Tolerance is the best practical expression of non-violence – Ahimsa. Mahatma Gandhi, therefore, considered service to be necessary for the practice of non-violence. He accepted selfless service as indispensable for the development of human qualities such as self-control, patience and faith in life and becoming egoless, which were the basic teachings of his ideal Maryadapurushottama Shrirama, the symbol of the Dharma, a living Lord; the rule (Ramarajya) under Shrirama is considered an all-time ideal system of governance dedicated to universal peace and progress.

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Foreword

*Christian Bartolf**

It is high time to highlight today's experience with practical spirituality following the continuous inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi's ethics. Everyman's life is concerned everyday. And the term "man" shall be "human being" according to Hansa Mehta's correction of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights> – "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." (Article 1) And yes, of course, the term "brotherhood" should include "sisterhood" and the non-binary companionship of all kins and neighbors: a fellowship of true reconciliation.

Why shall we be condemned to ignore the significance of Gandhi's spirituality with respect to all our fellow beings, animals, plants and beyond? Are we conditioned to repeat our indifferent, ignorant or thoughtless behaviour and display again and again dishonesty, greed, recklessness, egocentric or even egoistic self-centeredness like the bizarre and grotesque – or better: chaplinesque – modern times dictators and fascists of nuclear powers and space warriors. We would be trapped in a vicious circle of identical corporative or scientific rat race, colonised mice first played with and then pouched upon by imperialist cats.

Satyagraha (firmness in truth) is the self-assurance of conscience, voice of truth through the pathway of non-violence. Satyagraha is the eternal quotation and recitation of a reasonable code of conduct according to the Golden Rule: "Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you" (Confucius, Analects 15.23) – "This is the sum of duty. Do not unto others that which would cause you pain if done to you" (Mahabharata 5, 1517).

Randhir Gautam and Saji Varghese are familiar to me as diligently striving for "universal uplift" or "progress of all" (Sarvodaya) which means – according to John Ruskin in the summary version of Gandhi – "that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all". There are many voices nowadays which should be heard and listen to, no longer ignored, marginalised, silenced down or suppressed. It is up to you and

me, the readers of this new book, to listen to these voices and find our conclusion for a new nonviolent praxeology of human dignity, human rights and peace – exit to real independence without superiority or inferiority complex, without chauvinism, colonialism, imperialism, inequality, injustice, militarism, nationalism, racism, slavery, and war.

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