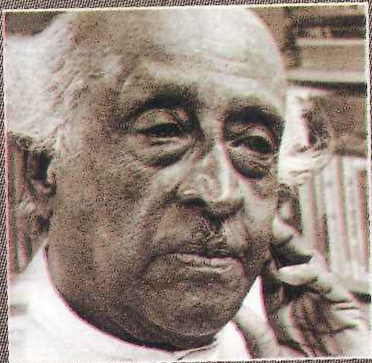


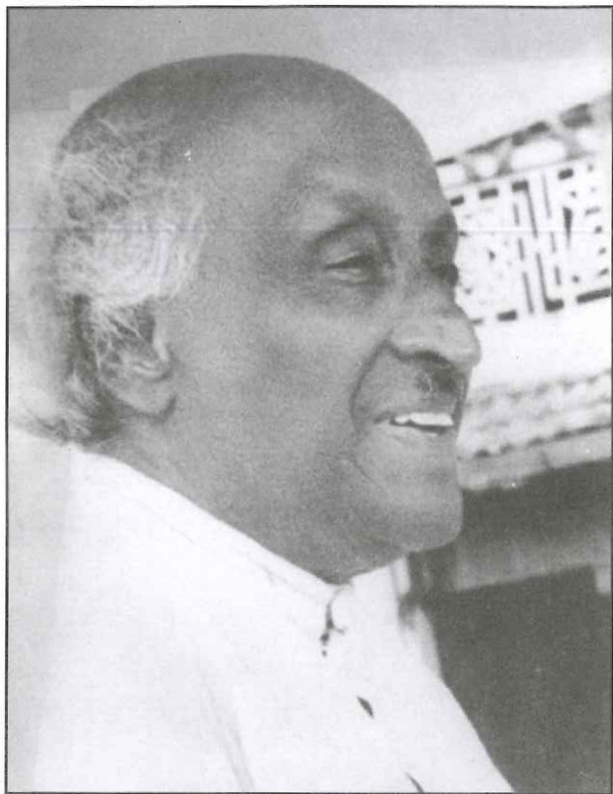
# The Core of GANDHI



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



The Madhavi Mandiram Loka Seva Trust  
Neyyatunkara



Dr. G. Ramachandran

**THE CORE OF GANDHI**

**&**

**The Centre of Gandhi's Contribution:  
Satyagraha**

Reflections of life

By

Desikottama

Dr. G. Ramachandran



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## FOREWORD

“The Core of Gandhi” is one of the series of booklets, “Reflections of Life” written by Desikottama Dr G. Ramachandran. Even a casual reader will find inspiration from a study of these reflections. How Gandhi was made in to a Mahatma by his experiments in his life and the instrument he found as “Satyagraha” were explained in GR’s own efficient language.

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.



## Chapter headings



### **1. The Core Of Gandhi**



### **2. The Centre of Gandhi's Contribution: Satyagraha**





reside in opposites. We have all come so much under the spell of the astonishing integration and unity of the man within himself that, no one has yet attempted a clear analysis of his complex and magnificent personality.

It was poet Rabindranath Tagore who once wrote that those disciplines are the most complex, which ultimately lead to the simplicity of a song. One has only to look at those who learn music to understand something of the daily grind of hard disciplines through which they must pass before they bring out a soulful song.

Gandhi's life was one long and ceaseless saga of endeavour in which he aided, bit-by-bit and piece-by-piece, to his stature ending up in the ever-advancing fullness of his total personality. There was nothing mystic or miraculous about his growth from a common man into the unsurpassed Mahatma of our history.

It is open to each one of us to see how

he advanced, step by step, gathering innumerable fragments of truth one by one and mixing them together in the fiery crucible of his life, ready to look at facts, accept their real significance, face any consequence in the pursuit of a cause, suffer any penalty for a mistake, recover lost ground again, but always moving onward, open minded, without fear and dedicated heroically to reach and hold the truth of a matter at any cost.

He was, therefore, not born a Mahatma. He moulded himself into one by the Tapasya of which he became the embodiment. He was a common man who pulled himself up to the uncommon height. He was no God but became a god man. Gandhi knew this about himself and that was why he named his biography, "The Story of My Experiments with Truth". Experimentation was one of the deepest passions of his life. He experimented with food, health and cure, clothes and dress, politics and economic, education and reform, ethics and spirituality



and organization and revolution.

With relentless logic and courage he broke new ground in every direction and yet had the depth and width of mind to separate the false from the true, the unreal from the real, defeat from success and to integrate all his aims and endeavors into the inner unity of his personality.

When we look into the splendid mosaic of his thoughts and deeds there is one thing, which stands out as unique and puts him in the forefront of world leadership. This was the unique discovery he made in a unique laboratory. The laboratory was South Africa and the discovery was Satyagraha. It was history, which threw Gandhi into the South African crucible. The situation in South Africa was itself unprecedented in history.

It was not merely that a white minority Government brutalized itself and millions of colored people in an attempt to permanently enslave them. Slavery was nothing new in the

world, but this one was unique in that it was grounded in a new metaphysics and ethics buttressed by perverted science. Every thought and action conceivable to diabolic human ingenuity was drawn upon to perpetuate the subjection of the many who were physically weak to the few who were physically strong. Any rebellion was totally made impossible. The very thought of rebellion was made treason under the law.

The white minority Government was armed to the teeth not only with weapons but also with twisted laws, institutions and philosophy. This slavery itself was held up as part of God's plan for man and the teachings of the New Testament were blackened and poisoned in support of it. The Bible had taught through 20 centuries that God made man in His image, but the cruel tyrants in South Africa taught that this applied only to the Whitemen. The many who were weak and held in subjection had no arms, no education, no organization and no power of

any kind. They could work and just manage to live within the unbreakable frontiers of this slavery. Once they accepted this slavery, they were fed, clothed and given shelter, but without any human rights whatsoever, not even the right of a husband to live freely with his wife or of a mother with her children. They could live like animals in the cattle shed of this fantastic civilization. Any attempt to break away in any direction was met with torture and death. It was a terrible prison house reared and maintained with infinite care within the heart of a new civilization.

It was into this prison house of slavery that history cast Gandhi. He had lived and studied in London. He was a Barrister-at-law from the Middle Temple. He was also an Indian from an aristocratic family with a great and ancient tradition of culture in his blood. But he was very young and inexperienced. He could have turned tail and run away from this terror in South Africa.

It was at this point that Gandhi revealed the first glimmer of his greatness. He stood firm and looked at the terror with unflinching eyes. Can we not say, in humility, that God broke into history at this point and gave Gandhi the inner urge to stand firm like a rock?

He had behind him only a mass of unlettered, poor, weak and unorganized Indian coolies and he himself had already been dubbed a coolly-barrister by the arrogant whites who kept the keys of the slave-prison. The historic challenge before Gandhi was whether the weak could fight the strong with any hope of success.

Throughout history in all the battles and conflicts between the strong and the weak, the weak had always surrendered or perished. Gandhi asked himself the question if this inescapable fact of history, as it appeared to be, could ever represent the law of truth, justice and love i.e., the law of God. Again, the light of God entered the soul of Gandhi and he knew at once that what

surrounded him was simply the negation of the law of God and therefore of history. Thereafter Gandhi did not hesitate. He plunged into the greatest experiment of our time to discover the weapon with which the weak could fight the strong, not individually but in the mass.

Let us unravel some of the ingredients, which went into this astounding experiment. The first was Gandhi's impregnable faith in God. To Gandhi, God was Truth, love or and justice. Truth and justice were concepts, but love or hate furnished the motivation for their interaction. Hate was acting in South Africa to perpetuate injustice and untruth. Could love be made to act effectively for truth and justice in the same area of collective human life? The answer came from the depth of Gandhi's mind. His inner mind said, yes, it could because it must, if God and man were to co-exist. Otherwise, God would be annulled and man would be left lonely in the jungle of life. That was impossible? This was the logic of Gandhi. He held on to that logic till

the end of his life. But there remained the question how could love be harnessed and made to act in the collective life of the slaves.

The first answer was love must act totally differently from hate. Suppression, torture, violence the prison and the bullet were the instruments of hate in the South African crucible as everywhere. These must be rejected as instruments of love. But what could be the instruments of love? Having rejected the weapons of hate, Gandhi set about to discover the instruments of love for the battle of the weak against the strong. Discoveries came to him one after the other.

The weak can refuse to obey, the weak must not surrender, and the weak must invite suffering instead of inflicting suffering. The weapons of love must make the weapons of hate as useless as possible and above all the slaves must stand together as one united community. It must be remembered that the challenge was to use the weapons of love collectively. It was clear,



as crystal to Gandhi that the whole of this battle would, inevitably be non-violent. And yet large masses of people must act together non-violently.

'Gandhi' was modern enough to understand the dynamics of numbers that he did not disdain in a mood of super saintliness. He realized at once that the first step was for him to disobey the iniquitous laws himself and then persuade all his people also to disobey them. He saw why the white minority Government used cruel violence to suppress the colored people. It was only under such suppression that the colored millions, including Indians, would give uncomplaining obedience. The whole aim was to secure obedience through terror.

Gandhi's answer was to match fearlessness against terror and disobedience against submission. Gandhi came to the ingredient in his experiment, which made disobedience a duty. It became the only duty. But could there not be violent disobedience; came the subtle question. Gandhi discovered that violence weakened

disobedience because it would leave the initiative in the hands of the tyrants who were masters in the art of violence.

Disobedience would become more effective when it was non-violent. Instead of increasing the violence of the tyrants it would reduce that violence to an extent and within that margin non-violence could become more effective. Gandhiji thus arrived at the discovery of strong disobedience through non-violence.

But disobedience and surrender must be kept poles apart. How could this be done? If the tyrants failed to secure obedience what would happen? They would punish the slaves, beat them up, throw them into prison and shoot at them with bullets. So Gandhi said to himself and his people that disobedience should persist in spite of everything the tyrants did. They could and would do everything in their power to extract obedience but they could not annihilate a whole community resisting them non-violently. The larger the number the better. But the question was would

the weak disobey in sufficiently large numbers and face all the terrible consequences of disobedience.

Here Gandhi's mind hesitated for a moment. Then came another vital ingredient in his discovery. There was the soul in each human being. Whatever might be the differences between human being due to geographical and historical circumstances and conditions during a few thousand years, man himself who was several hundreds of thousands of years old on the earth had each one a soul equal to any other soul.

God created man in His own image said the Bible. God resided in each human being said the Gita. The Buddha and Mohamed affirmed the same truth. Gandhi was a believer. He decided heroically to act upon the basis of the equality of human souls. From Gandhi's faith in this equality sprang his conviction that there was no man or woman so small, weak or helpless who could not discover the strength of the soul inside

and make use of it when life itself was in peril before tyranny.

Gandhi thus put his faith not only in the transcendent God but also equally in the God immanent in every man and woman. Gandhi then put together all these ingredients of his discovery and welded them into the concept and practice of Satyagraha.

Thus, step-by-step again, the experimenter in the laboratory of South Africa arrived at his radiant discovery of the power of collective non-violence, which evolved in time into the revolutionary weapon of Satyagraha.

It is difficult to make a discovery but even more difficult to apply it in a most difficult situation. Where did Gandhi get the reckless courage to use Satyagraha in South Africa? He was himself undergoing a basic transformation within himself. He found out that fear and non-violent action would be completely contradictory. He therefore shed all fear and

resolved that if he did not trust in the power of the soul he could do nothing. He therefore gave his people the call to awake, arise and act non-violently.

The response astonished and justified Gandhi's faith in God and man. His people rose as one man and followed him valiantly in the non-violent struggle the meaning of which came to them instinctively and with growing conviction.

What happened in South Africa in this epic struggle that lasted for seven years is now a part of our history. It jerked the whites into wonder and dismay. It also flashed the message of a new revolution across the world. Tolstoy, in far away Russia, saw it and recognized it as a new power for good in the whole world. The coolies began civil disobedience. The whites became angry and blind. They struck out at Gandhi and his coolies with all their weapons. They threw thousands into prisons, properties were confiscated and crowds were beaten up brutally. Disobedience continued nevertheless. No Indian

surrendered and no Indian obeyed. The whites sought for a remedy and found none. It became a long drawn out struggle that ended in the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement.

The struggle ennobled the coolies and gave them confidence and strength. The whites were ashamed inside themselves and were cleansed a little. The Whites were Christians. The Hindus and the Muslim collies showed them the meaning of the Cross. Both sides emerged from the struggle with a premonition that something new had happened to them both equally. The world had changed a little, not only in South Africa but also in the conscience and mind of man. Tolstoy wrote to Gandhi that the struggle in South Africa was significant for the world. More than anything else Gandhi himself became a transformed man. Deep within him there stirred the first awareness of a great mission. Gandhi went to South Africa as a young lawyer. He returned to India as the Mahatma.



This then was Gandhi's discovery in the laboratory of South Africa. It was the discovery of a weapon with which the physically weak can fight the physically strong. It is perhaps the greatest discovery of our century, greater than the discovery of atomic power. Atomic weapons are now in the hands of the mighty and with these weapons the strong will fight the strong and might destroy themselves. But here was the discovery of a weapon, which the weakest could use with effect against the strongest with a sporting chance of success.

The victory of the physically strong and the subjugation of the physically weak became no longer an imperative of history. Gandhian non-violence created a break-through in the history of the world. The physically weak need never remain anymore helpless in the face of the physically powerful. This is the explosion of hope, which Gandhi ignited in our time. There is almost nothing more significant for the future of man than this in the landscape of our century.

Luckily Gandhi has not left the power of Satyagraha in doubt.

After the non-violent struggle in South Africa, Gandhi led millions of the Indian people in 3 massive non-violent revolutions against British rule through which mainly the freedom of India was won. The new imperative laid upon us now is to place the weapon of Satyagraha in the hands of the suppressed and downtrodden throughout the world. No greater duty rests upon the people of India than this in view of the Gandhi Centenary in 1969.

Let no one be deceived into thinking that the impact of Gandhi and non-violence on world events are not clear or effective. The world seems to have little to do with Gandhi and Satyagraha. The U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. dominated the world because of their stockpiles of atomic weapons of incalculable destructive power.

Civilization is now in the grip of escalating violence. But let us remember that since the

end of the Second World War we have had several groups in the world, which have successfully practiced Satyagraha against tyranny and terror. More significant still is the worldwide reaction against nuclear weapons and a third world war and for world peace. Surprisingly, peace movements are strongest in the most advanced countries.

Non-violence is still only a trickle against the tidal waves of violence sweeping the world. But these tidal waves point to the decay and death of civilization. The trickle however points the way onward to a great renaissance of the human spirit with the possibility of building a new human society based on freedom, justice and peace.

Militarism and nuclear weapons are the blood-soaked signposts of a vanishing era. Gandhi and non-violence are the vibrant symbols of a slowly coming epoch of justice and peace. This is the core of Gandhi's life and work.

To understand that, love can be made more effective than hate, violence and hate are inseparable, equally non-violence and love are inseparable and non-violence can be organized on a commensurate scale to fight tyranny of every kind and above all that these are possible with mankind everywhere is

### **The Core of Gandhi.**



## **CHAPTER :2**

# **The Centre of Gandhi's Contribution: Satyagraha**



## The Centre of Gandhi's Contribution: Satyagraha



Satyagraha literally means “Truth Force” or “Truth Powers”. This idea and practice was at the center of Gandhi's life as is the center of his contribution to the world. All else is marginal compared to this. The quintessence of Gandhian is Satyagraha. If we don't get this, we have missed the meaning of his life and death.

I would sum up the five great contributions, which Mahatma Gandhi gave to the world as follows:

1. A new spirit and technique – Satyagraha;
2. The emphasis that the moral universe is one and that the morals of individual, group, and nation must be



the name;

3. His insistence that the means and the ends must be consistent;
4. The fact that he held no ideals he did not embody or was not in the process of embodying;
5. A willingness to suffer and die for his principles. These are the five great things he gave but the greatest of these is Satyagraha. He was influenced by his religious mother and the story of Raja Harischandar.

The idea of Satyagraha slowly evolved and then took possession of him. The germ of the idea was given to him in a Gujarati hymn. He says of it: "Its precepts – return good for evil – became my guiding principle. It became such a passion with me that I began numerous experiments in it." The hymn:

For a bowl of water give a goodly mean;  
For a kindly greeting bow thou down with zeal;  
For a simple penny pay thou back with gold;

If they life be rescued, life do not withhold.  
Thus the words and action of the wise regard;  
Every little service tenfold they reward  
But the truly noble know all men as one,  
And return with gladness good for evil done.

The germ of the idea came from this hymn. "But it was the New Testament that fined it in my heart" says Gandhi. When a missionary Dr S. W. Clemes, asked the Mahatma years ago what book or person had influenced him, most, he replied: "The Bible, Ruskin, and Tolstoy".

In later years he would have undoubtedly added the Gita. Tolstoy, with his insistence that the Sermon on the Mount be taken literally and acted on, helped to confirm the idea of the Gujarati hymn and to expound it.

It was Ruskin's 'Unto This Last' that made him decide on a life of simplicity. This is noteworthy!!!

A book out of the war ridden west -

**the New Testament** - turned him against war;

A book out of the materialistic, complicated civilization of Europe-**Ruskin's "Unto the Last"**— turned him towards simplicity. He reduced life to his bare necessities.

**Unto This Last** put together religion and service. "As you did it do one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me". His religion would be a serving of God through a serving of men.

He would be non-violent, he would be simple; and he would serve God through humanity. Thus was his working faith forward.

But it was an incident that precipitated there gathering elements into a fined life attitude – the wellknown train case in South Africa (Harijan, December 10, 1938)

There were two other influences that helped shape Mahatma Gandhi's ideas and attitudes.

Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience" expounding the fact that a man must obey his own conscience even against the will of his fellow citizens and be ready to undergo imprisonment in consequence for after all it was only his body, but not his spirit, which was in custody, arrived at a critical moment in South Africa and greatly appealed to him. Concerning this Gandhiji says:

"The statement that I derived my idea of Civil Disobedience for the writings of Thoreau is wrong. The resistance to authority in South Africa was well advanced before I got the essay of Thoreau on Civil Disobedience. But the movement was then known as Passive Resistance. As it was incomplete, I had coined the word **Satyagraha** for the Gujarati readers. When I saw the title of Thoreau's great essay, I began the use of the phrase to explain our struggle to the English readers. But I found that even Civil Disobedience failed to convey the full meaning of the struggle. I therefore

adopted the phrase “Civil Desistence”. Non-violence was always an integral part of our struggle”.

Another influence was his observation in 1909 of the British suffragettes and their methods involving imprisonment for gaining of their goals.

Here was a confluence of which God used to mould a mighty instrument of his purposes for the age: a Gujarati hymn from India, a New Testament from Palestine, a book from Russia, a pamphlet from America, a book and the suffragette influence from Britain, and then two men in South Africa, a coach attendant and a white occupant of a waiting room.

All these combine to push Gandhi by a hand of destiny into the arena of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to fight one of the noblest fights that have been fought by man for the liberation of man. They combined to make Gandhi the greatest revolutionary of the age – and the most gentle

and humane. When Gandhiji began to apply a New Testament principle to public affairs, then that was revolutionary.

The Mahatma believed that if you always did the true things, you would have the backing of the moral universe. He believed that the stars in their course would work for you. He further held that the Universe and we are made for truth.

Gandhi had one problem in life. “In this matter am I on the side of truth?” When he decided to adopt two things, truth and non-violence – one the fact and the other the method of applying the fact – he went forth believing that he had cosmic backing for what he was doing. It gave him an inner steadiness of purpose and a terrific drive-quiet but terrific. Gandhi’s strategy is truth, and his method is non-violence.

**Satyagraha**: says Gandhi – ‘Satyagraha is always superior to armed resistance. This

can only be effectively proved by demonstration, not by argument. It is the weapon that adorns the strong. It can never adorn the weak. By weak is meant the weak in mind and spirit not in body - the sword of the Satyagraha is love and the unshakable firmness that comes from it.

A Satyagrahi must always be ready to die with a smile on his face, without retaliation and without rancor in his heart. Some people had come to have a wrong idea that Satyagraha meant jail going only; perhaps facing lathi blows and nothing more.

Such Satyagraha could not bring independence. To win independence they had to learn the art of dying without killing”.

He goes on and lays down rules for the behaviour of the Satyagrahis: -

Anyone summoned to appear before a court should do so. No defense should be offered and no pleaders engaged in the matter.



If a fine is imposed, with the alternative of imprisonment, imprisonment should be accepted.

If only a fine is imposed, it ought not to be paid. There should be no demonstrations of grief or otherwise made by the remaining Satyagrahis by reason of the arrest and imprisonment of their comrade. It cannot be too often repeated that we court imprisonment and may not complain of it when we actually receive it. When once we are imprisoned, it is our duty to conform to all prison regulations.

A Satyagrahi may not resort to surreptitious practices. All that the Satyagrahi do can only and must be done openly. To evade no punishment, to accept all suffering joyfully and to regard it as a possibility for further strengthening his soul force, is the duty of every single one of my followers:

He gathers up his ideas into  
fifteen commandments.

## As an individual:

1. A Satyagrahi, i.e. a civil resister, will harbor no anger.
2. He will suffer the anger of the opponent.
3. In doing so he will put up with assaults from the opponents, never retaliate; but he will not submit, out of fear of punishment or the like, to any order given him anger.
4. When any person in authority seeks to arrest a civil resister he will voluntarily submit to the arrest, and he will not resist the attachment or removal of his own property, if any, when it is sought to be conflicted by the authorities.
5. If a civil resister has any property in his possession as a trustee, he will refuse to surrender it, even though in defending it he might lose his life. He will however never retaliate.
6. Non-retaliation excluded swearing and cursing.

7. Therefore a civil resister will never insult his opponent and therefore also, he may not take part in many of the newly coined cries, which are contrary to the spirit of Ahimsa.

8. A civil resister will not salute the Union Jack nor will he insult it or officials, English or Indian.

9. In the course of the struggle if one insults an official or commits an assault upon him, a civil resister will protest such official or officials from the insult or attack even at the risk of his life.

As a prisoner:

10. As a prisoner, a civil resister will behave courteously toward prison officials and will observe all such discipline of the prison as is not contrary to self respect; as for instance, whole he will salaam the officials in the usual manner he will not perform any humiliating gyrations and will refuse to shout "Victory to Sirkar", or the like.

He will take cleanly cooked and cleanly served food, which is not contrary to his religion, and will refuse to take food insultingly served or served in unclean vessels.

11. A civil resister will make no distinction between an ordinary prisoner and himself will in no way regard himself as superior to the rest, nor will he ask for any conveniences that may not be necessary for keeping his body in good health and condition. He is entitled to ask for such conveniences as may be required for his physical and spiritual well-being.

12. A civil resister may not fast for want of conveniences whose deprivations do not involve any injury to one's self respect.

**As a unit:**

13. A civil resister will joyfully obey all the orders issued by the leader of the corps, whether they please him or not.

14. He will carry out orders in the first instance though they appear to him to be insulting, in-

imical, or foolish, and then appeal to higher authority. He is free to determine the fitness of the corps to satisfy him before joining it; but after he has joined it, it becomes his duty to submit to its discipline, irksome or otherwise. If the sum total of the energy for the corps appears to a member to be improper or immoral, he has a right to sever his connection, but, being within it, he has no right to commit a breach of its discipline.

15. No civil resister is to expect maintenance for his dependents. It would be an accredit if any such provision was made. A civil resister entrusts his dependents to the care of God. Even in ordinary warfare where in hundreds of thousands give themselves up to it, they are unable to make no previous provision. How much more, then should such be the case in Satyagraha? It is the universal experience that in such times hardly anybody is left to starve”.

When one takes the attitude of the real Satyagrahi, it throws around him something

that disarms his enemies.

The Moslems of Noakhali slaughtered the Hindus in mass killing. The Mahatma deliberately went into these scenes of desolation state and went unarmed. India held its breath.

But when the Mahatma would march from village to village on his peace mission, the goondas would flee before him, afraid to face him. Once the absence of resistance and even resentment so unnerved the attacker that he desisted. Later he came and fell at the Mahatma's feet and begged forgiveness for what he had done.

Dr. Radhakrishnan sums up Gandhiji, and his non-violence movement.

“Gandhiji embodies the moulded pride of India, and in his Satyagraha is reflected the eternal patience of her wisdom. Gandhiji admits that submission to injustice is worse than suffering it. He tells us that we can resist through an act of non-violence, which is an

active force. If blood is shed, let it be our blood, cultivate the quiet courage of dying without killing; for man lives freely only by his readiness to die, if need be, at the hands of his brother, never by killing him..." Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

All of this seems idealistic and impossible. But not when you see it applied on a mass scale to a political situation. Then you see the sheer power of it, a strange new power that shakes you to your depths, and shakes a nation to its depths – the nation that adopts it and the nation against whom it is adopted. At first you are disposed to mockery and then something gets past your armor and gets you.

Gandhi has taken this method out of the realm of idealism, has applied it on a vast scale and has demonstrated its practicability. India has won her independence and she won it by non-violent means. It took 30 years to win it, but the time would have been greatly shortened had not violence crept into the



movement. To the degree that it has remained non-violent it has been power purer unadulterated power. It's only weakness was in the departure from its own principles and practice. Had India been true to the principle and practice of the Mahatma's non-violent movement, she would have assumed the moral leadership of the world.

The violence that crept in the movement when it was on and the violence that has attended the adjustments between Pakistan and India have tended to dim that moral leadership and yet through it all the amazing power of Mahatma Gandhi and his method shines.

The spirit of Mahatma Gandhi shines all the more against the background of the betrayal of his spirit, often by those who named his name.

Satyagraha as Gandhi conceived it must be born in the heart of the man using it as an answer to violence and evil. It is not a skilful

use of one's body to retract the movement of the other party but an offer of one's body to his physical violence.

To enunciate that Love and Truth have been shown by Gandhi to be powerful answer to hatred and falsehood and violence is easy. To say that these forces of Love and Truth can solve and are the only way to solve, racial, economic and political conflicts is easy. But in practice it will be found to be a begging of the question. How can you summon up love for one who has given you so much cause to hate? How can a Negro love a White man? How can a Pak patriot love Indian or Indian patriots love the Pak?

The force of Love and Truth must spring from a firm faith in God and His sovereignty over the hearts of man, to save Gandhiji's way from becoming an empty doctrines or a disappointing technique. Satyagrha is not for the skeptic, not for one who is content with the phenomenal world and the classification

of what one sees in that world.

**Satyagrahi was not an inventor.**

**He was a man of God.**



# *Desikottama Dr G.Ramachandran*

Blossomed:07-10-04

Withered: 17-01-95

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 has Mahatma Gandhi Vidya Peedom and is involved in other activities mainly for women and children.

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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 7<sup>th</sup> Oct 2004 to 7<sup>th</sup> Oct 2005.

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





A strong,  
calm and clear  
mind moulds your  
face and gives you a  
personality;  
so consciously cultivate  
your personality.



Reflections of life  
Series No : 1