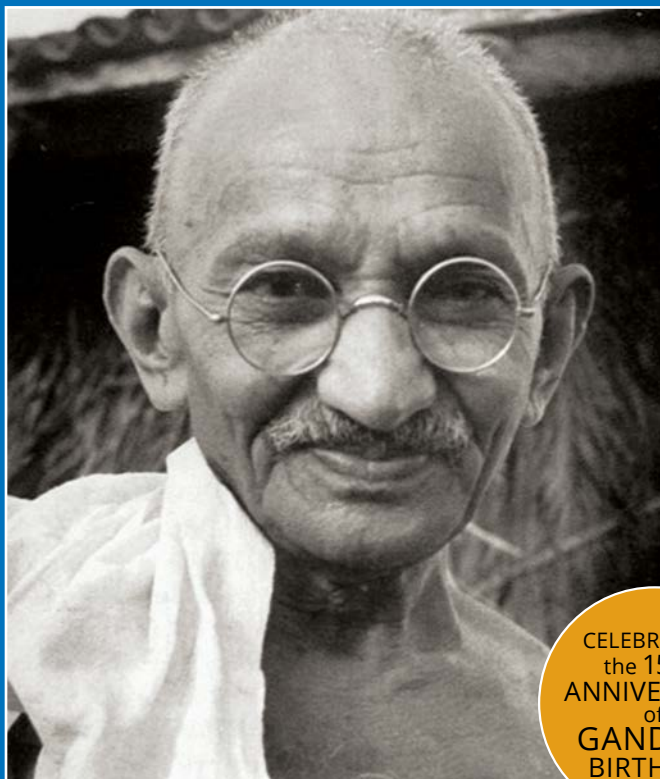


Ekknath Easwaran on Meditation & Spiritual Living

Blue Mountain Journal

SPECIAL ISSUE | SUMMER 2019



CELEBRATING
the 150th
ANNIVERSARY
of
GANDHI'S
BIRTHDAY

GANDHI & NONVIOLENCE
Love in Action
Transforming Anger

In This Issue



In 1969, to celebrate the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth, two of Eknath Easwaran's close students at the University of California at Berkeley put together an exhibit of photographs and quotations to show the spiritual basis of Gandhi's life. With the addition

of commentary by Easwaran, that exhibit led to his first book, *Gandhi the Man*.

This year, the 150th anniversary of Gandhi's birth and the 20th of Easwaran's passing, we offer this special issue of his journal to keep before us his unique message on the significance of Gandhi's example: that anger can be transformed into irresistible compassion, and that even ordinary people like us, through the practice of meditation, can make ourselves instruments of peace whose influence can spread to everyone around us.

— Sue Craig and the BMCM Editorial Team

Summer 2019, Volume 30, No. 2

© 2019 by The Blue Mountain Center of Meditation

P.O. Box 256, Tomales, CA 94971, info@bmcmm.org, www.bmcmm.org, 707. 878. 2369

The *Blue Mountain Journal* is a publication of The Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1961 by Eknath Easwaran to carry on his work.

To read previous issues of the *Blue Mountain Journal*, see www.bmcmm.org/journal.

To sign up for a free digital subscription, see www.bmcmm.org/subscribe.

A shining beacon for our world

I offer Mahatma Gandhi as a shining beacon in a world whose hope is rapidly fading. I offer him as an example of how universal forces of goodness will come to act through the day-to-day life of any individual who gives them the chance. He stands, as Jawaharlal Nehru said, “as a rock of purpose and a lighthouse of truth.”

How did Gandhi make himself like this? This question is of monumental importance, because in a world so intertwined and complex we do not have the luxury of lying back and watching forces at work. Every one of us has a personal stake in history. Every one of us must do all we can to avoid a worldwide conflagration.

Gandhiji put all his faith in the individual. His way was for each of us to make a personal contribution in our own home and community. His genius lay in knowing how to transform the raw material of daily living into opportunities for growth and service, so that routine events become spiritual occasions.

In looking at his life, an inspiring picture takes shape: of how one person can be immersed in solving the problems of the world without ever being overwhelmed by their demands.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. ...', positioned at the end of the main text block.



Gandhi in London, 1931.
(All photos of Gandhi are from *Gandhi the Man* by Eknath Easwaran.
See page 58.)

Gandhi's Message

by Eknath Easwaran

In India, Mahatma Gandhi is officially Father of the Nation. Under his leadership India attained freedom from the British Empire through a thirty-year campaign based on complete nonviolence that ended with both sides allied in respect and friendship. I would say that he belongs not so much to twentieth-century history as to the timeless lineage of the world's great mystics, kith and kin with Francis of Assisi and other luminous figures.

The mystics, though they teach universals, are also each unique. Each has an intuition or insight, so to speak, a particular message that arises as a deep response to the needs of the times. Gandhi's message was to show us the way out of the greatest problem of our age, that of the downward spiral of violence in every sphere of life that threatens to drag civilization back into barbarism if we do not learn to master it.

Most precious of all – like every great spiritual figure, but belonging to our own times – he gives us a glimpse of our evolutionary potential as human beings. He shows us that the spiritual life, far from being otherworldly, means living to one's highest ideals and giving full expression to every facet of personality in a life of selfless service.

Gandhi's early years

When Gandhi was born in 1869, India had already been under foreign domination for centuries. The long-term effects of this kind of domination on consciousness may not be obvious to those who have not lived under such conditions. After two

or three generations, beyond the political deprivation and economic exploitation, a people begins to lose confidence in itself. Indians grew up in the belief that they were inferior, born to be ruled over, not fit to be masters in their own home. The best and brightest went to London for their education and returned to careers in the bureaucracies of British India – or, occasionally, to terrorism or revolution. In any case it was axiomatic that any road to success, personal or national, had to be by imitation of Western ways.

Into this world, just twelve years after India became a Crown colony, a boy named Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born. He appears to have been, as he says, a very average youth, timid, inarticulate, painfully shy. Like everyone else whose family could afford it, he was sent off to London as a teenager to learn to become an English gentleman and to study law. Depressed by failure on his return, he decided to “try his luck” in a temporary job in South Africa, where a handful of Indian traders had made a niche for themselves in a community of a hundred thousand indentured Indian laborers working in mines and fields. A decidedly unpromising nobody, he left India in 1893 and dropped out of sight completely.

When he returned in 1915, the nobody was hailed as *mahatma*, “great soul.” Those twenty years in South Africa hold the secret of the essential Gandhi. We will return to look there more closely, for it is that transformation – not just an extraordinary success story, but the utter remaking of personality – that holds Gandhi’s ultimate significance for us today.

Growing up in Gandhi's India

I like to say I grew up not in British India but in Gandhi's India, because I was born just a few years before his return and he dominated my world like a colossus. I was too young (and my little village too isolated) to have much awareness of the tragedies that impelled him into national leadership in those early years. Only when I went to college, at the age of sixteen, did I discover his weekly "viewpaper," *Young India*. Gandhi was pouring his heart out in those pages, and despite the country's widespread illiteracy, I daresay his words reached into every one of India's villages as the paper was passed from hand to hand and read out to audiences everywhere along the way.

Today Gandhi is associated with marches and demonstrations. I look back and realize with some surprise that in the currency of the time each of these grand events seemed to fizzle and that most of those years Gandhi spent not in marching but in rebuilding foundations, healing divisions, unifying the country by urging us to take responsibility for our own problems. If we got our house in order, he told us, independence would fall like a ripe fruit as a natural consequence.

He enlisted everyone in this task, not only the underdogs but the upper dogs too; some of India's wealthiest industrialists were not only benefactors but personal friends. By his example, he led India's leaders and elite to focus the work of independence on the seven hundred thousand villages which everyone had forgotten but which make up the heart of India. It was a completely characteristic approach: begin at home, begin with yourself, correct the underlying conditions and suffer the consequences. The rest will fall into place.

For the welfare of all

One of the first lessons Gandhi had learned in South Africa was to begin by bringing people together onto higher ground. India was exploitable because it exploited its own people. We were weak because we were divided into innumerable factions each seeking its own gain, making it simple to play us against each other – an old Roman Empire tactic practiced by the East India Company and made official imperial policy after the Mutiny. The analysis made perfect sense, once grasped, but it wasn't a matter of politics to Gandhi. It was an obvious corollary of the unity of life, in which the welfare of all of us together was bound up with those whom the poet Rabindranath Tagore called “the lowest, the lowliest, and the lost.”

These ideas sound conventional enough today, but to put them into practice is always a shock. In India it caused an earthquake. By linking independence with the way we treated one another, Gandhi shook the country from top to bottom. For centuries, millions of Indians who were considered below any caste had been cruelly exploited by caste Hindus. Gandhi made a cornerstone of his campaign for national freedom the freedom of those whom the rest of India called “untouchable.”

He campaigned for them from the Himalayas to India's southernmost tip. Everywhere he told us that all of us were one and that we would never have the unity to throw off foreign rule, or even be worthy of self-government, until we ceased to exploit our own people. He gave outcaste Hindus a new name – Harijans, “children of God” – and called on temples to open their doors to them and on caste Hindus to bring them into their homes. It was an impossible appeal because it attacked ways of thinking ground deep into unconscious conditioning for countless generations. Yet people responded all over India.



Collecting for the Harijan fund, 1946.



During the Salt March, 1930.

Over and over I would think of the words of Jesus when he comes and tells the paralytic, “Arise, take up your bed and walk.” The man *had* to walk! And with equal joy and amazement, India arose too.

The Salt March

My college years were turbulent ones in Indian affairs. I must have been a junior on the night of December 31, 1929, when at the stroke of midnight the Indian Congress declared independence and unfurled the flag of a free India. Its motto, pure Gandhi, came from our most ancient scriptures: *Satyam eva jayate*, “Truth ever conquers.” Jawaharlal Nehru said later that on that night “we made a tryst with destiny.” Those were thrilling times for a village boy away at college, but they were only the beginning. Like the Americans with their Declaration of Independence, we had also made a tryst with war.

But this was to be a war without weapons. In March 1930, Gandhi wrote the British Viceroy that he intended to launch nonviolent resistance by marching to the sea to break a statute that made the sale and manufacture of salt a government monopoly, adding that he would accept the consequences cheerfully and that he was inviting the rest of India to do the same. That letter, as the journalist Louis Fischer observes with pleasure, “was surely the strangest ever received by the head of a government.”

The Salt March provided brilliant theater. Gandhi and his small band of volunteers took fourteen days to reach the sea, stopping at every village along the way and making headlines around the world. By the time he reached the ocean the procession was several thousands strong. When he picked up a handful of sea salt from the beach and raised it as a signal

to the rest of India, millions of people around the world must have watched him on the newsreels. But in India nobody needed the media. The country simply exploded in utterly nonviolent disobedience of British law.

What no one dared to expect was that in the face of police charges, beatings, arrests, and worse, the nonviolence held. Everyone knew Gandhi would drop the campaign if there was any violence on our part, no matter what the provocation. We “kept the pledge” day after day, filling the jails literally to overflowing. Many veterans of those days recall their terms in prison as the high point of their lives; Gandhi had made “suffering for Truth” a badge of honor.

Human alchemy

I can't describe the effect this had on me, on all of India. Obviously it was high drama, but most significant for me was the human alchemy being wrought. These were ordinary people, family, friends, school chums, acquaintances, men and women we saw daily in the marketplace or at temple, at work or school; all ages, high caste and low, educated and ignorant, cultured and crude, rich beyond calculation and unbelievably poor. How had they suddenly become heroes and heroines, cheerfully stepping forward to be beaten with steel-tipped batons, hauled off to jail, stripped of their livelihoods, sometimes even shot? Called to be more than human, we looked around and saw that we were capable of it. Gandhi was right: the body might be frail but the spirit was boundless. We were much, much stronger than we had thought, capable of great things, not because we were great but because there was divinity in us all – even in those who swung the clubs and wielded the guns.

For me, the burning question became: What was the

secret of this alchemy? Everyone in India knew that Gandhi had transformed himself in South Africa, but most of these millions of followers had scarcely even laid eyes on him. How was it that ordinary people became heroes simply through his example?

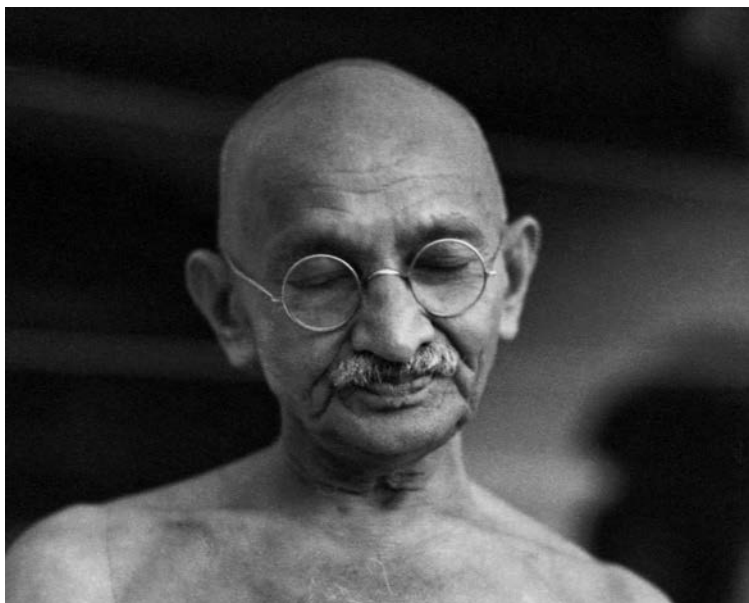
Visiting Gandhi

Graduate studies took me to a university in central India very near Gandhi's ashram, the little community he called Sevagram, "village of service." For the first time for me he was actually within reach. One weekend I decided to visit him and perhaps find answers to my questions.

I had to walk the last few miles from the train station, and the sun was low on the horizon when we arrived. A crowd had gathered outside a little thatched cottage where Gandhi had been closeted in urgent national negotiations since early morning. My heart sank. He would be tired after all that, tense and irritable, with little time for guests like me.

But when the cottage door opened, out popped a lithe brown figure of about seventy with the springy step and mischievous eyes of a teenager, laughing and joking with those around him. He might as well have been playing Bingo all day. Later I read that a journalist once asked Gandhi if he didn't think he should take a vacation. Gandhi had laughed and replied, "I'm always on vacation." That's just what I saw.

He was striding off for his evening walk and motioned us to come along. But after a while most of the crowd fell away. He didn't simply walk fast; he seemed to fly. With his white shawl flapping and his gawky bare legs he looked like a crane about to take off. I have always been a walker, but I had to keep breaking into a jog to keep up with him.



At a prayer meeting, 1944.

My list of questions was growing. This was a man in his seventies – the twilight of life by Indian standards of those days – burdened daily with responsibility for four hundred million people. He must have lived under intense pressure fifteen hours a day, every day, for probably fifty years. Why didn't he get burned out? How was he able to maintain this freshness? What was the source of this apparently endless vitality and good humor?

Verses from the Gita

After the walk and a meal it was time for Gandhi's prayer meeting. By this time it was dark, and hurricane lanterns had been lit all around. Gandhi sat straight with his back against a

tree, and I managed to get a seat close by, where I could fix my whole heart on him. A Japanese monk opened with a Buddhist chant and then a British lady began one of Gandhi's favorite hymns, John Henry Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light." Gandhi had closed his eyes in deep concentration, as if absorbed in the words.

Then his secretary, Mahadev Desai, began to recite from the Bhagavad Gita, India's best-known scripture, which is set on a battlefield which Gandhi said represents the human heart. In the verses being recited, a warrior prince named Arjuna, who represents you and me, asks Sri Krishna, the Lord within, how one can recognize a person who is aware of God every moment of his life. And Sri Krishna replies in eighteen magnificent verses unparalleled in the spiritual literature of the world:

They live in wisdom who see themselves in all and all in them, whose love for the Lord of Love has consumed every selfish desire and sense craving tormenting the heart. Not agitated by grief or hankering after pleasure, they live free from lust and fear and anger.

Fettered no more by selfish attachments, they are not elated by good fortune nor depressed by bad. Such are the seers.

A living dialogue

Sanskrit is a sonorous language, perfect for recitation. As Arjuna's opening question reverberated through the night air, Gandhi became absolutely motionless. His absorption was so profound that he scarcely seemed to breathe, as if he had been lifted out of time. Suddenly the Gita's question – "Tell me of the person established in wisdom" – became a living dialogue.

I wasn't just hearing the answer, I was seeing it, looking at a man who to the best of my knowledge fulfilled every condition the Gita lays down:

That one I love who is incapable of ill will
And returns love for hatred.

Living beyond the reach of I and mine
And of pleasure and pain, full of mercy,
Contented, self-controlled, firm in faith,
With all their heart and all their mind given
To me – with such as these I am in love.

Not agitating the world or by it agitated,
They stand above the sway of elation,
Competition, and fear, accepting life,
Good and bad, as it comes. They are pure,
Efficient, detached, ready to meet every demand
I make on them as a humble instrument of my work. . . .

Who serve both friend and foe with equal love,
Not buoyed up by praise nor cast down by blame,
Alike in heat and cold, pleasure and pain,
Free from selfish attachments and self-will,
Ever full, in harmony everywhere,
Firm in faith – such as these are dear to me.

I had always loved the Gita for its literary beauty, and I must have read it and listened to commentaries on it many times. But seeing it illustrated by Gandhi opened its inner meaning. Not just “illustrated”: he had become those words, become a living embodiment of what they meant. “Free from selfish desires” didn’t mean indifference; it meant not trying

to get anything for yourself, giving your best whatever comes without depending on anything except the Lord within. And the goal clearly wasn't the extinction of personality. Gandhi practically defined personality. He was truly original; the rest of us seemed bland by comparison, as if living in our sleep. He seemed to have become a kind of cosmic conduit, a channel for some tremendous universal power, an "instrument of peace."

A man of God

These verses are the key to Gandhi's life. They describe not a political leader but a man of God, in words that show this is the very height of human expression. They tell us not what to do with our lives but what to be. We see essentially the same portrait in all scriptures, reflected in the lives of spiritual aspirants everywhere.

In India, we go to an illumined man or woman to look, to have his or her darshan. We believe that when you look at a God-conscious person, it stirs something within you. There is an echo in your deeper consciousness because you are seeing your real Self. Gandhi stirred me deeply by placing before me an image of the human being that was far more radiant than any I had known. He still does. It is this beauty – the same divine spark that is concealed in all of us – that you see when you look at an illumined teacher.

I didn't understand this at the time, of course, but I went back thrilled and began to study systematically everything Gandhi wrote. I discovered he had a genius for transforming his life, so I tried to follow his example. While others were following his politics, I tried to absorb the way he worked on himself. But it took years for me to realize the real significance of that prayer meeting and the impact it made on my life.

I wasn't really a religious person, and while I respected those who were, at that time in my life I had never given a thought to leading the spiritual life. I had seen that Gandhi was really a mystic and the living embodiment of the Bhagavad Gita, but how had he managed to translate the Gita into his very consciousness? Not until I took to meditation myself did the rest of the puzzle fall into place.

The night in Maritzburg

There are really two chapters in the story of Gandhi in South Africa. The second covers the eight years after 1906 in which Gandhi developed and tested his new method of nonviolent resistance. But the first chapter to me is even more important, because it hides the chrysalis of his transformation.

The crucial event came soon after his arrival in South Africa, when Gandhi was thrown off a train at Maritzburg station because of the color of his skin. Something similar must have happened to every non-European in South Africa. But there are times in human affairs – sometimes in a profound external crisis, sometimes for no apparent reason at all – when superficial awareness is torn open and a channel into deeper consciousness is laid bare. That is what happened to Gandhi that night. It was bitter cold, and his coat and luggage were with the stationmaster, but he would not go and beg for them. He sat up all night thinking furiously about what had happened and what to do. He felt a strong impulse to turn around and go back to India rather than live in a place where he would be expected to put up with this kind of indignity.

By dawn he had made a curious resolve that came right from the depths of his heart: he would stay and he would fight, but against racial prejudice and on behalf of all, and in that

The Path

Mahatma Gandhi

I know the path: it is strait and narrow.
It is like the edge of a sword.

I rejoice to walk on it.
I weep when I slip.

God's word is:
"He who strives never perishes."

I have implicit faith in that promise.

Though, therefore, from my weakness
I fail a thousand times,
I shall not lose faith.

fight he would not resort to any tactic that would diminish the humanity he was fighting for. He would cling to the truth and suffer the consequences in trying to "root out this disease" which was infecting all parties involved.

The following day he proceeded on the next leg of his journey by carriage. There again he met with prejudice; though there was room in the carriage, he was forced by the driver to sit in a degrading place outside. When he refused, the driver tried to drag him off, alternately beating him and pulling at him; Gandhi refused to yield but refused also to defend himself and clung to the carriage rail until the white

passengers were moved to pity and begged the driver to let him join them at their side.

It was a curiously symbolic moment. No philosophy was involved; it would take years for him to make the “matchless weapon” of nonviolence out of this dogged determination never to retaliate but never to yield. But he had become a different man. The Sanskrit scriptures would say that on that night in Maritzburg “faith entered his heart.” In practice this means that in the very depths of his consciousness he had glimpsed a new image of himself. He was not just a separate, physical creature; he saw that he – and, crucially, every other human being – was essentially spiritual, with “strength [that] does not come from physical capacity [but] from an indomitable will.”

“Reducing himself to zero”

After this first instinctive “holding on to Truth,” Gandhi turned inward. He had met injustice; it degraded everyone but everyone accepted it: How could he change himself to help everyone involved see more clearly? Somehow, dimly at first, but with increasing sureness, he had already grasped that a person can be an “instrument of peace,” a catalyst of understanding, by getting himself out of the way. This marks the beginning of his life as a spiritual aspirant, and in the years that follow, hidden under the affairs of a terribly busy life, we can see him working tirelessly on the business of mystics everywhere: training his mind, transforming personal passions, “reducing himself to zero.”

The task sounds bleak until we see, through a living example, that this “zero” is what allows the infinitude of God to burst forth through the human personality. Meister Eckhart says inimitably, “God expects but one thing of you: that you should



Visiting Bengal after communal rioting, 1946.

come out of yourself in so far as you are a created being and let God be God in you.” And again: “God is bound to act, to pour himself into you, as soon as he finds you ready.”

Around-the-clock love and service

St. Francis took the Gospels as his model; Gandhi took the Gita. For both it was a systematic daily practice. Translating the Gita into character, conduct, and consciousness was precisely what Gandhi was doing in South Africa. He knew it by heart, knew it in his heart, studied it over and over every day, used it in prayer until it became a living presence. It was, he says, his “dictionary of daily reference.” Whenever he had a question about what to do or how to act, he took it to the Gita. Then, with the willpower that is his surest gift, he set about bringing his life into conformity with its teachings, no matter how unpleasant or inconvenient that might be. Those years in South Africa were a studio in which Gandhi worked every day like an artist, studying his model and chipping away at the block of stone that hid the vision he was striving to set free, painstakingly removing everything that is not Gita.

In many ways, allowing for differences in personal style, Gandhi goes about this very much like every other mystic. The crucial difference is that he does not withdraw from public life to do it. All his training is in the midst of around-the-clock public service. In most mystics we see personal passions being consumed in the love of God. Gandhi was transformed by his deep-running, passionate love of other people, wherein he found God, and an increasing desire to lose himself in salving their wounds and sorrows. Many mystics abrade their selfishness away; Gandhi dissolved his in love and service.

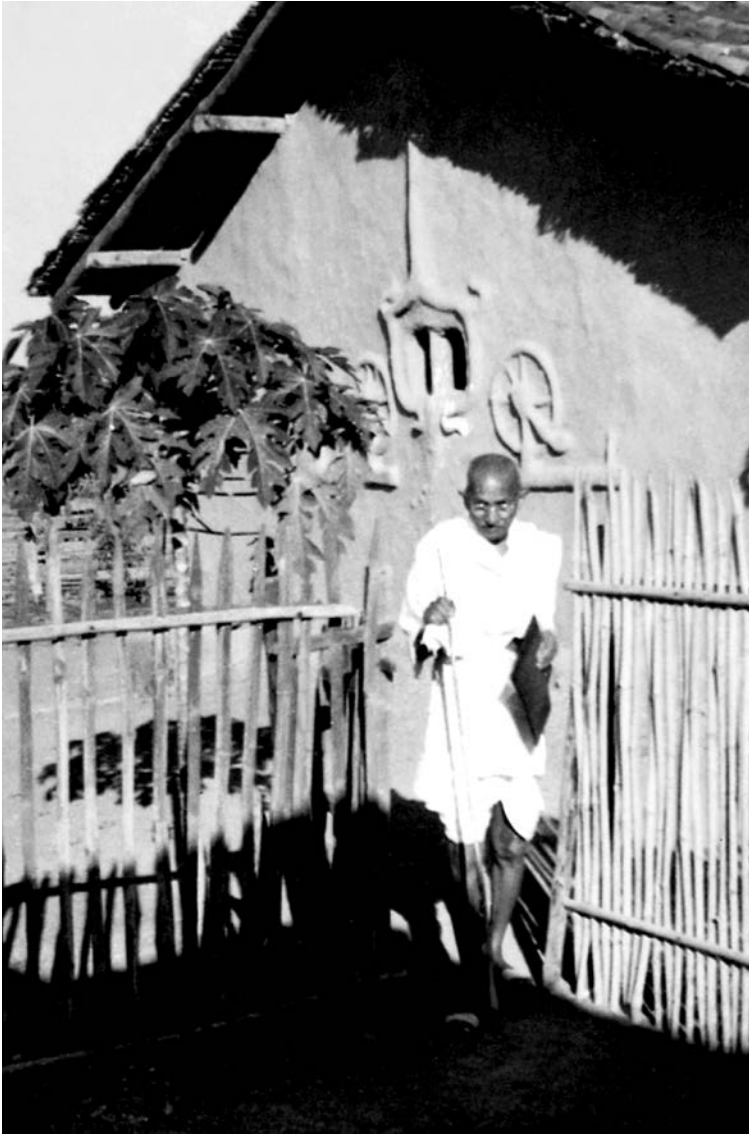
The transformation of anger

He made astonishing personal discoveries in those years, and perhaps the most significant for us today is that anger can be transformed. It is raw energy that can be transformed and fed back into a positive channel. Anger transformed becomes compassion.

In South Africa, beginning in his own home, Gandhi learned to transform his anger and then harness it in service. All the furious indignation of that night at Maritzburg station gets channeled first into transforming his bursts of temper with his wife. In every tradition, by whatever name it is called – “training the mind,” “guarding the heart,” “transforming the passions” – this is the essence of the spiritual life. Gandhi was a terribly passionate young man with a hot, imperious temper. All that passion transformed is what fueled a passionate life of selfless service.

“I have learnt through bitter experience,” he says later, “the one supreme lesson to conserve my anger, and as heat conserved is transmuted into energy, even so our anger controlled can be transmuted into a power which can move the world.” That one sentence is enough to place him among the world’s greatest teachers. He is telling us this is a skill; it can be learned. And as it is learned, it changes everything in its field.

His “staff of life” through these transformations, Gandhi tells us, was repetition of the mantram – in his case *Rama, Rama, Rama*, the mantram that he learned in childhood from his nurse. Gradually, as it verified itself in his life, the mantram became his greatest support, an infallible source of strength. Nothing is more effective in transforming anger into compassion, ill will into good will, hatred into love.



In front of his hut in Sevagram Ashram, 1935.

Onto the world stage

Typically, the transformation of Gandhi's last personal passion – which, as for almost all mystics, was sexual desire – occurred not in seclusion but during the long days and nights of bearing stretchers as a medic during the brutal suppression of a Zulu rebellion against the British in South Africa. Gandhi's agony over the suffering released a desire to serve that swept every personal desire into its path. It is no coincidence that just weeks after he took his vow of celibacy – for the third but last time, he tells us with dry humor – comes the great scene in Johannesburg's Imperial Theatre when he rose to address a crowd of angry Indians protesting a new piece of anti-Indian legislation and hit on the idea of offering nonviolent resistance. From that day (September 11, 1906) he stepped out onto the world stage.

Satyagraha

“It was only when I had learned to reduce myself to zero,” Gandhi says, “that I was able to evolve the power of satyagraha in South Africa.” Satyagraha – literally “holding on to Truth” – is the name he coined for this method of fighting without violence or retaliation.

Gandhi had a genius for making abstruse ideas practical, and one of the best examples comes when he explains the basis of satyagraha. In Sanskrit the word *satya*, “truth,” is derived from *sat*, “that which is.” Truth is; untruth merely appears to be. Gandhi brought this out of the realm of doctoral dissertations and into the middle of politics. It means, he said, that evil is real only insofar as we support it. The essence of holding on to truth is to withdraw support of what is wrong. If enough people do this – if, he maintained, even one person does it

from a great enough depth – evil has to collapse from lack of support.

The essence of nonviolence

Gandhi was never theoretical. He learned by doing. Satyagraha continued to be refined in action all his life; he was experimenting up to the day he was assassinated. But the essentials are present from the very beginning in South Africa.

First is the heartfelt conviction that a wrong situation wrongs both sides. Europeans and Indians alike were degraded by race prejudice; a lasting solution, therefore, had to relieve this burden for all involved. In spiritual terms this follows from the unity of life, which is what Gandhi's "Truth" means in practice. But it is also profoundly practical, because only a solution for everyone can actually resolve the problem and move the situation forward. More than just both sides "winning," everyone is a little nobler, a little more human, for the outcome.

Equally essential but hardest to grasp intellectually, nonviolent action means voluntary suffering. That in fact is how it works. Gandhi discovered in South Africa that reason is ultimately impotent to change the heart. Race prejudice was already causing suffering; the task of satyagraha was to make that suffering visible. Then, sooner or later, opposition had to turn to sympathy, because deep in everyone, however hidden, is embedded an awareness of our common humanity.

Clearly there is nothing passive about this kind of resistance. "The nonviolence of my conception," Gandhi says, "is a more active and a more real fighting than retaliation, whose very nature is to increase wickedness." That is the point: violence only makes a situation worse. It cannot help but provoke a violent response.

Ahimsa: unconditional love

Strictly speaking, satyagraha is not “nonviolence.” It is a means, a method. The word we translate as “nonviolence” is a Sanskrit word central in Buddhism as well: *ahimsa*, the complete absence of violence in word and even thought as well as action. This sounds negative, just as “nonviolence” sounds passive. But like the English word “flawless,” *ahimsa* denotes perfection. Ahimsa is unconditional love; satyagraha is love in action.

I said at the outset that every mystic seems to have a unique job to do. Gandhi’s job was not really the liberation of India. That was a tremendous achievement, but India was essentially a showcase, a stage for the world to see what nonviolence can accomplish in the highly imperfect world of real life. I haven’t even touched the surface of those achievements; there are miracles enough in Gandhi’s story to show that human nature is much loftier than we imagine. Our future depends on making that discovery.

“There is nothing new about ahimsa,” Gandhi insisted. “It is as old as the hills.” Throughout history all lasting relationships, all communities and societies, even civilization itself, have been built on the renunciation of violence for the sake of some greater good. Every conflict large or small is an opportunity to advance a little in evolution or move backwards. In this sense I believe civilization has reached a crossroads. A handful of angry people today, perhaps even one angry person, can wreak destruction on the other side of the globe. Violence has ceased to surprise us even in our homes and schools. We have made a culture of violence, and unless we change direction, it can destroy a great deal of progress that has been painstakingly built up over centuries of human evolution.

Nonviolence is a skill

In today's language, Gandhi gave us the basis for a technology of peace. He gave us tools for resolving conflicts of all kinds, which anyone can learn to use. But it is urgent to understand his message that nonviolence is a way of thinking, a way of life, not a tactic, but a way of putting love to work in resolving problems, healing relationships, and generally raising the quality of our lives. We don't begin on the grand stage he acted on; he did not begin that way himself. He began with his personal relationships, aware that he could not expect to put out the fires of anger and hatred elsewhere if the same fires smoldered in his own home and heart. His nonviolence is not a political weapon or a technique for social change so much as it is an essential art – perhaps *the* essential art – of civilization.

In other words, nonviolence is a skill, just like learning to read. Love is a skill. Forgiveness is a skill. The transformation of anger is a skill. All these can be learned. We cannot say we aren't capable of nonviolence; all we can say is we are not willing to do what is necessary to learn.

Finally, for spiritual seekers of all persuasions, Gandhi showed us that the spiritual life need not mean retiring to a monastery or cave. It can be pursued in the midst of family, community, and a career of selfless service. Even without reference to spirituality, if we look upon the overriding purpose of life as making a lasting contribution to our family and society, Gandhi gave us a higher image for ourselves, a glorification of the innate goodness in the human being, whose joy lies in living for the welfare of all.



At a prayer meeting in Bengal during Hindu-Muslim riots, 1946.

The same hope and faith

It has been said that the world's great mystics must come from the same country because they all speak the same language. Gandhi and St. Francis, Teresa of Avila and the Compassionate Buddha, are brothers and sisters. They seem so lofty that we sometimes feel they belong to another race or come from a different realm of being. But this does them a great disservice, for their message is just the contrary. They are our kinsfolk as well, and the country they come from is our own. They are like a relative who has disappeared for years and then returns to tell of a fabulous land. They give us maps, fill our ears with tips about which roads are safe and where the hostels are, tell us stories, show us their slides: anything to convince us that this country they have discovered is our real home and that, until we find our way there, as Augustine says, nothing else can fill the homesickness in our hearts.

This is Gandhi's ultimate message for us, and no sentence of his is more significant than where he says – and remember, this is a man who never let even a word stand if he did not know it to be true from his own experience – “I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith.” 🌸

The Real Lovers of God

Narsinha Mehta

They are the real lovers of God
Who feel others' sorrow as their own.
When they perform selfless service,
They are humble servants of the Lord.
Respecting all, despising none,
They are pure in thought, word, and deed.
Blessed is the mother of such a child,
And in their eyes the Divine Mother
Shines in every woman they see.
They are always truthful, even-minded,
Never coveting others' wealth,
Free from all selfish attachments,
Ever in tune with the Holy Name.
Their bodies are like sacred shrines
In which the Lord of Love is seen.
Free from greed, anger, and fear,
These are the real lovers of God.

This was Mahatma Gandhi's favorite hymn
from his own Hindu tradition.



Gandhi and Kasturba, 1915.

Stories of Love in Action

by Eknath Easwaran

Gandhi and Kasturbai

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi married a very beautiful girl, Kasturbai. They had many clashes in the early days, some of which were really tragic. But later on, Gandhi would say that it was from Kasturbai that he learned nonviolence, through her patience, her forgiveness, her generosity, and her high ideals.

When he came back from his student years in London, Gandhi explained, fully cultured and acutely conscious of his “legitimate rights,” the first person he tried to impress with all this status was his wife. Kasturbai Gandhi, however, was a woman with a will of her own. Gandhi began to demand his rights the minute he came home; and Kasturbai, naturally, started to do the same – at the same time, in the same house. Often their disagreements became so fierce that Kasturbai was reduced to tears, which only irritated Gandhi more. Once, exasperated, he shouted at her: “I will not stand this nonsense in my house!”

“Then keep your house to yourself,” Kasturbai pleaded, “and let me go!” In a rage Gandhi grabbed her by the arm and dragged her weeping to the gate. “Have you no sense of shame?” she cried through her tears. “Where can I go? I have no family here to take me in. Because I am your wife, do you think I have to put up with your abuse? For heaven’s sake behave yourself and shut the gate. Let’s not be caught making such a scene!”

It is Gandhi himself who relates the incident. At last it occurred to him that rather than exercise his “rights,” he could

fulfill his responsibilities. With Gandhi, to know was to feel, to feel was to act, to act was to live. Immediately, instead of forcing Kasturbai's obedience to his newfound beliefs and values, he began to try to win her over by his own example. It was a long, painful process, and often Gandhi had to ignore his cherished likes and dislikes to see things from her point of view rather than his own.

But gradually he began to see that there was no friction between them except what he had imposed, and that Kasturbai had always been trying to win him over by love. It was one of the most radical discoveries he was to make in a lifetime of experimentation: in order to transform others, you first have to transform yourself.

Kasturbai had been raised in a protected home and had never been exposed to any kind of ill treatment, but when Gandhiji went to prison in South Africa, she considered it an expression of her great love to go to prison with him, and to lead a number of other women to prison as well.

Later, when they had come back to India, while the British government imprisoned Gandhi many times and even sent Mrs. Gandhi and their sons to prison, their romance flourished. Every time they were thrown into prison they would come back more deeply in love. Every time their property was confiscated they would come back richer.

It is when two people face opposition together courageously, prepared to lay down their lives for each other, that love flames up. I saw Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturbai Gandhi in their seventies, and to me they were so luminously in love that compared to them, Romeo and Juliet were just a school flirtation. Two people with this kind of love for each other support the entire community with their shining example. 🌸



Kasturba spinning, probably 1940.

Gandhi and General Smuts

One of the first developments in Gandhi's South African campaign brought him straight to the head of the Transvaal government, General Jan Smuts. Gandhi had already developed the essentials of his later style, and it is easy to picture him sitting before this able Boer soldier and informing him quietly: "I've come to tell you that I am going to fight against your government."

Smuts must have thought he was hearing things. "You mean you have come here to tell me that?" he laughs. "Is there anything more you want to say?"

"Yes," says Gandhi. "I am going to win."

Smuts is astonished. "Well," he says at last, "and how are you going to do that?"

Gandhi smiles. "With your help."

Many years later Smuts admitted – not without humor – that this is exactly what Gandhi did. By his courage, by his determination, by his refusal to take unfair advantage, but especially by his endless capacity to "stick it out" without yielding and without retaliation, Gandhi managed at last to win the general's respect and friendship, and in 1914 the laws most offensive to the Indians were repealed and basic civil rights voted into law.

Before he left South Africa in 1914, Gandhi presented General Smuts with a pair of sandals that he had made himself. In 1939, Smuts wrote an essay for a commemorative work compiled for Gandhi's 70th birthday and returned the sandals with the following message: "I have worn these sandals for many a summer, even though I may feel that I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man." 🌸

Gandhi deals with press allegations

In 1930, British officials decided to call a Round Table Conference in London to discuss the issue of India's future. Gandhi, in prison at the time, was released so that he could make the voyage as one of India's representatives.

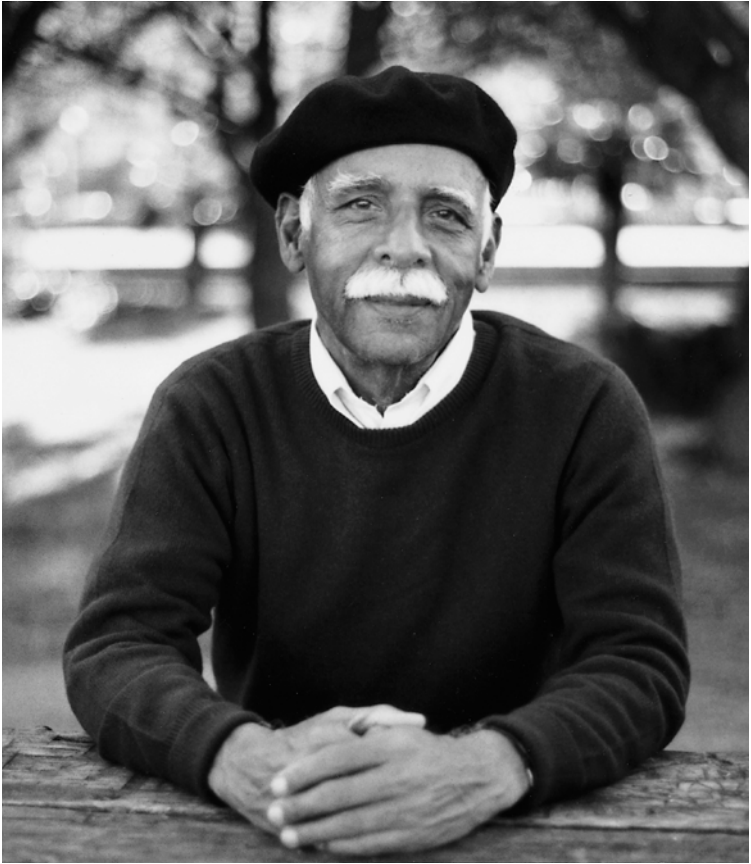
As soon as his ship docked in Marseilles, France, Gandhi was greeted enthusiastically by crowds of Europeans. But he continued to be misrepresented in the press, both conservative and liberal.

One correspondent for the London *Daily Mail* made all kinds of allegations, saying that Gandhi had said certain things but without bothering to print even one direct quotation to substantiate the claim.

On the train from Marseilles, when Gandhi discovered this reporter was on board, he sought the man out, sat down beside him, and asked him patiently why he had made such damaging statements when they had no basis in fact. Could he refer to even one line that Gandhi had actually said? When the man admitted he could not, Gandhi explained in careful detail why he had come and what he was hoping to accomplish in London.

Then he added, "I have a sense of humor which saves me from annoyance over these things. If I were lacking in it, I should have gone mad by now. For instance, I should go mad over this article of yours. It is up to me to say that you have packed this article with things which are far from truth, and I should have nothing to do with you. But I don't do so, and would continue to give you an interview as often as you came."

Gandhi's patience did much more to further his cause than an angry outburst could have done. 🌸



Easwaran, 1980s.

Nonviolence in Practice

by Eknath Easwaran

Nonviolence, Gandhi states, “is the final flower of Truth.” Because love draws a deeper response out of everybody, love is not just the most idealistic basis for action but also the most practical. Every person – every creature, I would say – has an innate response to loving action. “Love is a rare herb that makes a friend even of a sworn enemy,” Gandhi says. It is a revelation that he proved in the crucible of his own life over and over. Attacked so many times, vilified, thrown into prison again and again, betrayed, his life threatened and eventually even taken – Gandhi bore all these without resentment, without once stooping to retaliation.

It is not that injustice did not move Gandhi to anger; not at all. But instead of exploding in anger, he had learned to sink into the very depths of consciousness in meditation, where we are one and resentment is impossible.

Conserving creative power

In this supreme descent every vital organ exults; the whole nervous system is renewed. These are not miracles of mystical awareness; they are miracles of health, which I would say everyone can learn. It is because he had learned the supreme miracle of transforming anger that this little man was able to work for others fifteen hours every day without ever getting tired or tense, never unkind, never unloving, from his early years well into his seventies.

Conversely, even when anger is warranted, every explosion of anger is at the expense of your own vital organs. A flood

tide of energy is wasted. This is the lesson that Gandhi learned early on and expressed in that famous statement: “I have learnt through bitter experience the one supreme lesson to conserve my anger, and as heat conserved is transmuted into energy, even so our anger controlled can be transmuted into a power that can move the world.”

When Gandhi talks about transmuting energy and power that can move the world, it is not mere simile. He means just what he says. The innumerable occasions we have every day to get angry, to say and do unkind things, are opportunities for conserving a tremendous and potentially creative power.

A cosmic force

In mystical language, a river of divine love is flowing in the depths of every one of us. When you and I return kindness for unkindness, that cosmic river carries our act of love into the depths of the unkind person’s consciousness. Only a fraction of this river’s effect may be visible, yet it goes on – silently, and over a long period. When Gandhi insists that only one man or woman, acting constantly out of such love, can change the course of the whole world, he is talking about the power of this cosmic force. This is what he named satyagraha, the power of love in action.

When we return kindness for unkindness, we are stirring the unkind person’s consciousness. When we do good to those who would harm us, as Jesus pleads with us to do, not only are we protecting our own mind from anger, we are educating the perpetrators of harm too – in a manner of which they may not even be aware. This is the basis of Gandhi’s long-drawn-out campaign to get British rulers to leave India: a sincere appeal to their sense of decency, “until they tire of exploiting us.” This

grand faith in the nobility of human nature – which he demonstrated tirelessly, day in and day out, over a period of some fifty years – is what distinguishes Gandhi from any other world leader I know.

Satyagraha in America

Perhaps no man or woman in the West has enacted satyagraha so visibly as Martin Luther King, Jr, whom I had the privilege of hearing speak at the University of Minnesota.

As a young man King listened to a sermon by the president of Howard University, recently returned from a trip to India. He spoke of Mahatma Gandhi. “His message was so profound and electrifying,” King writes, “that I went out and bought half a dozen books on Gandhi’s life. I became deeply fascinated by his campaigns of nonviolent resistance.”

King did his research for a doctoral degree on Gandhi’s methods. “As I delved deeper,” he tells us,

My skepticism concerning the power of love diminished, and I came to see for the first time its potency in the area of social reform. Gandhi is probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. I came to feel this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.

King brought satyagraha into service for black Americans with a variety of moves: lunch counter sit-ins, marches, strikes against bus lines, and legal suits to desegregate schools, all backed up by a thorough program as to its nonviolent purposes. The turning point came during the drawn-out strike (ultimately successful and never violent) against the municipal

bus system of Montgomery, Alabama. “Living through the actual experience of the Montgomery protest,” King wrote, “nonviolence became more than a method; it became for me a commitment to a way of life.”

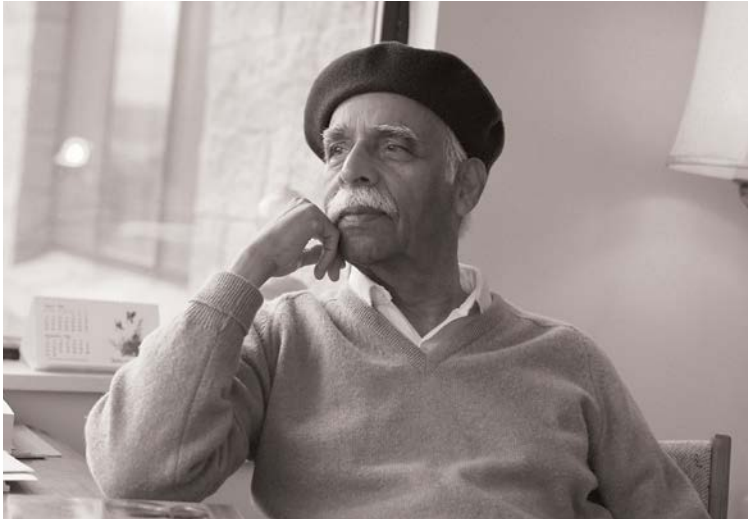
Throughout the struggle for basic services and liberties, Martin Luther King never lost sight of what it was his people were really hoping to accomplish:

True pacifism is a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love – in the faith that it is better to be the recipient of violence than the inflicter of it, since inflicting violence only multiplies bitterness in the world. Receiving violence when struggling for a just cause may develop a sense of shame in the inflicter, and thereby bring about a change of heart.

Along the way of life someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate.

This gets at the very kernel of Gandhi’s faith. “I hold myself to be incapable of hating any being on earth,” he declared. “By a long course of prayerful discipline, I have ceased for over forty years to hate anybody. I know this is a big claim. Nevertheless I make it in all humility.”

The critical phrase is “a long course of prayerful discipline.” Gandhi is telling us plainly that any individual undergoing the same kind of disciplines can attain this saintly stature. This is the goal we should aim at always. In it the human personality becomes a lighthouse, lighting the course of every passing ship in the treacherous currents of turbulent times.

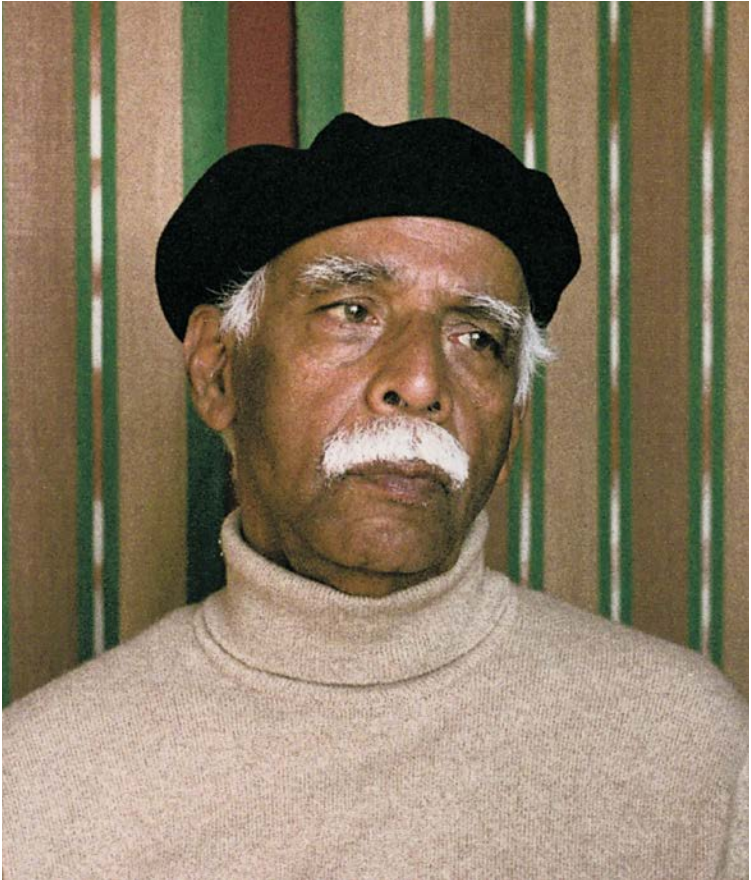


Easwaran in his office, 1980s.

Teach children to love everybody

One of the most terrible arguments against war is that when we train young men and women to fight and kill, we are teaching them not only to combat the official enemies of the nation but anybody they come in conflict with: their friends, their partner, even their parents or children. Under duress, and especially under the stress of sustained frustration, a person's will breaks down and all that combative conditioning is released. Tragically, even one's nearest and dearest are often the victims. You cannot train a person to kill without weakening the bonds of his basic humanity.

Encouraging children to hate even one person can erode their relationships throughout life. If they are going to be kind, they must practice being kind to everybody; if they are to learn love, they must practice loving everybody.



Easwaran, 1980s.

This can have far-reaching effects. I am proud of the fact that, by and large, the people of India have forgotten the exploitation they were subjected to. The young people of India today have not been bequeathed a legacy of resentment. That is one of Gandhi's greatest contributions. He showed that when conflict is resolved through love in action, both sides emerge stronger and closer; upcoming generations can grow up free from the onerous burden of hate and fear.

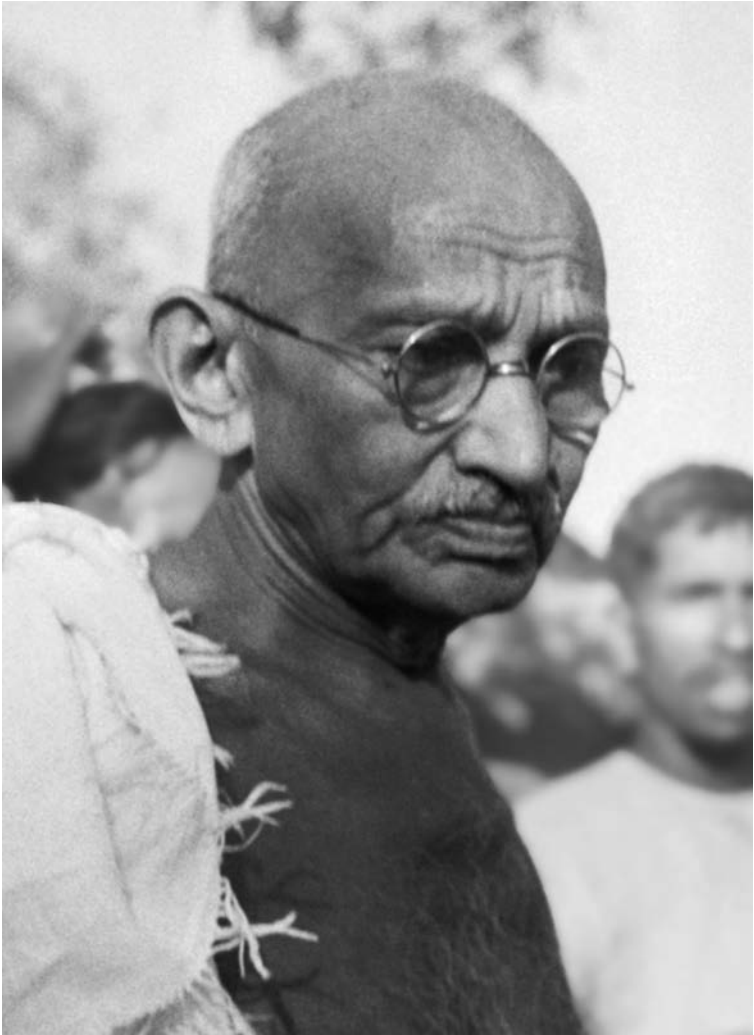
If we can start teaching our children that it is every nation's responsibility to help bring lasting peace to those who are at war, I am convinced that by the time they reach the age of discretion, they will be in a position to build a vastly safer world.

The ultimate triumph

The world can be very harsh. We have to learn to deal with unfavorable circumstances, unmerited condemnation, labor that goes unappreciated. Because Gandhi puts his faith in the essential law of unity, he would say that this occasional harsh reality of life gives us the opportunity to learn never to be shaken by attack, never to retaliate, but to continue actively loving and respecting those very people who attack us.

This is Gandhi's winning strategy. What he has in mind is something far more than the outcome of individual battles for good causes, no matter how meritorious. He has in mind the ultimate triumph of the forces of good in our lives.

"There comes a time," he said prophetically, "when an individual becomes irresistible, and his action becomes all-pervasive in its effect. This comes when he reduces himself to zero." It is time, therefore, to talk about what each of us can do right now to make our actions more and more effective. 🌸



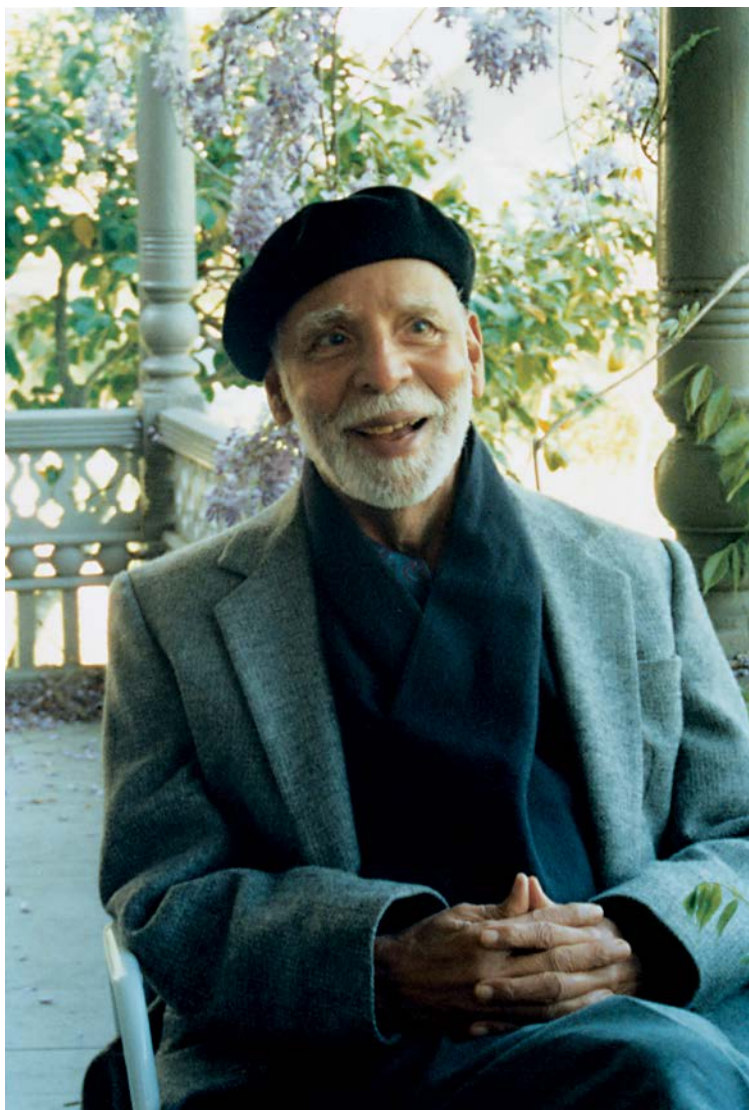
Bihar, 1947.

In the Midst of Darkness

Mahatma Gandhi

I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves, and re-creates. That informing power or spirit is God. And since nothing else that I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is.

And is this power benevolent or malevolent? I see it as purely benevolent. For I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the Supreme Good.



Easwaran, 1990s.

Transforming Anger in Our Own Lives

by Eknath Easwaran

It takes time to get love going. Most of us are conditioned to get angry at the slightest provocation, and a lot of plain old patience is needed at the outset. Gandhi repeated over and over that none of this came easily to him. When he was asked, “Is this the best way to become nonviolent?” he replied, “No, it is the only way.”

Every day we have to renew our commitment: to try to regulate our thinking process so that whatever is done to us, we will treat people with love and respect.

Gandhiji would say that although on the surface of consciousness a person may behave unkindly towards us, there are subterranean selfless forces in every heart. These forces have only to be reached. The other person may still turn away every time we make a conciliatory gesture, but underneath, subtle work is going on.

Returning kindness for unkindness is not simply being kind to that particular person. We are being kinder to ourselves, because we are undoing a compulsion, taking one more step towards being free.

The deconditioning process is straightforward enough: when anger comes up, don't act on it. When it tries to tell you what to do, say no. This calls for a great deal of inner toughness, a great deal of “true grit,” but there are a number of ways in which you can deal with rising anger.

Repeat the mantram

The simplest thing to do when you are caught by anger is to go for a long, fast walk repeating the mantram. A mantram is a spiritual formula which seekers from all traditions have found can transform what is negative in the personality into what is positive: anger into compassion, ill will into good will, hatred into love. By calming the mind, it gradually integrates divided and opposing thoughts at a deeper and deeper level of consciousness.

Rama, Gandhi's mantram, is a formula for abiding joy. Gandhi used to walk for miles every day repeating it to himself until the rhythm of the mantram and his footsteps began to stabilize the rhythm of his breathing, which is closely connected with the rhythm of the mind. When fear or anger threatened him, clinging to *Rama* used the power of these emotions to drive this formula for joy deep into Gandhi's mind. Over the years, as the mantram penetrated below his deepest doubts and fears, he became established in joy. It was a habit of mind which no surface turbulence could shake, no threat of violence destroy.

"The mantram becomes one's staff of life," he wrote, "and carries one through every ordeal."

This may sound simplistic, but try it. Go for a fast walk repeating *Rama, Rama, Rama* or *Jesus, Jesus, Jesus* in your mind, and you will find that the relationship between the rhythm of your breathing, the rhythm of your footsteps, and the rhythm of the mantram has a deep influence on your consciousness.

Just hold on

Recently a friend of mine told me she had discovered that when she was upset, if she could just hold on to the mantram for twenty minutes while she walked, it could transform any negative emotion. “When I realized that,” she said, “I realized that any transformation is possible.”

Fear and anger and greed agitate the mind; they churn the mind up like a stormy sea. When your mind is heaving up and down, it may be difficult to hold on to the mantram if your mantram is long. For emergencies like this, I would recommend using a shortened form of the mantram, the kernel of the mantram: *Rama* if your mantram is *Hare Rama Hare Rama*; *Jesus* if you use some form of the Jesus Prayer such as *Lord Jesus Christ* or *Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me*. This kernel of the mantram is the most potent word in the holy name; it is short and simple. No matter how agitated your mind is, you can hang on to it while it does its work of harnessing and transforming the power that was rampaging in you.

Do not wait until you have developed a full-blown rage, when judgment is clouded and the mind is heaving up and down – it will be very difficult to hang on to the mantram then, or even to remember it. Try to remember the mantram as soon as you feel anger beginning to rise, when the first storm warnings are out. Then, when your mind has quietened down, you will remember the good things that person has done for you and forget the bad things on which you have been dwelling.

If we can take advantage of all the opportunities for repeating the mantram – while waiting, while walking, while falling asleep at night – the mantram can help keep the mind calm and secure.



Taking a mantram walk at Ramagiri Ashram.

Slow down the thinking process

Destructive thoughts like fear and anger tend to be fast. If we could see the mind when it is caught in such thoughts, we would see thoughts tumbling over each other so fast that we don't know what we are thinking. That is why anger has such a dramatic effect on the body. The more we slow down the thinking process, the more control we have over our lives. That is simply the dynamics of the mind.

When we are afraid or angry or driven by a strong urge for our own personal satisfaction at the expense of those around us, the mantram can transform these strong emotions into a source of tremendous positive power and help us refrain from acting or speaking impulsively.

Throw yourself into selfless work

When Mahatma Gandhi's secretary, Mahadev Desai, was asked where Gandhi got all his power, Desai replied in effect, "He has forged all human passions – fear, anger, lust, greed – into one selfless, irresistible passion for the welfare of all."

When we are angry we can throw ourselves into selfless work that is active and demanding. Don't deal with powerful machinery or sharp knives in the kitchen at times like these, however, because you can lose your concentration and cut yourself.

For a while, your anger may make it difficult for you to concentrate on your work, but as you gradually learn to do so you will find that your anger has been transformed into power to help others and to deepen your meditation.

When I see instances of injustice – which I do every day now in the newspapers and magazines – I get enormously angry. I grieve every time I am reminded that half a billion people, most of them children, go to bed hungry each night. I don't have to see them face to face to feel their suffering; they are right there in my consciousness. But as that anger rises, it is transformed into creative energy for selfless action.

That is why you will never hear me waste a word on judging, haranguing, and complaining. My time and energy go into teaching others how to live by the unity of life, so that these wrongs can be set right.

Meditate on a passage

The mantram calms the mind and prepares it for meditation, which is the key to the transformation of character and consciousness. The principle of meditation is that you become what you meditate on. Gandhi meditated “with an undivided singleness of mind” on the ideal of the Bhagavad Gita: the person who renounces everything for love of serving others, and lives in freedom and joy.

“The last eighteen verses of the Second Chapter of the Gita give in a nutshell the secret of the art of living,” Gandhi wrote. “Those verses have since been inscribed on the tablet of my heart.”

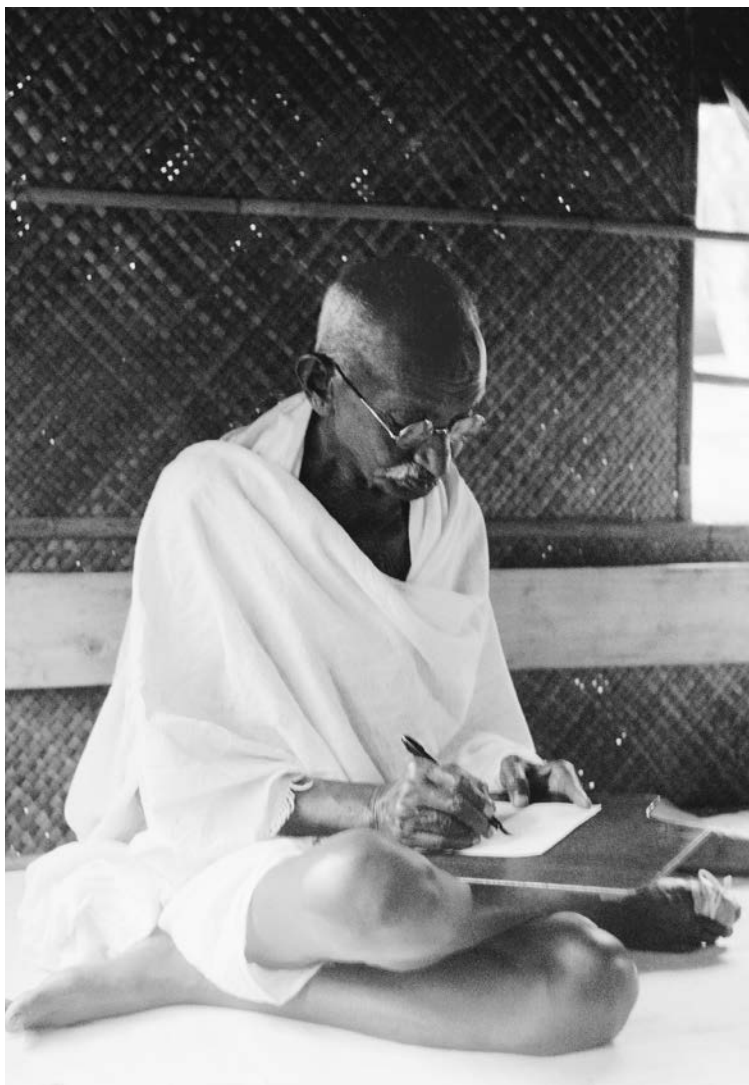
On trains, on board ship, while walking from village to village, while on the floor of the Mother of Parliaments in London – when the hour came Gandhiji would always say, “Please excuse me; it is time for prayer.” That was when he recharged his spiritual batteries.

For instructions in Easwaran’s method of passage meditation and the mantram, and for more passages and mantrams from different spiritual traditions, visit our website at www.bmcm.org/learn and www.bmcm.org/programs.

When you feel the world is on fire and you don't know how to begin to help, Gandhiji says, go to the Gita. For every human need, an answer is there. Yet this answer does not come from outside. When you meditate systematically on passages from the Gita and the other great scriptures of the world, and try to translate them into your daily living, answers come to you out of the depths of your consciousness.

That is why I teach meditation, to bring about this gradual but fundamental change in consciousness. I wait for those moments when somebody tells me, "I don't know how to be kind." I say, "I can teach you – or rather you can teach yourself, through the practice of meditation." Memorize a passage on kindness, on goodness, and then drive it inward every day, deeper and deeper into consciousness. If you persist, you will become that kind, good person on which you meditate; it cannot fail.

The purpose of meditation is to bring lasting peace to the mind. This is not a superficial suppression of hostility, but a profound, joyful, enduring peace of mind. It can pervade our consciousness to such an extent, Gandhi says, that even in our dreams we will not feel animosity toward anyone. Imagine! Most of us find it difficult in our waking moments to have love in our hearts always, but such is the power of these tremendous spiritual disciplines that once they are mastered, even in the unconscious no wave of anger will be able to rise.



During a peace mission to Bengal, 1946.

“My life is my message”

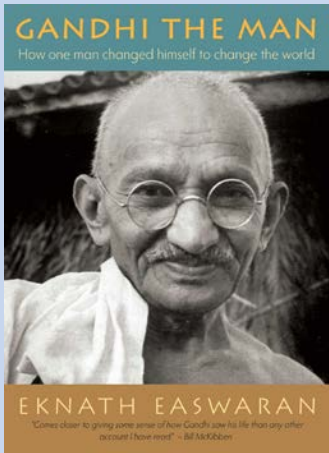
Once, while Gandhi’s train was pulling slowly out of the station, a reporter ran up to him and asked him breathlessly for a message to take back to his people. Gandhi’s reply was a hurried line scrawled on a scrap of paper: “My life is my message.”

It is a message which does not require the vast stage of world politics, but can be put into practice here and now, in the midst of daily life. We don’t have to keep reminding our children to be good, our partner to forgive, our neighbors to be neighborly. All we have to do is practice kindness and compassion in all our relationships.

Every one of us can learn to love like this. Nothing is more important, for it is on this that everything else in life depends. “I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him,” Gandhi proclaims, “and if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent.” It is not just my life or yours that is changed by learning this art of loving; the whole world benefits. The forces for good are strengthened by the measure of our love; the forces of darkness are reduced. 🌸

More from Easwaran on Gandhi

Gandhi the Man: How one man changed himself to change the world



Easwaran's spiritual biography of Mahatma Gandhi gives a moving account of the turning points and choices in Gandhi's life that made him an icon of nonviolence.

This issue of the *Blue Mountain Journal* includes photographs from the latest edition of *Gandhi the Man* that have been licensed from the GandhiServe

Foundation, a charitable public foundation that aims to promote the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi the Man is also available as an audiobook, narrated by Paul Bazely.

Gandhi's Story: Following the Inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi is a series of four audio talks by Easwaran.

You can find all these resources at www.bmcm.org/store.

Self-Surrender

Mahatma Gandhi

Our existence as embodied beings is purely momentary; what are a hundred years in eternity? But if we shatter the chains of egotism, and melt into the ocean of humanity, we share its dignity. To feel that we are something is to set up a barrier between God and ourselves; to cease feeling that we are something is to become one with God. A drop in the ocean partakes of the greatness of its parent, although it is unconscious of it. But it is dried up as soon as it enters upon an existence independent of the ocean. . . .

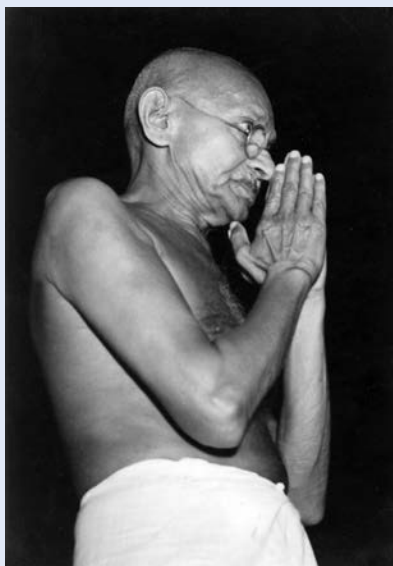
As soon as we become one with the ocean in the shape of God, there is no more rest for us, nor indeed do we need rest any longer. Our very sleep is action. For we sleep with the thought of God in our hearts. This restlessness constitutes true rest. This never-ceasing agitation holds the key to peace ineffable. This supreme state of total surrender is difficult to describe, but not beyond the bounds of human experience. It has been attained by many dedicated souls, and may be attained by ourselves as well.

Love in Action: Nonviolence to the End

by Eknath Easwaran

On January 30, 1948, Gandhi was in Delhi, consuming every waking moment in a last plea for Hindu-Muslim unity. When it was time for the prayer meeting, a dense crowd had gathered to hear him speak. As he walked to the platform, Gandhi held his palms together in front of him in greeting. And as he did so, a young man blinded by hatred placed himself in Gandhi's path, greeted him with the same gesture of his hands, and fired a gun point-blank into Gandhi's heart.

Such is the greatness of this little man's love that as his body fell, nothing but the mantram came to his lips, *Rama, Rama, Rama*. It meant *I forgive you, I love you, I bless you*.



Offering the traditional Hindu greeting, Bombay, 1946.

Solace to innumerable hearts

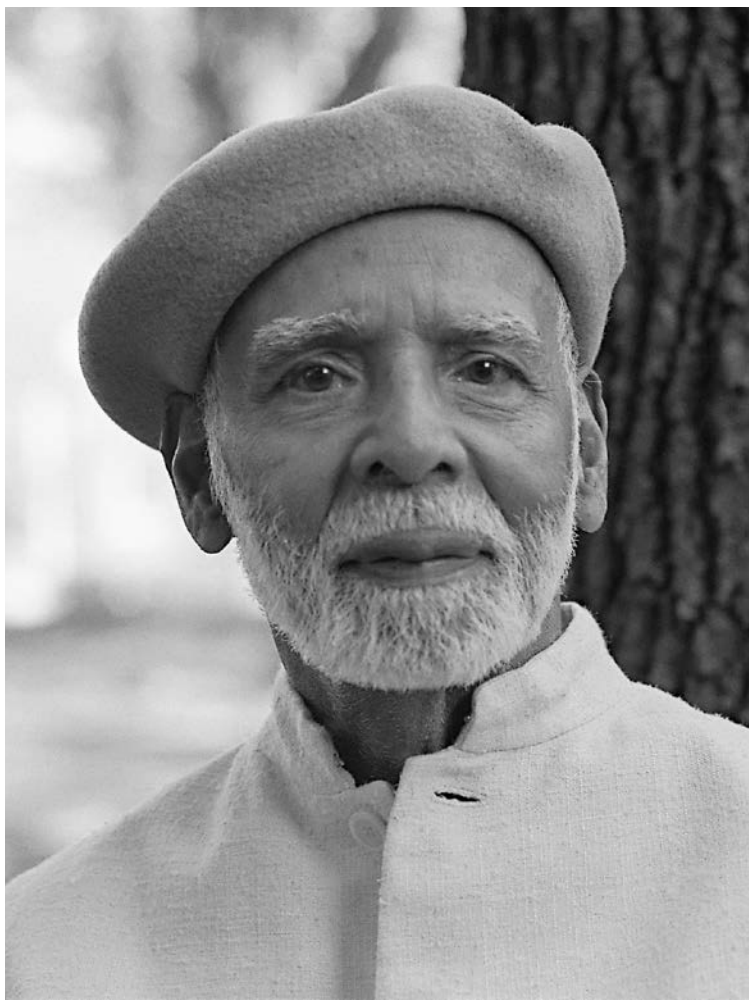
I was seated with friends in a theater in central India when suddenly the house lights went on and the manager stumbled onto the stage. With his voice barely under control he announced the news that already was racing around the world: “Mahatma Gandhi is gone.”

For a long time no one could move. Our grief could not find expression in words. Later, like hundreds of millions of my countrymen, I huddled next to the radio while Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru groped for words to express our loss: “The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere.”

Throughout that night of Gandhi’s assassination I lay awake. It seemed that not only our new republic but the whole world was adrift without a pilot or a polestar.

But in the small hours of the morning it began to dawn on me what Nehru had meant when he said:

“The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong . . . A thousand years later, that light will be seen in this country, and the world will see it, and it will give solace to innumerable hearts.” 🌸



Easwaran, 1990s.

The Glory of Gandhi's Life

by Eknath Easwaran

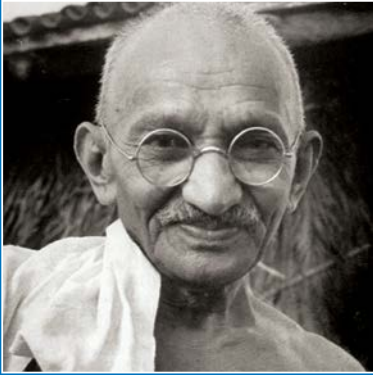
I do not think of Gandhiji as dead – he is more alive, more active, than most of us. When we complain about the lamentable state of the world, he is there to pat us on the back and say, “That is why I want you to grow, to learn to face problems. Life is crying out for you to give everything you can.”

For me, Gandhi's appeal lies in the fact that he was so visibly human, heir to all the frailties that we recognize in ourselves. Yet his life was a triumph over these frailties, an unending transformation of all that is weak in human nature into spiritual power. He has shown that we all have within us a spark of the divine, which can be kindled to a fire of love and service.

This is the glory of Gandhi's life. It says: You don't have to look to governments for help with this. Change your heart. Change your life: that will help your family to change; it will help your town to change. Gradually it will help your country to change. Day by day, step by step, thought by thought, we can grow to share Gandhi's unfailing faith that:

“One who puts love into action is always victorious.”





"I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith."

— *Mahatma Gandhi*



**Blue Mountain
Center of Meditation**

P. O. Box 256
Tomales, CA 94971
www.bmcm.org