**Gandhi's Art: Using Non-Violence to Transform "Evil"**

**Abstract:** The author described the Gandhian practice of *ahimsā* (not harming) as the basis of spiritual practice through selfless action. The author summarizes: "*Ahimsā* is the willingness to treat all beings as oneself." Gandhi's aim was *satyagraha*, "holding to the truth" of the divine force which is immanent in all beings. The author shows how Gandhi applied this truth to an analysis of dictatorial governments. Dictators flourish by identifying enemies as irredeemably evil; *satyagraha*, by contrast, asserts the possibility of change and redemption through the practice of *ahimsā*.

> *Changing the world begins with changing yourself; you have to become the change you want to see in the world.*
>
> -- Mahatma Gandhi

## Introduction

The most Gandhi-like person I know is a very patient and gentle yogi who lives in New Delhi. When I wrote to him to say that I was preparing this article, he replied, "Making an honest and sincere attempt to practice exactly what one preaches is not easy-- but Gandhiji did it to near perfection; at the cost of enormous physical as well as mental hardship, he examined his life in light of his convictions with brutal honesty, and underwent enormous inner suffering whenever he found himself wanting. That can give much greater torture than giving up physical comforts voluntarily, in which he also went to an extreme."

Why was Gandhi so scrupulous? He himself said: "You have to become the change you want to see in the world." Gandhi said that he thought Leo Tolstoy was the embodiment of truth in the age in which they lived: "Tolstoy's greatest contribution to life lies, in my opinion, in his even attempting to reduce to practice his professions without counting the cost."[1] Gandhi said that reading Tolstoy's writing "The Kingdom of God is Within You" changed his life, turning him from a votary of violence to an exponent of non-violence.[2] Like Martin Luther King Jr., whom he inspired in turn,[3] Gandhi always seemed ready to put comfort aside and to put his life on the line, without counting the cost. For example, when a leper came to his door in South Africa, Gandhi fed him, offered him shelter, dressed his wounds, and looked after him.

With his whole life, Gandhi made a generous contribution to the reservoir of human possibilities, on a scale that is rare. The impression he made was of a person skillful in work-- a defining mark of the yogi. He was a person who was "*fakir*-like" or "renunciant-like," with few possessions and with soulful ideals of simplicity. Gandhi was also socially engaged. His presence reminded Thomas

Merton of "a human question mark." Gandhi questioned unjust social structures and assumptions that had become accepted as reality. Gandhi had a critical mind and pragmatic approach; as a lawyer, he knew how to represent the disadvantaged legally, and was a man who held the highest ideals for his standards.

Gandhi's conscience stirred him to challenge injustices, and doing so, he made a great impact on the world, even during his own lifetime. He was one of the few people widely known around the world in a time of fewer and simpler media. His activities and charismatic personality were widely covered in the newsreels and tabloids. His nonviolent approach appealed to many people. Caricatures of Gandhi with his spinning wheel, or with his staff, marching to the ocean to make salt, wearing the simple homespun dhoti of a farmer, were recognizable around the world. His famous smile in black and white photos carried his aura of friendliness to many nations. He seemed to give voice to the ancient wisdom of Asia and the nobler teachings of Western religions, giving hope to people in troubled times.

There are numerous precedents for Gandhi's practice of conscientiously militant non-violence in the pursuit of justice. Non-violent protest can be found in the Vaishnava, Jain, Buddhist, Sikh, and Christian traditions, for example. But Gandhi was the one who most fully worked out for himself and for others the philosophy and practice of non-violence (*ahimsā*). He believed that man's mission in life is to learn the lesson of *ahimsā* for himself.[4]

He centered his life around the deep idea of *Satyagraha*, which was his most valuable legacy. Satyagraha was Gandhi's vision for dynamically living in such a way that one fulfills one's own spiritual potential while changing the conditions that generate suffering into relations of harmonious joy and fulfillment. This is a principle that is capable of being explored, experimented with, and practiced by many generations over many centuries.

*Ahimsā*

Gandhi pointed to the ancient yoga aphorism of Patanjali -- "Enmity vanishes before *ahimsā*"[5] -- as one of many historical examples of the wisdom of non-violence in ancient India. What is this power, the very presence of which dispels discord?

The word "*ahimsā*" literally means "harmlessness." Mark Kurlansky, who wrote *Non-violence: 25 Lessons From the History of a Dangerous Idea*,[6] recently remarked that there are few positive terms in the languages of the world that fully convey the ideas of "non-violence." But I think of examples like 慈 (*ci*) the Chinese term for motherly love, and 仁 *(ren),* good will toward others. There is also the Latin *caritas,* and, in English, "care," "compassion," "gentleness," and "love" might qualify. The Sanskrit words *karunā* (compassion) and *prema* (love) begin to convey the positive aspects of *ahimsā*. Also "innocent"--meaning both

"unharming" and unhurt" – has some correspondences. Gandhi wrote that "non-violence implies love, compassion, forgiveness."[7]

> *In its negative form [ahimsā] means not injuring any living being, whether by body or mind... I may not... bear any ill will [to any wrong-doer]... In its positive form, [ahimsā] means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of [ahimsā] I must love my enemy. I must apply the same rule to the wrong-doer who is my enemy or a stranger to me, as I would to my wrong-doing father or son. This active ahimsā necessarily includes truth and fearlessness... Ahimsā, truly understood, is, in my humble opinion, a panacea for all evils mundane and extra-mundane. We can never overdo it. Just at present, we are not doing it at all."*[8]

In Gandhi's view, *ahimsā* needs to be comprehensive, encompassing routines of daily life, like eating and drinking, an ethos encompassing all our interactions. "Underlying *ahimsā*," he wrote, "is the unity of all life; the error of *one* [person] cannot but affect *all*."[9] While those who think of themselves as realists may feel Gandhi is too idealistic, I think there was a long-term realism in his assessment. After World War II, Gandhi wrote "Those who have their hands dyed deep in blood cannot build a non-violent order for the world."[10] Gandhi was skeptical about a lasting peace resulting from any war. Bombs cannot force well-being, cooperation, and friendliness into existence.

"The result of ahimsā," however, "is always good."[11] Gandhi reminded us that

> *It is not himsā, or destructive energy, that sustains the world, it is ahimsā, the creative energy. I do admit that the destructive energy is there, but it is evanescent, always futile before the creative which is permanent. If the destructive one had the upper hand, all the sacred ties-- love between parents and child, brother and sister, master and disciple, rulers and the ruled, would be snapped. Ahimsā is like the sun, whose worship, as the symbol of God, our rishis immortalized in the Gāyatrī [the Vedic mantra recited in prayer for light and divine inspiration]. As the sun 'keeps watch over man's mortality', going his eternal rounds and dispelling darkness and sin and gloom, even so does ahimsā. Ahimsā inspires you with love than which you cannot think of a better excitement."*[12]

The creative energy which orders the universe at all levels is thus identified in Gandhi's philosophy with *ahimsā*.

Echoing *Rig Veda* X.90, Gandhi noted that "In violence there is nothing invisible. Non-violence, on the other hand, is three-fourths invisible, so that effect is in the inverse ratio to its invisibility."[13] We cannot see all that results from our *ahimsā* as it subtly works. *Ahimsā*'s mysterious potential is something that can only be known by experience. "To realize non-violence means to feel within you its strength, otherwise known as soul-force, in short, to know God."[14] Gandhi

said that the source of his optimism was his "belief in the infinite possibilities of the individual to develop non-violence. The more you develop it in your own being, the more infectious it becomes till it overwhelms your surroundings and by and by might oversweep the world."[15]

The Art of *Ahimsā*

Gandhi said, "I claim to be an artist working with nonviolence."[16] *Ahimsā* really is a performance art, conceived in the visionary conscience, and acted out on the public stage, confronting injustice, and causing the audience to have a change of heart. The practitioners plan a concerted effort to present their demands in a way that will bring the unjust situation to light by calling attention to it on the stage of public opinion. It is a series of creative improvisations in the face of oppression, dramatizing disapproval and calling for change.

*Ahimsā* is an art in another way as well. The Asian martial arts include not just graceful actions, but also *absences* of action. The practitioner steps out of the way of an intended blow, and the aggressor trips, falling of his own weight and awkwardness. Just as Sunzi wrote *The Art of War,* Gandhi worked out the way to an Art of Non-War. The oppressor, by being brutal, indicts himself as a brute in the eyes of all those who have conscience and sympathy.

In bringing about change, one needs a vocabulary to present the vision, to communicate the new philosophy. Part of Gandhi's art was finding the right words to communicate his points. An example is his term *harijan,* "children of God." In his vocabulary were such important verbs as to non-cooperate, to withhold participation, to refrain from violent acts, to engage in hartal, or a strike – all of which connote *not* doing. This is part of a pan-Asian wisdom. Taoist philosophy speaks of *wei wu wei* (為 無 為) – doing and yet not doing – accomplishing without acting. If the attacked person does not respond with a fist, a club, a gun, a knife, or a bomb, the attacker finds no resistance but instead lurches into empty space. The aggressor's momentum carries him too far and sends him sprawling, perhaps revealing to him his own foolishness. Intelligent, skillful "political jujitsu" can accomplish what is otherwise impossible. For example, demonstrators could not use force against the well-armed police during the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, but by acting without weapons and by accepting brutal attacks, willingly suffering at the hands of men unleashing attack dogs and wielding fire hoses, cattle prods, and billyclubs, non-violent protestors won the sympathy of the nation. (Perhaps the Palestinians would have won more of their demands by now if they had used this method.)

In Gandhi's experiences, *ahimsā* and *satya* worked together. He said: "When I look for ahimsā, Truth says, 'Find it out through me.' When I look for Truth, Ahimsā says, 'Find it out through me.'"[17] He also said that "Non-violence and Truth together form, as it were, the right angle of all religions."[18] "That is the typical pattern or conjunction of love and conscience, the practice of holding to

the soul's concerns, following one's inner light. Ahimsā is the willingness to treat all beings as oneself.[19] This is the Vedanta vision of *paramātma* -- that the same spiritual reality is found in all. Someone really viewing the world in such a way would not attack another, but would experience a sense of solidarity. The implications of mutuality in the image of "Indra's net" in Hua-Yan Buddhism; the Christian teaching, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," and in Hinduism the Atman teaching that all share in the same ultimate consciousness—all these point to the oneness of all. This oneness demands *ahimsā*, because when we harm others, we harm a part of our own larger self.

*Satya* and *Satyagraha*

For Gandhi, God is "a self-existent, all-knowing, living Force which inheres in every other force known to the world and which depends on none, and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing living Light."[20] God is truth, *satya*; in the *Rig Veda*, *satya* is a divine force. The term means "truth," ultimate truth," or "the enduring reality."[21] *Satya* is "the ultimate eternal reality." Truth goes beyond the human practice of honesty. In Hindu traditions it is the power of being true, of having an inner resolve, and having a conscience. It is inner spirit, soul force, the deepest reality in each being.[22] Gandhi wrote,

> *Truth ... truthfulness ... and Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle -- that is God... I worship God as Truth only. I have not yet found Him... As long as I have not realized the Absolute Truth, so long must I hold to the relative Truth as I have conceived it... Often in my progress I have had faint glimpses of the Absolute Truth, God, and daily the conviction is growing upon me that He alone is real and all else unreal... The seeker after truth should be humbler than the dust... Only then will he have a glimpse of truth.*[23]

The ultimate goal of life for Gandhi was "to see God face to face, to attain *moksha* [spiritual liberation]."[24] He said that he had felt an innate passion for truth from an early age.[25] How did the truth he sought reveal itself to him? "To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life"[26]—including politics. Such an experiences involve a spiritual openness to life, embracing other lives far beyond one's kin and birth community. Gandhi's hold on Truth thus kept him grounded in the workings of society.

In practice, in dealing with injustice, Gandhi did not see truth as fixed and inflexible. Sometimes truth involves the beauty of compromise, "Truth is hard as adamant and tender as a blossom."[27]

Truth is a power found in us all, especially when we are true to it: "I may be a despicable person," Gandhi said, "but when Truth speaks through me I am

invincible."[28] Gandhi saw God in the souls he met and worked with: "I am endeavouring to see God through service of humanity, for I know that God is neither in heaven, nor down below, but in everyone."[29] Gandhi also wrote that "Meeting with the peasants I was face to face with God, Ahimsā and Truth."[30] He experienced this realization through his love for the people, the simple trusting souls of humanity, and through the spirit in humble seekers. Thus it came from his "unshakable faith in ahimsā," a bond which is direct and experiential. It is not based on doctrine or logic, but on an experience of the sacred.

Gandhi called the practice of holding to Truth "satyagraha" and sometimes "soul-force." It is a commitment to conscientious non-violent striving for what is right. Gandhi said, "If I could popularize the use of *soul-force*, which is but another name for *love-force,* in place of brute force, I know that I could present you with an India that could defy the whole world to do its worst."[31]

Probably because he believed this, Gandhi made a commitment follow ahimsā relentlessly. "I shall discipline myself to express in my life this eternal law of suffering and present it for acceptance to those who care, and if I take part in any other activity, the motive is to show the matchless superiority of that law."[32]

As Gandhi explains in his *Autobiography* and in other writings, satyagraha is a demanding discipline, involving the practice of self-examination and working on oneself, as well as confronting problems in the world. "Satyagraha is a process of self-purification."[33] Also: "Satyagraha is essentially a weapon of the truthful."[34] To practice it, one must live in a conscientious way, that is, in a careful, scrupulous way, "A satyagrahi is pledged to non-violence, and unless people observe it in thought, word and deed, I cannot offer mass satyagraha."[35] To practice this spiritual discipline first, and then to train and discipline a wide spectrum of other people in a deep understanding of its principles so that they develop the commitment to practice it, was a great challenge. In this spiritual strategy, meaningful change doesn't happen by force, accident or luck, but by careful striving.

"Evil" As Changeable

The genius of *satyagraha* is that it is a way of confronting destructive oppressive forces and transforming them. It is a kind of social alchemy. It is a hopeful vision, emphasizing conscience and decency and the ability of people to learn and improve relations, to coerce a change.

Thomas Merton wrote insightfully that "modern tyrannies have all explicitly or implicitly in one way or another emphasized the irreversibility of evil in order to build their power upon it."[36] To gain power by creating the impression of distance, of disjunction, between themselves and evil, is an important strategy in the policies of various dictators. Dictators justify themselves and manipulate others with this distancing. In that stance the evil of the dictator's enemy and the

goodness of his own way are both asserted with a terrible simplicity. It is a powerfully manipulative oversimplification to interpret the situation in this self-serving way.

In the dictator's view, evil is something very literal and permanent; it can never be changed. The offender is irreducibly, irredeemably, concretely of the nature of demonic evil, with no transformation possible. If one is good, one's opposite, one's foe, is evil, and can never change, can never be neutralized or become a friend.

Merton uses the example of Hitler's worldview to illustrate this point. "It is no accident that Hitler believed firmly that sin is unforgivable. This is indeed fundamental to the mentality of Nazism, with its avid search for final solutions and its concern that all uncertainties be eliminated. Hitler's world was built on the central dogma of the irreversibility of evil. It is clear that Hitler was in this one thing a brilliant success: everything he did bears the stamp of complete paranoid finality."[37]

Hitler condemned the "evil" ones-- Jews, Gypsies and other scapegoats -- to degradation and death, as if to cleanse the earth of irredeemable stains. This Manichean idea that the evil of others is absolutely other was denied by Gandhi. Gandhi believed that "If we are all sons of the same God and partake of the same divine essence, we must partake of the sin of every person whether he belongs to us or another race."[38] In this view, we share in humanity. We share a spiritual worth which may be hidden or asleep. It requires skill to awaken it, but humans have a brilliant potential for creative intelligence, and so they are capable of finding a non-violent way to change conditions.

By sharing in *paramātma,* sharing in a common destiny, a common humanity, there is hope of finding agreement and reconciliation. Martin Luther King Jr., also tried to call on this kind of vision of common venture and destiny in his hope for change. He said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.... Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with America's destiny."[39] Gandhi and King underscored the shared destiny and underlying humanity of all and showed that such an understanding can prevail. They offered their lives to show that non-violence can bring a harmonious resolution to conflicts.

The fanatical view that relies on distancing, that recognizes isolated polar opposites as the only possible interpretation of a situation, and that insists on separateness, demonstrates a failure to see the self in others and the others in oneself. It refuses to admit the possibility of change in the universe and denies the underlying sameness and interdependence of existences. The antidotes to this view include Vedanta's *atman* vision, Buddhism's "Indra's web" of mutuality, compassion and interdependence; the Jewish and Muslim teaching that if you

save one life you save the whole world, and the practice of the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."[40] If the other is totally different, one does not share any of his guilt.[41] Taken to a logical extreme, the self-righteous assumption that "I alone am good" obliges one to expunge the evil. The ethnic cleansings and genocides in recent history are sorry reminders of the results of this view.

Thus a worldview which demonizes others and a view which sees underlying sameness have different outcomes. The vision of sharing a deeper self gives one a sense of a common humanity, a basis for sympathy, a hope for change, a possibility of resolving differences, and a potential that destructive people may have a change of heart. By contrast, a denial of equality makes violence possible. Gandhi wrote that "Violence is bred by inequality, non-violence by equality."[42] What Gandhi meant by these words, I think, is that if you see others as sharing your common humanity, and love others as yourself, you will be non-violent. Such a view, lived consistently, makes more likely a possibility of magnanimous outlook toward others. To see only difference between one's own good self and the evil other is a heartless, soulless, simplistic view, rather psychopathic in its rigidity and self-centeredness.

In the uncertainties of life a spiritual attitude brings out a willingness to respond creatively to life's problems, to see them as fluid and changeable. In Christianity there is the teaching to "forgive seventy times seven," an indication of indefinite forgiving and reconciliation.[43] This would seem to be a difficult spiritual path, but it is part of a way of life that is hopeful and open to change. This vision presents a way that is flexible, ongoing, patient, adaptable, resilient, forgiving, and evolving. It is positive, and similar to what Buddha taught:

> *Mind is the forerunner of (all evil) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they [the evil states of mind]. If one speaks or acts with wicked mind, suffering follows one, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draft-ox. Mind is the forerunner of (all good) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they [the good states of mind]. If one speaks or acts with pure mind, affection follows one, even as one's shadow that never leaves. "He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me,'" in those who harbour such thoughts, hatred is not appeased. "He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me," in those who do not harbour such thoughts, hatred is appeased. Hate is not overcome by hate; by Love (Metta) alone is hate appeased. This is an eternal law. The others know not that in this quarrel we perish; those of them who realise it, have their quarrels calmed thereby.*[44]

Using a metaphor of a cloth woven of interrelationships, Merton, in writing about the theme of positive quarrel-calming transformations, reminds us that the fabric of society is never finished. It is always in the process of being woven. It consists of constantly changing, continually emerging relationships. "Non-violence takes account precisely of this dynamic and non-final state of all

relationships among men, for non-violence seeks to change relationships that are evil into others that are good, or at least less bad."[45] This is the genius of non-violence. Because it pays attention to the process, the changeability, the constantly emerging new possibilities, it does not despair and attempt destruction, but is full of hope.

Non-violence, when practiced, brings out a kind of courage different from the risk-taking bravery in violence. In the use of force to solve problems, one over-simplifies the situation by presupposing that the evil that needs to be overcome is categorically definite and static, and completely irreversible. If evil is changeless and can never be transformed, there is only one answer – to get rid of the evildoer through violence. Merton also points out that in the extremely defensive view of evil as changeless, even to meet with or negotiate with the enemy is seen as a misstep that strays from the path, a failure.

In that narrow view of evil there is no alternative, no room for other possibilities. Merton wrote:

> *Failure to eliminate evil is itself a defeat. Anything that even remotely risks such defeat is in itself [seen as] capitulation to evil. The irreversibility of evil then reaches out to contaminate even the most tolerant thought of the hesitant crusader who, momentarily, doubts the total evil of the enemy he is about to eliminate. Such tolerance is already complicity and guilt, and must be eliminated in its turn.*[46]

In this rigidly defensive way of looking at things, any compassion or feeling of possibility of sharing sameness is strictly forbidden, and when detected, becomes part of the irreversible evil. Such permanent warlike attitudes do not allow for any flexibility. Such fanatical certainty cannot coexist with a soul-searching, problem-solving conscience. Merton points out that, for those who are rigidly defensive,

> *Fortitude … equals fanaticism. It grows with unreason. Reasoning itself is by its very nature tinged with betrayal. Conscience does indeed make cowards. It makes Judases. Conscience must be eliminated. This is the familiar mental machinery of tyrannical oppression. By reducing necessities to simple and irreversible forms it simplifies existence, eliminating questions that tend to embarrass minds and slacken the 'Progress' of the relentless and intolerant apparatus.*[47]

Thus one's own imperfections and humility, the possibility of regret and repentance, the reality of human guilt can not enter into the living weaving of society, where change is possible.

Finding Freedom from the Bonds of Vengeance

Gandhi saw that within the situation of conflicting views there a secret and hidden potential for finding inner freedom. The non-violent vision fosters some openness of possibilities -- some space for change, some wiggle-room for freedom. Gandhi saw that violent rebellions with confrontations that end up punishing and destroying the oppressor inevitably generate further cycles of revenge, violence, and oppression. For Gandhi a true solution must let both oppressor and oppressed come away satisfied. Instead of staying locked in cycles of mechanical repetition and reprisal, there has to be liberation from the automatic response of revenge-seeking, which can escalate and form an endless chain.[48] It is a vision which allows breaking the habit, stopping the addiction to violence.

Spiritual freedom is found in the non-violent way which is able, after the confrontations, to liberate both the oppressed and the oppressor. The oppressed must not be bound in exploitation, hatred, and bitterness, or continued injustice. The oppressed can grow in magnanimity and feel sorry for his oppressor. Without that sense of pity, both oppressed and oppressor will remain unaware of the reality of their relationship -- which involves a shared spiritual bond among imperfect humans. As Merton says, the only way to really "overcome" one's enemy is by helping him out of his dilemma, helping him turn into something other than an enemy. Mutual liberation from an intolerable situation is the goal.

Sympathy for others' ignorance allows one to "love one's enemy." Someone in a great hurry, and with rigid animosity and no uncertainty, will see no point in "turning the other cheek," or "killing someone with kindness." Loving one's enemy requires a larger vision, a wisdom gained from enough time to see cycles and enough space to exercise freedom. Violence arises from revenge and fear, and from following a command given by the leader of an attack_. Non-violence involves finding a way, using higher human powers, applying spiritual intelligence, employing wisdom. A creative space, the freedom of an unstuck imagination, and a liberated mentality not bound to vicious circles, make change possible.

Gandhi was a yogi, and also a very practical man. He embodied a combination of high ideals and skilful acts of practicality. He was grounded. He traveled around India for years to acquaint himself with villagers' problems. He needed a realistic grasp of on-the-ground troubles to go with his ideals, to experiment and develop his emerging vision of how people could improve their lives and agitate non-violently for independence.

Gandhi took seriously the questions which serious people raised. "What kind of police force would a non-violent state have?"[49] "Is sabotage sometimes necessary?"[50] Gandhi answered that terrorism results in demoralization. The end does not justify the means, despite what violent people always have to tell themselves. Gandhi affirmed that the "belief that there is no connection between the means and the end is a great mistake. We reap exactly as we sow."[51] Hence violent sabotage would not bring the desired result.

Gandhi's life makes an impression of soulfulness, of humility. "If I had no sense of humor, I should long ago have committed suicide,"[52] he said. He humorously called himself a "quack" because he tried various unorthodox remedies. Gandhi was comically and disarmingly self-critical: "I have been known as a crank, faddist, madman. Evidently the reputation is well deserved. For wherever I go, I draw to myself cranks, faddists and madmen."[53] He knew the temptations and demons humans are prone to struggle with. In his youth he tried smoking and eating meat, and in his teens even contemplated suicide (which today we might say showed the Kurt Cobain in him trying to get out). Gandhi saw the challenges and the worth and the satisfactions of life in the processes of striving, in practicing, trying one's best. He would agree with the Zen master who said: "Enlightenment is falling down six times, getting up seven."

Gandhi said, "Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort *is* full victory."[54] This is a refreshing value; it has a fragrance of kindness and forgiveness -- of being gentle with oneself as well as with others. "No matter how insignificant the thing you have to do, do it as well as you can, give it as much of your care and attention as you would give to the thing you regard as most important. For it will be by those small things that you shall be judged."[55] It was the human condition that Gandhi was working with -- in his own soul's struggles and in his struggles with the social issues of his day -- and he does not put himself on a pedestal above ordinary people. "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." [56]

Were Gandhi's standards too high? Was his idealism too extreme? If his standards had not been as high as they were, would he and others have sought to achieve such high goals? Without the high ideals, would he have felt justified and worthy in his demands for justice? I believe Gandhi would not have accomplished what he did accomplish, and would not have inspired Martin Luther King, Jr., and others, without that extra push for the ideal in character, and without such self-sacrifice. The spirit of non-violence does not come without a willingness to pay the price. "For non-violence to permeate us we should have a living faith in God. Non-violence comes to us through doing good continually without the slightest expectation of return. It simply spends itself and it is its own reward, and done in that spirit it is done not merely for friends but certainly for adversaries. That is the indispensable lesson of non-violence."[57]

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*NOTES*

[1]*The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (in 3 volumes), ed. Raghavan Iyer, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, vol. I, pp. 115-116. Hereafter this work will be cited as MPW.

[2]Tolstoy, meanwhile, was influenced by translations accounts of the life of the Buddha, while Gandhi's life and writings were, in turn, an inspiration to Martin Luther King Jr. This freely moving quality of inspiration is

interesting in itself. It suggests that an experience or idea is not fixed in one region of earth or one religious tradition, but is contagious and also unpredictable.

[3]Among the materials in the Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Collection, there is a frayed strip of worn paper which looks as if King had carried it in his wallet for years. On it the words "Gandhi speaks for us" were written in King's own hand. King came to know of Gandhi's teachings and activities because a small group of African-Americans associated with the YMCA, including Mordecai Johnson and Howard Thurman, went to India in 1936, and later spoke about Gandhi while King was a student at Crozier Theological Seminary. It was there that he got the inspiration for his future mission. See "My Pilgrimage to Non-Violence" The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/ papers/vol4/580901-002-My_Pilgrimage_to_Nonviolence.htm

[4]Paraphrase from MPW vol. II, pp. 23-25.

[5]A.K. Coomaraswamy wrote that the mystical basis for Gandhi's teachings about freedom in truth as the goal -- and of Satyagraha as the means to attain that goal -- is found in the *Maitri Upanishad*: "When the mind has been immolated in its own source for love of truth, then the false controls of actions done when it was deluded by sensibilia likewise will pass away." Yoga seeks freedom beyond conditioning, beyond the bonds of desire and hate.

[6]Mark Kurlansky, *Non-violence: 25 lessons from the history of a Dangerous Idea,* New York: Modern Library, 2006.

[7]MPW vol. II p. 217.

[8]MPW vol. II p. 212-213-214. Gandhi also thought of the name of God as a panacea; to sing and say "Rama" for example, can inspire strength and stamina, patience and kindness toward others.

[9]Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth,* New York: Dover Publications, 1983, p. 312. Hereafter cited as *Autobiography.*

[10]MPW vol. II p. 499. In the tradition of Judaism symbolically King David was not allowed to build the temple because of his shedding of blood, but his son Solomon, innocent of bloodshed, was able to build it.

[11]MPW vol. II p. 215

[12]MPW vol. II p. 216

[13]MPW vol. II p. 397.

[14]MPW vol. II p. 413.

[15]Thomas Merton, *Gandhi on Non-violence: Selected texts from Mohandas K. Gandhi's Non-Violence in Peace and War,* New York: New Directions, 1965, p. 26. Hereafter cited as Merton.

[16]MPW vol. II p. 408. See Howard Gardner, *Creating Minds: An Anatomy of Creativity Seen Through the Lives of Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham and Gandhi,* New York: Basic Books, 1994. In this book Gardner explores creative patterns in the lives of artists, thinkers, composers, and sees Gandhi as a creative performer in the public arena. Gandhi needed to embody a way recognizable to society and yet different enough to cause change. "Alone among these seven creators, Gandhi sought to speak directly to other human beings, not as members of a group or domain but rather by dint of their humanness. He sought to create a story, a conception, a way of being that could make sense to every other individual irrespective of his or her particular history of craft. Difficult as it is to change a domain, it is far more challenging to create a new human narrative and to render it convincingly to other individuals. For these reasons Gandhi's achievement is especially notable, though it may take centuries-- it did for Christ and Buddha-- to determine whether his religious and political breakthrough can take hold in a world so different than that inhabited by his predecessors." p. 356.

[17]MPW vol. II p. 216.

[18]MPW vol. II p. 11-12.

[19]MPW vol. II p. 11. Also see p. 553.

[20]Merton, p. 49.

[21]For example, RV X.85.1 "By Truth is the Earth supported." Cosmic order and Satya are often mentioned together in many verses of the Rig Veda, because Satya is true action arising from the cosmic order. Examples of places in the Rig Veda where Satya is mentioned: I.164.37; I.145.5; VII.76.4; I.152.1-3; I.20.4; I.105.12; VI.49.6.

[22]MPW vol. II 523.

[23]*Autobiography*, p. ix.

[24]*Autobiography*, p. vii.

[25]*Autobiography,* p. 9. Gandhi saw "God" as having higher standards than man. "Perfection is the attribute of the Almighty, and yet what a great democrat He is! What an amount of wrong and humbug He suffers on our part. He even suffers insignificant creatures of His to question His very existence, though He is in every atom about us, around us and within us." *Gandhi*. Bombay: Impact India Foundation, UN Development Program, nd., p. 11. Hereafter cited as G(IIF).

[26]G(IIF) p.55

[27]*Autobiography,* p.129.

[28]G(IIF) p. 23.

[29]G(IIF) p. 69.

[30]*Autobiography*, p. 370.

[31]*Autobiography,* p. 405; emphases added.

[32]*Autobiography,* p. 405.

[31]*Autobiography*, p. 415.

[34]*Autobiography*, p. 422.

[35]*Autobiography*, p. 422.

[36]Merton, p. 11.

[37]Merton, p. 11.

[38]G(IIF) p. 196.

[39]"Letter from Birmingham Jail" http://www.almaz.com/nobel/peace/MLK-jail.html Civil rights hero Fanny Lou Hamer famously said "Nobody's free until everybody's free."

[40]Without inspiring ideas of love and decency, transcendence or connectedness of some sort, if nothing is sacred, there is no reason not to scapegoat the outsider, and harm the weak, the ones deemed worthless.

Hate crimes, taking pleasure in the misfortunes of others, result from a sense that some do not share a common spiritual core with all others. In Islam there is the teaching "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself." *an-Nawawi's Forty Hadith: an anthology of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad Nawawi,* Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, 1997, p. 56.

[41]Merton cites another example from history of a contrasting view: "In St. Thomas Aquinas, we find a totally different view of evil. Evil is not only reversible but it is the proper motive of that mercy by which it is overcome and changed into good. Replying to the objection that moral evil is not the motive for mercy since the evil of sin deserves indignation and punishment rather than mercy and forgiveness, St. Thomas said that, on the contrary, sin itself is already a punishment 'and in this respect we feel sorrow and compassion for sinners.' In order to do this we have to be able to experience their sin as if it were our own. But those who 'consider themselves happy and whose sense of power depends on the idea that they are beyond suffering any evil are not able to have mercy on others' by experiencing the evil of others as their own." Merton, pp. 12-13.

[42]Merton, p. 13

[43]In practice only certain Christian communities, among them the Amish, are scrupulous in living up to this spirit of forgiveness. Others compromise with the conventions of state violence. Communities like the Amish are living examples of principles of transcending harm and promoting healing through the spiritual understanding in forgiveness. Others locate themselves on the spectrum of violence, from seeking violent revenge to acquiescence to their nation's violent acts committed in their name. It is as if the modern age of reason, realism and materialism can accept only violence and threats of violence as realistic, and as if all alternatives are unrealistic, not marketable, commercially unviable.

[44]Verses 1-3 *Dhammapada*. http://www.serve.com/cmtan/Dhammapada/pairs.html

[45]Merton, p. 13.

[46]Merton, p. 13.

[47]Merton, p. 13-14.

[48]Merton puts it like this: "To punish and destroy the oppressor is merely to initiate a new cycle of violence and oppression. The only real liberation is that which liberates both the oppressor and the oppressed at the same time from the same tyrannical automatism of the violent process which contains in itself the curse of irreversibility. The freedom contained in Jesus' teaching of forgiveness is the freedom from vengeance, which encloses both doer and sufferer in the relentless automatism of the action process, which by itself need never come to an end.'" Merton, p. 14.

[49]MPW vol. II p. 436.

[50]MPW vol. II p. 440.

[51]G(IIF) p. 103.

[52]G(IIF) p. 41.

[53]G(IIF) p. 4.

[54]G(IIF) p. 57.

[55]G(IIF) p. 71.

[56]G(IIF) p. 160.

[57]MPW vol. II p. 479.