Volume 17 Issue 20
Originally issued as A3



Global Journal of human-social science: A
Arts & Humanities - Psychology
Volume 17 Issue 3 Version 1.0 Year 2017
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Gandhiji's Views on Spirituality and Sensitivity in Daily Life

By Dr. Varsha Das

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He addressed spirituality largely from four angles. They can be enumerated as his faith in Lord Rama, his profound understanding of the teachings of Lord Krishna as depicted in the *Shrimadbhavadgeeta* of the *Mahabharata*, and his realisation that Truth itself is God. Finally, Spirituality as reflected in one's day to day life, in one's thought, speech and action.

Keywords: first-generation students, community college, gpa, gender, ethnicity/race.

GJHSS-A Classification: FOR Code: 130205p



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Gandhiji's Views on Spirituality and Sensitivity in Daily Life

Dr. Varsha Das

Keywords: *raamanaam, eleven vows, bhagavadgeeta, vaishnavajana.*

I. Introduction

A lot has been written about Gandhiji's life, work and thought in the past hundred years. It is difficult to think of anything new. One can only narrow down the scope, and look at one aspect of his multifaceted life in more detail. Gandhiji's moral courage, his stress on ethics and soul force in every sphere of life emerge from his strongly rooted existence in spirituality.

He addressed spirituality largely from four angles. They can be enumerated as his faith in Lord Rama, his profound understanding of the teachings of Lord Krishna as depicted in the *Shrimadbhavadgeeta* of the *Mahabharata*, and his realisation that Truth itself is God. Finally, Spirituality as reflected in one's day to day life, in one's thought, speech and action. These four aspects are not different from each-other. Rather they are interconnected, and quintessentially they all mean the same. These have been organised with a pragmatic approach in his text on Eleven Vows. Those Eleven Vows are: Truth, Non-Violence, Chastity, Control of Palate, Non-Stealing, Non-Possession, Bread Labour, Swadeshi, Fearlessness, Removal of Untouchability, and Tolerance. There can be other dimensions as well of looking at his views on spirituality, but the four mentioned above seem to be the obvious ones.

Gandhiji used to inspire and guide hundreds and thousands of people through his speeches, articles and letters. The recipients of letters benefited in their understanding of spirituality, which according to him was the way of life. It is almost impossible to enlist or even imagine how many people's lives he had touched, influenced and changed for the better during his lifetime that was spent in three different continents. Those to whom he wrote regularly included his wife, his immediate and extended family members, his associates in the *Satyagrahas* and the *ashrams* in South Africa and India, including their spouses and children, politicians, thinkers, journalists, rich businessman, farmers, downtrodden, visitors from various parts of India and abroad, and so on. I have tried to put together in this paper Gandhiji's views on spirituality asexpressed in his letters to his relatives in Gujarati language.

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II. Ramanaam

It is said that expanse of Gandhiji's life was from *Hey Rama to Hey Rama to Hey Rama*. The first famous incident was at his home when he was a child. He was scared of going in the dark. His governess Rambha had asked him to recite the name of Rama and go to the next room which had no light. He at that young age did not understand why and how that recitation had given him the courage, but he trusted Rambha with all his heart, and he began to believe that recitation of Rama's name helped to overcome fears. Later in life he encouraged many others to do the same to overcome fears, and also explained deeper connotation of Rama.

The second significant incident was in Johannesburg in the year 1908. Gandhiji had uttered *Hey Rama* just before falling unconscious when he was brutally attacked by Mir Alam and his Pathan associates. They were under the impression that Gandhiji by agreeing to register himself was on the side of the British. Mir Alam's heart completely changed when he came to know the truth. He repented and became Gandhiji's bodyguard!

Gandhiji's last words, as he fell on January 30, 1948 when he was shot dead by Nathuram Godse from close range, were also *Hey Rama.*

Gandhiji's trust in Rambha led him to trust Rama. What did he mean by Rama? Was Rama of the famous Indian epic the *Ramayana* Gandhiji's icon? On reading his letters and other writings one realises that Rama was a metaphor for a fearless spiritual way of life, the life that was rooted in and moved among the masses. If we split the root words of the *Ramayana* they are Rama and *Ayana. Ayana* in Sanskrit means to move among the people. When Rama was in exile for fourteen years he went on foot from village to village, meeting people rooted in the soil. He befriended the tribes of Nishada, Bheel and others, and also birds and animals in the forest. Gandhiji's life in India and abroad replicated the same.

'Rama' in its tangible and intangible form was an integral part of Gandhiji's life. In February of 1934 when Gandhiji was travelling in Karnataka, he wrote to his wife Kasturba explaining the significance of recitation of Rama's name as given by the saint poet Tulasidas, "*Naam* (name) means *Ramanaam* or the name of the god, and he (Tulasidas) has said that the name is greater than Rama which means that there was Rama

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who possessed a body, that was his limitation. His body was mortal but his name is immortal. The person called Rama also had limited virtues, but virtues of the god in *Ramanaam* are limitless. We can add any number of virtues to him because there is no end to his virtues. That is why he is *gunaateeta* (the one who transcends the three properties of nature i.e. *sattva,* goodness or purity*, rajas,* passion and *tamas,* darkness or ignorance)...We can undoubtedly swim through the ocean of this life if we engrave the name of god in our heart." (22 February 1934)

In another letter to Kasturba written five days later, on 27 February, Gandhiji took this subject a little further, "...How does one recite the name? How does the recitation help when there are thousands of thoughts? You recite it from the heart or else don't recite. If it is recited to show it to others then it is zero. It is rather sinful because it is hypocrisy. Recite with pure intention. Don't get tired of recitation even if there are other thoughts. Continue to recite in spite of thoughts. As you continue to do so it will be engraved in your heart one day....Illiterates and fools can also recite the name."

Gandhiji gave similar encouragement to his eldest daughter-in-law Gulab (Harilal's wife) in his letter of 19 August 1932. He wrote to her that she should not worry about good thoughts crossing her mind. However, "drive away negative thoughts by reciting *Ramanaam* and think only about your work." It is like light dispelling darkness. Gandhiji guided his relatives in the pursuit of spirituality according to each one's understanding and circumstances. He was at that time in the Yervada Jail. His campaign to open temples for the Harijans (the people of lower castes, now known as *dalits*) was bearing fruits. Twelve temples in Allahabad and all the temples in Ayodhya were opened up for the Harijans on 18 September. A Jain temple in Ahmedabad also opened its doors for the Harijans on 19 September 1932.

To Harilal's daughter Manu too Gandhiji wrote about the power of *Ramanaam* on 22 May 1945. "The world intimidates the person more who gets intimidated. Therefore, it would be better if you throw away your fears into the sea. Recitation of *Ramanaam* is the only infallible remedy."

III. The Bhagavadgeeta

The *Bhagavadgeeta* was Gandhiji's spiritual dictionary, a reference book. In his introduction (included in *Geetatriputi*, written from Segaon, Wardha on 24 September 1936), of the book *Geetapa-darthakosha* Gandhiji said that whenever he was in dilemma of action or non-action - *karmaakarma* - he found the right guidance from the *Geeta*. The *Geeta* for him was living, life-giving immortal mother. He believed that the *Geeta* wakes you up from swoon.

Gandhiji was first introduced to the *Geeta* by Edwin Arnold's translation in verse form published as the *Song Celestial* in 1888-89. Gandhiji had also translated the *Geeta* from Sanskrit to Gujarati with the hope that Gujarati men and women would read it and practice it in their day to day life.

He wrote to Kasturba Gandhiji from Kanya kumari, almost Southern tip of India, on 22 January 1934 as he was away from her for quite some time, "....The *Bhagavadgeeta* mentions that god's devotee must stay in solitude. It is important to understand this. We have come alone in this world and will leave alone. Then why do we long for someone's companionship during the period that is indefinite between birth and death? We can also see that though we are born alone are (actually) not alone. We are with our parents. We cannot live for a moment without them. As we grow we generally get married. There also, there are others. Friends also keep company. To an extent we need such company for the growth of our soul. Then why is solitude recommended? Let us understand that. As we think of companions we realize that they show our dependency. Mother, father, husband, wife, friends all of them make us dependent to some extent....Therefore, the mother *Geeta* asks us to look for solitude. It does not mean that you should run away from the company of human beings. It only means that you should not have expectation for having companions. Do not be afraid when there is none. And even if you are in the midst of millions enjoy mental solitude and experience closeness with god."

The fear of death is rejected in the *Geeta* when one is engaged in discharging one's duty. Gandhiji never minced words while talking about death. His letters to his dear ones vouch for it. Gandhiji's relationship with Kasturba since the time they got married till she breathed her last in the Agakhan jail provides the most invaluable lessons for life. Gandhiji was imprisoned in South Africa. He received a telegram from Mr. Albert West informing him about Kasturba's serious illness. Gandhiji wrote the most endearing letter to her from Pretoria on 9 November 1908.

a) Dear Kastur

Mr. West has sent today a telegram about your health. My heart is bleeding. I am alive and yet am not in a position to nurse you. I have dedicated everything to the struggle of Satyagraha. I just can't come. I would certainly not pay the fine. You'll get well if you muster a little courage and eat properly. Yet, if it is my destiny to lose you then I would write just this much that it would not be appropriate that you leave during (our) separation when I am still alive. My love for you is so much that you will remain alive for me even after your death. Your soul is immortal. Leave this life with full faith in the god. If you die it will be your offering to Satyagraha. Mine is not a mere political struggle. It is a

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religious struggle and therefore, it is absolutely pure. How does it matter whether one lives or dies? I am hoping that you also agree with the same and will not feel bad. I am asking this of you.

Mohandas

What a moving letter it is!

Gandhiji's views on death had not changed. From Yervada jail he wrote to his ailing daughter-in-law Lakshmi, his youngest son Devdas's wife on 7 July 1932, "Don't spoil your health by worrying. You should completely get rid of your fear of death and sorrow. Why fear and feel sad for something that is inevitable for each human being? To consider death as a punishment given by the god is ignorance. Death is a gift of god to human beings...."

Gandhiji gave similar assurance about god to his second son Manilal and his wife Sushila on 13 April 1943 from Agakhan jail, "God is indeed (our) guardian in all our sufferings. He can't be seen but he is very much with us. You'll never be perplexed if you maintain this trust."

Gandhiji had experienced near death situation more than once in his life. Separation from a dear one is painful. Even that he had experienced many a times. He could sail through it all because of his spiritual strength. In his letter to his daughter-in-law Chanchal (eldest son Harilal's wife, also known as Gulab) written on 28 January 1909 he quoted examples from India mythology. Perhaps that was the best way to shift Chanchal's mind from sorrow to a positive experience. In the very first sentence he assured her that he would never do anything that would harm her or make her unhappy, "There have been scores of women in India for whom separation was beneficent. Damayanti became immortal after she was separated from her (husband) Nala. Taramati's separation from Harishchandra did well to both of them. Draupadi's separation was for the Pandavas' well-being and all the Hindus are praising Draupadi's firmness. You should not think that these examples did not (actually) happen. Lord Buddha left his wife and became immortal and his wife also became immortal. This is ultimate. I only want you to know from these that your separation is not harmful to you. It is but natural that separation makes you unhappy. It is a sign of love...."

From Segaon Gandhiji wrote to his second daughter-in-law Sushila (Manilal's wife) on 30 June 1938 explaining to her the importance of making right choices in life. "Instead of submitting to our desires we should submit to *Dharma* and consider this as your life's resolution. Many a times there is contrariety between desire and *Dharma*, between pleasure and greater good. On such occasions do only that which is for greater good...."

Gandhiji had arrived at this spiritual height because of his continuous self-reflection and inner reformation. He could talk about the most profound philosophical concepts with such ease and made them relevant to each one's life.

IV. Truth is God

Gandhiji's own life was an ongoing quest for truth. In his letter to his nephew Narandas, written from the Yervada jail on 22 July 1930 Gandhiji explained. "Speaking the truth is generally considered as the meaning of the Truth. But the word Truth has been used in a larger sense. The truth in thought, speech and action is indeed the truth. Nothing more remains to be learnt in this world for the person who understands this Truth completely, because knowledge of all kinds is included in it. Whatever is not included is neither truth nor knowledge; how can it then contain true happiness? If we learn to use this method of testing then we'll immediately know which activity is worth undertaking, (and) which should be avoided; what is worth seeing (and) what is not; what is worth reading (and) what is not."

Gandhiji was writing quite regularly to Narandas from the jail. His letters combined personal queries seeking and giving information, guidance and instructions, and also his articles for the journals, the *Navajivan* in Gujarati and the *Young India* in English. These journals played significant role during the freedom struggle. They were used for Gandhuji's loud thinking, for propagating his views through debates and discussions. Their publication was suspended from 7 July 1930 as the Navajivan Printing Press worth Rs. 40,000 at that time, was confiscated by the Government. But no one was defeated in the spirit. Gandhiji continued to send articles in the form of his letters to Narandas. The text for the journals was typed and brought out in cyclostyled form. English translations of Gandhiji's articles were generally done by Valjibhai Desai and Mahadevbhai Desai. At times Gandhiji himself used to translate them in English for the *Young India*. Once while sending his English translation he wrote to Narandas that his translation should be used only if Valjibhai had not spent his time in translating it.

Gandhiji valued time immensely. In Sevagram he had placed a placard behind his seat which could be read by the visitors. It said, "Be brief, Be quick, Be gone".

Gandhiji was also very particular about not wasting anything. Most of the things were used again and again till they completely wore out, particularly envelopes. Once there was a discussion about the reuse of cloth covers. They all arrived at some conclusion, but after the prayer meeting one person raised the same issue once again. The matter was discussed once again. Gandhiji's pain for having wasted so many people's time is evident in his letter to Narandas written on 31 July 1930:

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"The question was, whether the whole cover is to be pasted with a blank sheet of paper or small chits are to be pasted on the written lines? This conversation was useless. Fifteen minutes of the beautiful time after the prayer was spent on this. As a result it confirmed our foolishness. It harmed truth, non-violence and discernment. Truth was offended because there was no desire for the quest for truth behind this conversation. Non-violence was put to shame because (the person) whose every moment should have been used to observe prevailing misery and pondering upon its remedies, gave his invaluable 15 minutes to this meaningless conversation; and discernment could not be followed. If there was any thought about essential and non-essential things, this conversation would not have lasted even for a moment. Having robbed the people of their fifteen minutes both the persons saw their foolishness in the face, and thanked the god for awakening them."

This may look like an insignificant incident but Gandhiji connected it with much deeper values of life. Apparently abstract concepts like truth, non-violence and discernment manifest in ordinary human behaviour which one often misses to notice.

Further, in the same letter Gandhiji said, "All (of you) must know this much: The search for truth is impossible without non-violence. Truth and non-violence are merged with each-other, like two sides of the same coin, or two sides of a smooth disc. Which one of them is the front and which one is the reverse? Yet, take non-violence as the means and truth as the end. Means are in our hands, therefore, non-violence is the supreme *dharma*. Truth then is god. If we continue to worry about the means we will definitely reach the end some day. We shall win the world if we can determine this much. Whatever obstacles we encounter on the way, we may often feel defeated externally, but without forsaking our trust we shall continue to recite the same mantra, (that) there is truth, it is indeed there. That is the only god; it can be encountered only through one way, by only one means, which is non-violence."

Non-violence alone therefore, is the method, the tool, the way of life to find the truth, the god. Non-violence is the soul-force that is most powerful of all the forces. However, it is not easy to be non-violent in the midst of rampant violence all around. One has to continuously forge it, be convinced about its ultimate success even when it is interpreted by some as weakness. Some intellectuals have interpreted that Gandhiji's non-violent struggle against injustice was due to the reasons of logistics. Since it was a mass movement it had no other choice but to shun weapons! Gene Sharp, an American intellectual inspired by Gandhiji's confidence and conviction in non-violence says, "If you fight with violence, you are fighting with your enemy's best weapon, and you may be a brave but dead hero." When Egyptian protesters' peaceful and disciplined Satyagraha was successful in driving away the dictator, Gene Sharp said, "This is straight out of Gandhi." Gandhiji's confidence in non-violent means to fight injustice had begun in South Africa in the year 1906, and it works even in now. Gandhiji's humanistic approach for resolving any problem, any dilemma was based on inner change, shift of focus from outside to inside. It helped in developing fearlessness and dignity of life.

For cultivating humanistic approach and nurturing it all through the life Gandhiji had spoken about Eleven Vows. These were meant for building one's character. In his words, "I feel and I have felt during the whole of my public life that what we need, what a nation needs, but we perhaps of all the nations of the world need just now, is nothing else and nothing less than character-building."

V. Eleven Vows

Gandhiji's views on spirituality and ethics are interwoven in the eleven vows. These are actions in daily life prompted according to each one's bent of mind, one's own traditions and beliefs, and capacity to understand the under currants of emotions. Gandhiji listed out eleven vows for the ashramites. They are recommended for a simple and happy life, for a continuous process of inner change, and for creating a solid spiritual foundation. As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the very first vow is Truth (satya), the next is Non-Violence (ahimsa), third is Observance of Celibacy (brahmacharya) and others are Control of the Palate, Non-Stealing, Non-Possession, Physical Labour, Swadeshi, Fearlessness, Removal of Untouchability and Tolerance. All of them support and sustain each other.

In his letter written to Narandas on 14 October 1930 Gandhiji mentioned the necessity of these eleven vows. He said, "Vow means unshakable determination. Vows are necessary to go beyond inconveniences. Unshakable determination is that which endures inconveniences and yet does not give up. A person cannot continue to rise without such a determination. Experiences from the world over would vouch for it....Taking a vow indicates strength and not weakness....If it is proper to do a certain thing, it should be definitely done. That is a vow....Those who say 'I'll do as per my capacity' are exposing their weakness or vanity, even when they refer to it as their modesty. There is not an iota of modesty in that. I have seen in mine and in many others' lives that the phrase 'as per my capability' is poison in good determination. 'As per my capability' means plunging into inconvenience right from the beginning. The sentence 'I'll act in accordance with the truth as per my capability' is meaningless. Any note that says that a certain amount will be paid by a certain date, as per my capability, will not be honoured in the form of a cheque or a bill of exchange."

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More about modesty Gandhiji had explained in his letter to Radhika dated 18 October 1930. Radhika, also known as Radha was Gandhiji's nephew Maganlal's daughter. He said, "The lesson of modesty cannot be learnt. Modesty emerges on its own while cultivating non-violence. Modesty is a significant form of non-violence. It is possible to learn modesty as external conduct which we find in royal families. That is not real modesty. It is a kind of culture. Modesty that I have indicated entails elimination of 'me'. Only a zero remains. Can this learning be imparted? The one who has become aware of this body's momentary (existence) and has a little knowledge of *atma* becomes modest immediately. If I scold you and you keep listening to it with the eyes of a poor cow, and do not get angry even in your mind, then what kind of modesty is that? It emerges only when you have learnt to have self-respect."

Such a common and misunderstood concept of modesty has been explained with such clarity that all those who read this letter will be compelled to do a bit of soul searching to figure out one's own category! One can ask oneself-- Am I modest? Am I hypocritical or is my modesty emerging from my non-violent and self-respecting attitude?

On November 2 of the same year Gandhiji had sent another letter to Radha clarifying more about self-respect and modesty. "If someone kicks me and expects a salute from me, I would tolerate his kick, would not get angry, and would wish well for the person who kicked, would not even retort, but I would not salute him. Here I maintained both self-respect and modesty. Having kicked me he tried to make me sit near his feet. I did not reply, I did not wish him bad even in my dreams but I did not sit near his feet. I think I maintained both. I had no knowledge nor was I aware whether I am modest or what was I when that incident took place.* I am analyzing it now. You can take many lessons from this. You can also learn from your own life, and it is better form a habit of learning from your own life rather than from others. It would be very good if you learn that art. Don't bother to learn about your virtues when you are trying to learn from your life, because others can also see that. Look for your faults. Observing one's faults is also modesty."

(This was during Gandhiji's journey in a horse carriage from Pietermaritzburg to Pretoria, in the year 1893 in South Africa.)

One's conduct in day to day life teaches a lot provided one develops the habit of looking at oneself critically. Gandhiji's explanations regarding eleven vows also lead towards enhancing positive traits and reducing one's negativities. The process seems a seamless connection between pragmatism and spirituality.

Nirmala was Gandhiji's third son Ramdas's wife. To her he wrote on 7 November 1932, "..No anger against anger, no flaw against flaw; calmness against anger, fault returned by good turn, abuse returned by love, ingratitude returned by doing favour - this is *dharma*. This is the conduct in the *ashram*." This letter was sent from Yervada jail.

Although the eleven vows were prescribed for the residents of the ashrams, their observance was voluntary. It was not thrust upon anyone. For that matter in almost all the aspects of life Gandhiji used to show the way, but he did force or drag people to walk that way. However, some have opined that he had forced his experiments in celibacy on his wife and a few others. But on reading Gandhiji's own writings it becomes clear that he always took the consent of the other person. In his letter dated 5 August 1930 to Narandas Gandhiji explained the composition of the word *Bra*hmacharya. He linked it with his primary search for the truth. "*Brhamacharya* means putting into practice (*charya)* the quest for *Brahman* - Truth." In the same letter he further said that semen is to be utilised for enhancing physical and mental power in both (the partners). The procreating senses (*jananendriya*) will be easily controlled if one can control all the senses (*sarvendriya*)."

Gandhiji's life itself was a series of experiments, be it on diet, fasting, S*atyagraha*, non-violence, etc. Everything he experimented first on himself. He included others in the experiment only when he himself was satisfied with the process and the results. That is why the title of his autobiography is *My Experiments with Truth.*

His explanation of *aparigraha* - non-possession is not confined to material wealth. He wrote to Narandas on 26 August 1930, "It is worth remembering that there should be non-possession of thought, similar to non-possession of things. A person who fills up his brain with unnecessary knowledge is a hoarder. All those thoughts which keep us away from god or do not take us towards the god are included in 'hoarding'. This definition has been given by the god in the 13th chapter (of the *Geeta*)."

Gandhiji gives similar advice to Narandas's wife Jamnaben, (letter dated 16 October 1932) in a different manner. It was towards leading a frugal, simple and alert way of life, "Even if it is your money you must keep the account of each cowrie (i.e. a coin of the lowest denomination), because it is a fact that nothing in this world belongs to oneself. We experience it on daily basis that everything belongs to god. Therefore, enjoy and spend everything with the sense of renunciation. Those who follow this keep an account of each *pai* (a copper coin, one third of a paisa) for their own satisfaction."

Not to get attached to worldly wealth, and serve others without any expectation of fruits or laurels was Gandhiji's advice to almost all his relatives. He wrote to his granddaughter Sumitra, Ramdas's daughter, on 4 January 1945, "...the next is about gold bangles. What

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will you do with them? The bangles can be of cotton thread, of shell, of glass, of silver, of gold, of diamond. But of what use they are to you? Your bangles are in your heart itself. This is the real and permanent ornament. Everything else is false...."

And to Amba, his nephew's son Prabhudas' wife, Gandhiji said, "...we want to serve in the midst of any kind of adversity, and that too with cheerful mind and reverence. It is alright if people get to hear about it or they do not hear...."

During his hectic travels in South India Gandhiji wrote to Kasturba on 5 February 1934. Although it was written to her, he ended it by giving his blessings to all. This is another simple and convincing letter about benevolence, about doing good to others. "We have a proverb which says, 'two tasks on the same one road' (*ek panth do kaaj*) . Two tasks should not be taken as two tasks only. Here two means more than one. So it can also be said that 'hundred tasks on one road'. Thousands of people got buried in Bihar within a minute. One naturally realises from this that not a minute should be wasted. Mira has sung, 'Make the best of today. Who has seen tomorrow?' We are not even aware of a minute or a moment. We step out with a yawn. Then which is that golden road where all your objectives are fulfilled as you walk it? Doing good to others (*paropakaar*) is the only road. It means serving the neighbours. Its name is (*paramaartha*) philanthropy. Paramaartha means the highest end of man (emancipation), and its third name is devotion to god, which is not achieved by turning the rosary or by doing *tilak* (mark of pigment on the forehead) or by bathing in the Ganges. We sing this during the morning songs (*prabhaatiya)* of Narasimha Mehta. Devotees teach us that devotion is exchanged against the head (i.e. life). Therefore, all the time, while eating and drinking, sitting and getting up, in the prison and outside, we wish well to the whole world, and to fulfil that do our best to serve others...."

VI. On Vaishnavajana

Narasimha Mehta was a 15th century saint poet of Gujarat. One of the devotional songs written by him was very dear to Gandhiji. Its first two lines are*: Vaishnavajana to tene kahiye je peed parai jane re, Paradukhe upakara kare toye mana abhimana na ane re.*

It means, the person who understands the pain of others is known as a *Vaishnava*. He helps others who are suffering but never boasts about it. The word Vaishnava literally means a devotee of lord Vishnu. In each line of this poem Narasimha defines a true *Vaishnava.* These are basically the qualities of a good human being. This song was often sung during the morning and evening prayers at the ashrams. A number of outsiders used to visit Gandhiji at the Phoenix Settlement (ashram) in South Africa. One of them was Joseph Royeppen. He was a Christian, and was good at music. He loved singing *Vaishnavajana* song. As written by Gandhiji in his letter to Narandas , dated 30 September 1930, "Once, instead of *Vaishnavajana* he sang *Christianajana*. All joined him instantly. I could see, Joseph's joy knew no bounds." A good human being can be of any religion, from any part of the world.

In the same letter Gandhiji also mentioned, "Late Daud Sheth's son Late Husain often stayed at the ashram. He used to join the prayers quite enthusiastically. In a very sweet melodious voice, accompanied by an organ he used to sing, '*yeh bahare baug duniya chand roz*' (this spring in the garden of world is but for a few days). We all learnt to sing that devotional song and it was often included in the prayers."

It has been recorded by the historians that just as Joseph Royeppen had replaced *Vaishnavajana* with *Christianjana*, Imam Saheb had replaced it with *Muslimajana*. Gandhiji raised a pertinent question in his letter to Narandas dated 23 September 1930, "...Why do we need so many religions? We know that there are many religions. There is only one soul but there are innumerable human bodies. Masses of human bodies cannot be avoided even if you want to. Just like in the tree there is only one root of religion but its leaves are innumerable."

"I am trying to explain religion to you. I would not force it on you," wrote Gandhiji to Narandas on 22 April 1929. It was his day of silence. This is what Gandhiji did all his life. He explained, never forced.

In conclusion I give two amusing episodes. Gandhiji had left for London by the Rajaputana ship from Bombay on 29 August 1931 to attend Second Round Table conference. Two British spies boarded the ship at Marseilles. One officer from the customs department went to check Gandhiji's luggage. Gandhiji showed the luggage and told him, "I am a poor beggar. All that I have in my luggage is - six spinning wheels, porringers from the jail, one container of goat's milk, six loin-clothes and a towel, and my honour --which may not be of much value!" These are the words of the man who practiced the vow of non-possession.

And the second episode: Gandhiji stayed in London for nearly three months. On 18th November he went to meet Llyod George and spent nearly four hours. When he left that place at one o'clock in the morning his whole family including the domestic staff went to see him off. The meeting between Gandhiji and Llyod George was reported in the *Manchester Guardian*. Besides the contents of the meeting it also mentioned that an unknown cat was visiting Mr. George's house every day and was sitting at a fixed place for some days prior to Gandhiji's visit. When Gandhiji arrived into that house and sat at a particular place it turned out to be the place where that cat used to sit! She came on that day also and sat on Gandhiji's lap. She kept sitting there till he left, and was never seen thereafter by anyone!

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