

Mahatma Gandhi: In His Own Words

Mahatma Gandhi was born October 2, 1869 at Porbunder, a town on the west coast of India. At that time, Britain ruled India. Gandhi became a key spiritual and political leader in the cause of India's independence, and he was unwavering in his teaching that this goal must be achieved through non-violence. While not wholly responsible for India's freedom, he is widely regarded as contributing more to this cause than any other. India's independence was a great political achievement; however, he is perhaps even more widely revered for his spiritual leadership. He was a moral force that will not be forgotten. India became independent on August 15, 1947. Mahatma Gandhi died January 30, 1948 of injuries wrought from an assassin's bullets.



The words of Gandhi on various subjects follow. For more information, see the excellent book:

The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi

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First Published, March 1945

Revised & Enlarged Edition, February 1967

Fourth Reprint, April 1996

ISBN 81-7229-149-3

Printed and Published by : Jitendra T. Desai, Navajivan Trust

Navajivan Mudranalaya, Ahemadabad-380014 India

*Entire book online at: <http://www.mkgandhi.org/momg/encyclopedia.htm>

Truth

WHAT...is Truth? A difficult question; but I have solved it for myself by saying that it is what the voice within tells you. How then, you ask, [do] different people think of different and contrary truths? Well, seeing that the human mind works through innumerable media and that the evolution of the human mind is not the same for all, it follows that what may be truth for one may be untruth for another ...

It is because we have at the present moment everybody claiming the right of conscience without going through any discipline whatsoever, and there is so much untruth being delivered to a bewildered world. All that I can in true humility present to you is that Truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of humility. If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of Truth, you must reduce yourself to a zero. (YI, 31-12-1931, p428)

Truth and Love--ahimsa--is the only thing that counts. Where this is present, everything rights itself in the end. This is a law to which there is no exception. (YI, 18-8-1927, p265)

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. (A, p370-1)

Truth resides in every human heart, and one has to search for it there, and to be guided by truth as one sees it. But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of truth. (H, 24-11-1933, p6)

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Non-violence

I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law--to the strength of the spirit....

The rishis who discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves known the use of arms, they realized their uselessness, and taught a weary world that its salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence. (YI, 11-8-1920, p3)

Non-violence is the law of the human race and is infinitely greater than and superior to brute force.

...

Non-violence is a power which can be wielded equally by all--children, young men and women or grown-up people, provided they have a living faith in the God of Love and have therefore equal love for all mankind. When non-violence is accepted as the law of life, it must pervade the whole being and not be applied to isolated acts. (H, 5-9-1936, p236)

The very first step in non-violence is that we cultivate in our daily life, as between ourselves, truthfulness, humility, tolerance, loving kindness. ... Non-violence is an unchangeable creed. It has to be pursued in face of violence raging around you. Non-violence with a non-violent man is no merit. In fact it becomes difficult to say whether it is non-violence at all. But when it is pitted against violence, then one realizes the difference between the two. This we cannot do unless we are ever wakeful, ever vigilant, ever striving. (H, 2-4-1938, p64)

God

To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheist of the atheist. For in His boundless love God permits the atheist to live. He is the searcher of hearts. He transcends speech and reason. He knows us and our hearts better than we do ourselves. (YI, 5-3-1925, p81)

The millionaires imagine that money can bring them anything in the world. But it is not so. At any moment death might come and snuff them out.... Losing one's life...is not the same thing as shedding 'self'. One has to learn to efface self or the ego voluntarily and as a sacrifice in order to find God. The spinning-wheel rules out exclusiveness. It stands for all inclusiveness. It stands for all including the poorest. It, therefore, requires us to be humble and to cast away pride completely. (H, 13-10-1946, p. 345)

I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent.

Altruism

YAJNA MEANS an act directed to the welfare of others, done without desiring any return for it, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature. 'Act' here must be taken in its widest sense, and includes thought and word, as well as deed. 'Others' embraces not only humanity, but all life....

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This need not frighten anyone. He who devotes himself to service with a clear conscience will day by day grasp the necessity for it in greater measure, and will continually grow richer in faith. The path of service can hardly be trodden by one who is not prepared to renounce self-interest, If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger, and will make not only for our own happiness, but that of the world at large. (FYM, pp. 53-56)

Spirituality

I DO not believe...that an individual may gain spiritually and those who surround him suffer. I believe in advaita, I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent. (YI, 4-12-1924, p. 398)

Sources

A

An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth: *M.K. Gandhi* : translated from Gujarati by Mahadev Desai : Navajivan Publishing House. Ahmedabad; vol. I, 1927; Vol. II, 1929; edition used: 1959

FYM

From Yeravda Mandir: Ashram Observance: *M.K. Gandhi*; translated by V.G.Desai ; Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1933; edition used:1957.

H

Harijan :(1933-1956) English weekly journal founded by Gandhiji and published under the auspices of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Poona, and from 1942, by the Navajivan Trust, Ahmadabad. T he weekly suspended publication in 1940 during the "Individual Satyagraha"; resumed in January 1942, but stopped appearing during the Quit India Struggle. It reappeared in 1946.

YI

Young India:(1919-1932) English weekly journal, published from Bombay as a bi-weekly, under Gandhiji's supervision from May 7, 1919, and as a weekly from Ahmedabad, with Gandhiji as editor from October 8, 1919.