Don’t Deviate From the Pledge
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Among the tributes received in New Delhi within hours of Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination on 30 January 1948 was one from Sarojini Naidu who said: ‘May the soul of my master, my leader, my father, rest not in peace. Not in peace—my father—do not rest. Keep us to our pledge. Give us strength to fulfil our promises—to our heirs, your descendents, guardians of your dreams, fulfillers of India’s destiny.’ The force of her words reminds us that we should not rest till we are able to internalize in ourselves the twin principles of Truth and Non-violence in our thought and action. We should be optimistic and hope that we would be able to overcome the crisis facing us and the world.”

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Of course, in order to come out of the present malaise and dilemma, the only remedy lies is in adopting the Gandhian path to resolve conflicts. Arnold Toynbee has rightly observed: “At this supremely dangerous moment in history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way—Emperor Ashok’s and Mahatma Gandhi’s principles of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna’s testimony to the harmony of religions. Here we have an attitude and spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family.”

The non-violent behaviour on the part of humanity requires the highest form of civilization. Civilization is an act of the spirit. Ancient India was far more civilized than Modern India with its satellites in space. The recurrent looting of banks in broad daylight arouses as little public attention as the going down of the sun in the evening. Our legal system has made life too easy for criminals and too difficult for law-abiding citizens. The country has forgotten that crime is not a problem to be handled by the police only but by the whole society. The two basic lessons which we are to learn from Indian history and from the Gita are: (i) Indian people have always taken their moral standards from rulers and people have risen to great heights whenever they have followed in the glow of noble kings or leaders; and (ii) regions and kingdoms have been destroyed not by adversity but by abasement, and corruption is the greatest solvent of public institutions, and poverty poses a smaller threat.

Politicians in India, instead of giving moral leadership for which people are yearning and waiting, are only occupied in maintaining a system which is poisoned by collective bad faith and polluted by individual self-interest. People are served by deception and craftiness instead of by vision and imagination.

Indians by and large are, “low arousal” people. They tolerate injustice and unfairness with feudalistic servility and fatalistic resignation. On 15 August, 1947 India achieved Independence. But Gandhi was not present in New Delhi. At that time, he was working among the poor people of Bengal. The reason for his absence was simple. He had two dreams in his life. The first dream was liberation of India from the British rule, while
the second was liberation of Indians from oppression and injustice, from inequity and inequality, from discord and disharmony.

His first dream was fulfilled but the second was not. According to the Mahatma, the true time for celebration would be when the second dream is fulfilled.

Gandhi was a leader of his people, unsupported by any authority; a politician whose success rested, not upon craft or guile, but simply upon the moral grandeur of his soul; a fighter who pushed back the mightiest empire on earth without the use of force; a spirit of profound wisdom and captivating humility, armed with only an iron will and inflexible resolve; and a frail man who confronted the brutality of military strength with the dignity of a simple human being.

Gandhi completely identified himself with the Indian masses. He observed: “We must first come in living touch with them by working with them and in their midst, we must share their sorrows, understand their difficulties and anticipate their wants. With the pariahs we must be pariahs and see how we like being in the boxes, miscalled houses, of the labourers of Bombay. We must identify with the villagers who toil under the hot sun beating on their bent back and see how we would like to drink water from the pool in which the villagers bathe, wash their clothes and pots, and in which their cattle drink and roll. Then and not till then shall we truly represent the masses.

The Indian masses responded to the Mahatma’s call in a spirit of total surrender. He said to them that “Real Swaraj will come not by acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused.”

He repeatedly used to mention that through realization of freedom for India, we would try to carry on and fulfil the mission of the universal brotherhood. He was really involved in achieving the broadest good of humanity at large.

India’s success will be measured not by homogenising a heterogeneous situation, but by the success with which diverse societies can be harmonized and co-exist and become mutually reinforcing and supportive; where traditions and modernity are appropriately blended, and where man-made capital does not become destructive of the natural capital.

Most of us are self deceivers and constant examination alone can save us. The musk is in the deer but it thinks fragrance comes from outside and so hunts for it relentlessly. What gives value and meaning to political life is a purpose. Politicians must consider politics as an opportunity to serve the people. It is neither to manipulate people nor to exploit them for
selfish ends. The mandate of the 2009 elections specifically tells the politicians that they must consider the people first and themselves as the last.

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Shri Ramakrishna says:
“He who is the Lord of the Universe will teach everyone. He alone teaches us, who has created this universe; who has made the sun and the moon, men and beasts, and all other beings; who has provided means for their sustenance; who has given children parents and endowed them with love to bring them up. The Lord has done so many things - will He not show people the way to worship Him? If they need teaching, then He will be the Teacher. He is our Inner Guide.”

Excerpted from The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Vol. I, p.80