Prof. Gangrade is someone who is highly respected in academic circles as well as in Gandhian fraternity. A life-long teacher, he headed the prestigious Delhi School of Social Work run by Delhi University for many years. He also rose to be Pro Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University. We are happy that he has prepared a very important and enlightening article. The title rightly describes the true purpose behind writing it. He shares his keen thoughts for anyone engaged in social service or any aspirant to become a social worker.

This article becomes very interesting because it does not merely deal with philosophical discussions. The author has tried to convey the values that emerged in Gandhi’s life, and which are recorded through his real life experiences in his autobiography. We may recall here that during his last days, a highly significant and important message that he gave to a questioner was, “My life is my message.” It was originally mentioned in Bengali language, but it has been frequently quoted and rightly so, because Gandhian thought cannot be understood clearly unless one tries to understand his entire life. Once again, we are reminded of Gandhi’s phrase about the story of his life when he gave the caption to his autobiography as, “The Story of My Experiments with Truth.”

As one tries to understand Gandhi, the central theme of all that he attempted in his life was to reconstruct the society on spiritual foundations. Life has to be value-based and he from his own search for truth and action in different forms and different fields came upon the universal values of life. Prof. Gangrade in this article has chosen different incidents of Gandhiji’s life which emphasize the essential values which should govern the life of an individual and society. Prof. Gangrade has also pointed out the impact of Gandhi’s life and Gandhian thought that is noticed in different parts of the world, particularly on leading personalities of the world. This description not only informs, but provokes thinking on the part of the present day generation of our country.

A highly commendable writing. We strongly urge our readers to read it with due attention and respect.

N.Th.
Abstract:
A poor man feels he is out of sight of others, groping in the dark. Mankind takes no notice of him. Gandhi was very much concerned with the plight of the common man. He felt that we must change the current state of affairs so that the poor man too can raise his head with dignity. He found three ways to do this. First, the gospel of love should be followed in place of that of hate. Second, violence should be replaced by self-suffering. Third, to put soul force against that of brute force. Therefore, replace greed by love and everything will be all right. If this is followed in the true spirit it will enhance the value of professional social work and enthuse others engaged in similar task to work with the people.

Loyalty:
Gandhi’s grandfather, Uttamchand Gandhi was an able administrator. But he ran into trouble with the Queen-mother Regent because he refused to do what her maid asked of him. The Regent then dispatched the army and got Uttamchand’s house shelled. But Uttamchand did not budge. He preferred to leave her service and move to Junagarh. There he had the audacity to salute the Nawab with his left hand.

He was asked to explain why he had shown such disrespect to the Nawab. He explained that his right hand had been pledged to Porbandar. The Nawab was pleased to see such loyalty.

Truth:
Gandhi saw the picture of Harishchandra Raja who had dedicated his life to truth. The ordeals through which the King had to pass and the agony, sacrifices and suffering that he had to undergo to stick to the Truth melted
Gandhi’s heart. He had always felt fascination for Truth. The story of Harishchandra reinforced this attraction and the determination to cling to Truth at any cost.

**Honesty:**

Once when Gandhi was in the class, the Inspector of Schools visited his school. The English teacher was keen to prove that his students had been taught well. He gave the students a dictation test in the presence of the Inspector. Young Gandhi could not spell the word ‘kettle’ correctly. The teacher saw this. He tried to prompt Gandhi to look at what the student next to him had written and to correct himself. But Gandhi could not bring himself to do this. He could not believe that his teacher who should have been concerned with the truthfulness, honesty and character of his students was himself prompting him to cheat or engage in untruth.

**Punctuality:**

Most students of his (Gandhi’s) school used to go home after the end of regular classes and return for the period of gymnastics. Gandhi too used to do this. One day, at the time he arrived for gymnastics, the period was over, and the boys had gone home. He was marked absent, and was hauled up before the Headmaster. He explained that he had been nursing his ailing father. Besides, the clouds too had misled him in judging the time. But the headmaster did not believe Gandhi, called him a liar, accused him of lying, and imposed a fine. It was not the fine that hurt him but the thought that he had been looked upon as a liar. That day, Gandhi learnt the lesson that those who wanted to be Truthful, and taken as Truthful, has to be vigilant and mindful of everything including punctuality in all works.

**Power of Confession:**

Gandhi became friendly with a boy. He had been warned against coming under the influence of this boy. But Gandhi persisted in the belief that he would be able to reform his friend. But his friend’s pleasant ways and persuasive tongue began to lead Gandhi astray in one field after another.

Gandhi’s father had unquestioning faith in him. He could not continue to steal and cheat and deceive his father. There was only one way out. He had to confess to his father and regain a clear conscience. He decided to write out a confession, admit his guilt, assure his father that he would never repeat the crime and ask the punishment for what he had done. He handed over the letter to his father and sat near him waiting to be admonished, and perhaps punished. His father read the letter. Tears rolled down his cheeks. Gandhi too was in tears. He felt that his father’s tears of forgiveness and faith had cleared him. He learned a lesson that he never forgot. It is this lesson and Gandhi’s faith in the power of confession that prompted Gandhi to make a public confession of his shortcomings and mistakes in later life.
Vows:

To get sound education, it was suggested that he (Gandhi) should go to England and qualify for the Bar. It would be a prestigious qualification, and open new avenues. The idea appealed to Gandhi. It was an opportunity and its own attraction at that time. To be educated in England was to receive a passport to the circles of elite.

But there were many hurdles. Elders, particularly Gandhi’s mother, had to give her consent. After much persuasion from many well-wishers and friends of the family, Gandhi’s mother agreed to let Mohandas go to England provided he took three solemn vows - to keep away from meat, wine, and women. Gandhi took these vows in all solemnity, and went to England. These vows had proved as a shield to keep him away from all kinds of temptations during his stay in England.

Discovery of the power within and the power of non-cooperation:

Gandhi had to go to South Africa to fight a legal case. He had to go to Pretoria where the legal suit was being heard. A ticket was booked for him in the first class, and Gandhi commenced his journey. When the train reached Petermaritzberg, a white passenger entered the compartment and objected to a ‘coloured man’ travelling in the first class compartment. He wanted Gandhi to be removed to the ‘van compartment,’ which was meant for coloured passengers. Gandhi protested. A constable was summoned. He took Gandhi by the hand, and pushed him out. He firmly refused to go to the van compartment. The train steamed away leaving Gandhi on the platform. The forces ranged against him might be mighty. But he had his own strength, the strength of his spirit, of his will; of his ability to non-cooperate with his ‘enemy’. That night Gandhi discovered himself. That night Gandhi shed his fear. He himself recalled that incident as the most creative experience of his life.

Leadership:

The assignment on which Gandhi had gone to South Africa had ended. Gandhi had prepared to return to India. A farewell meeting was arranged. At the meeting, as Gandhi was about to speak, his eyes fell on a copy of the Natal Mercury. It carried a report about the impending passage of a Bill to disfranchise all Indians in Natal. Gandhi saw this as the thin end of the wedge. He said that if the Bill was passed, and the Indians acquiesced in it, they would be driving the first nail into their own coffins. Everyone felt concerned, and wanted that the Bill be opposed. But who was to take the lead? Everyone at the farewell meeting turned to Gandhi. They told him he was the man who would save the Indian community in the hour of trial. Gandhi was reluctant. He was anxious to go home. But the persistent demand of the leading Indians and his own sense of duty made him agree to postpone his return. He declined
to take any remuneration for public service. Thus began a commitment that kept Gandhi in South Africa for two decades.

**Organizing People Against the Black Act:**

The Government of the State of Transwal notified the draft of a new ordinance on the 22nd of August, 1906. The new law made it compulsory for all Indians, even children, to register themselves with their finger prints.

Gandhi was clear that if the ordinance became law and the Indians acquiesced, they and their honour would be wiped out. It had to be resisted. He convened a meeting of all Indians at the Empire Theatre, Johannesburg. On the 11th of September 1906, when the time of the meeting came, the hall was overflowing. Haji Habib read out the resolution drafted by Gandhi. It declared that Indians would not submit to the ordinance. They would suffer the penalties that would result from defiance, but would not submit.

Gandhi was taken aback at Sheth Haji Habib’s suggestion of an oath. Gandhi said: “I know that pledges and vows are, and should be, taken on rare occasions…. But if I can imagine a crisis in the history of the Indian community of South Africa when it would be in fitness of things to take pledges, that crisis is real now… Everyone should fully realize his responsibility, then only pledge himself independently of others and understand that he himself must be true to his pledge even unto death, no matter what others do.” (*Satyagraha in South Africa*, M.K. Gandhi, 1997 Edition, pp 96-100).

Gandhi did not know all the implications of the new method of resistance that the vow symbolized. He only knew that some new principle had come into being, which was capable of revolutionizing individual and social life. This was the birth of Satyagraha.

Indians refused to register. Gandhi was ordered to leave Transvaal. He was arrested on the 10th of January 1908. By the end of January many Indians were in Jail. General Smuts, who was the Prime Minister, was perplexed. He sent a message to Gandhi. The Government only wanted to prevent further migration of Indians into Transvaal. So, if the Indians in Transvaal registered themselves voluntarily he would withdraw the ordinance.

Gandhi believed in the General’s intention and his promise to repeal the Act and agreed to the compromise.

General Smuts betrayed Gandhi. As soon as he found that a large number of Indians had registered, voluntarily, he brought in a Bill to validate voluntary registration in the eyes of the law, and announced that the Black Act (on registration) would not be repealed. It seemed as though Gandhi had been defeated.

Gandhi rose to the occasion. He found a dignified way of exposing the General’s perfidy and vindicating the honour, intention and courage of the
Indians. He declared that the Indians would stop registering and would publicly burn the certificates of registration that had been issued to them, thus voluntarily defying the Government to take action against them under the Act. A mammoth meeting was arranged at the grounds of the Hamidia mosque, and a cauldron was set up near the dias. An ultimatum was sent to the Government. From suffering in silence and petitioning, Gandhi had led the people to a position of fearlessness and defiance. It was they who were now issuing an ultimatum to the Government. “We regret to state that if the Asiatic Act is not repealed, in terms of the settlements and if the Government’s desire to this effect is not communicated to the Indians before a ‘specific date’, the certificates collected by the Indians would be burnt, and they would humbly but firmly take the consequences.”

The response was tremendous. There was high drama, open rebellion of the kind the world had never witnessed. The world press had assembled to witness the bonfire. The Government did not relent. It replied in the negative. As the telegram was read out at the meeting, there were cheers. Again, Gandhi declared that anyone who was afraid of consequences could take back the certificates before it was burnt. There was only one shout that rent the air: “Burn them.”

The struggle against the Black Act was intensified. Gandhi found many ingenious ways of defying the Act. He inducted prominent and respected leaders of the community like Parsi Sorabji and Adajania from Natal into the struggle of defiance and to court arrest and imprisonment.

Meanwhile, a new King was ascending the throne of England, and the British wanted to create an atmosphere of goodwill. They decided to amend and soften the Black Act, to make it look as though it was not specifically discriminatory against Indians. They released the Satyagrahis who were in Jail. The Satyagraha movement had gone for four years or more. It was now decided to suspend Satyagraha and review the next move.

Up till now, there were two issues that rallied the community, namely, the withdrawal of the Black Act or ban on Asian immigration, and the abolition of the 3 pounds tax. A third was added by a judgement delivered by Judge Searle. With one verdict, the judge declared all marriages solemnized by rites outside the Christian Church invalid. By this stroke, all marriages of Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Sikhs became invalid in the eyes of the law, thus undermining the legal status of families, wives and children. This infuriated women and men alike. Women became as keen to fight the government as men. Gandhi realized that this one act of the government had awakened women and made soldiers and militants of them. He wanted to give women opportunity to take part in the struggle. He knew they were capable of great heroism and powers of endurance. These were the qualities that the Satyagrahi needed.
A long march was organized, perhaps the first long march in recorded history. It started on the 6th November 1913 at the break of dawn. It bore witness to the heroism and determination of the Indians. While the marchers forded a river at one point, a child perched on the hip of a mother slipped into the swirling waters of the river. The mother did not wait to wail and mourn, but kept up march with the others. Where from did these indentured labourers and people who were condemned as cowards and slaves get the ‘iron will’ to resist without raising their arms?

The news of the atrocities that followed shocked the capitals of the world, and sparked off ‘hartals’ and strikes by Indians all over South Africa. The Government inducted mounted military police. They were ordered to shoot at sight. There were many scenes of heroic ‘non-violent’ defiance all over South Africa.

Gandhi went on a fast. This was the first of his many fasts for public causes. In utter identification with the indentured labourer, who was derisively called a ‘coolie’, Gandhi gave up his European dress. He cut his hair short like the coolie, wore a lungi and discontinued use of his footwear.

When reports reached England, there were a deep sense of shame and waves of indignation. In India, people were shocked and enraged. Indian leaders immediately wanted an end to atrocities and discrimination. India was on fire. The British Viceroy himself was moved to make a speech at Madras (now Chennai) in support of the Satyagrahis and their cause.

But an unforeseen development took place. The workers of the South African Railway System went on a nation-wide strike. This caused great hardship to all South Africa. Gandhi immediately suspended the Satyagraha, explaining that it was against the tenets of Satyagraha to exploit the distress of the adversary.

This had a disarming effect on General Smuts and the whites. They did not know how to fight and hate Gandhi in the face of such love and generosity. They realized the truth of what Gandhi had claimed from the very beginning that he had nothing against the white population of South Africa; all that he wanted was the removal of injustice. Love and suffering had melted the intransigence and resistance of the whites. The Government decided to accept all the three demands of the Indians - abolition of poll tax, validation of marriages and abolition of restrictions on travel and residence.

Gandhi had discovered a new weapon. He had demonstrated the power of the heart, or power that every human being had within himself. He had shown the power of Love and Suffering. He had taken his people from the depth of helplessness to the peaks of victory, from contempt and ridicule to respect; from fear to fearlessness and bravery.

He decided to return to the wider theatre of the motherland and to serve the people and to further demonstrate the power of Satyagraha.
The struggle in South Africa had made Gandhi known all over India. He had acquired the reputation of a man who was both a saint and a militant. Gandhi called the struggle in India a “Dharma Yuddha”, because it was waged for justice, and with the pure means of persuasion, love and voluntary suffering. For him non-violence was the first and the last article of his creed.

Gandhi was firmly against the partition of India. It would mean the surrender of all that he and the Congress had stood for and struggled for - the unity of India, the belief in pluralism and tolerance on which Indian society was based, the belief in secular nationalism that refused to make religion the basis of nationhood.

The leaders had decided that immediate independence was more important than the unity of India.

On the 14th August, on the eve of Independence, the two communities celebrated the coming of Independence. India achieved Independence on the 15th of August 1947.

**Gandhi is Gone:**

On the 30th of January at 5 p.m., as on every preceding day, the crowd was waiting for Gandhi in the prayer ground. Gandhi was talking to Sardar Patel, when his granddaughter Manu pointed out that he was getting late for prayer. He could not bear being late, least of all, for prayer. He got up in a hurry, took leave of the Sardar and walked briskly to the prayer ground leaning on the shoulders of Manu and Abha, his granddaughter and grand daughter-in-law. As he neared the raised ground, someone tried to edge forward, ostensibly to the Mahatma's feet. In a second, he bowed to the Mahatma, and as he rose pumped three bullets into him from a pistol that he had hidden in his dress. The shots were fired point blank; two pierced the Mahatma’s chest and went out, one was lodged in his lung. The Mahatma seemed to flounder. He slipped down with folded hands and the cry “He Ram” on his lips. The Mahatma was dead. He had been killed by an Indian, a Hindu. In life, he was known as Bapu, the Father. Bapu was no more. India felt orphaned.

The country was plunged in gloom. Pandit Nehru spoke on the radio and said: “The light has gone out of our lives....... Yet I am wrong, for the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light....... And a thousand years later, that light will be seen in this country, and the world will see it.... For that light represented the living Truth.”

Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad said that he had woken up from a dream, feeling that his hands were blood-red. He saw that his hands as well as the hands of all others in the country had been stained with the blood of Gandhi. A few days later, addressing Gandhi’s associates in Gandhi’s Ashram at Sevagram, Dr. Rajendra Prasad said: “We have betrayed him before the cock crew thrice in the morning.”
Gandhi is no more. But, as he himself foresaw: “When I am dead and buried, I will speak from my grave.” Gandhi’s body has been cremated, but not his message. That message will continue to be the message of hope for humanity.

**Gandhi on Non-violence:**

All countries should collectively shun violence and war. We should strive to follow what Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of Ahimsa, entreated all human beings to follow, i.e., the principle of non-violence.

In Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles, Ved Mehta writes that once during the communal riots in Noakhali, Bengal, Gandhi said that the country had become divided between two expressions of religion. The choice for us is between the religion of terrorism and true religion that has always advocated peace, communal harmony and mutual co-existence. True religion propagates compassion, fellow-feelings, selflessness, and self-transformation.

Regarding the call of “Do or die,” Gandhi interpreted the slogan thus: its true essence has nothing to do with aggression of any sort, “Do here means Hindus and Muslims should learn to live together in peace and amity. Otherwise I should die in the attempt,” suggested Gandhi. When someone asked Gandhi his views on war, his reply was just one word *Ahimsa*.

Ahimsa (non-violence), for Gandhi was not merely a negative state of harmlessness but a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil doer. He believed that in a war, there is no victor, only losers. Those who propagate war do not know what war means today. If they did they would not propagate wars. Even more than the millions who will surely die an instant death, life for survivors would only mean something worse than even death in the aftermath of a nuclear detonation that would leave behind a lingering and harmful radio activity.

A nuclear exchange, even the most ‘controlled’ one, would devastate entire regions. In such a war there can be no victor. Today’s nuclear weapons contain a lethal potential that will make even the atom bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki appear to be mere shadows.

Gandhi stressed that it was wrong to be obsessed with battles and their results. He was anguished by the brutal riots during partition. He said: “Without Ahimsa there is neither Pakistan nor Hindustan, only slavery awaits both the nations torn under mutual strife and engrossed in barbarity.”

For every conflict there is always an amicable concurrent solution. War is not a solution as with its territorial victory, it rather exacerbates the hardships of the people of the countries at war. Peace is life. War is death.

Gandhi’s most cherished value was Ahimsa, which is much more than simply non-violence. The way of war, as we are learning with sinking hearts, can only
lead to the grim degradation of the most cherished values. The way of peace can lead to nobility of soul.

**Gandhi on Truth:**

For Gandhi “Truth is God”. Even the atheist do not doubt the power of Truth. The seeker after Truth has a heart tender as the lotus, and hard as Granite. Gandhi described himself as a seeker after Truth. He believed that one should seek and follow Truth in every field of life. One should pursue the quest of Truth only if one had a scientific temper and was willing to experiment and go by evidence. He, therefore, conducted experiments in every field of life.

There are roughly speaking three kinds of Truths: (1) Mathematical, (2) Scientific, and (3) moral. One may ask what is the nature of “proof”, the criterion of validity, for the three kinds of truths? The most important thing to notice is that the nature of proof is essentially different in the three cases.

1. The proof of the mathematic theorem consists in deducing it by pure reasoning starting from some given axioms. It is an exercise in logical thought and nothing else. What is required of the axioms of a system is that these are not known to be mutually contradictory.

2. In the case of scientific truth the test consists in demonstrating that it explains (and predicts) results of experiments and observations. What is extremely important is to recognize that no measurement is possible without a proper theoretical framework. In science, a theory or explanation is always tentative, waiting to be replaced by a more comprehensive theory. There is nothing like a ‘true theory’. Scientific truth is based on experience, while mathematic is based on pure logic. This distinction between mathematic truth and scientific truth is crucial.

3. Now we turn to moral truths. We all know that Ahimsa is a good thing, but this cannot be proved by referring to books on mathematics or science, since both of these are neutral as regards morals. The concept of good or bad implies value judgments and values are related to purposes, aims and goals.

Bertrand Russell says in *Wisdom of the West* (1959): “We cannot give scientific justification for the goals that we might pursue, or for the ethical principles that we adopt… No scientific reason can be given why it is bad to inflict wanton cruelty on one’s fellows. To me it seems bad, and I am amazed that this view is widely held. As to why cruelty is a bad thing, I am sure that I can not supply a satisfactory reason.”

What then is the test for a moral Truth? Gandhi said that for him the test of “moral principle was the willingness of the person who subscribed to it to suffer for it without blaming the opponent/s. A moral principle is ‘true’ if it is in unison with a man’s spirit, if it is close to his ‘soul’.

**Gandhi my real hero, says Obama:**
In response to a question from the students of High School, US President Barack Obama has said that given a chance, he would like to have dinner with Mahatma Gandhi, who was a real hero of his. He has inspired people across the world. The President said he had hung a portrait of Gandhi in his state office ‘to remind me that real results will not just come from Washington, they will come from the people.’ (see *Hindustan Time*, September 10, 2009, p.1).

**Conclusion: A Second Freedom Struggle Needed**

It is presumptuous of those who take freedom as granted to sit in judgement on those for whom freedom was largely a dream. For most freedom fighters, Independence was the grand outcome of a life time of conflict and grief. It is a worrying sign of ideological destitution that we have almost forgotten the man and his ideals who gave us freedom.

The most significant and inspiring icon of India’s freedom movement was and would always remain Mahatma Gandhi. He had pulled off a preposterous idea - resistance to tyranny through mass, non-violent civil disobedience or satyagraha - in unspeakably complex circumstances. India’s remarkable victory against British would not have been possible without his unique mix of personal integrity, indomitable will, austerity, spiritual-wisdom and rare political acumen.

*Time* magazine (USA) once named the Dalai Lama, Lech Walesa, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, Aung San Suu Kyi, Benigo Aquino Jr., Bishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela as “Children of Gandhi and his spiritual heirs to non-violence”.

In South Africa Nelson Mandela went on to fulfill Gandhi’s dream of Satyagraha. American President Barack Obama confers to being deeply inspired by Gandhi. But what of India after Gandhi? The world, if not India, remember him with reverence and think that his philosophy is the only hope and alternative.

The Mahatma believed poverty to be a country or community’s biggest act of violence against its people, but 62 years after Independence, more that half our people remain poor. This is because India’s political leadership continue to violate every code that Gandhi demonstrated to be essential for good governance.

Corruption exists, is taken for granted even, and is celebrated. India is not truly free because like slaves, we passively accept injustice. Stealing is violence. Breaking the Law is violence. Disrespect is violence. Laziness is violence. By that token, we unquestioningly accept violence at home, in our streets, in our work places and from those in public office. The lot has spread through to the nation’s marrow.

Modern India confronts a different challenge - a crisis of leadership and crises of character. Very few of us have the luxury of worthy role models in parents, in teachers, friends or corporate and political leaders. Where excellence
exists, it is very rarely offered for a larger cause but used to serve the individual ego. We no longer have brilliant solutions to our multiple problems because we have no ideas. We have no ideas because we have no character. And until we develop a strong national character, we will be denied access to the “soul-force” that makes everything so simple.

Today, the creed of the majority of politicians has become that disturbance (MLA attacked for taking oath in Hindi, on the occasion of the 12th legislative assembly of Maharashtra on Monday, November 9, 2009) is the best way to settle scores, hatred is preferable to love, fraud to sincerity, vilification and vindictiveness are short cuts to grab power and power retention. As a result, the ideal of “Government of the people, by the people and for the people” has degenerated into, “Government off the people; buy the people and far the people.” Indeed, we have today Government of the politicians, by the politicians and for the politicians.

India is ripe for another freedom struggle. It is a challenge to social workers to rise and restore our past glory. We should resolve to wage a war against the devils hidden within. We should learn to make peace with the world. We should spread joy amongst our fellow-beings. The final lesson which can be deduced from the discussions is: Do not perform any good action through bad means thinking it is sufficient if it bears good fruit.

Note: My thanks are due to Mr. Keshar Singh Aswal of AVARD for processing the hand manuscript for computer output.

References

M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography or the story of my experiments with Truth, Navajivan Mudranalaya, Ahmedabad, This Reprint, April 2000.


* Sushila Bhavan
156, VAISHALI,
Pitampura,
Delhi - 110034.