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Chapter Thirteen

Mahatma Gandhi

*Spiritual Liberator and Father of
Modern Day India*

Anno Domini 1869

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Vegetarianism, Fasting, and Conscious Awareness

I had read a book about vegetarianism that truly opened my eyes to the plight of animals and it made me see that I could not make progress as an enlightened person while feeding on the flesh of tortured creatures of God. Mankind was not made to be carnivorous, but to be nourished from the natural bounty of Mother Earth ~ if it could not be grown from the soil, I would not eat it.

Cleansing the body with a pure diet, free of the heavy vibration of slaughtered animals, is the first step in being clear in mind and spirit; it is hard to see through a dirty window. My personal experience with vegetarianism led me to meet with some deep spiritual thinkers of the day who introduced me to the great religious scriptures of the world. This in turn led me to the awareness of the spiritual side of life, and of the need to "feed the soul" as well as the body. In fact, I began the practice of "non-eating" to cleanse myself of impurities in mind and soul, and to make a political statement against social injustice.

Ah, tolerance! Looking back at the discrimination I experienced first-hand in South Africa as a young law clerk, I say, "Thank you!" to those who opened my eyes to the oppression inflicted upon the minority races, for this was the catalyst for my true calling on Earth as a fighter of social injustice and a liberator of the human spirit. There is no greater mission than to open the doors of freedom and equality to fellow human beings, and to do it with the grace

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of God, rather than the blood of battle. Everyone has it within themselves to stand for what is right and be the rock that will not move in the face of injustice; though all the arrows of hate come flying at you; the rock is impervious to their assault and the arrows bounce off and lay harmless on the ground. Be the solid rock of justice, peace and equality; and you will endure, and you will win.

I spent a great deal of time experimenting with the concepts of love and truth, especially truth, because I found that to be the foundation for all that is good and right. There is no love without truth, for love can be colored by false beliefs, but the truth stands alone with God; pure and unshakeable. **Truth is what shapes destiny and determines if a government will ultimately succeed or fail.** There have been so many clay feet and houses made of straw created by ego-driven leadership that whole nations can topple at the drop of a hat because there is so little truth at their foundations. The truth, as I see it, is that each soul has the right and capacity to think for themselves, and a government of and by the people should simply uphold the basic laws of conduct as agreed to by the whole. With truth at the core of a nation, there is no basis for oppression; it cannot thrive where there is the understanding of human rights and the inherent dignity of every human being. The Founding Fathers of the United States of America had it right from the beginning; and it is the personal greed and spiritual ignorance of their successors who have sullied the red, white and blue flag of freedom of justice and liberty for all people.

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In my quest to establish *Ahimsa*, the way to love and truth through non-violence, I wanted to bring about change in the way that people related to each other, personally and politically. I wanted them to see the value in achieving a peaceful end to their differences, which did not mean lying down and rolling over, but standing up for what was right and not being moved or bullied from their position. If that meant being flogged or going to jail, then that was the cost of liberation from oppression.

The Practice of *Satyagraha* (Non-Violent Protest)

Violence begets more violence, and retaliation against terrorism creates more of the same. There is no peaceful, meaningful or long-lasting resolution ever to be obtained from violent measures. The idea is to TEACH your opponent by EXAMPLE; that they become converted from their war-like ways by the example of the forceful, focused and intelligent application of TRUTH as demonstrated by *Satyagraha*, which literally means to hold firmly to the truth.

I never liked the term, "passive resistance" because it implies weakness and is the antithesis to standing for what is right and true. When I say that TRUTH is the mainstay of *Satyagraha*, I mean that it is to live by the principles of truth; to follow what is true to the self and that which honors the highest in self and others. There is a deeply spiritual element to *Satyagraha* that transcends the human experience and encompasses elements of the higher, inner nature of man and woman. It is meant to address the "other side" of

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humanity; the God-like, the Divine in nature. When one who is trained in *Satyagraha* practices this discipline in society, this one is the mirror by which others can see themselves, and see the way to a better understanding of their differences. *Satyagraha* is to find the common element that brings all of humanity together as one entity under God and into ITS essence. This was my dream and my intention when I developed the concept of a peaceful, non-violent method to deal with social injustice. I wanted to bring GOD and TRUTH into the forefront because I wanted to raise the social consciousness above the mind and into the unlimited potential of the spirit.

When that law strips people of their dignity and rights as human beings, when that law attacks and destroys the principles of equality, and when that law seeks to segregate and persecute a group of people; mocking them, torturing them, imprisoning them, and killing them for no other reason than racial prejudice or religious intolerance -- then that law must be resisted, broken, and abolished.

The only laws that withstand the test of time, fairness, and truth are God's laws that are written within the heart of every man and woman; each person instinctively "knows" what is right and what is wrong; it is a built-in condition of being a soul first and a body last. In *Satyagraha*, I have attempted to appeal to the spiritual and moral side of people; to their highest state of consciousness. In so doing, I have tried to bring each person's sense of truth to the

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forefront, so that fairness and rightness could prevail in all areas of social and political interaction.

The Practice of *Satyagraha* and Wartime

When the enemy is hurling rocks at you, it is very tempting to pick up the largest rock and hurl it back. But that is not the way of the wise who seek to uphold truth in all of their actions. Was I challenged to fight back? Did I get angry? YES! I was, after all, only human and felt deep outrage at the injustices hurled at the Indians in South Africa. But the way of truth is not through violent retaliation -- an eye for an eye leaves the whole world in darkness. *Satyagraha* takes great courage, much greater than the bearing of firearms. How hard is it to stand with a loaded rifle aimed at the head of a defenseless enemy? But to be on the receiving end of that gun and be willing to give up your life rather than bow to the will of injustice takes enormous bravery, faith, and love. It was better to sacrifice a single life than to sacrifice an entire movement toward freedom and equality. My own life was offered to the cause of truth and peace in this way, and I have not one regret over it.

To Have Faith is Everything

Faith in God is that irrepressible driving force within a man or woman that compels them to seek the truth no matter what is happening. It is the light in the heart that never goes out, even when all else slips into darkness, and it is what leads the way to the right course of action in dealing with life's challenges. I had often been asked, "What is faith?" by

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those who were oppressed and wondered how to hold on to hope in the face of great suffering. I told them as I say now - that if you have faith in yourself, then you have faith in God, for you are a part of God's power and love in the world. The idea of separation from God is what causes despair, so I tell you now from my own experience that there is absolutely no separation whatsoever between ourselves and the God who created and loves us. That is the key element to understanding and achieving enormous and unconquerable faith -- we reside within the heart of God and cannot be separated from IT!

If you are speaking of religion, I believe there is a universal religion that governs the universe with truth, love and equality; it is non-sectarian and based upon the truth of God's immutable laws that touch and harmonize with all religions of the world. I believe that each living soul is imbued with the "memory" of their divine origin, and it is this moral compass that guides them in their choices and actions. This intuitive spiritual understanding living within each man and woman is what brings love and compassion into every area of life.

The End of British Colonialism

The British Empire was constructed and dependent upon the exploitation of weaker nations, such as India. Over time, the lack of a moral foundation at its structure caused the empire to collapse upon itself when those who had long been oppressed by it had had enough and rose up to fight for

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their independence. This is the always the fate of tyrants; that they will fall by their own greed. Any government with greed at its heart will fail and fall like a ton of loose bricks. Morality and ethics is the rock and mortar that upholds nations and empires, and gives them longevity and success. Without it, they are left to fend for themselves when the righteous reclaim what is theirs under the laws of God and all that is right and good. For the cause of freedom cannot be subjugated or suppressed; it is a divine calling that supersedes the arrogant, self-serving laws of little men.

The Philosophy of *Satyagraha*

In *Satyagraha* spiritual men and women of vision found a common ground between government and religion; they found a way to integrate the spiritual with the political so that war was no longer the only means to end oppression. War imposes a heavy burden on the economic structure of a nation, and creates separation and isolation from the world family. When the people of a nation can work with their leadership and police forces to affect spiritual, economic, and social change without the use of violence, there is growth and prosperity for all. *Satyagraha* creates a win-win situation that is hard to resist; while colonialism creates ethnocentrism, tyranny, oppression, poverty and death. The choice seems very clear.

Though I had succeeded in bringing India to a state of independence from British tyranny, I was assassinated before I had time to address the social reforms I wished to

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make within India itself. There was and still is a very definite social structure and class division that has caused great poverty, which is overwhelming and overlooked by privileged society. The "untouchables" are those unfortunate souls who were born outside of the acceptable social class or caste -- their skin color determines their destiny to live a life of poverty with no chance for an education because nobody wants to help them or have anything to do with them. They are the invisible people who have left a very large and visible scar of shame on the self-important and self-conscious face of India's high society.

Decades of British occupation in India have created a light-skinned, attractive race of people who were given every opportunity of education in the finest schools and their pick of the best jobs and careers. This has created a large chasm in the social structure and left many of the lower class with little or no chance to better themselves; when skin-color and looks determine opportunity in a society, mass poverty is the result.

To the beloved people of India and the world, let me say this: remember that you are not your bodies or your possessions -- when you leave this world all earthly things will melt away like the last frost before the spring. You will take with you only your SOUL and your HEART; that is all that GOD will see when you stand naked before the Majestic Presence. Live through your heart and recognize the divine soul within each and every person you encounter; for one day they will stand alongside you before GOD as your equal

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and you will be called to task for living a life of prejudice or compassion.

A prayer-song that will help you focus on faith, compassion and the power of love

1. Read this prose before you begin your day.
2. End with a "Blessed Be" at its ending.

God of Truth

"God of Truth,

*You have shown me that my brother is that ONE
who walks a dirt road on bare feet.*

*He is that ONE who cannot give me bread
but who gives a heart filled with hope.*

*You have shown me that my sister is that one
with children clinging to her back*

and a heavy basket of rags to wash in the river.

*She cannot give me a single rupee or a plate of rice,
but gives a song as sweet as the laughter of angels.*

God of Truth,

*You have shown me the power of faith
in the shining black eyes of a kindred spirit
who travels the steep and stony path*

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to freedom, equality and non-judgment.

*You have shown me how to see
beyond the flesh of those I meet,
and to TOUCH the sacred divinity of their souls.*

God of Truth,

*You have erased all lines of division from my sight
and shown me the boundless joy
of universal brotherhood and spiritual unity.*

*You have shown me the power of your love
in the resilience of the human heart to overcome
mountains of persecution, ignorance and intolerance,
and to find that one sure stronghold on the mountainside
where oppression is transformed into salvation
by the reach and pull of your mighty hand.*

God of Truth,

*You have shown me the power of non-violence
to tame the tigers of conflict into submission*

*and to stand up for what is right and true
within myself and within the world.*

*You have taught me the ways of Ahimsa
during this short stay on Earth
and to see the Brahma who beckons me*

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*To the place beyond all suffering where all souls are equal
In your eternal Grace.*

*I find peace now wherever I go.
There is peace in the field, the mountain, the stream.
There is peace in the rivers and lakes.
Everywhere I look, there is Peace.
Everywhere I go, there is Truth.*

*God is Truth and I am in God.
I am Truth."*

~Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

