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The Terrible Meek

by

CLIFFORD MANSHARDT

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The Terrible Meek

An Appreciation of
MOHANDAS K. GANDHI

By **CLIFFORD MANSARDT**

Henry Regnery Company

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HENRY REGNERY COMPANY

PAMPHLET NUMBER 31

JUNE 1948

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

The Terrible Meek

An Appreciation of
MOHANDAS K. GANDHI

By **CLIFFORD MANSARDT**

It is a grim fight and a weary one, this fight of
the Seeker of Truth: for the vow of the Truth-seeker
is harder to keep than that of the warrior or the widow.
For a few hours does the warrior fight; the flames soon end
the widow's struggle with death:
But the battle of the Knight of Truth goes on without ceasing:
Thus, lay hold on the sword of His Name, O my Brother
and fight as long as life lasts!

KABIR, 14th Century A.D.

HENRY REGNERY COMPANY

Hinsdale, Ill.

1948

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THE TERRIBLE MEEK:

An Appreciation of **MOHANDAS K. GANDHI**



The death of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi on January 30, 1948, marked the end of an era in India. It brought to a close a period of personal leadership which has had few parallels in world history, and the like of which may never be seen again. A frail, half-naked little brown man was revered almost as a god by millions of Hindus and honored by Hindus and Muslims alike. His word was of more power than the orders of government, enforced by armies and all the administrative machinery of a mighty empire. The world has lost one of the great figures of history.

I first met Mr. Gandhi a few months after my arrival in India, in 1925. Conversing informally at a small afternoon tea, Mr. Gandhi said: "It is my belief that most American missionaries in India talk too much. The most effective way to preach the gospel is to live the gospel. Let your deeds speak for you. Give yourselves in love. Love is the language of the heart which India understands. A rose does not need to preach. It simply spreads its fragrance. The fragrance of religious and spiritual life is much finer and subtler than that of the rose."

Mr. Gandhi's ideas attracted me and I began a study of his life and teachings which has continued through the years. Since Gandhiji was primarily a man of action he has left behind no

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carefully worked-out system of philosophy. In fact many of his statements are contradictory, for he dealt with practical problems and commented on such problems as they arose. And yet there are certain basic ideas which served to unify his thought and action.

At the heart of Mr. Gandhi's philosophy is the principle of *Satya* or Truth. *Satya* is derived from *Sat*, which means 'being'. *Satya* thus is being. Nothing exists in reality save Truth. Hence *Sat* or Truth becomes the most important name for God. "It is more correct," says Mr. Gandhi, "to say that Truth is God, than to say that God is Truth."¹ Without Truth there can be no true knowledge. Hence the Hindu scriptures associate *Chit* or knowledge with the name of God. Devotion to Truth is the sole justification for our existence.

Observation of the law of Truth does not mean simply speaking the Truth. It means Truth in thought, Truth in speech, and Truth in action. There can be no inward peace without true knowledge, which is the realization of Truth in its fulness.

Since human beings are fallible, what may seem to be Truth to one person may appear as Untruth to another. But just as God himself appears to different individuals in different aspects, so every man must follow Truth according to the best of his abilities. In the quest for Absolute Truth, or God, the seeker must be faithful to relative Truth—the faithful carrying out of his daily duties. "To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face," says Gandhi, "one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."² The pursuit of Truth is true devotion (*bhakti*). When Truth becomes the organizing principle of one's life, all other rules of correct living follow naturally, and obedience to these rules becomes spontaneous.

¹Gandhi, M. K., *From Yeravda Mandir*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, p. 1

²Gandhi, M. K., *An Autobiography, or The Story of My Experiments With Truth*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, p. 615

Intertwined with Truth is the principle of *Ahimsa*, Love, Non-violence. As Truth is the end, *ahimsa* is the means. "By concentration an acrobat can walk on a rope," says Mr. Gandhi, "but the concentration required to tread the path of Truth and *ahimsa* is far greater. The slightest inattention brings one tumbling to the ground. One can realize Truth and *ahimsa* only by ceaseless striving."³

The principle of *ahimsa* is often distorted in the West by overemphasis of the unwillingness of Hindus to take animal life. Buddha preached the sacredness of all created life and that nothing blessed with the breath of life should be killed by the hand of man. We hear stories about the Jains, who refuse to kill even a worm or an ant. But Gandhiji has emphasized the positive side of *ahimsa*. "Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of *ahimsa*," he says. "But it is its least expression. The principle of *ahimsa* is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody."⁴

Mr. Gandhi's life was organized around the principle of love. It is easy to love within narrow limits, but Gandhiji's love was all-inclusive. It took in the outcaste at the bottom of the Hindu social scale and it transcended religious lines to include Muslims. Even in the fiercest days of the national struggle, Mr. Gandhi refused to bear ill-will for the British. Time and again he told his followers that Indians were not fighting Englishmen, but that their struggle was against imperialism. At an age when he could have been enjoying a well-earned retirement, Mr. Gandhi risked his life daily, as he tramped the riot-torn areas of Bengal, Bihar and the Punjab in the interest of Hindu-Muslim unity. It was his love for others—his inclusiveness—that brought about his death at the hand of a Hindu bigot, who could visualize India simply as Hindustan—a place for the Hindus alone.

Although technically Mr. Gandhi's life was ended by an assassin's bullet, Gandhiji had faced and conquered death when he abandoned all thoughts of self to follow the way of love. He had made the words of the hymn of Pritamdas his own:

The pathway of love is the ordeal of fire. The shrinker
turns away from it. . . .

³From *Yeravda Mandir*, p. 5

⁴*Ibid*, p. 7

Love is a priceless thing, only to be won at the cost of death.

Those who live to die, these attain, for they have shed all thoughts of self.

Those heroic souls who are rapt in the love of the Lord, they are the true lovers.

“The body ceases to be,” says Gandhi, “when we give up all attachment to it. This freedom from all attachment is the realization of God as Truth. Such realization cannot be attained in a hurry. The body does not belong to us. While it lasts, we must use it as a trust handed over to our charge. Treating in this way the things of the flesh, we may one day expect to become free from the burden of the body. Realizing the limitations of the flesh, we must strive day by day towards the ideal with what strength we have in us . . . Whatever difficulties we encounter, whatever apparent reverses we sustain, we may not give up the quest for Truth which alone is, being God Himself.”⁵

The third ruling principle of Gandhi's life was *Brahmacharya* or Chastity. The man who takes Truth as his life-partner is unfaithful to her if he applies his talents in other directions. Since consecration to the realization of Truth requires utter selflessness, the attempt to realize Truth through self-gratification is a contradiction in terms.

Brahmacharya, for Gandhiji, is not just a matter of sexual morality. Etymologically, *charya* means course of conduct; *brahmacharya*, conduct directed to the search of *Brahma* or Truth—which implies the disciplined control of all the senses.

“The distinction between the life of a *brahmachari* and of one who is not ought to be as clear as daylight,” says Mr. Gandhi. “Both use their eyesight, but whereas the *brahmachari* uses it to see the glories of God, the other uses it to see the frivolity around him. Both use their ears, but whereas the one hears nothing but praises of God, the other feasts his ears upon ribaldry. Both often keep late hours, but whereas the one devotes them to prayer, the other fritters them away in wild and wasteful mirth. Both feed the inner man, but the one only to keep the temple of God in good repair, while the other

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 8-9

gorges himself and makes the sacred vessel a stinking gutter . . . *Brahmacharya* means control of the senses in thought, word and deed."⁶

During Gandhi's lifetime I was often asked by American friends: "Why does Mr. Gandhi dress as he does?" The answer is that Gandhiji identified himself completely with the Indian masses. Since the great majority of the peasants are so poor that they can afford only a minimum of clothing, Mr. Gandhi accepted their lot as his own and dramatized Indian poverty to the world at large. He lived as a humble peasant, though he could have maintained himself in luxury.

In Gandhi's thinking, theft was not just a matter of one person taking another person's property. With millions starving for lack of food, he regarded it as theft for any person to take food that he did not require, or in larger quantities than his bodily needs demanded. "Perfect fulfilment of the ideal of non-possession requires, that man should, like the birds, have no roof over his head, no clothing and no stock of food for the morrow." But only the fewest possible, if any at all, can reach this ideal. Nevertheless, the ideal must be kept in view, and every seeker after Truth must critically examine his possessions and seek to reduce them. It is in this connection that Mr. Gandhi gave utterance to one of his most profound insights. "Civilization, in the real sense of the term," he says, "consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service."⁷

Mr. Gandhi believed that the scriptures of the world are sounder treatises on the laws of economics than many modern textbooks. Jesus, Mahomed, Buddha, Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Shankara, Dayanand and Ramakrishna were all men who made the world the richer, and all of them had voluntarily accepted poverty as their lot. Instead of accepting American wealth as the standard of progress, Gandhi would have India strive to be morally supreme. "Instead of boasting of your glorious past," he says, "let us express the ancient moral glory in our own lives and let our lives bear witness to our boast. . . . Ours will only be a truly spiritual nation when we shall show more

⁶An *Autobiography*, pp. 258-259

⁷From *Yeravda Mandir*, pp. 24-25

truth than gold, greater fearlessness than pomp of power and wealth, greater charity than love of self. If we will but cleanse our houses, our palaces and temples of the attributes of wealth and show in them the attributes of morality, we can offer battle to any combination of hostile forces without having to carry the burden of a heavy militia. Let us seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the irrevocable promise is that everything will be added unto us. These are the real economics."⁸

Just before his death Mr. Gandhi engaged in one of his numerous fasts—his final fast being in the interest of Hindu-Muslim unity. "Why does Mr. Gandhi fast?" has been another familiar question. Fasting is rooted deep in the religious history of India. Austerity, called *tapas* in Sanskrit, was practiced centuries before the birth of Christ, when religious devotees punished themselves in unusual ways in the attempt to secure unusual powers—generally for personal benefit. The Hindu sacred scriptures abound in instances of men, who, by torturing themselves, gained power over the gods or over other men.

Thus in the *Ramayana* (i. 57-66) we have the story of the king Vishvamitra, who resolved to compel the gods to make him a Brahmin, after having suffered humiliation at the hands of the Brahmin Vasishtha. For a thousand years he engaged in rigid austerities which attracted the attention of the gods, but his reward was not Brahminhood, but the designation of *Rajarsi*, or Royal Sage. Still Vishvamitra was not dismayed. He undertook a second thousand years of austerities and this time was rewarded by the plain title of Sage. The king was still unsatisfied. Following a policy of all or nothing at all, he returned to his austerities.

The gods, recognizing his determination, sent a nymph from heaven to lure the king from his path. Vishvamitra succumbed to her charms, and for ten years gave way to his passions. Then his eyes were opened, and though he had lost all the merit so laboriously gained, he began his quest anew.

Retiring to the Himalayas, he took the vow of chastity, and underwent another thousand years of austerities. By this

⁸Gandhi, M. K., *India Of My Dreams* (Compiled by R. K. Prabhu), Hind Kitabs Ltd., Bombay, pp. 92-93

time the gods were really alarmed, and awarded him the title of Mighty Saint. But Vishvamitra said he would be satisfied with one title alone—the name of Brahmin.

Again he went to work. He stood on one foot for a thousand years, at the same time holding his arms high over his head. He never moved. In the hottest summer he underwent the ordeal of the five fires. He refused protection during the rains. He ate only air. Such devotion caused the gods to tremble and after a hurried conference they dispatched a second nymph from heaven to display her charms. But this time Vishvamitra saw through the ruse, and in a fit of anger turned the hapless nymph into stone. By becoming angry, however, he lost merit, and so began the task of overcoming anger.

For a thousand years he did not speak, and then, his vow of silence having been completed, sat down to eat some boiled rice. The gods were still active. They sent a Brahmin beggar to request the rice. Without hesitation Vishvamitra complied, and for another thousand years observed the vow which he had hoped to break with that meal of rice. For a thousand years he neither breathed, ate nor spoke.

The gods then knew that they were defeated. Only quick action could save the three worlds from destruction. Vishvamitra's request was granted. He was raised to the rank of Brahmin, and continued to live happily through many generations.⁹

Contrast this story with the general pattern of Mr. Gandhi's fasts. The 21-day fast in 1924 can be taken as illustrative. Gandhiji had been released from jail, after an imprisonment of two years, and was just recovering from an operation for appendicitis. Hindu-Muslim relationships, which had been steadily deteriorating, broke down completely in many parts of India, with exceptionally serious riots at Kohat, resulting in the exodus of the entire Hindu population. It was obvious that more than ordinary steps must be taken to restore confidence.

Mr. Gandhi spent days and nights in prayer seeking divine guidance, and on September 18 announced that he would undertake a fast of three weeks as an act of penitence because of

⁹Summarized from Macfie, J. M., *Myths and Legends of India*, T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh, pp. 15-20

the sins of his own people. The fast was a truly vicarious one—where a man who was innocent undertook to punish himself for the sake of the guilty. As news of the fast spread through the country, the masses were overcome with fear and wonder. They turned to prayer for their beloved leader, and the terrible riots ceased.

On the twelfth day of the fast, when Mr. Gandhi's life seemed to be in real danger, his immediate followers urged him to take food. But Gandhi replied: "Have faith in God. . . . You have forgotten the power of prayer." The fast was completed successfully and Gandhiji's favorite hymn was sung: "The way to God is only meant for heroes; it is not meant for cowards."

While the fast was in progress a Unity Conference met in Delhi, bringing together outstanding religious and political leaders from all communities, seeking to find a way to promote harmonious relations between the contending religious groups.

In the story from the *Ramayana*, which we have summarized, Vishvamitra underwent great austerities in order to gain the powers of a Brahmin. But in his hour of triumph he insisted that his old enemy Vasishtha be present personally to convey him his title, on behalf of the gods. Other stories show a more definite trend in the direction of utilizing *tapas* for the realization of moral and less selfish aims. When Mr. Gandhi fasted he put positive moral and social content into the ancient principle. To achieve a result was not enough. The whole *act* must be entered into in the spirit of love. Having purified himself, he was then in a position to endure suffering to promote the welfare of others. And when it came to the final sacrifice, his death was so awe-inspiring, that the war-like passions of Hindus and Muslims alike were stilled. The bloody communal strife, which Gandhiji had been unable to control in life, came to an end under the stimulus of a common grief.

In developing the principle of sacrifice (*yajna*), Gandhiji departed from the traditional Hindu view of sacrifice as renunciation. The holy man, to the great majority of Hindus, is the man who abandons the world. Renunciation, as interpreted by Gandhi, means living in the world, but carrying the principle of renunciation into all the activities of life. All men must live the dedicated life. Thus life becomes a duty rather than an in-

dulgence, and livelihood instead of becoming the major objective, is the by-product of one's vocation. When work is transmuted into worship, life becomes artistic in the real sense of the term. "A life of sacrifice is the pinnacle of art, and is full of true joy."¹⁰ Gandhi urges unpaid public service as a duty, taking precedence over service of self. The pure devotee is one who serves humanity without reservation.

One of the secrets of Mr. Gandhi's power was his humility. Though one of the world's truly great men, Mr. Gandhi was wholly selfless. Even his worst enemies could never accuse him of self-seeking. He sought neither wealth, position, nor political power. His life was dedicated to the service of an ideal. For Gandhiji, humility was not a matter of deprecating one's self and refusing to take responsibility. Inertia and humility are not synonymous. Each person must recognize his own limitations and then serve whole-heartedly within the framework of these limitations. Every man thus has a useful function in society, and no man has a right to glory in pride of place.

All creatures are nothing more than a mere atom in this universe. Our existence as embodied beings is purely momentary; what are a hundred years in eternity? But if we shatter the chains of egotism, and melt into the ocean of humanity, we share its dignity. To feel that we are something is to set up a barrier between God and ourselves; to cease feeling that we are something is to become one with God. A drop in the ocean partakes of the greatness of its parent, although it is unconscious of it. But it is dried up, as soon as it enters upon an existence independent of the ocean. We do not exaggerate, when we say that life on earth is a mere bubble.¹¹

Unlike most world figures of this generation, Mr. Gandhi believed in the supremacy of the spiritual. He regarded the spiritual as the supremely real. He believed in God; he felt that his actions were guided by the spirit of God, and spent long hours in seeking to know the will of God. He prayed in the morning to gain strength for the duties of the day, and he prayed at night to secure that peace which would enable him

¹⁰From *Yeravda Mandir*, p. 59

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 46-47

to rise above the responsibilities of the day. In season and out of season, Mr. Gandhi testified to the help of prayer in meeting his crushing responsibilities.

My first prolonged contact with Gandhiji was in 1931, when Gandhi served as the sole Congress representative at the Second Round Table Conference in London. My family and I sailed from Bombay on the same ship as Mr. Gandhi and his party. Our cabins were in the same passageway, so for a number of days we were thrown quite closely together.

My outstanding memory of the voyage is the evening prayer meetings held on the boat deck of the ship, led by Mr. Gandhi and attended by any who desired to participate. The Arabian Sea was storm-tossed, but the quiet of the Red Sea, coupled with the unusual beauty of the evening sunset, provided a rare setting for Mr. Gandhi's evening message. The uninitiated would never have guessed that upon this frail little man's shoulders lay the political destiny of India. His role appeared rather to be that of a religious leader. He discussed many topics, but again and again came back to prayer. "I could not bear the burdens of life apart from prayer," he said. "Without it I should long since have become a lunatic. Prayer is my daily sustenance. I cannot live without it."

And when a group of Indian students who were going to London for higher studies, asked for a message, it was the same advice: "Be constant in prayer. Prayer alone will sustain you in your hours of need."

Mr. Gandhi believed both in public and private prayer. "A congregational prayer is a mighty thing. What we do not often do alone, we do together. . . . It is a common experience for men who have no robust faith to seek the comfort of congregational prayer. All who flock to churches, temples, or mosques are not scoffers or humbugs. They are honest men and women. For them congregational prayer is like the daily bath, a necessity of their existence. These places of worship are not a mere idle superstition to be swept away at the first opportunity. They have survived all attacks up to now and are likely to persist to the end of time."¹²

¹²Winslow, Jack C., and Elwin, Verrier, *Gandhi: The Dawn of Indian Freedom*, Fleming H. Revell Company, London, pp. 82-83

It was while going to his daily prayers that Mr. Gandhi met his death.

The two ruling principles of Gandhi's life—Truth and Non-violence—came to significant expression in the movement first known as passive resistance and later designated as *Satyagraha*. Gandhi's experiments with passive resistance began in South Africa, where he led the Indian residents in the Transvaal in a protest against discriminatory legislation. But as the struggle advanced it became clear that the phrase 'passive resistance' was not an adequate description of its nature. A small prize was offered for a better name, which brought forth the suggestion *Sadagraha*—firmness in a good cause. Mr. Gandhi amended this suggestion to *Satyagraha*, as more completely denoting the true nature of the movement. "Truth (*Satya*)," he says, "implies love, and firmness (*Agraha*), engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement *Satyagraha*, that is to say, the Force which is born of Truth and Love or Non-violence, and gave up the use of the phrase 'passive resistance.'"¹⁸

Mr. Gandhi felt that the term "passive resistance" was not free from the connotation of violence and that in fact it had been used by other groups as a preliminary to violence. *Satyagraha*, on the other hand, was soul-force pure and simple. Again, passive resistance does not demand love for the person or group resisted, while *Satyagraha* is founded on love and has no place for hatred. Passive resistance carries with it the idea of harassing the other party. *Satyagraha* has no desire whatever to injure the opponent. It looks towards the conquest of the opposite party by suffering in one's own person—in other words, by love. The object of *Satyagraha* is positive—to effect such a change of heart in the opponent that he becomes a better and stronger person.

Since *Satyagraha* is based on Truth, it can only be offered in a righteous cause. Gandhiji has referred to *Satyagraha* as *dharma-yuddha*—righteous war. Righteous war, in this sense, does not mean the same thing as the traditional holy war, where men killed in the name of religion. It is rather a struggle organized around the principles of religion. And as Truth is all-

¹⁸Gandhi, M. K., *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, p. 173

powerful, *Satyagraha* must in the end prevail.

Satyagraha, as practiced in India during the last thirty years, has had its failures. There have been errors of judgment on the part of the leaders, and violent action by *satyagrahis* who joined the movement from mixed motives. But when all is said, there is no other movement in modern times which has accomplished so much with so little. Impractical as Gandhi's principles may appear to the practical man, the fact remains that *Satyagraha* has worked. India today is free, not through the use of guns, airplanes or tanks, but through the discipline of self-suffering. And is it an overstatement to say that Britain too is cleansed, because she had the moral courage to grant this freedom?

We in the West, who sit daily under the shadow of war, should at least make the effort to explore this principle, for it presents a challenge both to our Christianity and our humanity. If soul-force can work—and its effectiveness has been proven—why do we hesitate to put in practice that which is a derivative of our own religion? Can it be that the moral leadership of the world is passing to the East?

The question has often been raised whether Mr. Gandhi was not a secret, though unbaptized Christian. The answer is no. Mr. Gandhi had a feeling of kinship with all religions. Since "all faiths outlined by men are imperfect, the question of comparative merit does not arise. All faiths constitute a revelation of Truth, but all are imperfect and liable to error. Reverence for other faiths need not blind us to their faults. We must be keenly alive to the defects of our own faith also, yet not leave it on that account, but try to overcome those defects. Looking at all religions with an equal eye, we would not only not hesitate, but would think it our duty, to blend into our faith every acceptable feature of other faiths."¹⁴ Such tolerance does not mean indifference towards one's own faith, but a more intelligent and purer love for it. Through toleration of other faiths we come to a better understanding of our own.

In response to a direct question asking why he remained a Hindu, Mr. Gandhi said: "Being born in a Hindu family, I have remained a Hindu. I should reject it, if I found it inconsistent with my moral sense or my spiritual growth. On exam-

¹⁴From *Yeravda Mandir*, pp. 38-39

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ination I have found it to be the most tolerant of all religions known to me. Its freedom from dogma makes a forcible appeal to me inasmuch as it gives the votary the largest scope for self-expression. Not being an exclusive religion, it enables the followers of that faith not merely to respect all the other religions, but it also enables them to admire and assimilate whatever may be good in other faiths. Non-violence is common to all religions, but it has found the highest expression and application in Hinduism."¹⁵

When asked whether he was a secret Christian, Gandhi replied: "The charge of being a Christian in secret is not new. It is both a libel and a compliment—a libel because there are men who can believe me to be capable of being secretly anything, i.e., for fear of being that openly. There is nothing in the world that would keep me from professing Christianity or any other faith, the moment I felt the truth of and the need for it. Where there is fear there is no religion. The charge is a compliment in that it is a reluctant acknowledgment of my capacity for appreciating the beauties of Christianity. Let me own this. If I could call myself, say, a Christian or a Mussalman, with my own interpretation of the Bible or the Quran, I should not hesitate to call myself either. For then Hindu, Christian and Mussalman would be synonymous terms."¹⁶

India has always opened her heart to great leaders. The orthodox Hindus believe that there have been nine incarnations of Vishnu, but in actual practice the list is not limited to these nine. There is a verse in the *Gita* which declares: "Whenever there is decay of righteousness, and there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then I myself come forth; for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, I am born from age to age." These words are the words of Krishna, who in the *Gita* is both the incarnation and spokesman of Vishnu.

During his lifetime Mr. Gandhi was worshipped as an incarnation of Vishnu by numbers of people, variously estimated, the figure mentioned by some running into the millions. Since his death, his image has been enshrined in numerous temples. A book published in Bombay in 1945 declares that

¹⁵*Young India*, October 20, 1927, quoted in Gandhi, M. K., *Christian Missions*, Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad, p. 36

¹⁶*Young India*, September 2, 1926, quoted in *Christian Missions*, pp. 48-49

the world is witnessing today the fulfilment of the cyclic manifestations spoken of in the *Bhagavadgita*. The time will come "when Mahatma Gandhi will be regarded as an incarnation of God by the teeming millions of India."¹⁷

The West will be somewhat reluctant to accept this estimate of Mr. Gandhi, but it does see in him a Saint in the best religious tradition. Paraphrasing the words of an earlier biographer, one can say: In many ways, the teachings of Gandhi illuminate and recall to the modern world the half-forsaken ideals of Catholic Christendom. Intellectually a rationalist, temperamentally and in the field of ethics, Gandhi revealed the closest kinship to Catholicism. He understood and advocated the monastic ideal, in the Franciscan and Jesuit interpretation of it. He knew the power of Poverty. He believed in Celibacy. His own practice of fasting and silence linked him to the great Catholic saints. He understood the meaning of Obedience and believed in Penance. His love of prayer, stress on discipline, his desire that religion should be ordered and reasonable; his pre-eminent belief in the supremacy of spiritual powers, marked him as a Saint of the Catholic type. The same sort of things which made men love Francis made men love Gandhi.¹⁸

Gandhi by early training was a lawyer, but certainly other lawyers in India have won greater distinction in that field. Gandhi was the recognized leader of the Congress Party, but he was by no means the most brilliant parliamentarian in the Congress group. Every word that Gandhi uttered was accorded respect and huge throngs were present at all of his public appearances, but Gandhi could not be called a silver-tongued orator. What then was the secret of his influence? Simply this. Gandhi incarnated in his own person the ideals and aspirations of India. He was the soul of the nation.

Today Mr. Gandhi is gone, and the people of India who leaned so heavily on his leadership must walk alone. But the life and teachings of Gandhi are there to guide them—and to guide not only India, but a groping world.

¹⁷Gupta, Nagendranath, *Gandhi and Gandhism*, Hind Kitabs, Bombay, p. 31

¹⁸Winslow and Elwin *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45

THE AUTHOR

CLIFFORD MANSHARDT writes of Gandhi and the ideas he represented from the background of close personal experience in India, and careful study. He went to India in 1925 to become director of a neighborhood house in Bombay. He became later also Director of a leading school for social work in Bombay, and of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust. He returned to this country from India in 1941.

In an earlier pamphlet in this series, *Freedom Without Violence: India's Struggle for Independence*, Dr. Manshardt discussed Mr. Gandhi's political leadership and his influence on the Indian independence movement. For this reason, he has confined himself in the present pamphlet to Mr. Gandhi's fundamental thinking.

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