CHAPTER VI

ATMABALAM- THE SPIRIT OF THE MAHATMA,

SATYAM TUAM ASI

By adopting to live in harmony with Nature, Gandhiji could prove that he was a great spiritual scientist. Through the simple techniques of Nature living he could fuse social values and spiritual science. He translated Hindu religion into simple popular terminology of practical living. In addition to the infrastructure sought from social values, his staunch belief in God served as the catalyzing agent in all his scientific experiments with Nature living and truth. He synthesized religion and ideas expressing morality and ethics. He believed that man was essentially a seeker of Truth. He did not believe in a personal God, his God was more of sat-chit-ananda: Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. He was a monotheist and identified the relevance of man’s return to the Cosmo-primal energy supporting the vast cosmic universe. As the Vedanta concept of Tat-Tuam- Asi -- Thou art that Gandhiji showed himself Satyam-tuam-as -You are truth, i.e. he proved to be an incarnation of truth. He gave up the metaphysical disquisition about the nature of God. He conceptualized how God can be identified with
Truth. He had the very deep and profound Hindu concept of *Brahma* the all prevailing reality which is God in its various manifestations. It is that God he believed in. To quote his own words: "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. He is even the atheism of the atheist."¹ George Orwell, who was temperamentally away from Gandhiji considered him as "a humble naked old man, sitting on a praying mat and shaking empires by sheer spiritual power."² Gandhiji had a firm conviction in simple living and believed how God would pave the way for the attainment of self realization and *Moksha*. His line of argument in this regard was justified by his own interpretation of the *Gita*.

In his search for the eternal spirit, Gandhiji was perpetually guided by *Bhagavat Gita*-his eternal mother. Every activity of his daily life reflected the concepts moulded by *Gita*. He admits:

The *Gita* is not only my Bible or Koran, it is more than that. It is my mother. I lost my earthy mother, who gave me birth, long ago; but this eternal mother has completely filled her place by my side ever since. She has never changed, she has never failed
The conviction that *Gita* -is the greatest work of practical Indian Philosophy led Gandhiji to interpret the same for the common man, who has little or no literary equipment, “who has neither the time nor the desire to read the *Gita* in original and yet who stands in need of it”

His interpretation – the gospel of selfless action – was carried out, in harmony with routine life, through discourses and discussions after daily morning prayer. His interpretation gives importance to the practice of *karmayoga* in terms of nonviolence and work without attachment. As Gandhiji accepted *Gita* as a dictionary, his interpretation of *Gita* can be considered as a Thesaurus for every aspirant of spiritual freedom. Swami Ranganathananda observes:

Mahatma Gandhi’s translation of the *Gita* is entitled *Anasaktiyoga*. There can be no expression of the science of values or spiritual growth without this *anasakti* or detachment from the body and the little self presiding over it. That is the evolutionary path towards *moksha* or spiritual freedom which is the goal of all evolution. The science of spirituality or *adhyatma vidhya* deals with this subject of *moksha* towards
which one can travel at one's own pace, when well established in the science of values.\(^5\)

Through the interpretation of the *Gita*, he explains the ethical and moral aspects of *Dharma* which constitute the basic science of values.

Gandhiji realized how the *sankhya* philosophy and *Gita* concept are in sharp contrast. Through the simplicity in living he identified the principles of the *sankhya* system adopted by *Gita*. The concept of evolution to explain the breaking up of the unmanifest into the manifest and the idea of *gunas* are realized in detail. But the *Gita* denies the independent existence of *prakriti* and *Purusha*. The root of that dualism is cut at the root and *Brahman* is projected as the all-prevading spirit of everything animate or inanimate.

This Absolute is thus described as having **two aspects or natures** - the higher and the lower, the higher consisting of the Essence that vitalizes and sustains, and the lower being the world of Nature. The higher aspect – *Jiva* – is the individual self in all, and the world of Nature is nothing but the *Sankhyan Prakriti*...... The individual self is the same as the Universal Self, only seeming different in different bodies, because he
identifies himself with the various adjuncts, the body, the mental and the intellectual apparatus, and experiences the objective world. It is his attachment to these adjuncts- these *gunas* that binds him to the body and drags him from birth to death and death to birth."

The Uniqueness of Hinduism identifies *prakriti*, *Gunas* and the concept of *Moksha*. The *Sankhya* concept of *Prakriti* and the *Gita* concept of the *gunas* are closely identical.

The *gunas* are not separate from *prakriti*; they are often described as "born of *prakriti*", but they are the very stuff of *prakriti*, as indeed we have them described as synonymous with *prakriti*. Man's senses, mind, intellect etc are his *prakriti* or his *gunas*.?

He believed in the *Gita* Concept that *Moksha* is for those who strive till their last breath...

Krishna is the Lord of *yajna* and we worship Him because, though in human form, He worked all His life. He was awake every moment, awake even when the Pandavas slept. The latter's eyes were always fixed on him. He did not wish to harm the Kauravas or help the Pandavas; His only aim was to see that
right prevailed. He spent his body working ceaselessly all his life, but it retained its light till the last.\(^8\)

Gandhiji’s actions and aspirations were centered on these concepts which acted as a sure guide in his path towards self-realization.

Gandhiji's continual sojourns in England, and South Africa and the untiring journey through the lengths and breadths of India gave him enough opportunities to experience the mystic glory of the creator. He was fully conscious of the duty assigned to him by Him. These divergent realms of experience helped him to conceptualize the spiritual authenticity of human existence. Sheshrao Chavan comments:

Gandhiji coveted no position, no wealth, no power, and yet he was able to command the respectful obedience of millions. This influence according to Rabindranatha Tagore sprang from his dynamic spiritual strength and incessant sacrifice. His passive resistance was based on absolute fearlessness before guns and bayonets, imprisonment and tortures; insults and injuries even death itself could not dim the spirit of Gandhiji.\(^9\)

To attain the spiritual goal, Gandhiji followed the natural scheme of life, envisaged by vedic tradition, with his own amendments of timely relevance. He was a keen interpreter of simple life and the various
principles of *ashrams* propounded by *Vedic* India. He believed that "the family, the varnas, the ashrams, the sadhanas were all designed to perfect the individual." He proved how the Indian way of living propagated by him deepens the personality and attunes the mind free from psychic imbalance. It develops the positive attitudes like patience and persuasion. The ashrams or the four stages in one's life—the *brahmacharya*, the *grihasthashrama*, the *vanaprastha* and *sanyasa* were rightly interpreted from the perspective of true Hinduism. He had great faith in such concepts because he believed that "Religion touches the deepest elements of the human psyche." He interpreted religion from the perspective of social psychology. The very word "Religion comes from a word, the root of which means to bring together." That is why he praised *sarvadharmasamabhava*—a concept superior to secularism.

The profound faith in the possibilities of Hinduism turned Gandhiji practically optimistic. He realized how Hinduism and simple living could bring about harmony between the various religions. He proved how a Hindu could experience life as absolutely equal and one. Gandhiji expressed his strong protest against the arrogant and anti-natural concept of the priests. He had no hesitation in criticizing those
Hindus who held orthodox views which annihilate the spirit of Hinduism. He eulogizes the uniqueness of Hinduism, which was the pole star in all his voyages to fathom the depth and the relevance of righteousness and simple living in terms of self realization. Gandhiji's unique spiritual quest was already there when he came across and befriended with the religious enthusiasts like the Theosophist brothers in England. In their company he read Sir. Edwin Arnold's *The song Celestial* – the translation of *Bhagavad Gita*: “The verse in the second chapter—

If one

Ponders on objects of the sense, there springs

Attraction; from attraction grows desire,

Desire flames to fierce passion, passion breeds

Recklessness, then the memory - all betrayed -

Lets noble purpose go, and saps the mind,

Till purpose, mind, and man are all undone - made a deep impression on my mind and they still ring in my ears.” Following *The Song celestial* they recommended *The light of Asia* by the same author. He was introduced to the Theosophist Supremo Madam Blavatsky and Mrs.Annie Besant. This acquaintance gave him an
opportunity to read Madam Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy*. He says: "This book stimulated in me the desire to read books on Hinduism, and disabused me of the notion fostered by the missionaries that Hinduism is rife with superstition." It was about this time that Gandhiji got introduced to Christianity. A copy of the Bible which he bought from a Christian friend of Manchester whom he met at a vegetarian boarding house in London paved the way to his knowledge on Christianity. The Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament imparted immense impression on Gandhiji's mind. He admits: It

...went straight into my heart. I compared it with the Gita. The verses 'But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but who so ever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man take away thy coat let him have thy cloke too' delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of Shamal Bhatt's 'For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal' etc.

My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the Gita, the *Light of Asia* and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly. As a school boy Gandhiji was taught all sorts of things except religion in the sense of self realization or knowledge of self. Though
born in the *Vaishnavite* faith, he hesitated to go to *Haveli* - the *Vaishnava* temple, where much immoralities were practised. He was not an indiscriminate superstitious worshipper of all that goes under the title 'worship'. He had an aversion for whatever is evil or immoral.

He says:

Being born in the *Vaishnava* faith, I had often go to the *Haveli*. But it never appealed to me. I did not like its glitter and pomp. Also I heard rumors of immorality practiced there, and lost all interest in it. Hence I could gain nothing from the *Haveli*.

His attitude to other places of worship was also identical.

Gandhiji realized how fearlessness is the first requisite of spirituality and how it could be accumulated through Nature living.

When he was young there was in him a fear of ghosts and spirits. His childhood nurse suggested a remedy for the fear. She advised him to repeat *Ramanama*.

I had more faith in her than in her remedy, and so at a tender age I began repeating *Ramanama* to cure my fear of ghosts and spirits. This was of course short lived but the good seed sown in childhood was not sown in vain. I think it is due to the seed
sown by that good woman Rambha that today \textit{Ramanama} is an
infallible remedy for me.\textsuperscript{17}

The zest for the spiritual quest was further intensified while listening to
the reading of the religious books like \textit{Ramayana, and Bhagavata}.

About this time he laid the foundation of his \textbf{deep devotion to}
\textit{Ramayana}: "Today I regard the \textit{Ramayana} of Tulsidas as the greatest
book in all devotional literature."\textsuperscript{18} He realized how simple living and
\textit{Ramanama} – repeated recitation of God’s name - had tremendous
potentialities to purgate the body, mind and spirit which should go in
perfect harmony for self realization - the supreme goal of all religions.

Gandhiji believed in the Hindu theory of the \textit{Guru} or teacher
and his importance in spiritual quests. But his personal amendments
were appended to the theory, which motivated to attain the goal of self
realization:

I think there is a great deal of truth in the doctrine that true
knowledge is impossible without a Guru. An imperfect teacher
may be tolerable in mundane matters, but not in spiritual
matters. Only a perfect \textsuperscript{gnani} deserves to be enthroned as Guru.
There must, therefore, be ceaseless striving after perfection. For
one gets the Guru that one deserves. \textit{Infinite} striving after
perfection is one's right. It is its own reward. The rest is in the hands of God."19

The true Guru is to be reached naturally. Gandhiji got acquainted with Raychandbhai, the connoisseur of pearls and diamonds. He was a man of spotless character and wide knowledge of the scriptures. He had a burning passion for self realization. Though Gandhiji could not place him on the throne of his heart as Guru, he was Gandhiji's guide and helper. Gandhiji admits: "Three moderns have left a deep impression on my life, and captivated me: Raychandbhai by his living contact; Tolstoy by his book The Kingdom of God is within you; and Ruskin by his Unto This Last."20 It is well known that Gandhiji did not seek and find a Guru. Louis Fischer comments: "Gandhiji had no Guru; ideas came to him through his own acts. Ruskin's second and third teachings were really Gandhiji's own... he read into Gita and Ruskin his own deepest convictions..."21 Gandhiji's strange potentiality was totally aided by the simplicity in living which he observed.

Adherence to Nature living and zest for self realization were the guiding forces of Gandhiji's spiritual pursues. He believed that some of his prominent acquaintances in South Africa were catalytic in his efforts for self realization through religion. Through his association
with Dada Abdullah he got some introduction to Islam and Koran and the glory of righteousness and self purification through fasting. He learnt that Islam was not the religion of the sword but the message of the simple and humble. His meeting with Dada Abdulla’s attorney Mr. A.W. Baker at Pretoria was a turning point. He received Gandhiji warmly and made kind enquiries. He warned about the fearful amount of colour prejudice in South Africa. He upheld the excellence of Christianity from various points of view. He ascertained Gandhiji’s religious views during the very first interview and invited him to attend the prayer at the church built at his own expense. This invitation acted as a turning point in Gandhiji’s quest for self realization. The same night he thought:

What, I thought, can be the meaning of Mr. Baker’s interest in me? What shall I gain from his religious co-workers? How far should I undertake the study of Christianity? How was I to get literature about Hinduism? And how was I to understand Christianity in its proper perspective without thoroughly knowing my own religion? I could come to only one conclusion: I should make a dispassionate study of all that came to me, and deal with Mr. Baker’s group as God might guide me.
I should not think of embracing another religion before I had fully understood my own.²²

This was an occasion for his ardent spiritual introspection through prayers. He joined Mr. Baker's prayer meeting, for he believed that prayer is a holy performance and a verbal component in Nature living; which assures help in self-realization. He identified how the prayers were supplications to God for various things, integral, according to each person's desire. Gandhiji admits: "A prayer was now added for my welfare: 'Lord, show the path to the new brother who has come amongst us. Give him, Lord, the peace that thou hast given us'."²³ He found a sublime sense of relief in supplicating for simple things. This sense served as a perpetual fountain of incessant consolation throughout his living in harmony with Nature.

Gandhiji realized how one who views Nature as a manifestation of God and believes in Nature living develops a living faith which is an impulse to prayer. As he believed in God it followed that he must pray to Him. To him prayer is any devotional act and it is asking God for help when one is in need. It is not only a devotional performance but also an opportunity for spiritual recreation through introspection, confession and repentance. Prayer is a poignant yearning of the heart to
be one with the Maker, an invocation for His blessing and an asking; and a longing of the soul, a daily admission of one's weakness. During prayer one reviews one's immediate past, confesses one's weakness, asks for forgiveness and strength to be and to perform better.

Prayer imparts a living awareness of God within and supplies an ardent zest for selfless action. For those who are filled with the presence of God in them to labour is to pray – work is worship. Their life in harmony with Nature is one continuous prayer or act of worship. Nature living kept Gandhiji alert to be prayerful in all his enterprises. He believed in the concept of omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. A prayer is meant to evoke the Divinity within the person who supplicates to God. Prayer is a continual longing to dissolve into the Divinity and attain self realization. Gandhiji believed that steadfastness to Truth is Prarthana which in effect means an earnest desire to be fulfilled with the spirit of Truth. The desire should be present all the twenty four hours. But without simplicity in living human souls are too dull to have this awareness day and night. In simple living or Nature living one offers prayers for a short time in the hope that a time will come when all the human conduct will be one continuously sustained prayer. To Gandhiji a prayful heart is the
vehicle of genuine service and service makes the heart prayful. The thousands who sweat before the spinning wheel lead a simple life and they pray by performing a celestial action - a plea for swadeshi, Swarajya- independence and swaaraajya- self-mastery. Satya Sai Baba enlightens: “The complete man is he who achieves outer swarajya and inner swaaraajya.”

Gandhiji ventured to eradicate untouchability through a sequence of sincere prayer. He visualized how God himself recognizes the heart of him who serves his fellow men. To Gandhiji prayer is no mere exercise of words of the ears, it is no mere repetition of empty formula. A simple man’s prayer should be acceptable, to the masses, if it is congregational as Gandhiji’s favourite one:

*Raghupathi Raghava Raja Ram*

*Patheetha Pavana Seetharam*

*Eswara Allah Tere Nam*

*Subko Sanmadi De Bhagvan*

In this congregational hit a spiritual realm of values is aroused with a sense of monotheism. It should be a namajapa - utterance and repetition of a name as in Ramanama if it is a personal prayer. But repetition of Ramanama is futile if it fails to stir the soul. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart. It
must be in clear response to the spirit which hungers for it. Gandhiji advised to begin one's day with prayer and make it so soulful that it may remain with one until evening. Prayer always reminds of God's glory and man's helpless insignificance. Nature living emphasizes how prayer is the only means of bringing about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts. The divergent aspects of his activities were influenced by this belief. Gandhiji's concern on the internal and external cleanliness is well-known. He argued how the body becomes dirty if we do not bathe and how the pure soul appears impure unless the heart is washed with the water of prayer. Soul also requires a sort of water cure to eliminate malignancy and ailments if any. Gandhiji says: "As food is necessary for the body, prayer is necessary for the soul." He also believed in occasional fasting an essential requisite for Nature living. It is also a kind of prayer. Fasting of a spiritual nature is an effort to become one with the universal essence, so it is the highest form of a prayer. Our prayer is a search. It is a reminder to ourselves that we are helpless without His support. No effort is complete without a definite recognition that the best human endeavour is of no effect if it has not God's blessing behind. Prayer is a call to humility. It is a call to purification of the self. In his innumerable prayer gatherings Gandhiji
demonstrated how prayer is a part of simple living and prayer through service is a sure way to sanctify in God.

The act of approving the spirit of parental sentiments is an integral component of spiritual quest through Nature living. It paves the way for spiritual purgation and self realization. Gandhiji had a meeting with a frank hearted and staunch young man, Mr. Coates, who celebrated the glory of his Christian beliefs. He saw round Gandhiji’s neck, the Vaishnava necklace of Thulasi beads, given by Gandhiji’s mother. He thought it to be superstitious and requested Gandhiji to abandon it. Gandhiji politely explained:

I do not know its mysterious significance. I do not think I should come to harm if I did not wear it. But I cannot, without sufficient reason, give up a necklace that she put round my neck out of love and in the conviction that it would be conducive to my welfare. When, with the passage of time, if it wears away and breaks of its own accord, I shall have no desire to get a new one. But this necklace cannot be broken.  

Mr. Coates did not appreciate the argument and said that salvation was impossible for Gandhiji unless he accepted Christianity. But Gandhiji could reassure him that “The distorted belief of a Plymouth Brother
could not prejudice me against Christianity." This awareness elevated him to an uncommon degree of practical wisdom.

Gandhiji's first Sojourn in South Africa and the Christian influence helped him to keep his religious sense alive and alert. There were gradual changes in his spiritual perspectives and mode of life in South Africa. All the trails he took at this time were taken in the name of God and for His service. He had a fear that he might never return to India. So he kept his wife and children with him and enough to support them. This plan made him deplore the life policy and feel ashamed of having been caught in the net of insurance agent. He says:

And what reason had I to assume that death would claim me earlier than the others? After all the real protector was neither I nor my brother, but the Almighty. In getting my life insured I had robbed my wife and children off their self reliance. Why should they not be expected to take care of themselves? What happened to the families of the numberless poor in the world? Why should I not count myself as one of them? 

He believed that every one is expected to be supported by the common father in Heaven. No Life Insurance Policy can turn the course of one's destiny. Insurance is not a component of simple living.
The change in the mode of life brought him closer to the Theosophist society in Johannesburg. He had religious discussions with them every day. There used to be readings from theosophical books and short speeches by Gandhiji. He criticized the members whose conduct did not appear to him to square with their ideal. Unlike the Christian acquaintances, the theosophists intended to draw Gandhiji to their society, but that was with a view to getting something from him as a Hindu. He says:

Theosophical literature is replete with Hindu influence, and so these friends expected that I should be helpful to them. I explained that my Sanskrit study was not much to speak of, that I had not read the Hindu scriptures in the original, and that even my acquaintance with the translations was of the slightest. But being believers in Samskara (tendencies caused by previous births) and punarjanma (rebirth), they assumed that I should be able to render at least some help. And so I felt like a Triton among the minnows. I started reading Swami Vivekananda’s Rajayoga with some of these friends and M.N.Dvivedi’s Rajayoga with others. I had to read Patanjali’s Yogasutra with one friend and the Bhagavad Gita with quite a number.
The tranquil co-existence in the oceanic depth of religious thought expedited the evolution of the Triton in to a rare specimen of celestial eminence.

Gandhiji’s simple living in acquaintance with the theosophists had a considerable role in imparting a sound religious background. His company with them formed a sort of seekers’ club to which Gandhiji could not but contribute immensely. His faith in the Gita became more staunch than ever. He realized the necessity of diving deep in to it. With one or two translations, he managed to understand the original Sanskrit and decided to learn by heart one or two verses every day. The Gita verses were written on slips of paper and pasted on the wall to help his memory. Every morning he managed to memorize the lines and gradually he could recite thirteen chapters without much effort. The Gita became his ‘infallible guide of conduct’ and a ‘dictionary of daily reference’. Whenever his life was full of weariness, and the fret and fever associated to the external tragedies, it turned to be a friend, philosopher and guide.’ To Gandhiji, Non possession is a cardinal component of Nature living. It broadened his spiritual vision. He learned to discard all the material things. He realized how the life of the spirit could not be shaken off by the bounds of wealth, money and
sex. He realized that he was only a ‘trustee’ not at all an owner of any private property. *Samabhava* or equability implied that he should work without any desire for any reward or fruit. He ought to be least moved by victory or failure. He should treat alike the insulting insolent and corrupt officials, co workers of yesterday raising meaningless oppositions and men who had always been good. Gandhiji says:

*Just as I turned to the English dictionary for the meanings of English words that I did not understand, I turned to this dictionary of conduct for a ready solution of all my troubles and trials. Words like *Aparigraha* (non-possession) and *Samabhava* (equality) gripped me.*

As the dictionary enhances one’s word power so the *Gita* turned Gandhiji into a spiritual power house of Truth and practical idealism, *Gita* helped Gandhiji to find religion in jurisprudence and it led to the spirituality oriented community service. He recollects:

*Snell’s discussion of the maxims of equity came to my memory. I understood more clearly in the light of the *Gita* teaching the implication of the word ‘trustee’. My regard for jurisprudence increased, I discovered in it religion. I understood the *Gita* teaching of non-possession to mean that those who desired*
salvation should act like the trustee who, though having control over great possessions, regard not an iota of them as his own. It became clear to me as day light that non-possession and equability presupposed a change of heart, a change of attitude. I then wrote to Revashankarbhai to allow the insurance policy to lapse and get whatever could be recovered, or else to regard the premiums already paid as lost, for I had become convinced that God, who created my wife and children as well as myself, would take care of them. To my brother, who had been as father to me, I wrote explaining that I had given him all that I had saved up to the moment, but that hence forth he should expect nothing from me, for future savings, if any, would be utilized for the benefit of the community.  

Gandhiji’s belief in the service of the community was superior to the service of the family. To him it is the primary step for self realization. It was his heart’s desire and had always thrown him amongst the poor and enabled him to identify himself with them.  

The *Gita* opened to him limitless vistas, where through he found enlightenment in moments of intricate interrogation. When a group of missionaries expressed their doubt on the reliability of Hinduism on
the way to salvation, he explained how he found supreme solace which he missed even in the 'Sermon on the Mount'. The Gita also taught him to develop his faith in ahimsa based on the Hindu belief of oneness of all life in the universe. He preached whatever is acceptable in Hinduism. But he accepted them only after the 'acid test' of reason, which he applied to all the other religions that came his way. Through the faith in the Gita and Hinduism he lived to realize three things, viz.:

1. The Supreme reality of God.
2. The glory of the unity of all life through Nature living and nonviolence.
3. The value of Ahimsa and Love as a means of realizing God.

Karma - Duty and Truth:

Gandhiji led a simple life in Pretoria. His valuable experiences under the Pretorian sky promoted his spiritual quest: "Here it was that I had opportunities of learning public work and acquired some measure of my capacity for it. Here it was that the religious spirit within me became a living force......"33 Gandhiji's enthusiasm for the realization of the ultimate self was at its zenith. He says:

If I found myself entirely absorbed in the service of the community, the reason behind it was my desire for self
realization. I had made the religion of service my own, as I felt that God could be realized only through service. And service for me was the service of India because it came to me without my seeking, because I had an aptitude for it.\textsuperscript{34}

The service in South Africa also revealed to Gandhiji novel implications of truth at every stage. It invigorated his zest for more perusals in \textit{Karma} and Truth. He identified God with Truth:

Truth is like a vast tree, which yields more and more fruit, the more you nurture it. The deeper the search in the mine of Truth the richer the discovery of the gems buried there, in the shape of openings for an ever greater variety of service.\textsuperscript{35}

He wrote:

In my opinion the Sanskrit text \textit{Satyam bruyat, priyam priyat, Na bruyat satyam apriyam} means that one should speak the truth in gentle language. One had better not speak it, if one cannot do so in gentle way; meaning thereby that there is no truth in a man who cannot control his tongue.\textsuperscript{36}

The culmination of such gentle speech and search would fetch a speedier access to self-realization. For “the pursuit of Truth is true \textit{bhakti} (devotion). It is the path that leads to God, and, therefore, there
is no place in it for cowardice, no place for defeat. It is the talisman by which death itself becomes the portal to the life eternal."

His concept of Truth from the spiritual perspective is further explained:

> From the standpoint of pure Truth, the body too is a possession.
> It has been truly said, that desire for enjoyment creates bodies for soul. When this desire vanishes, there remains no further need for the body, and man is free from the vicious circle of births and deaths."

He believed in the very spirit of this concept which could be better identified through Nature living.

Gandhiji was doubtful whether the swam of sadhus and sanyasis who occupy the premises of the Sanctum Sanctorum are really in search of any spiritual pursuits. They lacked simplicity in life and presence of mind. His experiences at Hardwar as a participant of the Kumbha mela were not positive. Here he came to notice the absentmindedness of the pilgrims. Their hypocrisy and slovenliness made him uneasy. The sadhus who were roaming about there seemed to enjoy the sensual aspects of life. He was sadly critical about many of the activities going on in the fair. He expressed his concern about the
pious souls in the midst of hypocrisy. He spent whole nights in deep thoughts. Following a “life based on disciplinary resolutions.” He warned against the meaningless pilgrimages.

Through a life in harmony with nature, Gandhiji reached the absolute realms of spirituality. He proclaims:

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. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. This 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.40

According to him religion and politics should go in mutual harmony with each other, without interrupting simple living. That is why he viewed politics as a supportive component of self realization. To him politics is a part of sociality and morality which should provide spirituality and actuality.
In profuse strains of spiritual eminence he says:

But the path of self-purification is hard and steep. To attain to perfect purity one has to become absolutely passion-free in thought, speech and action; to rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion. I know that I have not in me as yet that triple purity, in spite of constant ceaseless striving for it. That is why the world’s praise fails to move me, indeed it very often stings me. To conquer the subtle passions seems to me to be harder far than the physical conquest of the world by the force of arms. Ever since my return to India I have had experiences of the dormant passions lying hidden within me. The knowledge of them has made me feel humiliated though not defeated.41

He proved how activities of life such as politics, social affairs, or economic activities can go hand in hand with the means of promoting self realization. He did not believe that spiritual law works on a field of its own. On the contrary, it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life and thus it affects the economy, the social and the
technical fields. That is why he was active in his ardent deliberations in political enterprises and proved beyond doubt how Nature living is a totally encouraging factor in politics. He asserted:

The experiences and experiments have sustained me and given me great joy. But I know that I have still before me, a difficult path to traverse. I must reduce myself to zero. So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him. \(^{42}\)

His revelation is a powerful outcome of living in harmony with life. Following absolute simplicity unto this last Gandhiji could assert that he was an illuminating power house of spirituality amidst encircling gloom of ignorance and poverty. "He could motivate the Indian community to fight for spiritual elegance. He could do so because he was a Mahatma.\(^{43}\) He developed a deeper root and wider vision. He gave more value to life than matter. In his spiritual pursuit Gandhiji followed Nature living, Religion, Ethics and the Gita. He worked himself beyond Sattvaguna, dedicating all his activity in the name of God to fuse into the ultimate Truth. His simple living identified the individual and Universal reality, the essence of karma and Rebirth and the glory of God as Generator, Operator and
Destroyer. He was about to turn to the stage of *Avatara*, the Lord’s descent on the earth in human form – the incarnation of a life in harmony with Nature. His spirit inspires millions to chant: “Twam - *Satyam – Asi*” – You are the Truth.
References:


7. Mahadeva Desai, p30


3. Sheshrao Chavan, p51


5. M.K. Gandhi, p58

6. M.K. Gandhi, p58

7. M.K. Gandhi, p27

8. M.K. Gandhi, p27


10. M.K. Gandhi, p75

11. M.K. Gandhi, p75


27. M.K. Gandhi, p104
28. M.K. Gandhi, p219
29. M.K. Gandhi, p220
30. M.K. Gandhi, p221
31. M.K. Gandhi, p221,222
32. M.K. Gandhi, p222
34. Krishna Kripalani, p25
36. R.K. Prabhu, p32
37. R.K. Prabhu, p32,33
38. R.K. Prabhu, p33

40. M.K. Gandhi, p420

41. M.K. Gandhi, p420

42. M.K. Gandhi, p420

43. Shri. Shri. Ravishankar, Asianet TV Channel Interview, 09-01-2000, 3.30 P.M