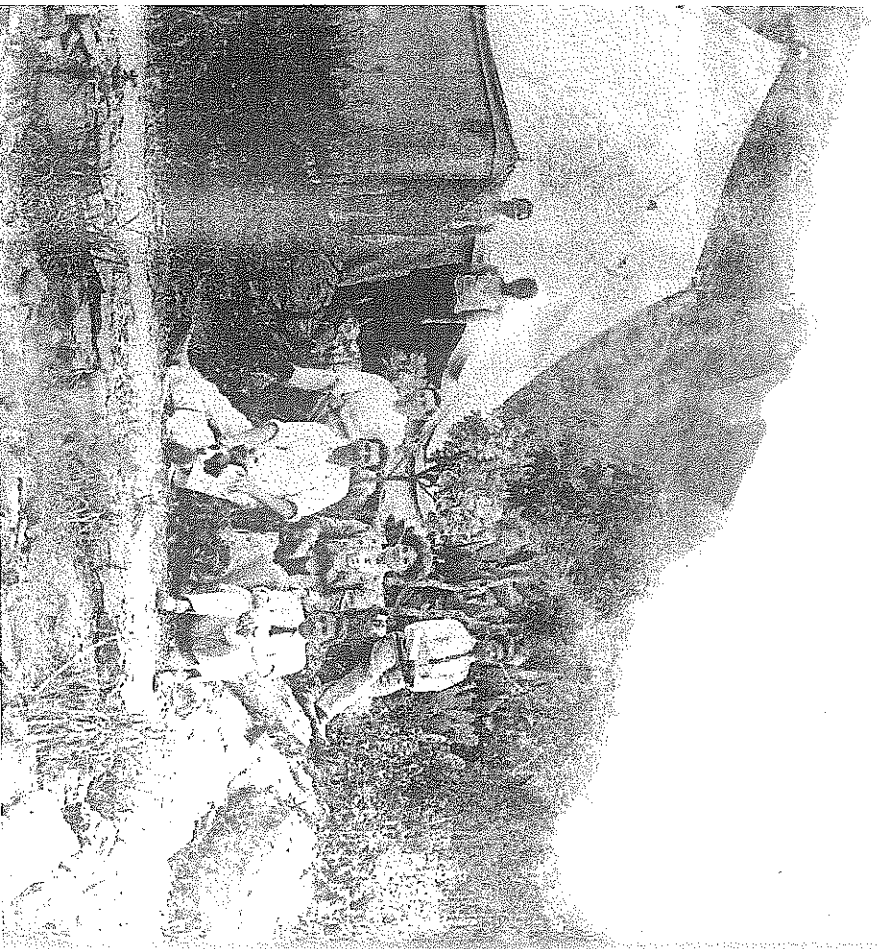


# India - History - Gandhi Inspired by Gita - 2

THE GITA GIVES DETAILED instructions for crossing the sea of life. The battlefield where the narrative is set represents the individual human heart, where the forces of light and darkness, love and separateness, war incessantly for mastery over our thought and actions. In the dialogue which unfolds, Arjuna, the warrior prince who represents every man or woman, seeks to learn the art of living from Sri Krishna, the Lord of Love, who is the outward manifestation of Arjuna's deepest self. Arjuna is a man of action. He is not interested in metaphysics or airy theories; he wants to know how to make every moment of his life count, free from anxiety and fear. His questions are practical inquiries into the problems of living, and Sri Krishna's answers are simple and to the point. We are born to fight, he tells Arjuna; there is no choice in the matter. Our every desire must bring us into conflict. But we can choose how and whom we will fight. We can turn our anger against others, or we can turn it against what is selfish and angry in ourselves. We can use our hands to strike at others or to wipe their tears away. It is a call to action, and that is why Sri Krishna describes the heroes and heroines of the Gita's "way of love" in the language not of sentiment but of war:

That one I love who is incapable of ill will  
And returns love for hatred.  
Living beyond the reach of *I* and *mine*  
And of pleasure and pain, full of mercy,  
Contented, self-controlled, firm in faith,  
With all his heart and all his mind given  
To me - with such a one I am in love.

Source: Easwaran, Eknath.  
Gandhi The Man  
Nilgiri Press 2011



Gandhi, sitting bottom right, with his youngest son, Devadas, top right; Hermann Kallenbach and his dog on the left, and others at Tolstoy Farm near Johannesburg, probably 1910.



«What effect this reading of the Gita had on my friends, only they can say; but to me the Gita became an infallible guide of conduct. It became my dictionary of daily reference. 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 'samahava' (equability) gripped me. How to cultivate and preserve that equability was the question. How was one to treat alike insulting, insolent and corrupt officials, co-workers of yesterday raising meaningless opposition, and men who had always been good to one? How was one to divest oneself of all possessions? . . . Was I to give up all I had and follow Him? Straight came the answer: I could not follow Him unless I gave up all I had. My study of English law came to my help. . . . 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, regards not an iota of them as his own.»