*Indian Freedom Struggle – Qualities (2)*

*Humanities 9 – Social Movements*

**Gandhi’s Views on How to Set Yourself Free**

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“There is no other God than Truth, and the only means for the realization of truth is love or Ahimsa.”

Gandhi said the above quote and he also said that knowledge of truth and practice of love are impossible without self-purification. One the purse in heart can see God. To attain a pure heart, to rise above attachment, to be free, to be free from fear requires self discipline. Thus, we find that Gandhi advocated for selflessness.

Gandhi said we have to abandon earthly values, fame, possession, and pleasures. To be one with the poor and to the outcast is to be his equal in poverty, and to cast oneself out.

According to Gandhi, “to be free to say or do the right, regardless of praise or blame; to be free to love all and forgive all, and non-attachment is essential. Freedom is only for the unconfined who enjoy the whole world without owning a blade of grass in it.”

The greatness of Gandhi is that he spared no pains in disciplining himself. Gandhi affirms that when we rise above the pleasures of the body into the liberty of the spirit we can see equality for all. Gandhi states that to thee the spirit of truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creates as oneself.

Gandhi said, “I have no desire for the kingdom on earth. I am striving for the kingdom of heaven, which is spiritual deliverance for me the road to salvation lies thought toil in the service of my country and of humanity. I want to identify myself with everything that lives. . . I want to live at peace with both friends and foe.”

Thus from his approach to freedom, Gandhi became a man of action and strived to serve humanity in the true spirit of faith. He lived the phrase, “Service to People is Service to God”. Gandhi wanted to gain the salvation of himself and for the millions of people who needed real freedom from oppression and exploitation.

**Gandhi’s Human and Social Aspect of Freedom**

The special qualities of Gandhi’s idea of freedom is that the mar of spirituality is with love for all. The spirit of humanity is one of the important aspects of Gandhi’s approach to life in society. Throughout his life, Gandhi believed and lived the saying” Thou shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Gandhi believed that there must be freedom and equality for all human beings. Gandhi believed that only justice could end oppression, and justice means that all human beings are recognized as equal.

Gandhi was a servant of humanity. He labored to build a world where the poorest have a right to food, light and air in their homes, and to hope and dignity in their lives. He always expressed his concerns for the cure of evil and for the prevention of injustice and dangers. All his public activities in South Africa and India can be understood only if we know his love for the common person.

Gandhi started his nonviolent resistance movement on a mass scale to protest against oppressive restrictions. He stood out for the principles that all men are equal regardless of race and color. Gandhi revealed this and inspired with is own dignity and honor.

Thus in his human approach, Gandhi lived outside of distinctions based on race, religion, and region. He advocated for a universal brotherhood because he believed all human beings belong to the same human family.

In India, it was Gandhi’s goal to rid the county of divisions and conflicts, to discipline the masses to be independent, to raise women to social, political, and economic dependence equality as men, to end religious hatred, and to end untouchability. It is a fact that the success Gandhi achieved with removing untouchability will stand out as one of his greatest contribution to the progress of humanity.

After centuries of oppression, the people seem to have lost the will to lift themselves up. The social, economic, and political forces against them are too strong. To given the oppressed confidence, pride, and self-respect is no easy task.

Yet Gandhi tried to give a generation and nation of people his passion for freedom. Gandhi’s aim was freedom. For, in freedom men and women reveal their best. Without freedom people remain in slavery. As a great defender of human liberty Gandhi struggled to release the people from social evils and the country from the foreign rule by using his moral approach of truth and nonviolence.

**Gandhi’s Political Concept of Freedom**

Of all the definitions of freedom, the most important is that freedom mean political democracy. “Swaraj” means “self-rule”. Gandhi first wrote about swarajin his book *Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule* in 1909. For Gandhi, Swaraj means, “we are pledged to Truth and nonviolence.” As such, it is obvious that Gandhi adopted nonviolence as a means to free Indians from colonialism and misery. He continued, “Swaraj is obtained by educating the masses about their sense of their [own] capacity to regulate and control authority.” To describe Gandhi’s perfect conditions he said, “the Swaraj of my dream recognizes no race or religious distinctions…Swaraj is to be for all, including the farmer…the blind, the starving toiling millions.”

**Gandhi’s Swaraj**

On the eve of his voyage to England in 1931, Gandhi stated that the Hind Swaraj is the rule of all of the people, and is the rule of justice. Gandhi believed that this mean rights for no particular group. Instead, it belongs to all. But the protection of the poor peasants, which forms majority of the population, must be the main focus. Therefore, Gandhi must truly represent the poor. But this does not mean forgetting about the middle class or the upper class. All that the Swaraj aims at is that all classes must work for the interests of the poor.

Gandhi said that he wants freedom of India so other countries may learn something from a free country and so resources from our country may benefit mankind. He expressed the belief that a country has to be free in order that it may benefit the world. Thus Gandhi worked to achieve freedom through his approach of truth and nonviolence.

**Gandhi’s Economic Aspect of Freedom**

Given the political struggle for freedom, Gandhi said that freed “for the sake of the millions can never mean a form of political freedom merely for the sake of it.” Political freedom must include economic freedom too.

For Gandhi Swaraj meant self-rule based on self-control. Therefore, Gandhi stressed economic self-sufficiency, which could give the people and villages the strength to stand up against oppression.

Gandhi said that “independence must begin at the bottom.” Thus every village will have power. In this there is no room for machines that would displace human labor or would concentrate power in the hands of a few wealthy people. Every machine that helps every individual has a place. Therefore, every village has to be independent and capable of managing itself. Gandhi said that factories ought to work not for profit but for the benefit of humanity. Gandhi then stressed the importance of small-scale village industries and cooperative farms. He also stressed politically and economically self-governed villages.

Gandhi always advocated that we need to build up political and economic power to be free from oppression. Gandhi was dedicated to the welfare of the millions of poor in India. It is complete independence that he wanted. Gandhi used nonviolence in order to gain truth and freedom. He stressed moral values based on nonviolence to achieve equality for all people.