

THOUGHTAUDIO



SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

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Produced by ThoughtAudio.com

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SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

NEITHER SAINT, NOR SINNER

I think that the word 'saint' should be ruled out of present life. It is too sacred a word to be lightly applied to anybody, much less to one like myself who claims only to be a humble searcher after Truth, knows his limitations, makes mistakes, never hesitates to admit them when he makes them, and frankly confesses that he, like a scientist, is making experiments about some 'of the eternal verities' of life, but cannot even claim to be a scientist because he can show no tangible proof of scientific accuracy in his methods or such tangible results of his experiments as modern science demands.



To clothe me with sainthood is too early even if it is possible. I myself do not feel a saint in any shape or form. But I do feel I am a votary of Truth in spite of all my errors of unconscious omission and commission.

POLICY OF TRUTH

I am not a 'statesman in the garb of a saint'. But since Truth is the highest wisdom, sometimes my acts appear to be consistent with the highest statesmanship. But, I hope I have no policy in me save the policy of Truth and ahimsa. I will not sacrifice Truth and ahimsa even for the deliverance of my country or religion. That is as much as to say that neither can be so delivered.



I see neither contradiction nor insanity in my life. It is true that, as a man cannot see his back, so can he not see his errors or insanity. But the sages have often likened a man of religion to a lunatic. I therefore hug the belief that I may not be insane and may be truly religious. Which of the two I am in truth can only be decided after my death.



SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

It seems to me that I understand the ideal of truth better than that of ahimsa, and my experience tells me that if I let go my hold of truth, I shall never be able to solve the riddle of ahimsa..... In other words, perhaps, I have not the courage to follow the straight course. Both at bottom mean one and the same thing, for doubt is invariably the result of want or weakness of faith. 'Lord, give me faith' is, therefore, my prayer day and night.



I claim to be a votary of truth from my childhood. It was the most natural thing to me. My prayerful search gave me the revealing maxim 'Truth is God', instead of the usual one 'God is Truth'. That maxim enables me to see God face to face as it were. I feel Him pervade every fibre of my being.

FAITH IN RIGHT

I remain an optimist, not that there is any evidence that I can give that right is going to prosper, but because of my unflinching faith that right must prosper in the end..... Our inspiration can come only from our faith that right must ultimately prevail.



Somehow I am able to draw the noblest in mankind, and that is what enables me to maintain my faith in God and human nature.

SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

NO ASCETIC

I have never described myself as a sannyasi (an ascetic). Sannyas are made of sterner stuff. I regard myself as a house-holder, leading a humble life of service and, in common with my fellow-workers, living upon the charity of friends..... The life I am living is entirely very easy and very comfortable, if ease and comfort are a mental state. I have all I need without the slightest care of having to keep any personal treasures.



My loin cloth is an organic evolution in my life. It came naturally, without effort, without premeditation.



I hate privilege and monopoly. Whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo to me.



It is wrong to call me an ascetic. The ideals that regulate my life are presented for acceptance by mankind in general. I have arrived at them by gradual evolution. Every step was thought out, well considered, and taken with greatest deliberation.



Both my continence and non-violence were derived from personal experience and became necessary in response to the calls of public duty.

The isolated life I had to lead in South Africa, whether as a householder, legal practitioner, social reformer or politician, required for the due fulfillment of these duties the strictest regulation of sexual life and a rigid practice of non-violence and truth in human relations, whether with my own countrymen or with Europeans.



SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

Mine is a life full of joy in the midst of incessant work. In not wanting to think of what tomorrow will bring for me, I feel as free as a bird. The thought that I am ceaselessly and honestly struggling against the requirements of the flesh sustains me.



Work without faith is like an attempt to reach the bottom of a bottomless pit.

SHEDDING THE EGO

I know that I have still before me a difficult path to traverse. I must reduce myself to zero. So long as man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow-creatures, there is no salvation for him. Ahimsa is the farthest limit of humility.



If we could erase the 'It's' and the 'Mine's' from religion, politics, economics, etc., we shall soon be free and bring heaven upon earth.



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 is a mere bubble.



A seeker after truth cannot afford to be an egotist. One who would sacrifice his life for others has hardly time to reserve for himself a place in the sun.



SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

There are limits to the capacity of an individual, and the moment he flatters himself that he can undertake all tasks, God is there to humble his pride. For myself, I am gifted with enough humility to look even to babes and suckling for help.



Fates decide my undertakings for me. I never go to see them. They come to me almost in spite of me. That has been my lot all my life long, in South Africa as well as ever since my return to India.

LITTLE BOOK KNOWLEDGE

I admit my limitations. I have no university education worth the name. My high school career was never above the average. I was thankful if I could pass my examinations. Distinction in the school was beyond my aspiration.



During the days of my education, I had read practically nothing outside textbooks, and after I launched into active life, I had very little time left me for reading. I cannot, therefore, claim much book knowledge. However, I believe I have not lost much because of this enforced restraint. On the contrary, the limited reading may be said to have enabled me thoroughly to digest what I did read.



Of these books, the one that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life was *Unto This Last*. I translated it later into Gujarati, entitling it *Sarvodaya* (the welfare of all). I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin, and that is why it so captivated me and made me transform my life.



SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

I was living in South Africa then. It was the reading of Unto This Last on a railway journey to Durban, in 1904, when I was thirty-five, that made me decide to change my whole outward life. There is no other word for it, Ruskin's words captivated me. I read the book in one go and lay awake all the following night, and I there and then decided to change my whole plan of life. Tolstoy I had read much earlier. He affected the inner being.

SERVICE OF THE POOR

The heart's earnest and pure desire is always fulfilled. In my own experience, I have often seen this rule being verified. Service of the poor has been my heart's desire and it has always thrown me amongst the poor and enabled me to identify myself with them.



I have always had a love for the poor all my life and in abundance. I could cite illustrations after illustrations from my past life that it was something innate in me. I have never felt that there was any difference between the poor and me. I have always felt towards them as my own kith and kin.



I have no desire for the perishable kingdom of earth. I am striving for the Kingdom of Heaven which is moksha. To attain my end it is not necessary for me to seek the shelter of a cave. I carry one about me, if I would but know it.



A cave-dweller can build castles in the air whereas a dweller in a palace, like Janak, has no castles to build. The cave-dweller who hovers round the world on the wings of thought has no peace. A Janak, though living in the midst of 'pomp and circumstance', may have peace that passeth understanding.

SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI



For me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and there through of humanity. I want to identify myself with everything that lives.



My life is an indivisible whole, and all my activities run into one another; and they all have their rise in my insatiable love of mankind.



I am used to misrepresentation all my life. It is the lot of every public worker. He has to have a tough hide. Life would be burdensome if every misrepresentation had to be answered and cleared. It is a rule of life with me never to explain misrepresentations except when the cause requires correction. This rule has saved much time and worry.



I have been known as a crank, faddist, mad man. Evidently, the reputation is well deserved. For wherever I go, I draw to myself cranks, faddists, and mad man.

PRACTICAL DREAMER

I believe in absolute oneness of God and, therefore, also of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source. I cannot, therefore, detach myself from the wickedest soul (nor may I be denied identity with the most virtuous). Whether, therefore, I will or not, I must involve in my experiment the whole of my kind. Nor can I do without experiment. Life is but an endless series of experiments.



I must be taken with all my faults. I am a searcher after truth. My experiments I hold to be infinitely more important than the best-equipped Himalayan expeditions.

SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI



It has been my misfortune or good fortune to take the world by surprise. New experiments, or old experiments in new style, must sometimes engender misunderstanding.



I am indeed a practical dreamer. My dreams are not airy nothings. I want to convert my dreams into realities as far as possible.



If any action of mine claimed to be spiritual is proved to be unpractical, it must be pronounced to be a failure. I do believe that the most spiritual act is the most practical in the true sense of the term.

MY FALLIBILITY

I claim to be a simple individual liable to err like any other fellow-mortal. I own, however, that I have humility enough in me to confess my errors and to retrace my steps. I own that I have an immovable faith in God and His goodness, and unconsumable passion for truth and love. But, is that not what every person has latent in him?



Those who have at all followed my humble career even superficially cannot have failed to observe that not a single act of my life has been done to the injury of any individual or nation..... I claim no infallibility. I am conscious of having made Himalayan blunders, but I am not conscious of having made them intentionally or having even harbored enmity towards any person or nation, or any life, human or sub-human.



SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

I have made the frankest admission of my many sins. But I do not carry their burden on my shoulders. If I am journeying Godward, as I feel I am, it is safe with me. For I feel the warmth of the sunshine of His presence.



My austerities, fastings, and prayers are, I know, of no value if I rely upon them for reforming me. But they have an inestimable value, if they represent, as I hope they do, the yearnings of a soul striving to lay his weary head in the lap of his Maker.

KINSHIP WITH ALL

Whenever I see an erring man, I say to myself I have also erred; when I see a lustful man, I say to myself so was I once; and in this way, I feel kinship with everyone in the world and feel that I cannot be happy without the humblest of us being happy.



I shall have to answer my God and my Maker if I give any one less than his due, but I am sure that He will bless me if He knows that I gave someone more than his due.



I am too conscious of the imperfections of the species to which I belong to be irritated against any single member thereof. My remedy is to deal with the wrong wherever I see it, not to hurt the wrong-doer, even as I would not like to be hurt for the wrongs I continually do.

SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI



I can truthfully say that I am slow to see the blemishes of fellow-beings, being myself full of them and, therefore, being in need of their charity, I have learnt not to judge anyone harshly and to make allowances for defects that I may detect.

Regard for Opponents

Differences of opinion should never mean hostility. If they did, my wife and I should be sworn enemies of one another. I do not know two persons in the world who had no difference of opinion, and as I am a follower of the Gita, I have always attempted to regard those who differ from me with the same affection as I have for my nearest and dearest.



It is to me a matter of perennial satisfaction that I retain generally the affection and trust of those whose principles and policies I oppose. The South Africans gave me personally their confidence and extended their friendship.



In spite of my denunciation of British policy and system, I enjoy the affection of thousands of Englishmen and women, and in spite of unqualified condemnation of modern materialistic civilization, the circle of European and American friends is ever widening. It is again a triumph of non-violence.



I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less fellow-human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine.

SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI



It would be impossible for any person to point to a single act of mine during the past 50 years which could be proved to have been antagonistic to any person or community. I have never believed anyone to be my enemy. My faith demands that I should consider no one as such. I may not wish ill to anything that lives.

MY MAHATMASHIP



NO MAHATMA

I DO not feel like being one [a Mahatma]. But I do know that I am among the humblest of God's creatures.



Often the title has deeply pained me; and there is not a moment I can recall when it may be said to have tickled me.



My Mahatma ship is worthless. It is due to my outward activities, due to my politics which is the least part of me and is, therefore, evanescent. What is of abiding worth is my insistence on truth, non-violence and brahmacharya which is the real part of me. That part of me, however small, is not to be despised. It is my all. I prize even the failures and disillusionment's which are but steps towards success.



The world knows so little of how much my so-called greatness depends upon the incessant toil and drudgery of silent, devoted, able and pure workers, men as well as women.

SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI



Truth to me is infinitely dearer than the 'mahatmaship', which is purely a burden. It is my knowledge of my limitations and my nothingness which has so far saved me from the oppressiveness of the 'mahatmaship'.

SICK OF ADORATION

I have become literally sick of the adoration of the unthinking multitude. I would feel certain of my ground if I was spat upon by them. Then there would be no need for confession of Himalayan and other miscalculations, no retracing, no re-arranging.



In the majority of cases, addresses presented to me contain adjectives which I am ill able to carry. Their use can do good neither to the writers nor to me. They unnecessarily humiliate me, for I have to confess that I do not deserve them. When they are deserved, their use is superfluous. It cannot add to the strength of the qualities possessed by me. They may, if I am not on my guard, easily turn my head. The good that a man does is more often than not better left unsaid. Imitation is the sincerest flattery.



The Mahatma I must leave to his fate. Though a non-co-operator, I shall gladly subscribe to a Bill to make it criminal for anybody to call me Mahatma and to touch my feet. Where I can impose the law myself, i.e., at the Ashram, the practice is criminal.

SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

TRUE HONOR

The highest honor that my friends can do me is to enforce in their own lives the program that I stand for or to resist me to their utmost if they do not believe in it.



It will be waste of good money to spend . . . on erecting a clay or metallic statue of the figure of a man who is himself made of clay and is more fragile than a bangle which can keep by preservation for a thousand years, whereas the human body disintegrates daily and undergoes final disintegration after the usual span of life. I have learnt from my Muslim friends, among whom I have passed the best part of my life, my dislike of statues and photographs of my figure. . . .



Let these lines serve as a warning to those who want to honor me by erecting statues and having portraits of my figure, that I heartily dislike these exhibitions. I shall deem it ample honor if those who believe in me will be good enough to promote the activities I stand for.

NO 'AVATAR'

I hold it to be a blasphemy to represent me as Shri Krishna. I claim to be a humble worker and no more among many in a great cause, which can only be injured rather than advanced by glorification of its leaders. A cause has the best chance of success when it is examined and followed on its own merits. Measures must always, in a progressive society, be held superior to men, who are after all imperfect instruments, working for their fulfillment.

SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI



The only virtue I want to claim is Truth and Non-violence. I lay no claim to superhuman powers. I want none. I wear the same corruptible flesh that the weakest of my fellow-beings wears, and am, therefore, as liable to err as any. My services have many limitations, but God has up to now blessed them in spite of the imperfections.



I lay claim to nothing exclusively divine in me. I do not claim prophetship. I am but a humble seeker after Truth and bent upon finding It. I count no sacrifice too great for the sake of seeing God face to face. The whole of my activity, whether it may be called social, political, humanitarian or ethical, is directed to that end.



And as I know that God is found more often in the lowliest of His creatures than in the high and mighty, I am struggling to reach the status of these. I cannot do so without their service. Hence my passion for the service of the suppressed classes. And as I cannot render this service without entering politics, I find myself in them. Thus I am no master. I am but a struggling, erring, humble servant of India and there through of humanity.



It is curious how we delude ourselves. We fancy that one can make the perishable body impregnable and we think it impossible to evoke the hidden powers of the soul. Well, I am engaged in trying to show, if I have any of these powers, that I am as frail a mortal as any of us and that I never had anything extraordinary about me nor have any now.

SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI



I do not consider myself worthy to be mentioned in the same breath with the race of prophets. I am a humble seeker after truth. I am impatient to realize myself, to attain moksha in this very existence. My national service is part of my training for freeing my soul from the bondage of flesh. Thus considered, my service may be regarded as purely selfish. I have no desire for the perishable kingdom of earth. I am striving for the Kingdom of Heaven, which is moksha.



I claim to be no more than an average man with less than average ability. Nor can I claim any special merit for such non-violence or continence as I have been able to reach with laborious research. I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith.



Some of my correspondents seem to think that I can work wonders. Let me say as a devotee of truth that I have no such gift... All the power I may have comes from God. But He does not work directly. He works through His numberless agencies.

SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

AWARENESS OF LIMITATIONS

I consider myself to be a sagacious worker and my sagacity means no more and no less than a fine perception of my limitations. I hope I never travel beyond my limits. Certainly, I have never done so consciously.



I am conscious of my own limitations. That consciousness is my only strength. Whatever I might have been able to do in my life has proceeded more than anything else out of the realization of my own limitations.



If I was what I want to be, the fast would not have been necessary. I would not then need to argue with anyone. My word would go straight home. Indeed, I would not even need to utter the word. The mere will on my part would suffice to produce the required effect. But I am painfully aware of my limitations.



I shall continue to confess blunders each time the people commit them. The only tyrant I accept in this world is the 'still small voice' within. And even though I have to face the prospect of a minority of one, I humbly believe I have the courage to be in such a hopeless minority.



I claim to be a fairly accurate student of human nature and vivisector of my own failings. I have discovered that man is superior to the system he propounds.



I hope there is no pride in me. I feel I recognize fully my weakness. But my faith in God and His strength and love is unshakable. I am like clay in the Potter's hand.



SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

I have no desire for prestige anywhere. It is furniture required in courts of Kings. I am a servant of Mussalmans, Christians, Parsis and Jews as I am of Hindus. And a servant is in need of love, not prestige. That is assured to me so long as I remain a faithful servant.

READINESS FOR MARTYRDOM

There are certain things which you cannot escape all at once, even whilst you are avoiding them. This earthly case in which I am locked up is the bane of my life, but I am obliged to put up with it and even indulge it.



I implicitly believe in the truth of the saying that not a blade of grass moves but by His will. He will save it [my life] if He needs it for further service in this body. None can save it against His will.



Do not seek to protect me. The Most High is always there to protect us all. You may be sure that when my time is up, no one, not even the most renowned in the world, can stand between Him and me.



I must be true to my Maker, and the moment I feel that life is insupportable for me, I hope not to be found wanting. What better reparation can I do than willing surrender of the body that has ceased to evoke response and may be a hindrance to the discovery of the true way?

SAYINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI



I am not aching for martyrdom, but if it comes in my way in the prosecution of what I consider to be the supreme duty in defense of the faith I hold. . . I shall have earned it.



Whilst I prize the unbounded affection of the people, let them realize that my life is not worth keeping if anxiety to save it deflects the attention of the nation from the main purpose.



Assaults have been made on my life in the past, but God has spared me till now, and the assailants have repented for their action. But if someone were to shoot me in the belief that he was getting rid of a rascal, he would kill not the real Gandhi, but the one that appeared to him a rascal.



God alone is my protector. How can puny man, who is not sure even of his own tomorrow, presume to protect another? I am content to be under God's care. He may protect or destroy. I know He sometimes even destroys to protect.



I do not want to die . . . of a creeping paralysis of my faculties-a defeated man. An assassin's bullet may put an end to my life. I would welcome it. But I would love, above all, to fade out doing my duty with my last breath.



I am not afraid to die in my mission, if that is to be my fate.

THE END