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Quotes from Gandhiji

On E.S. Montague's enquiry in 1938 about how a social reformer like Gandhi had "strayed" into politics Gandhi replied: "Politics is an extension of my social activity. I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind and that I could not do unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man's activities today constitute an indivisible whole. . . . I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of 'sound and fury' signifying nothing. (M.K. *Gandhi, Nonviolence in Peace and War*, 2 vols. (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1948), 1: 170-71).

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"The only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. . . I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity. My countrymen are my nearest neighbours. They have become so helpless, so resourceless, so inert that I must concentrate on serving them. . . . If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity."
(*Harijan*, August 29, 1936).

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Gandhi's own personal conviction is that we serve God through service, especially of the victimized; it gushed from the depth of his heart in his press meeting of 1939 while breaking one of his numerous fasts, Ganhiji said: "I claim to know my millions. All the 24 hours of the day I am with them. They are my first care and last, because I recognize no God except the God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions. They do not recognize His presence; I do. And I worship the God that is Truth or a Truth which is God through the service of these millions." At the same time one should work and earn one's living: "It is sin to provide food for an idle person who makes no effort and depends on others for food. It is a meritorious act to provide him with an occupation and, if he refuses to work, to let him starve is to render service to him. However, ceremonial worship by itself does not constitute the service of God." *Navajivan*, October 25, 1925.

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The famous Gujarati hymn which Gandhi often speaks about is given in his Autobiography.

For a bowl of water give a goodly meal;
For a kindly greeting bow thou down right with zeal;
For a simple penny pay thou back with gold;
If thy life be rescued, life do not withhold.
Every little service ten-fold thy reward;
But the truly noble know all men as one,
And return with gladness good for evil done.

— *Autobiography*, p. 31.

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Some people may brand Gandhian *Satyagraha* as idealistic, having no practical application. The eye-witness account of Mr. Webb Miller, a special U.S. correspondent for the United Press, describing the scenes in the Salt Depot picketing led by Sarojani Naidu and Manilal Gandhi at Dharsana Camp, Surat, Bombay Presidency, during the non-cooperation movement in 1930, which was published in the *New York Telegram*, is enough to show that real satyagraha can be fully imbued with Gandhian ideals. Miller wrote:

In the eighteen years of reporting in twenty two countries, during which I have witnessed innumerable civil disturbances, riots, street fights, and rebellions, I have never witnessed such harrowing scenes as at Dharsana. The western mind can grasp violence returned by violence, can understand a fight, but is, I found, perplexed and

baffled by the sight of men advancing coldly and deliberately and submitting to beating without attempting defense. Sometimes the scenes were so painful that I had to turn away momentarily. One surprising feature was the discipline of the volunteers. It seemed they were thoroughly imbued with Gandhi's non-violence creed, and the leaders constantly stood in front of the ranks imploring them to remember that Gandhi's soul was with them. During the morning I saw hundreds of blows inflicted by the police, but saw not a single blow returned by the volunteers. So far as I could observe the volunteers implicitly obeyed Gandhi's creed of non-violence. In no case did I see a volunteer even raise his arm to deflect the blows from lathis. There were no outcries from beaten swarajists, only groans after they had submitted to their beating.

(Richard B. Gregg, *The Power of Non-violence* (New York: Fellowship Publications, 1944), pp. 25-28).