

Path Without Destination

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...Gandhi composed a chant which strung together these principles and was sung collectively morning and evening by the members of the ashrams, in one of which Gandhi himself lived.

I chanted this enchanting chant twice a day while I lived in the ashram. Composed of deeply meaningful Sanskrit words, it is like a rosary of moving mantras. I still chant it and find myself entranced whenever I do.

Ahimsa, satya, asteya,

Brachmacharya, asangraha,

Sharirashram, aswada,

Sarvatra, bhaya varjana,

Sarva dharma samanatva,

Swadeshi, sparsha bhavana,

Vinamra vrata nishtha se,

Ye ekadash sevya hain.

It translates as follows:

Nonviolence, truth, nonstealing,

Sacred sex, nonconsumerism,

Physical work, avoidance of bad taste,

Fearlessness, respect for all religions,

Local economy,

and respect for all beings,

These eleven principles

Should be followed with humility, care, and commitment.

These principles are not dos and don'ts. They are not vows; they are aspirations and inspirations. They are like resolutions which are made on the eve of the new year. In this case the resolutions are made daily. They are guidelines for conduct, a framework to be interpreted by each individual and society according to its own context. They could be used resolutions for the new millennium.

Let me explain these eleven points of reference one by one, with my own interpretation

1. Nonviolence (Ahimsa)

Ahimsa, or nonviolence, is a universal first principle of nonoffensive living. Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Christians, and followers of all other religions, one way or another, have to a greater or lesser extent proclaimed this to be fundamental. Nonviolence should underlie all relationships among humans and between humans and the nonhuman world. Nonviolence is part of the perennial philosophy. But Gandhi made it more relevant to our time by using it as a weapon of resistance to social injustice, to British colonialism, to economic exploitation of the weak by the strong, and to caste discrimination in India.

Nonviolence goes much further than not killing. On a personal level it begins with nonviolence of mind. At the ashram I was taught to cultivate the skill of restraint from any aggressive, offensive, damaging thought. If by any chance I had entertained violence in the mind, I was to cultivate the skill of not expressing it in speech. Words which wound or insult or debase another can precipitate a cycle of violence. I learned to express my opinions about politics, politicians, or people with whom I disagreed in a respectful manner. If I lost control of my speech then, of course, I was to avoid physical violence at all costs. If I was attacked verbally or physically, then I was to respond through the techniques of nonviolent defense.

The nonviolent way is the way of the strong and the brave. This is not passivity and not weakness. Gandhi always kept a Chinese miniature of the three wise monkeys on his desk. One covers its eyes with both paws, one covers its ears, and one covers its mouth. This figure symbolizes see no evil, speak no evil, and hear no evil.

At the social and political level, nonviolence means opposition to institutional and structural violence. I learned from Gandhi not to be shy of engaging in constructive criticism but to approach opponents in person or in writing with a kind heart, because the aim is always to bring about a change of heart and mind in the person or society. This technique continues to impress me deeply, especially when I see much of the media engaged in inciting violence between politicians, nations, and ethnic or religious groups. We have to learn to live with people and nature nonviolently, which means giving up the desire to impose our will, to subjugate, to dominate, and to control other people, animals, and the natural world for the fulfillment of our own ambitions and our own egos. The more I have seen and thought, the more I have realized that nonviolence is the essential ground on which a sustainable future for humanity as well as for the Earth can be envisioned and built.

It seems to me that the strife and conflict which are so prevalent in the world today are the results of our belief in the power of violence. In spite of all the wars, conquests, colonialism, and imperialism, humanity has learned nothing. We still believe in violence as the ultimate sanction. From newspaper articles to nuclear weapons, we follow the path of violence. Hindus and Muslims in India, Jews and Palestinians in the Middle East, Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland are too ready to believe that ultimately they will find a solution through violence. For me this is not an option.

At the ecological level, humanity has been at war with nature. Our desire to conquer nature has led to destruction of wilderness, reduction of biodiversity, production of poisonous chemicals, construction of megacities, megadams, megaindustries, and megacorporations. This has resulted in polluted seas, polluted rivers, polluted air, depleted foods, and eroded land. Our cruelty to animals, our disregard for traditional tribal cultures and their rights, our relentless drive to extract oil and other minerals without limit are all part of the same story.

We need to change this story. The story of violence is too old and boring. Humanity and the Earth have suffered enough. Let the new millennium begin with a new story, the story of nonviolence. In this story all relationships are embedded in the spirit of mutuality and reciprocity, the spirit of reverence for all life — human life, animal life, plant life, the life of rock, soil, and water. Only by living in a story of the sanctity of life can life be sustained.

In our arrogance we humans have assumed that we are the masters of nature and that we can cause havoc and devastation all around us yet somehow escape harm ourselves. When we do not impose violence on others, others will not impose violence on us, but if we live by the sword, we will die by the sword. The result of nonviolence is peace at all levels. Personal peace, world peace, and peace with nature.

Without inner peace, no other peace can be realized. If I have achieved a degree of peace of mind within myself, then I will not fear others, but if I have not been able to overcome my personal fears, then it is easy for political and military leaders to create in me fear of an external enemy. Every day on the radio and television and in the newspapers I hear or read about "enemies." We are all divided into different groups and fear somebody. So many of the world's resources are spent on armaments, which are connected with our inner insecurity. War and violence begin in our minds. So unless I start with myself and make peace with myself, I cannot achieve peace in the world.

This inner peace should be translated into world peace. I cannot retire into the serene space of my inner peace and leave the world as it is. I cannot sit calmly meditating while nuclear weapons pile up. So nonviolent action to bring peace in the world is a natural consequence of inner peace.

World peace is a building block to making peace with nature. When nations fight, when bombs are dropped, it is not only human beings who are killed; natural habitats are also destroyed. But no one counts the cost of nature's demise. Making peace with nature is important even if there is no war, because war with nature leads to war between nations. Most wars are fought over resources and to protect markets. Wars are less and less political and more and more economic. All wars are wars against nature since they involve a tremendous amount of air pollution, sea pollution, and land pollution; land mines are a case in point. So the nations of the world have to agree unanimously that, whatever their dispute, diplomatic and nonviolent

methods will be the only course they will follow; under no circumstances will violence be used.

Of course, this will not happen overnight, but if this could be a new millennium resolution and if, step by step, the world could work toward this goal, then one day we might establish a nonviolent social order. In the wake of nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare, and in the wake of global warming, ozone depletion, and world hunger, the stark choice is between nonviolence and nonexistence.

2. Truth (Satya)

Satya, or truth, means seeing reality as it is. Although we can never be sure of the nature of ultimate reality, it is right and proper to seek it. There is no one truth which can be described, explained, and defined in language. Buddha, Jesus Christ, Mahavir, Mohammed, and Socrates have all been seekers of truth. Poets, saints, and mystics like Kabir, Tulsidas, Rumi, Hildegard of Bingen, Mother Julian of Norwich, and St. Francis experienced the divine and the sacred in all things. For them that was the truth. But we cannot live on the wealth of our ancestors. We must seek our own treasure and take up the quest to find our own truth.

Truth is multifaceted and pluralistic. Seeing existence in all its mysterious diversity yet realizing its wholeness prevents me from imposing a monolithic belief system onto it. The quest for truth is a liberating journey; it liberates me from dogmas, both religious and political. There is no final point at which I could say that I have found the truth, this is the truth, and this is the truth for everyone. The moment truth is imprisoned in a belief system, the truth is lost. As long as the experience and the techniques of other seekers are used as pointers, as signposts, then those disciplines and methods can be of some help. But the signpost is not the real thing. Truth cannot be preached; it can be communicated, if at all, only in dialogue and conversation and, more important, through living example. Truth is not a commodity which can be dished out from temples and churches. Truth is not something which can be conceptualized or extracted from holy books. It has to be lived and experienced.

Seekers of truth are free from all kinds of fundamentalism. It is easy to see the fundamentalism of others but more difficult to recognize one's own. So

Christians may criticize Muslim fundamentalism without recognizing their own fundamentalism. Similarly, capitalists may criticize socialist fundamentalism and forget that the fundamentalism of the free market is no less oppressive. Those who preach the superiority of Western democracy are in as much danger of undermining the community-based tribal cultures as those who preach the politics of the one-party state.

The fundamentalism of the global economy suppresses ideas and information in the name of trade secrets, intellectual property rights, patenting, and copyright. Monopoly businesses create monoculture economies as well as monoculture of the mind. Such monoism is the bedfellow of dualism and blocks the search for and discovery of multifaceted truth.

To follow the way of truth is to have no preconditions, no prejudice.

It is a way to face things as they are. Truth is the "isness" of Zen. The pursuit of truth is unconditional and open-minded inquiry and exploration, up to the last moment of our lives.

3. Nonstealing (Asteya)

Asteya, or nonstealing, means not taking what does not belong to you, but it goes far beyond the conventional concept of theft. According to the Upanishads, all and everything, from a blade of grass to Mount Everest and from an earthworm to a human being, is imbued with the divine. Earth, fire, air, and water are sacred elements. All beings take from the Earth for the continuity of life. Babies take milk from their mothers' breasts, deer take water from the stream, birds eat fruit from the trees, humans take the produce of the Earth. Gandhi said that there is enough for everybody's need but not enough for anybody's greed.

When humans use resources not out of need but out of greed, they are consuming what other inhabitants may need or they are depriving future generations of their livelihood. When humans clear-cut forests, they are stealing from the birds, animals, and insects who inhabit those forests.

The humanism of the last few hundred years has given birth to an ideology which states that human beings are at the pinnacle of evolution; they are a superior species, they are masters of nature, and they have a God-given

right to use nature and other lives for their convenience. This is a false philosophy. As a result, industrial technology has been developed to plunder nature and exploit the weak. The land has been stolen from the aboriginal and tribal peoples all over the world.

Asteya is more than illegal theft: when family farms are destroyed by agribusiness, it is theft of the countryside; when crafts are destroyed by industry, that is theft of skills; when big trawlers overfish the oceans and thus destroy small fishing villages, that is theft of livelihood. Legal or illegal, these are all ways of stealing. To follow the way of Asteya is to use and consume only what nature can replenish. It is a way to consume only to meet our vital needs, knowing that other peoples and creatures also need to meet their vital needs, and therefore I take only my share of things. Asteya is a way of living simply so that others may simply live. Asteya is a way of generosity. Asteya tells me that meanness, accumulation, and overconsumption are thefts of nature and stealing from God.

4. Sacred Sex (Brahmacharya)

Brahmacharya, or sacred sex, means appropriate sexuality within a healthy human relationship. In the wake of the population explosion, restraint and care in sexual relationships are required. Human sexuality, appropriately practiced, is part of love of God. Love for God begins with human love. This is the microexperience of macrolove, the intimate realization of ultimate love. Unconditional love between two individuals leads to universal love.

Trivialization of sex, media- and film-induced temptation to seek temporary gratification, pornography, rape, sadism, masochism, physical violence, and sexual abuse all stem from our disrespect for the sanctity of sex. Sacred sex is based on the foundation of commitment, responsibility, sacrifice, celebration, and joy.

All Hindu gods are married. Rama with Sita, Krishna with Radha, Shiva with Shakti, Vishnu with Lakshmi — these mythological icons are the models of the man-woman relationship. In them sensuality, dance, music, color, flowers, perfume, food, and all other aspects of good living and religiosity play their full parts. Everything in proportion, in the right place, at the right time, with wisdom and common sense. The man-woman relationship is the ultimate fulfillment of yin-yang balance, the Shiva-Shakti principle: it is the

union of matter and spirit, the world and God, body and soul, nature and culture. In such unions all opposites are transformed into complements.

5. Nonconsumerism (Asangraha)

Asangraha, or nonconsumerism, means nonacquisition, nonaccumulation, and nonconsumption of goods and services which are inessential, wasteful, harmful, and unnatural. Excessive possessions are a trap; they bind us, imprison us, and enslave us. If I were caught in the trappings of wealth and power, I would be unable to live a truly comfortable, creative, and compassionate life. Much of my time would be absorbed in taking care of houses, cars, household gadgets, furnishings, paintings, silverware and china, computers, yachts, and umpteen other things. I would need to work hard to earn enough not to meet my needs but to service these possessions. A stage would come when my possessions would possess me rather than my possessing them. I would be in the knot that is *graha*. When that knot is pulled tight, it becomes *sangraha*, but when I am free from the noose I am practicing *asangraha*.

In our modern times possessions have become signs of status of success, of position and of power. No wonder that modern society has been named the consumer society. Unlimited economic growth has become the ideal of every nation in the world. In order to achieve this individual lives, families, the social fabric, and our relationship with the natural world have been destroyed. We have passed the point of increasing human well-being by increasing material wealth.

Many surveys have found that in the Western world a reasonable living standard was reached in the 1970s, but since that time there has been a downward curve. More cars have meant more pollution and more congestion in the cities, waste disposal has reached levels at which landfills are poisoning the earth and water. In spite of enormous wealth and economic success, poverty has by no means been abolished; a small percentage of people control a large percentage of wealth, which affects social cohesion and harmony negatively. Increasing crime and a large prison population, drug trafficking, unemployment, homelessness, and social exclusion are acute problems in most Western nations.

There is total confusion about the aims of society and the meaning of life. Material wealth is only a means to an end — and that end is living a good life: spiritually, psychologically, socially, and artistically. Living the good life entails good human relationships throughout. But in our present culture means have become ends. Human societies are pursuing the accumulation of wealth for its own sake. Having has become more important than being. We value people not for who they are but for what they have, what kinds of status, power, position, and possessions they have. We have lost the sense of meaning, we are holding on to an empty form.

However, there is increasing awareness of this state of affairs; movements of voluntary simplicity, downshifting, local economy, and local currency are growing. Ordinary people reacted against the stranglehold of state-controlled socialism in the countries of the former Soviet bloc; now, in the West, the signs of revolt against the dictatorship of the market and the rule of money are evident. Such new economics, based on the principle of sustainability, give me hope of a transformation from acquisition to asangraha.

Nonconsumerism is not asceticism, it is not a principle of denial; it is knowing the limits and enjoying the abundant gifts of nature without possessing them. Nonconsumerism is integral to a life which is simple in means and rich in ends.

Obsessive attachment to acquisition leads to poverty of spirit and of imagination. Nonconsumerism is a way of finding the critical balance between material and spiritual wealth. If in balance, material wealth can be helpful to the society in service, sharing, and generosity. Therefore, nonconsumerism is nothing to be afraid of; with it life will be more enjoyable, not less. A nonconsumerist society is a no-poverty, no-affluence society. Such a society is worth aspiring to and worth working for.

For the last few hundred years we have been working for the creation of a consumer society, and its promise of utopia. All drudgery and chores were to be done by machines, and people would have plenty of time to pursue spiritual, artistic, and creative activities. Now there are cars and computers, faxes and phones, washing machines and central heating, and shops are filled with all conceivable kinds of goods, but where is the time? Where are the creativity and spirituality? Where is the utopia?

6. Physical work (Sharirashram)

Sharirashram, or physical work, means the practice of daily manual labor. Society the world over is divided into two parts: those who work with their hands and those who enjoy the fruit of other people's work. Peasants, farmers, craftsmen and women, factory workers, and other laborers work hard but get little in return. Lawyers, professors, accountants, managers, bankers, stockbrokers, landowners, and aristocrats use only their brains and are highly paid.

There is always a deep tension between the managers and the managed, the intellectual workers and the manual workers, between those who manipulate the market and those who are their victims. Such a divided society is unhealthy. The purpose of physical work is to heal that division. It gives an opportunity to all to use their hands as well as their heads. We may not be able to achieve complete parity in this field, but the goal for intellectuals, managers, and members of the middle class is to include a certain amount of manual work in their everyday lives.

I was deeply inspired to know that Gandhi, however busy he was always incorporated some spinning, cleaning the toilets, and nursing the Ii sick into his day. He made the spinning wheel a symbol of India's political independence and economic self-reliance

Working with one's hands is much more than making or producing things. Physical work is a form of worship. It is a spiritual practice. It is a healing process, a therapy. It is an activity essential to ignite our imaginations and an antidote to alienation and exclusion.

Our hands have a tremendously transformative power A lump of clay is turned into a beautiful pot, a block of stone into a sculpture, a pile of bricks into a home, a heap of wool into a tapestry. Sacrificing hand skills at the altar of technology can only bring disenchantment and mental confusion. A deskilled society is a degraded society.

We need to begin at the beginning. We need to restore the place of manual work in our schools. Together with reading, writing, mathematics and science, languages and literature, we need to teach children gardening, cooking, building, pottery, smithying, carpentry, animal husbandry, music, dance, and other crafts of life. Children leaving school should know what to do with themselves in very practical terms, and the industries which destroy

manual jobs must be made to pay a heavy tax, which should be spent on encouraging handiwork. However sophisticated the technology, it cannot fulfill the deep urge of the body to act and to make.

Even when we have a good income from our professional work, that is no substitute for engagement with our hands. Gandhi wrote, "It is a tragedy of the first magnitude that millions of people have ceased to use their hands as hands. Nature has bestowed upon us this great gift which is our hands. If the craze for machinery methods continues, it is highly likely that a time will come when we shall be so incapacitated and weak that we shall begin to curse ourselves for having forgotten the use of the living machines given to us by God. Millions cannot keep fit by games and athletics; and why should they exchange the useful, productive, hardy occupations for the useless, unproductive, and expensive sports and games?"

All of us should be able to bake bread with whole flour. Dependence on denatured, mass-produced bread causes the loss of home culture. What value has a home without a proper kitchen, where members of the family cook creatively and imaginatively and celebrate food, work, and life together?

When I have engaged in manual labor, I am satisfied with less. The work itself is a source of satisfaction. But when I have not engaged in the process of making, I am hungry for something, and I do not know what I am hungry for. And so I want more — I seek satisfaction in shopping, yet I remain dissatisfied. I realize that true satisfaction cannot be derived from things; it comes only when mind and body join in bringing out the potential of matter by interacting with it.

A purely materialistic and utilitarian mind-set pursues one, and only one, aim — continuous and endless production through mechanical means. This has resulted in the loss of a sense of beauty. We have created an ugly world, and the tragedy is that we no longer have the ability to discriminate between what is ugly and what is beautiful. Furthermore, with mechanized modes of production, things such as paper plates and polystyrene cups are made to be used once only, so that human hands are not required even to wash them. And of course built-in obsolescence is the curse of our time; it is always easier and cheaper to buy new rather than mend the old.

When craftsmen or women make things by hand, they unselfconsciously combine heart, head, and hands. As a result, whatever they make is

beautiful, useful, and durable (the BUD principle). Tribal people in many parts of the world, traditional craftspeople, the illiterate peasants of the past and present, make artifacts, build houses, erect stone walls in their fields, and these are items of exquisite beauty. They make these things for practical purposes or for aesthetic purposes or for ritual. And these objects are durable; they last until their natural end. The older they become, the more attractive they look. They are always repairable. Making and mending are part of the same continuum. The BUD principle is the source of true satisfaction, spiritual, sensual, and physical.

7. Avoidance of Bad Taste (Aswada)

In the case of food, *aswada*, or avoidance of bad taste, means not eating unhealthy food. This includes junk food, fast food, convenience food, processed food, imported food, and too much food. We are what we eat. With good food, body and mind function well. Bad food contributes to mental breakdown, cravings, and ill health. A good life cannot be built on a bad diet.

Food should be pleasing to the eyes, pleasing to the nose, pleasing to the tongue, but above all, it should nourish body and soul. Food is sacred. It is a gift of nature, and we should take it in its natural form or as close to that as possible. Playing politics with food or profiteering from food is an insult to our common sense. Tampering with food through genetic engineering and patenting shows a desire to dominate natural processes. Food patenting is a kind of theft. It has been called biopiracy and rightly so. The dominant nations and corporations have devised laws and regulations to suit their purpose in the name of nutrition.

Indian science classifies food into three types: *satvik*, *rajsik*, and *tamsik*. Satvik food is associated with true food. It is simple, natural, seasonal, and local. Fruit, vegetables, grains, pulses, nuts, and herbs come in this category. Relishing the natural taste, the original flavor of food with the least interference and processing has been considered the highest form of cuisine by Indian nutritionists and Ayurvedic doctors. Those who eat satvik food need no other medicine. This is the diet of gods and angels, sages and sadhus, mothers and babies. Natural spring water; fresh and untreated milk and yogurt; pure boiled rice; potatoes baked in their skins; beans and peas; salads of all kinds; thyme, rosemary, sage, cardamom, cumin, turmeric,

basil, coriander, chives, and other herbs; and mangoes, apples, bananas, and every local fruit are satvik foods.

It is not just what you eat but how you eat it. Preparing with care, sharing and celebrating, being unhurried and relaxed in a convivial ambience contribute to making food satvik. Preparing and eating satvik food is a spiritual practice.

Rajsik food is associated with Raja the king. It is spicy, stimulating, exciting, lavish, and elaborate. It is complicated, preserved, and processed. Onions, garlic, chili, spices, pickles, mature cheeses, salt, sugar, canned food, alcoholic drinks, tea, coffee, chocolate, ice cream, foreign food, and frozen food out of season come in this category. Rajsik food has been promoted by soldiers, merchants, and people who prefer taste above nutrition, pleasure above satisfaction, and design above delight.

Tamsik food is associated with malevolent forces that cause lethargy, depression, anger, cruelty, and intoxication. Tamsik food is artificial, violent, and addictive. Hard spirits, hard drugs, tobacco, meat, stale food, overcooked or burned food, and stolen food come in this category. Overeating is also tamsik.

Some readers may object to having meat included in this class, but modern methods of raising animals in factory farms and slaughtering them in huge mechanized abattoirs involve an immense amount of pain and suffering for the animals. Meat production on this scale takes up vast amounts of land, causing extinction of wildlife. Huge quantities of grain are grown in countries where local people are malnourished and living below the poverty line so that grain can be exported to feed animals of the rich, industrialized countries to provide cheap meat. Furthermore, virgin forests are being cleared to create farms to rear stock so that meat eaters can buy cheap meat burgers. All this for what benefit? Meat eating causes heart disease, cancer, and other illnesses. Then billions of dollars are spent on health care. The medicines themselves are the results of cruel experiments on animals.

An ecologically balanced, environmentally sound, and economically sustainable future has to be largely vegetarian. Such food needs to be produced through organic methods. In the future we will have to return to small-scale farming, in which people in greater numbers are working the land, cultivating the soil with simpler tools. Farming will be more like gardening than like agribusiness. Poisoning the land with massive inputs of

chemicals for short-term gain is in itself a tamsik act and against the ethos of good food. Methods of permaculture, biodynamic agriculture, forest farming, and natural farming are in tune with the quality of satvik food. The essential point of good food is to practice moderation in all circumstances.

The categories of satvik, rajsik, and tamsik are not watertight. They provide a frame of reference so that we can consider moving from tamsik to rajsik to satvik as far as possible. They are helpful indicators of where our priorities should lie. A satvik state is an aspiration rather than a rule.

These three qualities can also be applied in other spheres of life. For example, inspiring, poetic, educative, nonviolent films will fall in the satvik category; romantic, entertaining, high-budget films are rajsik; violent, pornographic, or depressing films are tamsik. Similarly, a simple, beautiful, and appropriate-sized home, made with natural and local materials, is satvik. Opulent, expensive, palatial, exhibitionist, plush, showy homes are rajsik. High-rise, high-tech homes built with plastic, asbestos, and other unnatural materials are tamsik. Castles built to dominate the landscape and people are also tamsik. These qualities can be applied to cities, transport, dress, sport, and other areas of life. In each case, in meditating on the three qualities one attempts to turn oneself towards the practice of good taste.

8. Fearlessness (Sarvatra Bhaya Varjana)

Sarvatra bhaya varjana, or fearlessness, means freedom from fear always and everywhere. Our lives are ruled by fear. Fear of death, fear of old age, fear of illness, fear of unemployment, fear of failure, fear of superior, fear of inferiors, fear of responsibility, fear of commitment, and numerous other fears cause us continual anxiety. Fear leads to violence and war; fear prevents us from seeking and speaking the truth; fear forces us to steal, stops us from loving, makes us accumulate things. Fear is at the root of all evil. Fear is the cause of inner and outer insecurity. Because of fear we want to control, dominate, and rule others. Fear erodes personal as well as social harmony.

The cure for the problems created by fear is unconditional trust in the workings of the universe. As we trust that the sun will rise, water will quench thirst, fire will cook food, boats will sail the seas, so we have to trust that each life, including our own, will fulfill its destiny.

Most of our fears are artificially induced. They are induced at school, in the family, by our peer groups, by politicians, by the media, by religions, and by our own ignorance. The greatest task is to be free from all fears.

In many religious traditions and mythologies, dissolution of ego has not been spoken of as a hero's journey or a warrior's path. When I am able to leap to help someone without fearing my own death, I become a hero, because at that moment I am unaware of my own self. If that moment of emptiness, that experience of egolessness, that bliss of enlightenment can become a way of being for always and everywhere, then I am free from fear.

A hero is not a special kind of person; every person is a special kind of hero when he or she is without fear. Every life is a hero's journey. When I trust in the universe I am not afraid to take risks. If I am afraid of taking risks, is life worth living?

All human beings are part of the tapestry of the universe, part of a pattern which connects. Nothing exists in isolation or separateness. When I realize this network of grand relationships, I lose the illusion of my separate self; I lose the ego, I lose the sense of "I" and "my." When there is no ego, who is afraid of whom?

When I am no longer self-concerned or self-seeking, then I am also not so critical and judgmental of others. I am able to get on with living life rather than worrying about it. I get up in the morning, I clean my teeth, I eat a piece of fruit, I dig the garden, I answer letters, I shop for myself and for my neighbor who is ill, I cook lunch and share it with my family, I clean the dishes, and I rest, I read, I write, I go for a walk, I attend a meeting, I make a few phone calls, and I go to bed at night. The next day is another day. Whatever needs to be done, I do it. Without always questioning, complaining, criticizing, doubting, and, above all, fearing.

In Gerald Jampolsky's words, "Love is letting go of fear." I always seek love but am unable to love because I am unable to let go of fear. Love is all I need. Love is the source of joyful living. Love is my true destiny. In love I find the meaning of life. Love is the ground of all relationships. I am longing for love, but fear stops me from giving and receiving, from being fulfilled.

When I have been able to cultivate fearlessness in my everyday life and have accomplished solid trust from which all activities flow, then I am able to act socially, politically, and collectively without fear and to follow a

truthful and right course of action. When I am faced with an unjust law, I am prepared to break it and stand for justice, freedom, and integrity; I am not afraid of the consequences, including imprisonment or death, as Emile Zola, Henry David Thoreau, Martin Luther King, and Mahatma Gandhi showed.

9. Respect for All Religions (Sarva Dharma Samanatva)

Sarva dharma samanatva, respect for all religions, means appreciation of all religious traditions and tolerance of beliefs with which we may disagree. A religion stems from a particular historic condition, or a specific geographic context, or a unique social need. A religion gives expression to a spiritual quest through a set of formulations and principles and stories. Following the original revelation, scholars, philosophers, theologians, and writers create theories, interpretations, and commentaries. Priests and preachers turn the original teachings of a great prophet into dogma, which is followed in a literal, inflexible, and rigid manner. As a consequence the spirit and the meaning of original teachings are forgotten and the empty shell is worshiped. Ritual takes over and becomes an end in itself. The challenge for a spiritual seeker is to clear away the clutter and search for his or her own experience. Deep down, all religions are pointing toward the same wisdom: the wisdom of love and compassion, peace and generosity, service and serenity, egolessness and self-realization.

To put it simply, different religious paths are like different cuisines. The ingredients are the same: rice, wheat, potatoes, pulses, vegetables, herbs, et cetera, but in the hands of Chinese, Indian, French, Italian, and Arab chefs, these ingredients are transformed. They smell, taste, and look so different, but they are all able to satisfy hunger. Similarly love, truth, compassion, and charity put in the religious traditions of Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Buddhists, and Jews may appear different, but if practiced sincerely they all bring about a transformation of consciousness leading to equanimity and peace.

Of course there are different beliefs emerging from these different traditions — belief or no belief in God, in reincarnation, in hell and heaven, life after death, the soul, good and evil, sin and virtue. These beliefs are like theories of food; some people believe that chamomile tea will help you to sleep, garlic is an aphrodisiac, an apple a day keeps the doctor away — no one can ever determine for certain whether such theories are ultimately wrong or

right, or work for everybody. Therefore there is no point in fighting, quarreling, and killing each other in the name of one theory or another. Hindus and Muslims could happily coexist, as Chinese and Italian restaurants can coexist. If people prefer Chinese to Italian food or vice versa, let them enjoy whichever food they like.

Let us cultivate respect for the diversity and plurality of religions. If the whole world had only one religion, it would be no better. People would invent religions within the religions, sects within sects. Not all Christians have been renowned for living in peace and harmony, nor all Buddhists. So the principle of sarva dharma samanatva is to let the thousand flowers bloom. As we have many languages with their own specific excellences and insights, so it is wonderful that we have so many religions. The world is richer for it. If we do not wish to discard small languages like Hungarian or Tibetan in the name of convenience, why should we wish to make Christianity or Islam or any other religion the only valid religion for the whole world?

Religion is not in the Koran or the Bible, it is in our hearts, in our actions, and in our practice. Religion is not in a church, a mosque, or a temple, it is in the way we relate to other humans, to animals, to forests, to the poor and oppressed, to the ill and dying. Belief in this or that is to some extent speculative, though interesting. Healing the wounded, sharing ourselves with others, listening to them, being gentle, open, and humble are immediate and practical expressions of true religion. So I should be free to practice whatever religion I like, but I must be free of the burden of arrogance and exclusivity.

10. Local Economy (Swadeshi)

Swadeshi, or local economy, means developing a sense of your own place and loving it. All of us have a mother and a father who have given birth to us. In the same way, we all have a place where we live. That place sustains us, and we should sustain it. A nation-state can have a centralized government, but the better form is a confederation of self-governing, self-reliant communities, neighborhoods, districts, townships, and bioregions, where people fulfill their lives from the products of their own localities. When all people are looking after their own patches of land, then every place will be looked after. Where a local economy prevails, people derive maximum benefit from the bounty of their own locality and refrain

from desiring, obtaining, and controlling the resources of other localities. They do not permit any damage to the people and to the local environment. "Not in my backyard" is a perfect formulation, as every yard is somebody's backyard. If every backyard is protected, no yard will be damaged.

This means local apples, local butter, local vegetables, local cheese, local crafts, local industry, local shops, local schools, local hospitals, and in all other matters turning to local goods and services before others. Maximum economic and political power, including the power to decide what is imported into or exported from the local community, remains in the hands of the local government.

For thousands of years before the industrial revolution, mass transportation, and cheap energy, people all over the world lived in relative harmony with their surroundings, weaving homespun clothes, eating homegrown food, caring for the countryside, building homes, temples, and churches with local materials. And yet ideas, cultures, arts, and religions spread far and wide, creating a universal consciousness. Thinking globally and acting locally has been practiced for millennia.

But in modern times minds have grown narrow while markets have expanded. There used to be freedom for people to move and freedom for ideas to spread while goods and services were local. That was a much healthier state of affairs and less damaging to the environment. Now all governments put severe restrictions on immigration of people, but they allow the dumping of goods in countries where the same goods are plentifully available. For example, New Zealand butter is dumped in England while English butter is turning into a butter mountain. Californian wine is pushed into the French market while France knows not what to do with its wine lakes. Japanese cars are forced on the American people while American cars are lying unsold, occupying vast acres of parking lots. Meanwhile transportation of butter, wine, cars, and other goods is causing depletion of the ozone layer and global warming. Who, other than the giant corporations, benefits from this massive movement of goods? Small and local businesses, shops and industries are closed down, throwing people on the unemployment heap and making them dependent on state benefit.

Recently the Wuppertal Institute in Germany asked a question. How many miles does a container of strawberry yogurt travel before it reaches the kitchen table of a German household? They discovered that the yogurt,

including the plastic container, the label printed on it, the sugar, milk, and strawberries, had traveled eleven hundred miles. If that yogurt was part of the local economy, it would hardly travel at all.

Once E. F. Schumacher related an incident to me. He observed a large truck bringing biscuits made in Manchester to London. A few minutes later he observed mother truck taking biscuits made in London to Manchester. Now Schumacher was an economist, so he started to ponder the economic rationale behind a truck full of biscuits coming from Manchester to London and vice versa. What could it be? If the specialty of a Manchester biscuit was desired in London, the biscuit manufacturer could send the recipe to London on a postcard. The Manchester manufacturer could even send someone to London to teach the art of biscuit making. Schumacher could not understand what benefit was derived from using a fleet of trucks, congesting the highways, polluting the air, and making the drivers sit alone for several hours day after day for the best part of their lives in the service of moving around biscuits. In the end, in some desperation, he said to himself, "Oh well, I am a mere economist and not a nutritionist. Perhaps the nutritional value of these biscuits is increased by transportation!"

Schumacher was not against trade altogether. If there was something in Manchester which could only be made there, then it was reasonable to exchange it for something which could only be made in London. But to ferry identical goods around in the name of free trade is economic insanity. The trade between nations and regions should be minimal, like icing on a cake.

This observation was narrated to me in the early 1970s, before globalization of the economy, the stranglehold of GATT and NAFTA, and obsession with world trade were strong. Now, under the regime of liberalization, biscuits are carted around not just from Manchester to London but from Manchester to Moscow, from London to Los Angeles, and from Tokyo to Toronto.

If people think that the global economy is based on rationality, then they need to have their heads examined! World trade is the most irrational system yet devised. Everyone loses except the global corporations, and the environment suffers most of all. The globalization of the economy is colonialism pure and simple, wearing the mask of free trade, progress, development, science, technology, modernity, the promise of utopia tomorrow. Today there is a net flow of resources and wealth from the poor countries of the South to the rich countries of the North.

The answer to globalization is swadeshi. Whatever is made or produced in a locality must be used first and foremost by the people of that locality. Every local community should have its own carpenters, potters, shoemakers, builders, mechanics, farmers, engineers, teachers, weavers, doctors, bankers, merchants, musicians, artists, and priests. In other words, each local community should be a microcosm of the macroworld.

The principle of swadeshi is not against cities, but it is against sprawling suburbs and megalopolies. If there were cities of one to two million people, flanked by greenbelts and sufficient amounts of supporting farmland, then New York would not depend on lettuce imported from California and London would not depend on potatoes imported from Egypt.

Swadeshi is concerned not with personal self-sufficiency or family self-sufficiency but with self-sufficiency of the bioregion. In conjunction with the principle of manual work, the economy should be based not on centralized and mechanized modes of production but on decentralized, homegrown, handcrafted modes of production. In other words, not mass production but production by the masses.

Mass production is concerned with the product, whereas production by the masses is concerned with the product, the producers, and the process. The industrial system depends on impersonal, alienating, and soul-destroying structures, whereas small-scale methods of production for, by, and within the local area encourage neighborliness and human relationships. People take care of each other and of animals, land, and forestry. A healthy economy is a local economy, and a local economy is a healthy economy.

The champions of globalization are mostly from the United States and Western Europe. These countries profess to believe in democracy, but democracy and the global economy are a contradiction in terms. Industrial bureaucrats operate anonymously. Their power and wealth is so enormous that many small and poor nations, not to mention local communities, are unable to stand up to them. Multinational corporations can use their money and muscle to bribe officials, can hire clever lawyers to interpret laws in their favor, can spend large sums of money to entertain and impress politicians, and can use their cunning to overpower any opposition.

If the companies were small and local, they would have to work within the bounds of local support, local culture, and local accountability. They would be obliged to serve the local community since they would be making a profit

out of it. Ethics and economics would be twinned. There would be more chance to implement the triple bottom line — financial profitability would be required to match with social responsibility and environmental sustainability. Within the local economy, profit has a place, but it is kept in its place. In the matrix of society, profit, culture, nature, and spirituality together make the complete picture.

11. Respect for All Beings (Sparsha Bhavana)

Sparsha bhavana, or respect for all beings, means that caste, color, class, creed, sex, age, race, and other similar distinctions are no reason for putting people down or up. In India the caste system makes some people outcasts or untouchables. In Britain the class system divides society. In Northern Ireland religion keeps communities apart. In the United States color causes segregation. Then there is the divisiveness of sexism, ageism, and racism. In subtle or not so subtle ways, discrimination is practiced in most societies. In many cultures men treat women as second-class citizens. The rich turn their noses up at the poor; the clever and educated look down on the illiterate. City people look at country folk with disdain. Civilized societies consciously, or subconsciously, consider primitive and tribal societies to be dispensable. Industrialized societies look at agrarian societies as backward.

Of course attitudes are changing, racial harmony is improving, untouchability in India has been outlawed, and in the United States civil rights have been restored. However, we are a long way from establishing equal and unqualified respect for all human beings. We are even further from looking at speciesism. To some extent the concept of human rights has been brought into public discourse, but animal rights and the rights of wildlife, including the whole animate and inanimate world, have hardly been expressed. I wonder whether you, my reader, even grasp the concept of species rights. But sparsha bhavana requires a deep respect for all species and acceptance of the intrinsic value of all beings.

Most people think and act as if God created animals for the benefit of human beings and therefore human beings consider it their birthright to hunt them, kill them for sport, ride on them, and of course slaughter them to eat. This attitude to animals is comparable to past attitudes to slaves and to servants. It has been and still is argued that animals have no souls and are therefore of no value other than their usefulness for human beings. This collective

myopia is at the root of the present-day ecological crisis. Millions of species are becoming extinct because of human encroachment on their habitats. This human colonialism is ever expanding over the territories of the nonhuman species.

We don't think that nature exists in its own right. If there is a piece of land, we automatically assume that some individual or government owns it; if a piece of land is not being used either for farming or for building, people think that that land is being wasted. If we are to cultivate respect for all beings, then we need a radical change, almost a revolution in our attitudes. We need to learn to rejoice in the beauty and the mystery of existence as it is and not look at it as a source for economic activity.

Of course we have to take things from nature for our use. We have to take wood for the house, food for the body, wool and cotton for our clothing, but we must take these things not as a right but as a gift and feel gratitude toward nature. If we have that kind of attitude, then we will take with care and restraint because we will think that if we cut down a tree, we are not only taking the life of that tree, but also taking away a whole environment, the home of many birds and insects, shade and food for all kinds of creatures. So if we are taking one tree away, we should plant five trees in its place.

Basically it is a question of attitude. The attitude which allows people to kill animals and clear forests is the same attitude which allows stronger nations to attack weaker nations. We are at the threshold of a new century and a new millennium. I wish to see an emergence of the century of ecology. We humans need to rediscover our humility and learn to practice sparsha bhavana toward all species. There is a built-in instinct in all species to live. We need to respect their instinct, their right to live and flourish.

Throughout Gandhi's eleven principles there is a common thread — there can be no such thing as freedom without limit, restraint, and responsibility. Understanding and accepting the limit is a guarantee, a protective shield of freedom. My body has a protective skin; the skin forms the boundary of the body. Within the bounds of the skin, my senses, my heart, my veins, my bones, and numerous organs, cells, and bacteria can function freely. Similarly my house has a boundary, a limit. Within the four walls of the house, I live freely, reading, writing, cooking, cleaning, caring for my family and friends, and undertaking numerous other activities. My society also has

limits. I function within laws and regulations. My rights and responsibilities are defined by those laws. Freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of movement, and all the other aspects of civil liberty I exercise within the law of the land. But as there are laws of the body, of home, of society, and of nations, there are laws of nature.

Some of the eleven principles, such as nonviolence, are stated in the negative. The aim is not to tell me what to do — that would be too prescriptive — the aim is to show where my limits are and to make clear that by stepping out of those limits I will endanger my freedom. But if I stay within my limits I am free to act as I choose. In terms of nonviolence, I am free to live as long as I let others live. In terms of nonconsumerism, if I tread lightly on the Earth, the Earth will continue to sustain life; if I live simply, then others can simply live.

If we accept that the body has a limit, the house has a limit, the nation has a limit, then why do we have difficulty in accepting that there is a limit to economic growth? Since the publication of *Limits to Growth*, I have participated in numerous environmental gatherings, particularly in the UN conference on the environment in Stockholm in 1972 and the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Lip service is paid to protecting the environment and conserving energy, forests, biodiversity, and wildlife, but there is a strong drive to continue on the path of unhindered economic growth. The debate has been continuing for decades, but the penny has not yet dropped. The Western way of life, based on economic expansion, is not yet open to negotiation, to paraphrase George Bush when he was president of the United States.

The idea of limit is very simple. A child is born, grows for about twenty years, very slowly, almost without being noticed, then reaches her or his full height of five to six feet. For fifty years or more that person remains the same height. This principle of scale is built into each and every natural phenomenon. An organization, a business, an industry, a national economy, and a world economy should be no exception. But this theory of scale has been constantly ignored by the powers that be.

In the context of such a dominant culture of growth, the eleven principles may appear pious thinking at best and irrelevant at worst, but I am not so pessimistic. The Roman Empire did not last forever. The British Empire, over which the sun never set, came to an end. Communist control of the Soviet

bloc, once so powerful, has disappeared into history. Slavery ended, apartheid ended, and there is no reason to believe that the ecologically unsustainable and personally dissatisfying forces of materialism manifested in money-dominated economies will last forever. Once human consciousness has changed, once we have a new awareness of our place in the scheme of things, once we have realized that there is more to life than the unending chase for material possessions, and once we focus on the importance of being rather than having, we will see a dramatic transformation all around us. Then we will take to these eleven principles as ducks to water.