

The Wisdom of Gandhi

A Seven-Week Series

IN-HOME STUDY GUIDE

Week FIVE Study Questions and Notes for Discussion

“If we could erase the I’s and ‘mine’s’ from religion, politics, economics, etc., we should soon be free and bring heaven upon earth”
– Mahatma Gandhi

Study Questions - Out of the Ego Cage (Review pages the book *Gandhi the Man*, pages 28-29; pages 114-115 and Chapter 4, *Gandhi the Man*, pages 125-145)

- **What is the fear of giving up “I” and “mine?”** *Notes for discussion:*
 - Fear of not getting our way.
 - Fear of loss: our self/identity, happiness, personal satisfactions, pleasure, control, prestige, security, power, profit.
 - Fear of having to give up something: our likes and dislikes, judgments, opinions, habits.
- **What are the possible benefits?** *Notes for discussion:*
 - We can live life in the Spirit, affirming our oneness with all peoples, all creatures and the natural environment.
 - “All the Masters . . . gained an understanding that there is nothing in this outer world of changeable conditions that will give you peace unless it’s led by Spirit.” (Baine Palmer: “Out of the Ego Cage”)
 - The sermon spoke of the Buddha: on the night of his enlightenment, the Buddha arrived at the radical discovery that we do not exist as separate beings. He saw into the human tendency to identify with our separate state of existence and discovered that this belief in “I” and “mine” is a root illusion that creates our suffering and removes us from the joy, freedom and mystery of life.
 - At first, Gandhi found, “it was painful to give up his time or pleasure for the sake of others’ needs. But the freedom that followed was exhilarating. Gandhi’s joy knew no bounds.” (p. 28)

“Through many years of living for others, rather than himself, Gandhi found that what he had eliminated from his personality was only his separateness, his selfishness and his fear.” (p. 115) Like Gandhi, if you were to focus more on understanding the needs of those around you, how would this reduce your feeling of separateness from other people? Notes for discussion:

- *“He who devotes himself to service with a clear conscience, will day by day grasp the necessity for it in greater measure, and will continually grow richer in faith.” – Gandhi (p. 29)*
- *“Albert Schweitzer said that the purpose of human life is to serve and to show compassion and the will to help others. He goes on to say, ‘I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know, the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.’ “ (Baine Palmer, “Out of the Ego Cage”)*
- *As St. Francis said, “It is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, it is in dying (to self) that we are born to eternal life.”*
- **How does self-will or self-interest get in the way of being effective in our actions to help others? Notes for discussion:**
 - *“Self-will blocks the release of the tremendous inner power of satyagraha (soul-force); removing self-will frees it.” (p. 152)*
 - *Self-will diminishes our spiritual awareness and our ability to know the truth. (p. 28)*
 - *“Truth is God . . . God alone knows absolute Truth” – Gandhi. “We . . . can pursue only a relative truth; but if our search for truth is pure and devoid of self-interest, Gandhi believed, we will not come to harm.” (p. 151)*
 - *“But truth alone is not enough. Gandhi knew human nature and felt that, by itself, truth could become ‘unethical’: ‘It is because we have at the present moment everybody claiming the right of conscience without going through any discipline whatsoever that there is so much untruth being delivered to a bewildered world.’ What can make the search for truth impure, ‘unethical,’ is his ‘self-interest.’ Gandhi’s antidote to untruth was the systematic reduction of self-centeredness, which he spelled out in a simple tenet, ‘Reduce yourself to zero.’ This reduction of self-will is the discipline he mentions above, and without it, the search for truth can lead to self-righteousness, arrogance, even tyranny.” ([. 151)*
- **What were Gandhi’s spiritual practices? Notes for discussion:**
 - *Daily Meditation*

- Repetition of his mantram “Rama, Rama” – the “staff of life” which carried him through every ordeal
- “Reduce himself to zero;” the systematic reduction of self-will so that, “Thy will be done – not my will.”
- Put the welfare of others first. *“Start where you are . . .with your wife, or your husband, or your children. Try to put their welfare first and your own last every minute of the day, and let the circle of your love expand from there. As long as you are trying your very best, there can be no question of failure.”* – Gandhi (p. 126)
- Gandhi strove moment to moment, to keep his consciousness aligned with God Mind so that in every aspect of life his thoughts, words and actions would be aligned with Spirit. Gandhi once said, *“One man cannot do right in one department of life whilst he is occupied in doing wrong in any other department. Life is one indivisible whole.”* (p. 31)