

Satish Kumar Retreat Notes (November 2006)

In November of 2006 I attended a retreat with Satish Kumar on Gandhian philosophy. Here is a link to his bio: <http://www.resurgence.org/satish/index.htm>

What follows are my notes from the retreat.

Activism becomes enlightened when it is a natural expression of your state of being. For Gandhi, Thich Nhat Hanh and Mother Theresa there was no burn out. gaya = greek for earth. In Sanskrit gaya means everything. We engage with other people as a form of spiritual practice. When we help others because we think we are better off this is a materialistic approach. "I know better" is not the right approach. The whole idea of "I'm coming to help you" has to change. They don't need your help, they are not backward or uneducated. These are labels we put because we have a kind of mind set of what it means to be developed and education. The purpose/end goal must be questioned.

How those who are poor became poor and how do we become privileged? That is the fundamental question. We have appropriated and taken from them. They know how to build food and house. We have taken their land, forest, rivers and say we own them. We have become owners of nature. "We" as in those who are going to help. Rather than giving, taking less or not taking is the first step. The purpose is that I go not to help them but to liberate myself. I am imprisoned in this exploitative system, prejudice of ownership. Ownership has to be transformed into a relationship and then it becomes spiritual practice. Live like them and teach them as much as you learn from them then work like development is not work it is a way of life. The giver and the receiver are the same, there is no separation when you live in a world of relationship. Be who you are, when you change that concept, the weight is taken off what comes from you becomes natural. You are who you are living a life of relationships. Liberate yourself from ownership. The oppressor should be liberated, liberate ourselves from the idea or idealism. Even the idea that people are without spirituality is spiritual materialism, it is not something you can give. We must liberate our minds from this idea. When you are working with people working towards spiritual liberation action itself is the reward, result is not separate from action. There is no aim, no goal. When you relax this is the moment to live. No goal, no end result. Taking care of the child in the moment, you can't be anything other than who you are. You can't carry responsibility for saving the world than you are –paradox.

What is spirituality?

The word spirit comes from breathing. Inspirar, expired (dead). Spirit means able to breathe. You are breathing therefore you are spiritual. Whatever is breathing is spiritual. A free spirit is someone that breathes, doesn't get stuffy or blocked. When you are able to be like air then you are spiritual. A spiritual person also breathes through their mind and heart. They are dynamic, ever changing and transforming, that is spirit. With spirit you need matter. They are not 2 separate entities. Without spirit no matter is able to survive. No dualism between matter and spirit. There is no such thing as evil separate from good. Darkness has light because only in context of dark can you understand light. White/black,

Sita/Ram cannot be separated. There is no evil, only ignorance. Developed people creating underdevelopment. Dispel the idea of good or evil between black and white, there are many other colors.

Your inner voice, the voice of your soul will respond appropriately. Be cohesively responsive. Participate in that response, when you are fixed there is no more gaya, no more singing. When you are in relationship everything is—respond to everyone as it is. Recognize your capacity, the whole universe is inside of you. Listen to your inner voice. Drop your burdens, you are swimming.

Whenever you wake up that is the morning. Delusion is the work of the mind, enlightenment is beyond the mind. The reality of your being is greater than your conditions. Your genius and capacity than your impediments. Remind you of your capacity for courage. The person who is capable of killing is also capable of loving. Transformation occurs when you don't put evil into a category. You are capable of loving and I can accept your killing without fear.

Spirituality is seamless. Diversity in unity. Don't practice otherization. You can engage in protest and not stop the flow. Action is essential, it is what we are but act without an idea of achievement, mindset of wholeness and interrelatedness. Action is coming out of deep inner wisdom, not something fixed, not a dogma. The answer is within you, you are empowered. A garden without weeds is impossible.

Vaishnav Jan

This song is telling you a way of life which is natural and spiritual.

Vaisnav Jan – living in true nature, with nature, a natural person.

Natureà natalànative

Vishnu's principle of birth. The sufferer and you are identified with each other. Mother Theresa's helping others was a natural expression of her

A natural person bows to everyone, every being, everything in the whole world with out discrimination

To be a true protestor you have to act this way. If you think others are bad then you are just as bad as them. Does not say bad words about anyone, protest, social change with spirituality. Who can be more weak than yourself? The moment you spiritually transform yourself can you move towards real spiritual transformation. (Akbar and Berbel story "what is the most sweet and bitter thing in the world?" words)

A mango tree has no discrimination, anyone can have mangoes, be like the mango tree.

Trust in the universe, in yourself and in people—this is the root of peace.

Without risk there is no life. When we are free from illusion and delusion there is no other. When you are a natural person all sacred places are within you. Ananda

Coomeraswamy: “An artist is not a special kind of person but every person is a special kind of artist.”

Empowerment, you have the power to change the world.

Dharma is what holds you, what sustains you. Dharti = earth, dhiraj = patience

We confuse dharma with order. Svadharma = your own dharma

Sustainability = dharma way of living

Pain and suffering are an integral part of living. Pain and suffering show that you are alive, aware and a conscious being. Life means pain, ride the pain. Don't kill it. Pain is the Buddha's first truth. It is painful to grow. Pain is no problem. You must understand the cause of pain. Be AWARE. You can't solve a problem with the same tools which gave birth to a problem. We are quick to treat pain instead of understanding its cause. The cause of economic control is fear, greed, control of nature. Mankind is the only species that has to pay for its food. Only human society is a society that has stocks in warehouses but people are starving.

The oppressed becomes the oppressor, fear and greed. In order to practice civil disobedience you must have spiritual obedience. Satyagrahaà satya – insistence on truth. What is truth? Truth is what is natural, what is real. If you really want to help you have to develop humility. There is a world of difference between employment and livelihood.

Imagination needs courage. Aboriginal Australians have dream time. The your practical program and action will follow.

Don't undermine romance. Romantic imagination, dreaming with in that be practical.

Workable model of alternative. Creativity is the prerogative of the minority.

Om = omnipresent, omnipotent

What is infinite and eternal we haven't got it. Lost what was infinite and eternal (time and space).

What is progress, advancement, and development? These things have a cost which are time and space. How do we reclaim time and space? If you want to make a journey you need time. Time is eternal and infinite and unlimited by removing the clutter which has filled our time and space.

Simple, sattvic and easy we don't have time so how do we liberate our time? The first obstacle is ambition. Success is only measured by external standards seeking success is the first obstacle. Success and ambition related to results. Not action themselves. Move from success to fulfillment. Fulfillment is from within. If we are seeking seriously a path

to success and fulfillment are not the same. In a spiritual journey fulfillment is what we seek and it is in every moment. When action is only means to an end it is elusive.

Mahatma Gandhi – you don't have to forsake the world to be spiritual. Spirituality in the world and truth and non violence in politics. How to bring the world and spirit together? Integrating a spiritual practice with social political action. We need to understand ourselves as not in control of the universe. We are part of a large process. If I participate in this process it will take care of itself trust is a conversation and response to every moment. All manner of things shall be well. In this unpredictable universe there is order which we don't understand. Observe there is implicit order, when you have that your life will follow the pattern of the universe. If you plan everything and want to know certain then you don't have trust—LET GO!

Your life will evolve like the universe relationships break down when we try to control instead of participate. If you have trust in your heart then you have no ego. Relationship is a continuous conversation. It is a dance. In trust in relationship there must be generosity which is unconditional. Spiritual path and practical path is one in the same. All work becomes sacred. path you follow is the same seeing the meaning in your world and action follow letter and spirit. Remain detached in the world is very challenging, we remain visible reality with out understanding the invisible reality. Spiritual practice and social action go hand in hand. Political action should not come in the way of everyday living. Meditation is a way of life.

Many good ideas are expressed in trinity. How to integrate political, social and spiritual? Soul, soul, society. Soul means the connection to ourselves, when we are in touch with our own being. Soil is our connection to the natural world and many trinitys don't include this (body, mind, spirit etc.) The Self is made up of nonself all other dimensions from the beginning of evolution. Atman all the time is changing. It is the continuity that is invisible, non material, universal and individual, indivisible, non separate. I am that, soham. I am related. Soul is the invisible reality which is indivisible, integrated. INTEGRATION, INTEGRITY, INTEGRATING. Dan is not just giving, sharing. Work as meditation. Action as meditation, work and meditation are not separate. Participating no good talking about saving the world when someone else washes your dishes and clothes.

M2A = 2 part mediation, one part action. Tathgataà Buddhist like that it is gone. Kabir – weaving transformed into poetry while he was weaving poetry was being made when he was weaving he was writing poetry.

Each of us has our own way of applying ask yourself and you will find the answer. Don't be a follower, don't follow the Buddha, he didn't follow anyone. How to apply? Ask yourself. How do you turn teaching into spiritual practice? Take what suits you and leave the rest. Find your won answer, you will find it you have everything you need, there is nothing lacking in you. what is the rush to find the answer? The answer will come, just keep seeking. Answers evolve and grow. When you have a torch in your hand you can only see a few feet ahead but as you move you see further ahead. Enlightenment is to see

things as they are, it is now, in this moment, nirvana is in this moment. You have the switch inside, find your own switch. Light has gone into you so you are enlightened. See things as they are. Utopia means no place, you cannot create it tmr. We need to empower ourselves. If you are aware of your relatedness to the trinity then you are in relation. The individual is not separate the individual is indivisible. You are the yeast, catalysis in society, continuous journey. There is no happy ever after, that is boring! Moksa is now, in this moment. When you realize things as they are. Moksa is not something you achieve in many lifetimes. Total and complete = pain and pleasure as they are.

What is truth?

In Indian tradition truth is not the first principle. Ahimsa is first then satya is second. Ahimsa is common ground, nonviolence is the first principle, violence is poison which disturbs. Mental and verbal violence. Mental, subtle and physical. To understand truth you have to first understand ahimsa. Nature is nonviolent, feeds life with life. Violence is projected, organized, vengeful. Violating with domination ideal. Darwinian thinking is not right. Nature is harmony, love and respect is central to nonviolence. Tsunami is an expression of the earth's pain. Violence is conscious and organized, premeditated.

Truth is dynamic, always changing. Truth is multiple, many dimensional like a diamond (precious with many dimensions). No fixed truth or reality when we seek truth we are all the time opening our eyes to see things as they are. Anekanth – no one knowledge (jain term). In language it is not possible to speak the truth, you can only speak of an aspect of truth. Language is dualistic, it only allows for partial truth. Always evolving do not fix it to any one thing, be ready to constantly discover new truths. Truth simply is. Truth is to understand things as they are, even the totality. You can't bring truth into language. Often we get stuck in a truth as THE truth. We have to manage the reality of truth with greater generosity. How do we look for 4 noble truths on a mountain when we lie in our every day lives?

Children and education

Cooking should be just as part of the curriculum. Clothes making, and how to build a house. School should be a community. Education is not the teacher knows and children are ignorant. Children know who they are and who they want to be. Nurture the seed not by putting in education but bringing it out. Educare – bringing out. Small is beautiful, not learn about nature but learn from nature. Children are not underdeveloped adults. When a child is 16 he is no longer your child, he is your friends. When they are under 16 your task is only to observe and support them. You don't have to be part of the economy, the economy has to be part of you.

trust yourself and your ability and you will be able to negotiate your way in the world.

Tea story = big idea small moment

Be open, your mind and heart, you cannot predict one door closes, another opens. Converting mundane incident into active imagination. Gandhi was a master symbolist.

Imaginary force is an act of social change. Using an ordinary moment and transforming it into an extraordinary moment is how we become a change agent. Truth is elusive.

Moral force = truth force, satyagraha is when you evoke energy encapsulated or entrapped in you for interest of the whole not self interest. Self-interest is included in the interest of the whole. Sarvodaya = whole, EVERYTHING, beyond capitalism and socialism. Insistence on truth is inclusive of everything = satyagraha interest in everything. Socialists/communists = interest of the poor but Gandhians =- interest of the whole.

Tolstoy's "War and Peace" is using a very archetypal story to convey a message. Veda Vyasa was very very imaginative in trying to use that archetype of peace. Read the Gita in a metaphorical, allegorical way. Let go of the idea that your students need to be taught.

The invisible dimension of God is undescrivable (god, Brahman, Spirit). Even if you ate an apple before you don't know how the apple you are eating tastes. The invisible dimension is VERY important if not more important. Invisible dimension beyond our intellect. We do not live in a mythological world now using methods of violence to defeat violence is out of date. Time is now, this moment. We need to engage in non violent struggle and that is when we can use archetypal stories of inspirational metaphor.

External peace can only be brought about by internal peace.

How could anyone ever tell you that you are anything less than beautiful?

How could anyone ever tell you you are anything less than whole?

How could anyone fail to notice that your living is a miracle?

How connected you are to my soul?

Agri, cultivate, culture, gardening

Farming → farm out

Diplomacy = rajasic

Dialogue = sattvic

Monologue = tamasic

In order to make long term change we need to stop brain washing.

"I never let my schooling interfere with my education." Mark Twain

No respect for children or individuality.

What do children need from education? What do they want from education? Being in relationship is the key, it is hard to do that with 40 kids all day. You can't do that in a factory setting. Education for a post-industrialist age. Critiquing and Constructing are two legs used for walking. Education is useful and beautiful. Criticizing is important BUT we can't stop there. There must be a building, constructive aspect.