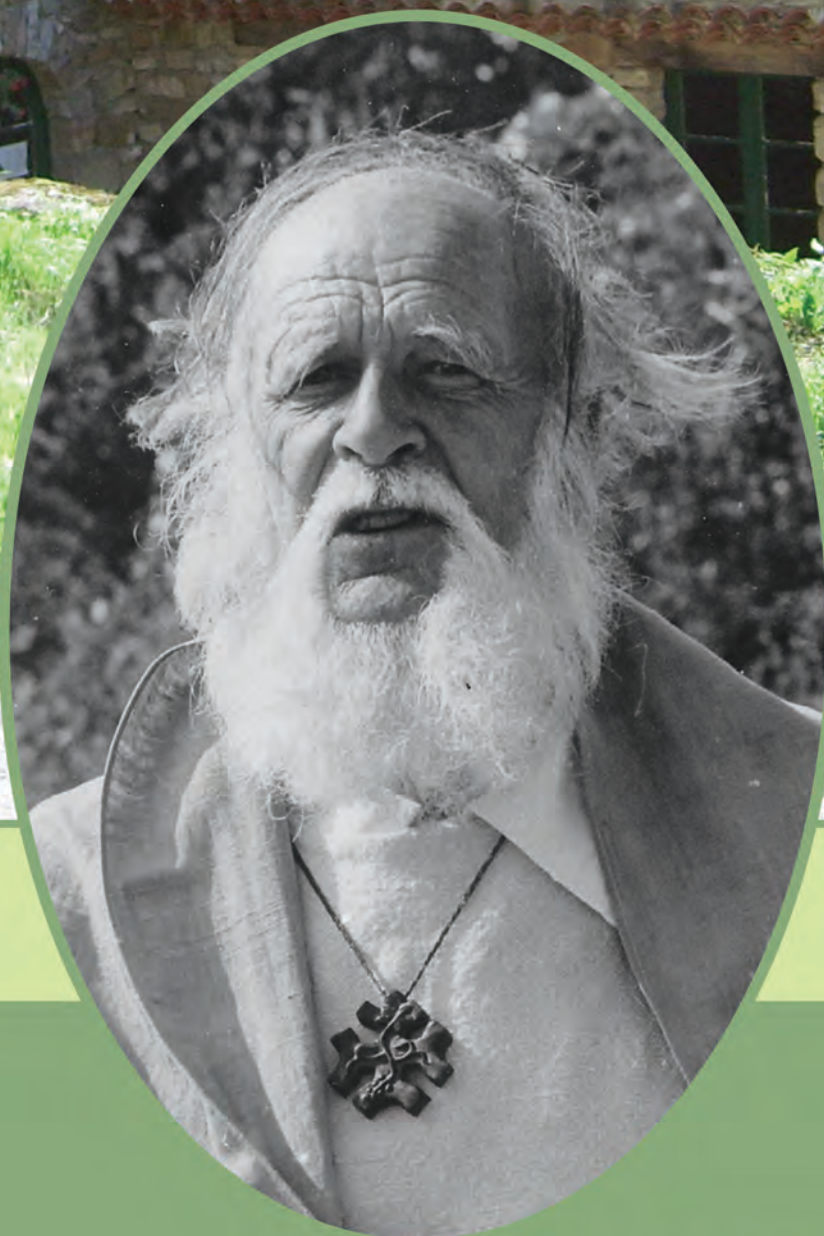
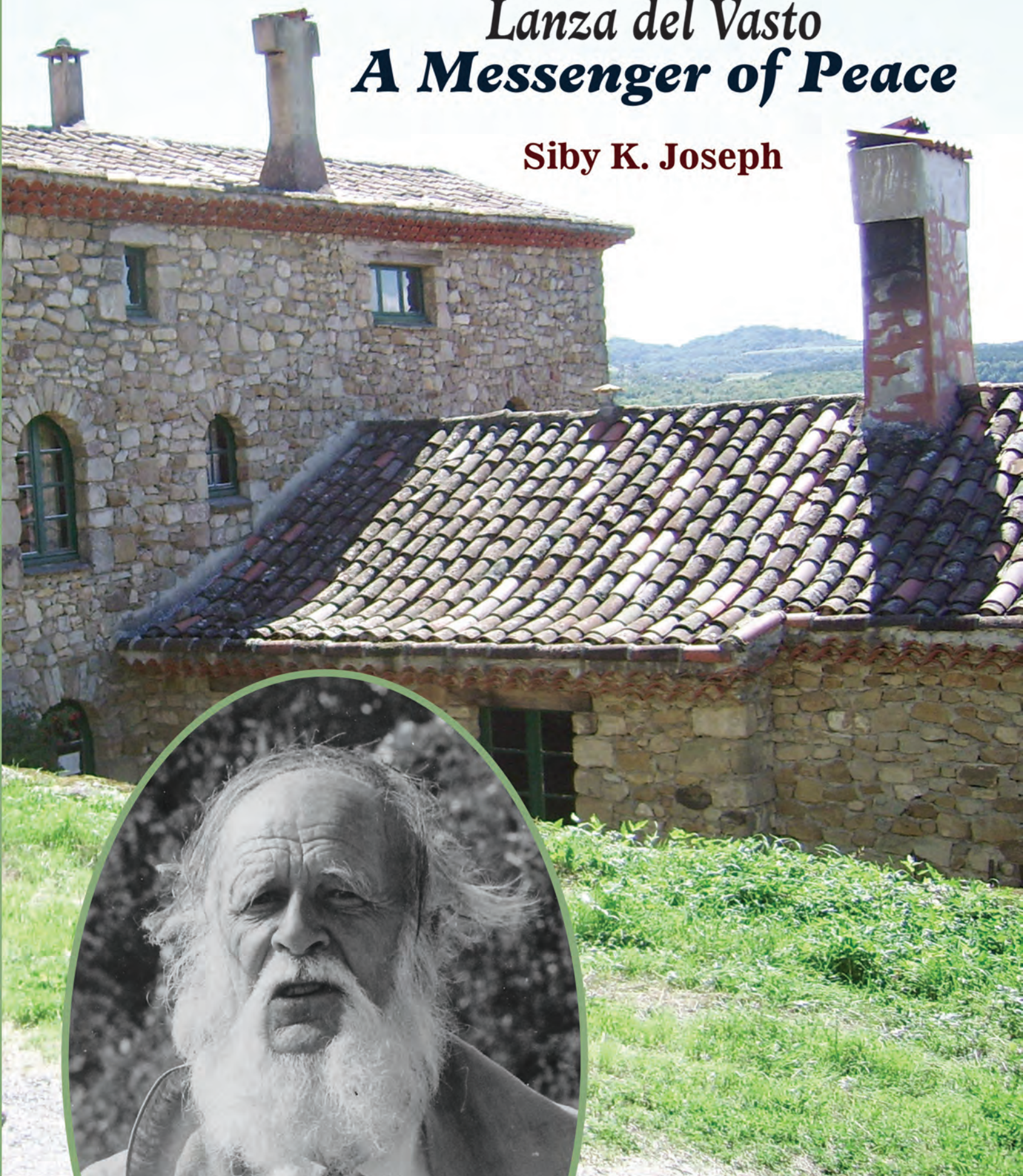


Lanza del Vasto ***A Messenger of Peace***

Siby K. Joseph



Foreword
Louis Campana

Gandhi International Éditions

**Lanza del Vasto:
A Messenger of Peace**

Siby K. Joseph

Dean of Studies and Research
Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha

Gandhi International Editions

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publishers.

The views and opinions expressed in this book are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the organizations to which they belong.
First Published 2018

© Gandhi International

ISBN: 978-2-9559999-4-3

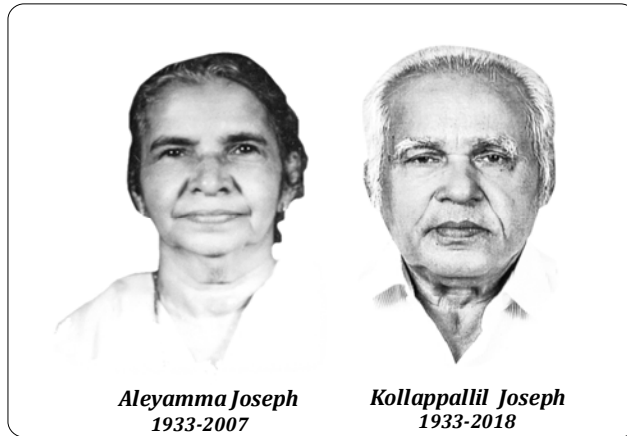
Published by

Gandhi International

37 Rue de la Concorde, 11000 Carcassonne,
France

Printed at Om Laser Printers

2324, Hudson Lines, Kingsway Camp, Delhi – 110 009



Aleyamma Joseph
1933-2007

Kollappallil Joseph
1933-2018

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the loving memory of my parents,
who have been the primary source of inspiration for my life

CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>		7-12
<i>Preface</i>		13-14
Chapter -1	Lanza del Vasto :A Brief Biographical Sketch	15-24
Chapter-2	Gandhi: The Inspiring Force for Shantidas	25-37
Chapter-3	The Community of the Ark	38-51
Chapter-4	Lanza del Vasto and the Ark in Peace Action	52-58
Chapter-5	Epilogue	59-61
<i>Appendices</i>		
Appendix -1	Lanza del Vasto's Letter to Gandhi	63-65
Appendix -2	The Mission of the Ark	66-67
Appendix -3	The Foundation Principles	68-76
Appendix -4	Common Prayers of the Ark	77-83
Appendix -5	Lanza Del Vasto: A Chronological Sketch	84-91

Foreword

Every river has its source, its confluences, its delta, which is sometimes common to other rivers that have their own sources and confluences. All of them end up in the ocean, which reconstitutes and distributes by evaporation the indispensable waters to the sources.

Every hurricane has its cause, it could be the agitated oceans or a civilisation assaulted by the spirit of conquest, or of profit, or of power...

Aware of this dangerous spirit of destruction, in 1933, Lanza del Vasto travelled alone, begging, from Rome to Bari. He was looking for the source. During this journey he started writing the beginning of the *Principles and Precepts of the Return to Obvious*, and he decided to go on a journey without return to India to meet the one he felt as "an oasis of greenery and peace". I mean Gandhi.

On the slopes of the Himalaya he ended his collection of poetry flavoured with sacred and voluntary renunciation. In the meantime, while travelling, he studied the Gita, the Vedas, the Upanishads, as well as the other religions of India, like Jainism. He also studied Sanskrit, the ancestor of the Indo-European languages, and he discovered the varied interpretations of the sources of non-violence.

Return to the Sources was published in 1943, in the middle of the Second World War, and it was the story of his eighteen months journey in India. The book was unexpectedly successful. *The Approaches of Inner Life*, in 1962, is the story of his experiences with Hindu and Jain masters whom he confronted with his own Judeo-Christian roots. He has remained a Roman Catholic all his life.

His wedding with Chanterelle in 1948 was the occasion to found the first Community of the Ark. It settled with difficulties here and there, without any real possibility of extension or proper functioning. The first members were seekers of meaning and facilitators of ideas.

In Tourelles-sur-Loup, where the community seemed established in the 1950s, Lanza del Vasto decided to join Vinoba Bhave (1954) who was walking throughout India to recover land for the poorest, the landless and the hungry ones. It was the Bhoodan Movement or the gift of Earth. When he came back to France, following this unique experience, Lanza del Vasto published *Gandhi to Vinoba: The New Pilgrimage*. This is the book which made me quit all activity to join the Ark in 1970. I was 23 years old.

In 1959, *The Four Scourges* was published, and it was a critique of the modern society. Originally, Lanza had written a thesis on corporations in the middle-ages for his friend Acquaviva, who had to present it in the law faculty of Pisa in 1925, but he preferred to spend his time painting. On the occasion of the writing of this work, Lanza had the opportunity to study the founding principles of law and ethics. *The Four Scourges* are the quintessence of this thesis and his own writings.

Everything in the life of the Lanza - Chanterelle couple was a search for beauty and meaning, that is why these books leave space to carving, singing, theatre, artistic creation, and community experimentation. Everything is coherence and beauty, work is a celebration, and celebration is a sacred work. I lived there for eight years, without any money in my pocket, free and amazed by this reality of another possible world which so far had been a utopia. Those times were an occasion to confront oneself, for inner cure, peace and the discovery of a

secret force to displace false urgencies and stereotypes of a sick society drowned in stress, a society of speed imposing fallacious values.

Always moving around, Shantidas (the name given to Lanza by Gandhi) was travelling throughout Europe in order to give evidence of the holistic Gandhian non-violence. Specific actions were being implemented. In front of arbitrary raids during the Algerian war, solidarity movements were initiated with imprisoned Algerians in France. On the Concorde Square in Paris companions and friends of the Ark organised demonstrations: they chained themselves in order to claim the right to go to jail, shouting "We are also suspects" to the policemen in charge of cleaning France of suspicious non-compliant faces !

We can also recall actions led against nuclear powers and the rejection of the bomb as early as the 1960s. The short book entitled *About the Bomb*, printed by the Ark, ends with these words:

"This is the leading role France can play.

Will she desert, go along with the Great Powers, earthen pot against two iron pots, raise suspicion and hatred on all sides, rush into work, setbacks and dangers, for the sole purpose of claiming the Right to be part of the Great Destruction?

Or is she going to be sufficiently intelligent, free, brave to accept this mission through which she will be praised and blessed by the whole world and the future generations?"

We know that France has voluntarily chosen the Bomb as a permanent threat, leading the people towards a clear holocaust.

New communities sprang up, initiatives from different people, accepted by the chapter. One urban community, in Villeneuve near Grenoble, didn't obtain the consent of the Pilgrim. Jo Pyronnet confessed that he found himself in front of a wall of inability to understand Shantidas. However the separation was completed, though painful. When his wife died, Jo asked for priesthood in the Catholic Church. Before his ordination, and some time even before his own death, he declared himself as a Gandhian priest and a disciple of Lanza del Vasto.

In those years Lanza del Vasto was reproached as a backward-looking person. Nevertheless he was the first to launch alerts on ecology, on the drifts of mad progress and its consequences. He was the first one to point out the nuclear peril, as we mentioned already, as a means of massive destruction but also as a policy without a vision, narrowly enclosed in a deadly industrial and military ideology. Following Gandhi, he denounced a civilisation of fear of the other, of threat, of profit and of domination, on the level of human relationship as well as geopolitical issues. He fought for the farmers of Larzac, who were threatened with the loss of their land for the extension of a military camp. He proposed a fast, which was a prologue that finally ended in a victory ten years later. He questioned his contemporaries on the escalations of violence due to exacerbated competition between great powers, and he proposed to found small communities of peaceful life, sober, slow and caring for the space and the role of the last man.

Every rotation of the spinning wheel is a revolution!

Every planted tree is a revolution!

Every kitchen garden is a revolution!

All that is small, sober, slow, local, friendly is good, beautiful and meaningful.

Isn't it the current tendency of the ones who have understood that globalisation of financial markets, the power of the big retail groups, the game of lobbyists in the suffocating political milieus are in fact furious machines aimed at crushing men?

This was already announced by Lanza del Vasto in 1960. Against those illusions of power, he advocated the return to oneself, to self-control and to love of the other as the necessary conditions for happiness.

The Spiritual Trinity, his last book published in 1971, ended on a Vedic meditation:

By whom does it reach its goal, the intelligence?
 Who ? The primordial breath of life, who drew it?
 Who threw those words that I go pronouncing?
 The ear and the eye, which god has put them to work?
 Hearing of hearing, thought of thought, yes: That!

Let's risk one more step in the tracks of mysterious certainties :
 I love, therefore You are !

Shantidas returned to India in 1977, in October. He was received in Delhi in the Gandhi Peace Foundation; then he went to Wardha, he planted a tree in the Magan Sangrahalaya (a museum of rural technologies established by Gandhi); he later paid a visit to Vinoba, then almost deaf in Paunar. In Ahmedabad he gave three talks in English in Gujarat Vidyapith (a University founded by Gandhi). Later he travelled to Australia and Japan in 1980.

He died in 1981, on the day before the Feast of Epiphany.

My children, when I have given up
Lay me aside in the grave,
Bind the sandal to my feet
Put the stick well in my fist,
Because I want to be ready to get up,
When will come the One who must come.

(The March of the Kings- Lanza del Vasto)

Every river has its source.

Every hurricane has its cause.

I would like to thank Siby K. Joseph, Dean of the Institute of Gandhian Studies of Wardha, who proposed this book on the now famous personality Lanza del Vasto also known as Shantidas.

Louis Campana

Preface

In commemoration and celebration of the 80th anniversary of the meeting of Lanza del Vasto, popularly known as *Shanti Das*, with Mahatma Gandhi in 1937 at Wardha, Gandhi International (France) and the Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha jointly organised the *Sevagram International Conference on Non-violent Economy and Peaceful world* at Wardha in October, 2017. The Conference was aimed at providing an International forum for exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences for worldwide Gandhian, nonviolent, peace organizations/institutions and individuals working for a sustainable world.

During the Conference, we felt the need for a hand book on Lanza del Vasto highlighting his contribution in the field of peace and non-violence. A proposal was placed before Louis Campana, the President of Gandhi International and he readily agreed to it. I got familiarized with the Community of the Ark in the 90's through close contact with Louis Campana, a direct and ardent disciple of Lanza del Vasto, and Michele Le Boeuf, who was responsible for communities of the Ark during that period. I had the opportunity to visit the two rural communities at La Borie Noble and La Fleyssière and the new Community at St. Antonie l'Abbaye in Isere in 2006. I was amazed by the simplicity and life style at La Borie Noble and the memories of my visit and stay in that Community are still fresh in my mind. I made a presentation about the Community of Ark in the University of Delhi during the Hind Swaraj Centenary Year and many scholars and activists came to me to know about this experiment. It shows the enthusiasm of sensitive minds about novel ideas and practices.

As most of the literature about Lanza del Vasto was mainly available in French, Italian and Spanish languages

writing a tract was a challenging task. I could do this work due to the help and cooperation of members of Gandhi International, especially Louis Campana, President and Christophe Grigri, Coordinator of the organization. Louis Campana was kind enough to write a foreword for the book. I am thankful to Margalida Reus, responsible for Communities of the Ark in France and members of the Communities for their kind help in the execution of the project. I am glad that this will be released in the birth place of Lanza del Vasto in Italy.

When this project was in full swing my father was hospitalized and subsequently he passed away at home on 15th August 2018. I used to present all my writings to him and he always encouraged me. His loving memory and inspiration prompted me to restart this work and complete it on time.

I am thankful to my family members especially my elder Brother Fr. Joseph K. J. for his constant encouragement and checking the whole manuscript within a record time. My thanks are also due to Fr. Anil Prakash D'Souza, Lecturer in Dogmatic Theology and Director of the Carolian Theological Forum, St. Charles Seminary, Nagpur; for checking some French translations and my nephew Amal Jose Philip for his assistance. I am grateful to Ramchandra Pradhan, Senior Member of the teaching faculty of Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha for suggesting the title for this work and his constant encouragement in all my works.

Last but not least, I am grateful to my wife Arunima Maitra and my daughter Almitra K. Siby who have always been my source of strength and without their love and constant encouragement; I would not have been able to finish this work.

International Day of Peace
September 21, 2018

Siby K. Joseph

Chapter -1

Lanza del Vasto :A Brief Biographical Sketch

Giuseppe Lanza di Trabia-Branciforte, popularly known as Lanza del Vasto, was born on September 29, 1901 in San Vito dei Normanni, near Brindisi, Italy. His father Don Luigi Giuseppe Lanza di Trabia-Branciforte was from one of the most illustrious Sicilian families. But his grandmother was from France. In December 1900, Don Luigi was married to Anne-Marie Henriette Nauts-Oedenkoven, a young woman from the Antwerp, Belgium, belonging to an upper middle class family, whom he met during the World Fair under the Eiffel Tower. With the dowry money, the couple purchased in the immediate vicinity of San Vito, in Specchia di Mare, a new property with a modern colonial-style mansion. Don Luigi was concerned about the issues of working class and peasants and fought the local elections under the socialist label. Anne – Marie gave birth to two more children Lorenzo Ercole, in 1903, and Angelo Carlo, in 1904. The three children had their early schooling in Carovigno.

Giuseppe's childhood experiences helped him to understand the hidden truths of nature and later to develop the worldview based on interconnectedness of all beings. His surroundings provided him an opportunity to develop his intuitive capacities in a natural manner. His birthplace was close to the sea. It would be worthwhile to mention one of the incidents in the beach with his mother. Once his mother smiled and walked away keeping himself in front of the waves in the scorching mustard-coloured sand in the beach. As a child, it

was quite natural that he may become frightened. But he proved his mettle. He all of a sudden became aware of the sky and of the blinding brightness of the world that surrounds it. There are many occurrences of similar nature even in his early childhood. This intuitive mind perhaps gave birth to original thought which made him a wise man and philosopher of originality in future.

In 1911, Giuseppe's father abandoned the family. The young Giuseppe, with his mother and two brothers, moved to Paris in 1913. They attended secondary education in Lycée Condorcet, near the Gare Saint-Lazare. Giuseppe missed the light and colour of native place but got attuned to the city life. He was called as Peppino in the family. He had a strong orientation towards humanistic and literary studies. He had his first innings in poetry in his school days. The French poets of the nineteenth century attracted him especially Victor Hugo¹, followed by Charles Leconte de Lisle² and Jose Maria de Heredia.³ The teenager had long debates with his brother Lorenzo on Spinoza⁴ and Nietzsche⁵.

Without giving up his inclination for poetry, in 1920 he enrolled for the Philosophy course of the Royal Institute of Practical and Advanced Studies in Florence and in 1921 at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Pisa. The philosophical study at the University was far beyond his satisfaction. He could hardly find love or wisdom in it. What he felt was nothing but "a profound sense of boredom". In June 1923, he was overwhelmed by the reading of the Rhenish mystic Jean de Ruisbroek understanding of the Trinity. He spent time for writing poetry and other literary activities in the midst of philosophical studies. In the summers of 1924 and

1925, he participated with his brother Lorenzo in the annual meeting of European intellectuals. In Pisa, he made friendship with the painter Giovanni Costetti. He took deep interest in philosophical studies and discovered the writings of Thomas Aquinas⁶ especially his conception of the Trinity. His study of the writings of Thomas Aquinas helped him to rediscover his Christian faith.

The young Giuseppe had good mastery over Italian, French and English languages and served as an interpreter or teacher of French and Italian for American students. In 1926, he was attracted to Mary, a young girl from America. But it was short lived since she did not respond to his correspondence after her return to America. He gave up the idea of ever making friendship or marrying another woman. However, the later developments in his life proved that this thinking was a temporary one. This young man developed himself as a thinker, artist and writer and took the pen name Lanza del Vasto⁷ in 1927 by going deep into the roots of his family history. This name appeared frequently in the covers of Florentine publications. In 1928, he obtained the Doctor of philosophy degree from Pisa University for his thesis on the approaches to spiritual trinity, a masterpiece, an original contribution in relational philosophy. It was in the same year, he read Romain Rolland's classic work *Mahatma Gandhi*, which was originally published in 1924. From the reading of Rolland's work, Lanza found in Gandhi, a Hindu by birth, seriously trying to put into practice the Gospel far better than any Christian. This work has created greater impact in his later stage of life. Despite the higher academic achievements, Lanza did not want to remain as a mere intellectual or opt for a career in the university. He felt

that the wisdom he gained through studies should be tested on the touchstone of reality and decided to undertake extensive travels.

In the summer of 1930, he went to Berlin to work as a translator and embraced a bohemian life style. On February 6, 1931, his father Luigi, died in Florence. He could not come in time and assist his ailing father. A sense of remorse remained in his mind throughout his life about this lapse. In October 1931, he returned to Paris. It was on a fine morning in March 1932, when Lanza was sitting on a bench in Parc Monceau in Paris, that he made acquaintance with a young man sitting next to him. His name was Luc Dietrich. The first question Lanza placed before Dietrich was "Are you as good as this bread?" This meeting was the beginning of inseparable friendship between the two for the rest of Luc Dietrich's short life.⁸ Lanza helped Dietrich in his writings. But he remained as his mentor and refused to take the credit as a co-author of some of the writings of Dietrich.

In October 1932, he left for Milan. As per the recommendation of the sculptor Marino Marini, he played the role of Colonel Stéphane Türr in a film by Jerzy Toeplitz. But soon he was disappointed and gave up the hope of making a career and fortune in the film industry. In 1933, with an intense spiritual quest to find out the meaning of his very existence, he walked across Southern Italy for three months, barefoot and penniless, from Rome to Bari. During this time he began writing his *Principes et préceptes du retour à l'évidence* (Principles and Precepts of the Return to the Obvious), which was subsequently published in 1945.⁹ In his introduction to this wandering life, he wrote:

“By dint of swinging from one foot on to other, I have ended by forgetting everything I was made to learn at school, everything I ever read in books.

The few thoughts left to me rattled in my head for some time, then dropped, dried up in the sun and air, and have hardened and shrunk almost to nothing.

Only a fool states the obvious with great fervor and an air of having discovered it. Forgive me, friend, if henceforth I cannot do the otherwise.

The only things I know now are so obvious that an intelligent man would disdain to say them. So obvious that most intelligent men have come to forget them.”¹⁰

Further he wrote:

“Where we are going, along this road we have been following for so long without once asking where it leads?

Some have taken it to seek fortune, some to drive away care, some to seek out knowledge, and some in order to go home.

We are going to all these things at the same. We are going to return to the obvious.”¹¹

In the 1979 French edition of this book, a new subheading was added *Éloge de la vie simple* [In Praise of Simple Living].¹² This journey on foot provided him an ascetic experience and the need for returning to nature and leading a simple life in tune with nature. These notes which he scribbled down during his wanderings give deep insight into fundamentals of Lanza’s approach and what kind of path one should follow in the search of the ultimate. It could very well serve as a reference point to understand Lanza’s philosophy and approach to life.

In 1933, he had an opportunity to revisit the family palace of Palermo and Florence. Luc Dietrich joined him in the same year. This get together provided both of them an

opportunity to work in the field of ideas. In February 1934 Lanza started working on *Judas* and Luc Dietrich on *Le Bonheur des tristes (The Happiness of Sad People)*. In January 1935, Lanza returned to Paris. During the summer, he travelled on a bicycle in France and Italy, from Paris to Caen, and from Caen to Florence. In October 1935, he worked for three months as a tutor in a family in Versailles.

As stated earlier, Lanza got acquainted with life and work of Gandhi from Romain Rolland's work *Mahatma Gandhi*. He wanted to see how Gandhi, a Hindu by birth, puts into practice the gospel of Jesus Christ in day to day life and actions and hear the Sermon on the Mount from a Hindu ascetic. In December 1936, keeping this goal in mind, he went on a pilgrimage to India. He had an opportunity to meet Gandhi at his ashram at Sevagram in the district of Wardha on January 29, 1937 and stayed with Gandhi for three months. Lanza's stay with Gandhi for three months was a turning point in his life. Gandhi turned out to be his mentor and guide. It was Gandhi who had given him a new name, *Shantidas*, meaning servant of peace. Henceforth, his life was marked by complete adherence to the principles and practice of non-violence.

From Wardha, he went on a pilgrimage to the sources of the Ganges River in the Himalayas. In the night of June 16 to 17, 1937, he had a unique experience. He felt that he received a divine call. He explains the same in the following words. "In a beautiful night, in the hills, I heard a voice that told me 'Shantidas, what are you doing here? Go home.' and so I turned round, there was nobody, but the stars, and I waited for some explanations, but there were no explanations. I did not know what to do, what to find, why to go back, but anyhow I had to

obey it. And, at the same time, I felt very very weak to begin anything, to do anything, especially in my own country, because I knew what spirits are there in my own self or in my own country.”¹³ But he continued his pilgrimage in India. Finally he left Gandhi and India on February 20, 1938 to return, through Egypt and Italy, to Paris in April. In October, after an ascetic summer in Rhodes, he went on foot to Palestine, then on the brink of civil war, to Jerusalem, "between two lines of tanks" and to Bethlehem, where he arrived on the eve of Christmas. He moved further on foot to Constantinople and the Mount Athos, where he stayed from March 20 to April 10, 1939.

Lanza was in Paris on July 10, 1939, when the Second World War broke out. Six weeks later, he left for Switzerland. In Switzerland he took classes as a means of living. From April to June 1940, he worked as a tutor in Toulon. He was stuck in Marseille in the Free Zone, and finally settled in Allauch in June 1941. He made acquaintance with René Daumal, writer and poet who introduced him to his friend Simone Weil, philosopher, mystic and political activist. Through his friend Luc Dietrich, he had a meeting with a musician from Marseille, Simone Gibelin, popularly known as Chanterelle, who later became the companion of his life. During this period, he published books on poetry and a play. Along with Luc Dietrich Lanza published *Dialogue of Friendship* in 1942.

In the last year of the war, Lanza got a request from an editor to write down about his journey to India. The result was his classic work *Le pèlerinage aux sources* (The Pilgrimage to the Sources)¹⁴ and this book was an enormous success and it was translated into several other languages. The original French

edition was published in 1943 by Denoël, and it sold over one million copies.¹⁵ He explains the impact of this book as follows: “It was the time of occupation, of misery, humiliation. People were imprisoned in camp. My book went there. Many afterwards came and told me ‘you have saved my life’. ‘I took to the test of life again reading your book speaking of non-violence, of palm trees, of great horizons, of the things of God’.”¹⁶ He used to give commentaries on the Gospel each Friday, from 1946 to 1948 in the church of Saint Paul-des-Champs. These teachings were published in a book form in 1951 with the title *Commentaire de l'Évangile* [Commentary on the Gospel]¹⁷.

Lanza's engagement with Chanterelle in January 1948 finally culminated in their marriage in Crécy-en-Brie on June 24, 1948. Soon after his marriage, Lanza founded the first Gandhian rural community known as the Community of the Ark in France. His project of communities of Ark was aimed at overcoming the grave disaster of violence in the western society, like the Ark of Noah in the Old Testament. Thirty three years of his life was devoted to the projects of the Ark. He was a true messenger fully engrossed in spreading the message of peace and non-violence throughout the world especially in the western society. He died in his eightieth year of life in one of the Communities in Spain on January 5, 1981. His body is buried in the Community of Ark at La Borie Noble in Roqueredonde in Herault, France.

Notes and References

1. Victor Marie Hugo (1802 –1885) was a French poet, novelist, and dramatist of the Romantic Movement. He is

considered to be one of the greatest French writers. In France, Hugo is primarily known for his poetry collections, such as *Les Contemplations* (The Contemplations) and *La Légende des siècles* (The Legend of the Ages).

2. Charles Marie René Leconte de Lisle (1818 -1894) was a French poet of the Parnassian movement. He is popularly known by his surname, Leconte de Lisle. He is most famous for his three collections of poetry viz. *Poèmes antiques* (1852), *Poèmes barbares* (1862), *Poèmes tragiques* (1884).
3. José-Maria de Heredia (1842 – 1905) was a Cuban-born French Parnassian poet. He wrote very little but some of his sonnets were circulated in manuscript form and gave him a reputation before they were published.
4. Baruch Spinoza is considered to be one of the great rationalists of the 17th century.
5. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche's well known statement "God is dead" occurring in his many works especially in *The Gay Science*. On the basis of it, most commentators regard Nietzsche as an atheist. But philosophers like Walter Arnold Kaufmann suggest that this statement reflects a more subtle understanding of divinity.
6. The concept of relation is central to the doctrine of the Trinity of Saint Aquinas.
7. The literal meaning of his pen name is "Lance of the Desert".
8. Luc Dietrich (1913-1944) was a French writer, poet and photographer. Another famous friend of Dietrich was poet Rene Daumal. Dietrich's best known today for his semi-autobiographical novel, *Le Bonheur des tristes* ("The Happiness of Sad People")
9. Lanza del Vasto, *Principes et préceptes du retour à l'évidence* (Paris: Denoël-Gonthier, 1945).

10. Lanza del Vasto, *Principles and Precepts of the Return to the Obvious*(New York:Schocken Books,1974,) p.7.
11. *Ibid* . p.9.
12. Lanza del Vasto, *Principes et préceptes du retour à l'évidence. Éloge de la vie simple* (Paris: Denoël-Gonthier, 1979).
13. Lanza del Vasto, *Pilgrimage to Non-violence* (Wardha: Institute of Gandhian Studies, 2017) p.15.
14. The first English edition of this book was published in 1972 by Schocken Books, New York with the title "Return to the Source."
15. Lanza del Vasto *Return to the Source.*"(New York :Schoken Books)
16. Lanza del Vasto, *Pilgrimage to Non-violence*, op.cit.p.16.
17. Lanza del Vasto, *Commentaire de l'Évangile* (Paris: Denoël-Gonthier, 1951).

Chapter-2

Gandhi: The Inspiring Force for Shantidas

Gandhi's life was a source of inspiration for many people across the globe and they became his true disciples. Lanza del Vasto was one of his convinced disciples from the West who learnt the true meaning of non-violence through his personal acquaintance with Gandhi and literally experienced it in day to day life and action during his stay with him. The influence of Gandhi on Lanza del Vasto was so profound that it changed the course of life of this philosopher, thinker, poet and artist and everything in his life thereafter centered on the principles of Gandhi.

Lanza del Vasto was a highly educated person with many accomplishments to his credit in various fields and he was in search of a real source from which he can streamline the path he should follow. As a result, he started his pilgrimage to India in December 1936 and finally found the source, that is, Gandhi in the year 1937. The meeting with Gandhi had far reaching result in the life of Lanza and its effect remained with him till his last breath. On a request from Lanza del Vasto, Gandhi gave him a new name *Shantidas*. Through his life and action, he does justice to the name given by Mahatma Gandhi. It is interesting to look into influence of Gandhi on the life of this Italian aristocrat from France.

Lanza del Vasto in his work *Return to the Source* especially in the Chapter - IV "Wardha or Three Months with Gandhi" explains in his introductory remarks what Gandhi

meant to him. At a cursory look one may feel it is blind admiration. But it is not true. His appreciation was the result of his stay with him for three months closely observing and studying his thoughts and ideas. He wrote in a poetical manner the influence Gandhi had on him;

“Here he is before my eyes, the only man who has shown us a green shoot in the desert of this century.

A man who knows the hard law of love, hard and clear like a diamond.

The captain of the unarmed, the father of the pariahs, the king who reigns by the divine right of sainthood.

He has come to show us the power over this earth of absolute innocence. He has come to prove that it can stop machines, hold its own against guns and defy an empire.

He has come into the world to bring us this news from beyond, where nothing changes, to teach us the truth that we have always known, being Christians. Truth so ill-assorted with us, so strangely contradictory to everything that the world and men had taught us, that we did not know what to do with it. We kept it between the four walls of the church and in the dark of our hearts. He, the Hindu, had to come for us to learn that we had always known.”¹

Thus in Gandhi, he found the echo of Sermon on the Mount and its practical application through the law of love or non-violence. Through the close contact with Gandhi this litterateur turned into a man of action and epitome of peace and non-violence.

Lanza’s stay with Gandhi for three months was a period of constant learning. The first important advice Gandhi gave to Lanza was ‘put all clerical work aside and busy yourself with your hands’. This helped Lanza to understand the philosophy

and importance of work. Reflecting on work Lanza wrote: “The work of the hands is indeed the apprenticeship to honesty. Honesty is a certain equality one establishes between what one takes and what one gives.”² According to him no individual is dispensed by nature from working with one’s own hand. This is true in the case of an individual who is engaged in mental labour and putting the burden on others and remains in their debt.

Like Gandhi, Lanza was aware of the importance of mental or intellectual work and he considered it as incomparably superior.³ He fully endorsed the view that mental work is only for mental satisfaction.⁴ Lanza went a step further by linking the work with the concept of honesty. He said “Paying one’s debt of labour with money is perhaps cheating too, for money in the hands of someone who has never worked with his hands is a meaningless token. The debtor may be satisfied with it, but honesty cannot be. One must earn the right to give. Whoever has not paid his debt has no right to give.”⁵ Taking into consideration this fact, he engaged himself in spinning and carpentry work during his stay with Gandhi. That was the beginning of a new life for him. Despite his family background and personal accomplishments, there was no feeling of superiority in him and he identified with the common man. He felt that it will take a hundred years to repay the debt he owes to the society in terms of physical work and he was not ready to waste a single minute. The beauty of his personality is that whatever he learnt from here, he practiced it throughout his life.

Like Gandhi, Lanza considered self government as the best system, which is not only dignified but also stable. He realized the fact that economic independence is a must for national independence. He considered the principle of *Swadeshi* 'as the kernel and gauge of independence'. According to him the goal of economic activity should be the satisfaction of needs and a natural economic system which makes an individual free and contented. He outlined the things to be done to correct economy which is based on wants and not on human needs. "Irreducible needs should be satisfied in the simplest and surest way; labour and exchange should be regulated; agitation and anxiety should be eliminated; and men should be rid of complicated and vulnerable artificial system; they should be contented, and, above all, set free. Let man always remain greater than what he makes and more precious than what he has."⁶ He even went to the extent of saying, 'let us get rid of squalor and cultivate poverty.' Talking about cultivating poverty and embracing poverty from a person who has an aristocratic background and also from the West was something unthinkable. But he took that challenge and practiced it in letter and spirit. Gandhi was an irresistible force which helped him to imbibe and practice these ideas.

He was very much aware of the consequences of machines and the so called advantages of it like saving of time and labour, production of abundance, increased exchange and bringing people closer and finally ensuring perpetual leisure for all. He refutes all these claims by bringing into notice the fact that where machine is master, people are always hard pressed for time and on the other side where people do everything with hand find adequate time for everything. Further, the process of

saving time has made the work fragmentary and boring. The ill effects of overproduction and unemployment and forced contract are well known to everybody. It is the machines which enslave human being and he is alienated due to minutest division of labour. He has become a machine and there is no life for him and his movements have also become largely mechanized. That is why he wrote "The machine enslaves, the hands sets free."⁷ He looked upon work as a means of self expression and believed that the bodily work which largely provides humanity a chance to prove their worth in the world. Gandhi in the ultimate sense looked upon work not only as a means of expression of one's self but also as a means of self realization or salvation. Lanza wrote "To turn back is *not* Gandhi's intention. No one is less given than he to historical revivals or to harking back to the good old days. He professes neither hatred of the West nor a horror of civilisation nor contempt of economy. On the contrary, his revolution looks forward with sound and sober hope. He is the first wise man in the East to prescribe work as duty for every man and a road to salvation."⁸ In the Gandhian economy, human being is placed at the centre and it aims at the development of human beings and ensuring peace, harmony and freedom.

It was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who stated that 'The best government is that which teaches us to govern ourselves.' The chief aim of a government which Gandhi visualized was to make itself less and less necessary or promoting self rule and village autonomy. According to Lanza, Gandhi has three points in common with those that are warring for supremacy in the West. They are the following:

“With the liberal regime: political liberty as the liberals see it. Respect for the antagonist's opinion. The feeling that even people's own good cannot be imposed on them by force.

With the communist regime: the primacy of work. The duty for all to do manual work. Equality of duties and rights for workers of every kind, whatever the inequality of their abilities.

With the nazi-fascist regime: self-government. The replacement of the principle of commercial competition by that of solidarity between the corporations. The affirmation of the human will as being something that does not depend on economic conditions. Recourse to the individual and his authority. The formation of administrators and leaders.

But there is one aspect of Gandhi's regime which has nothing in common with those of the West, present or past, and that is its truly Hindu and Christian character.”⁹

This characteristic Lanza summed up in one word: *Ahimsa*, the doctrine and practice of non-violence. For him, *Ahimsa* is a Christian virtue. It is in no way different from charity because ‘it is marveling and merciful goodwill towards everything that lives.’ According to Lanza, Gandhi’s *ahimsa* was a positive force and to call it passive resistance is a complete misunderstanding. He viewed the non-violent resistance of Gandhi as more active than violent resistance and it demands more daring, a greater spirit of sacrifice, more discipline and more hope. In a non-violent combat the goal is not victory over enemy but to conquer enmity and the fight is not against the enemy but his errors.

Gandhi’s understanding of God was a unique one. Lanza was fascinated by this idea. On the basis of his relentless search for fifty years, Gandhi declared to the world that “Truth is God”. Gandhi while replying to a question as to why he

considers ‘God is Truth’ at a meeting in Switzerland, on his way back from the Round Table Conference in London said: “If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, I have come to the conclusion that for myself, God is Truth. But two years ago I went a step further and said that Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz. that God is Truth and Truth is God. And I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth which began nearly fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to Truth was through love. But I also found that love has many meanings in the English language at least and that human love in the sense of passion could become a degrading thing also. I found too that love in the sense of Ahimsa had only a limited number of votaries in the world. But I never found a double meaning in connection with truth and even atheists had not demurred to the necessity or power of truth. But in their passion for discovering truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God—from their own point of view rightly.”¹⁰ This understanding in Lanza’s view “is the only metaphysical statement Gandhi has ever made.”¹¹ Lanza wrote “My very love of absolute Truth has taught me the beauty of compromise.”¹²

Lanza considered the *Autobiography* of Gandhi ‘a book of great human interest, even if lacking in literary beauty’. He was full of appreciation for the autobiography including the very title of the book. He wrote:

“He (Gandhi) entitled it *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*. The modesty and the assurance implied in this title are admirable. Nobody is less pedantic than this great teacher

of a great doctrine, nobody more wary of abstract statements or claims that cannot be verified. No one is more devoid of dogmatic obstinacy or blind fanaticism than this great religious leader. No visions, no prophecies, no miracles adorn the legend of this saint. His saintliness shines out in the simplicity of his everyday work and in the timeliness of his public action.”¹³

Further he stated,

“Like very great men, he has only one idea. Like very great ideas, his is simple and of the nature of obvious mathematical truth. He has taken it to its ultimate conclusions and immediately applied them with that lucidity of mind, purity of heart and rightness of action that sweep away obstacles and disarm the foe. He is unique. Yet, ‘Anybody could do the same thing in my stead,’ he says artlessly.”¹⁴

Gandhi was a different kind of saint marked by simplicity, uniqueness and originality. At the same time he declared to the world that what he was doing anybody could emulate it. But before Gandhi, non-violence was a virtue practiced by saints and seers. It was Gandhi through his life and action, experimented non-violence on a massive scale and made it a ‘matchless weapon’ for common masses to achieve social justice. That is perhaps the reason why persons like Lanza del Vasto was very much attracted to Gandhi’s idea of *Ahimsa*.

Even scholars and close disciples of Lanza del Vasto are not sure whether he was familiar with *Hind Swaraj* at the time of meeting with Gandhi.¹⁵ *Hind Swaraj* is a seminal work which Gandhi wrote in 1909 during his stay in South Africa.¹⁶

This book was written basically to reject the cult of violence represented by the avowed Indian anarchists in London and their prototypes in South Africa.¹⁷ Also he wanted to tell the world the sublimity of method of non-violent resistance viz. Satyagraha.¹⁸ He remained strongly committed to the views he expressed in *Hind Swaraj* in 1909 even after many years.¹⁹ From the 'Introduction' Lanza del Vasto wrote for the French edition of *Hind Swaraj* in 1957 it is clear that he regarded this work as a fundamental one. "This small work is fundamental. It is surprising that in France many of Gandhi's writings have been published, and many, many more on Gandhi himself, yet this one, in which the germ of his whole doctrine lies, has been neglected. The fact is that under cover of a gentle, uniform style it is extremely audacious. The fact is that the new Indian politicians have no desire to publish it and the Westerners no desire to receive it. Because it accuses the latter of maintaining a fiendish civilisation and it accuses the former of spoiling and enslaving their country under the guise of freeing it."²⁰ Lanza was a great critique of modern western civilisation. He went far ahead in his criticisms against the modern western civilization.

Lanza argues that a person gets convinced about Gandhi's arguments in *Hind Swaraj* not because of the strength of his arguments. It is mainly due to the strength of the truth in Gandhi's life. Gandhi critique of western civilization was not the result of a systematic study or his expertise in a particular branch of knowledge. Lanza opines that its roots lie in the personal experience and religious conviction of Gandhi.

Lanza was also greatly influenced by Vinoba Bhave and joined him in *Bhoodan* or land gift movement in 1954. It was a

new pilgrimage to India. He introduced to the West, the life of Vinoba and his march with Vinoba and also extracts of Vinoba's writings from the book *Swaraj Shastra* in his book '*Gandhi to Vinoba-The New Pilgrimage*'.²¹ Lanza places a number of questions of his fellow Christians in this work. They are the following.

"You call yourself a Christian," you shout at me, "you did not go to carry the word of God to India or to preach Christ, but have come back from there to preach the Hindu religion among Christians.

"We have no need of your Gandhis and Vinobas. We have our saints, and that is enough for us.

"We have no need of your non-violence. We have the Gospel.

"We have Jesus Christ, who is alone Holy, alone Lord, alone All high, and that is enough for us.

"Do you want to turn us into Hindus, Buddhists or fakirs? You are taking advantage of the ignorance and fears of the men of today, to lead to other sources than the true one!"²²

The answer which Lanza gave makes his position very clear and shows how he combines his Christian faith with Gandhian doctrine.

"I am not preaching the Hindu or the Buddhist religion, but merely defending them against lying allegations. The barriers of prejudice and ignorance are, it seems to me, bad bulwarks for our faith.

The doctrine which I preach and uphold, and to which I am looking for a social and spiritual revival both in the West and the East, is the Gandhian doctrine, which cannot clash with our religious faith, because it is not a new religion or even a religious doctrine at all, for it concerns another plane.

It is a doctrine of social and personal change which can only clash with other doctrines of social change.

It is a social doctrine which is in conformity with the precepts of religion-of every religion, but more particularly of our own, which need not surprise us, since it is drawn directly from the precepts of the New Testament. Jesus himself has said: "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven."

For those of us also who are Christians and Gandhians Christ is the only Lord, and the Kingdom of Heaven ,the only goal.

The only one.

But it is not enough to say it. The only one.

That is why it cannot be good enough to divide our life into two halves and to render one half unto God and the other unto Caesar or Mammon.”²³

Thus it is clear that it was his firm conviction in Christian faith which brought him near to Gandhi and in Gandhi he found the practical application of Christian principles or teachings of Jesus Christ. He carried this message to different parts of the globe especially to the West for a social and spiritual revival.

Notes and References

1. Lanza del Vasto *Return to the Source.*"(New York :Schoken Books,1972), pp.100-101.
2. *Ibid.* p.103.
3. Let me not be misunderstood. I do not discount the value of intellectual labour, but no amount of it is any compensation for bodily labour which every one of us is born to give for the common good of all. It may be, often is, infinitely superior to bodily labour, but it never is or can be a substitute

for it, even as intellectual food, though far superior to the grains we eat, never can be a substitute for them. Indeed, without the products of the earth, those of the intellect would be an impossibility.

M. K. Gandhi, *Young India* , 15-10-1925, pp. 355-6.

4. May not men earn their bread by intellectual labour? No. The needs of the body must be supplied by the body. "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's" perhaps applies here well. Mere mental, that is, intellectual labour is for the soul and is its own satisfaction. It should never demand payment. In the ideal state, doctors, lawyers and the like will work solely for the benefit of society, not for self. M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 29-6-1935, p. 156.
5. Lanza del Vasto, *Return to the Source*, op.cit. p.103-4
6. *Ibid.* p.106-7.
7. *Ibid.* p.111.
8. *Ibid.* p.110.
9. *Ibid.*p.114.
10. M. K. Gandhi ,*Young India*, 31-12-1931
11. Lanza del Vasto, *Return to the Source*,op.cit. p.122.
12. *Ibid.*p.126.
13. *Ibid.* p.116.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Louis Campana wrote : "As a young idle aristocrat, Giuseppe Lanza del Vasto travelled around Europe, from high society salons to literary circles, in search of meaning and recognition. He was already in his thirties when he heard about an Indian man who was resisting the British occupation. Was he familiar with Hind Swaraj ! ? It is hard to tell." See Louis Campana "Lanza del Vasto : An Apostle of Non-violence and Peace" in Frédéric Rognon, *Lanza del Vasto or Community Experimentation And other essays* by Louis Campana and Siby K. Joseph (France:Gandhi International, 2017) p.39.
16. The original text of *Hind Swaraj* was written in Gujarati between 13th and 22nd November 1909 on board the ship *S.*

S. Kildonan Castle during his return voyage from London to Cape Town.

17. During Gandhi's four month stay in London in 1909, he had occasion to talk with many Indian anarchists representing the Indian school of violence. Gandhi wrote in his *Satyagraha in South Africa* that the *Hind Swaraj* "... had its birth from the necessity of having to meet their arguments as well as to solve the difficulties of Indians in South Africa who held similar views." See M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa* (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1993), p. 211.
18. Gandhi further explains that the "*Hind Swaraj* was written in order to demonstrate the sublimity of *Satyagraha* and that book is a true measure of my faith in its efficacy" See *ibid.*, p. 212 .
19. In a message to the *Hind Swaraj Special Number of the Aryan Path* published in September 1938 Gandhi wrote "I might change the language here and there, if I had to rewrite the booklet. But after the stormy thirty years through which I have since passed, I have seen nothing to make me alter the views expounded in it."
20. Lanza del Vasto's introduction to the French edition of 'Hind Swaraj' was translated by Gerry Blaylock during the Hind Swaraj centenary year. It is available on the website.
<http://www.semisottolaneve.org/ssn/a/30496.html>
See also "Introduction" by Lanza del Vasto in M. K. Gandhi, *Leur in civilisation et notre délivrance*(Paris : Denoël, 1957)
21. Lanza del Vasto *Gandhi to Vinoba: The New Pilgrimage* (New York:Schocken Books,1974)
22. *Ibid* p.203.
23. *Ibid* p.203-4

Chapter-3

The Community of the Ark

Louis Campana while delivering a lecture on Lanza del Vasto said “The community of the Ark was not born in France. It was born in India during Lanza del Vasto’s meeting with Gandhi in his ashram at Sevagram in 1937.”¹ In a sense it is true because the seeds of his ideas on alternatives germinated in his mind while he was in Sevagram and it has grown in the course of time in a fertile ground. Lanza del Vasto was instrumental in preparing the fertile ground in his own country and in the West and other parts of the globe. His meeting and stay with Gandhi for three months at Wardha can be aptly described as a turning point or watershed in his life. The search for alternatives in the later phase of life is a direct result of his close and intimate relation with Gandhi during his stay in Sevagram. Under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, he could set the goal and mission of his life. Lanza was influenced by Gandhi’s understanding of non-violence, which was comprehensive and it included both sentient and non-sentient beings. After completing his meeting with Gandhi he went on a pilgrimage to the source of Ganges in the Himalayas. He was convinced that Gandhi’s vision or his world view provides a frame work to overcome the ills created by modern industrial civilization in the West.

He received a divine call in one of the large villages of Himalayan hills. He wrote about his plan or vision from Narendranagar on June 27, 1937 seeking Gandhi’s advice. It was basically what he imagined about his future course of

action. His imagination reveals the visionary in him. He was aware of the fact nothing is too great for imagination. But he realized that the path he has to follow will be a difficult one. This letter was not simply a reply to Gandhi's letter expressing some stray thoughts. He made it clear that he has pronounced his vows for life and laid out the plan of future action with a vigorous zeal. He realized that he was not fit for work in a village of India. He wanted to transform himself completely to become a servant of peace and was ready to take any risk. He felt that he was personally called for work in his home in the West, where peace was in great danger and lovers of peace were an object of ridicule and hatred.

Lanza del Vasto wanted to lay down the foundations of an Order of wandering brothers, dedicated to preaching of peace across the countries. It will be a disciplined army armed with the weapon of sacrifice following the vows of poverty, chastity, work, obedience and perpetual refusal for rest. He wrote: "They will teach peace: that is not taking rest, but it is the sword, as Jesus said. The peace must not be desired out of fear for death and destruction. It must not be loved for the preservation of the pleasures of life, but it must be wanted as a duty of the spirit. Peace does not belong to cowards, but to those who resist violence from outside and from within. Until now those men who have accepted war made heavy sacrifices for the same, similarly they must be ready to take the same risks for the conquest of peace. Our first battle, and victory, will be a refusal of military service in all countries at the same time. It will be a march of those who have been regimented to army, with banners and trumpets, saying no to the military barracks, but ready to end up in prisons."² His dream or vision

was like a branch of a great tree that was born out of his meeting with Mahatma Gandhi.

Lanza was very enthusiastic to realize his dream so he went back to Gandhi again. Gandhi listened to him with great patience and admitted 'all that is very well.' Further he said 'perfect, but I want to know only one thing, how you are called, because if you are not called, all your intelligence, all your courage, all your virtues will be of no use and if you are called, even the virtues that are lacking will be given.' This statement of Gandhi was rather disturbing for Lanza because how is one to know if one is called?

Lanza finally went back in 1938. The air of the world was filled with the smell of war. The catastrophe of the Second World War was an eye opener for him. It deepened his conviction about the path of non-violence and principles for which Gandhi stood for. The huge success of his book *Return to the Source* in 1943 which describes his pilgrimage to India and to Gandhi made him popular in the Western world especially in France. People started gathering around him asking him to guide them. He realized that he should plunge into the work now. Following the principles and percepts given by his Master, that is, Gandhi, he began teaching small groups of young people in Paris in the middle of the great city. He organized some workshops on spinning, handloom, pottery and wood work. He used to teach them on spiritual matters mainly three aspects viz. knowledge of oneself, possession of oneself and the gift of oneself. Scholars who worked on Lanza consider this as the beginning of Ark. It was only four years after this, the Community of the Ark took a definite form and shape.

In the year 1948, Gandhi was assassinated in Delhi. Lanza del Vasto thought that the right time has come to realise the mission which was given to him by Mahatma Gandhi. After his marriage with Chanterelle, a musician, he founded the first rural community of the Ark in Tournier, Charente, France. In fact it was a modified version of the order which he described to Gandhi earlier. The establishment of a Gandhian order in the West or the Community of Ark marked another phase in the life of Lanza del Vasto. It was a creative expression in communitarian living and a European model of ashram on Gandhian lines. The contribution of Lanza lies in the fact he could introduce Gandhi's philosophy to the Western world and synthesize it with Christianity or the spirit of Jesus Christ. The Cross which was the symbol of the Ark was a uniting force with the divine and the path one should follow for saving humanity. He looked upon his community like Noha's Ark in Old Testament, as an instrument to save the Western world and humanity from the peril of war and violence. It is a sign of hope and an alliance between God and human beings. In the first stage itself groups of Friends of the Ark were organized and conferences were held in the cities.

The Community was open to all. The Community life was not free from conflicts. He could settle the issues through non-violent means including fasting. But his ambitious project was short lived. After four years of its formation Lanza was forced to close its doors. He felt the need for specific rules regarding crucial points of community living for its survival and continuity. The commitment of people involved in the process is one of the crucial factors which ensure the stability of the order. They should follow certain vows to make them as

the fittest instruments to fight against social injustices and for their spiritual development.

The second community was founded in 1953 in Tourettes-sur-Loup in the Alpes-Maritimes. In the meanwhile, Lanza undertook another pilgrimage to India. The second pilgrimage to India from January to May 1954 was to join Vinoba Bhave, the spiritual heir of Gandhi, in the land gift movement. The march with Vinoba was a rejuvenating experience for him. He became more convinced about the efficacy of non-violent method in ensuring social justice. To put it differently, he drank from the fountain of non-violence and went back to his home with a renewed zeal and enthusiasm. The second Community was relocated to Bollène in Vaucluse in 1954. The strict entry procedures were formulated in the second phase of the Community experiment. If anyone wanted to become a full-time member of the community he or she would be treated as a novice for three years. A new member will be admitted to the community only on the basis of unanimous decision by its members. This helped in ensuring men and women of courage and conviction as its members. Vows were prescribed for the members of the Ark and they should follow them by their own choice. They were work (including bread labour, service), obedience (primarily to the rule and one's vows), responsibility (and co-responsibility), purification (of one's self), poverty (living simply), truthfulness (service of truth) and non-violence (including defense of justice).³

The number of people living in the Community increased in the course of time and a new home was required

for accommodating the members. Thus the Community of Ark was relocated in La Borie Noble with the acquisition of 1000 acres of farmland and forest in the hills of the Languedoc in Southern France.⁴ The group shifted to this location in 1963. The members rebuilt the half-ruined buildings of stone deserted by the villagers since the First World War. La Borie Noble became the headquarters of the Community of Ark from that year onwards. In the course of time two further communities were established on the land viz, Nogaret and La Fleysière. Many communities were formed in France and other parts of the globe. La Borie Noble and La Fleysière are the two rural communities of Ark which are still active and functioning on the ideals laid down by Lanza del Vasto.

The community life in the Ark is a unique experiment in the application of nonviolence in different facets of human life. The Ark Charter reiterates the community's deep faith in nonviolence which they inherited from Lanza and Gandhi. It is described as follows: "In the footsteps of Gandhi and Lanza del Vasto, the members of the Ark has chosen non-violence as a basis for working on oneself and spiritual research. They choose: to open themselves to service and sharing; to live in a simple manner, respect all living beings, to act for Justice and Peace by nonviolent means."⁵

The document further clarifies "The members of the Ark recognize each other by their adhesion to this Charter. This text does not state everything about the Ark however the foundations and orientations are concentrated within it. To be part of the Ark, is to take the path of non-violence, which will call upon us to simplify our lives, to be aware of the needs of

others, to work on ourselves, to listen to that which is Beyond All, and to take part in action for more peace and justice.”

Lanza del Vasto wrote “Swaraj does not have the negative etymological meaning of Independence, it is not just a simple fact of no dependence on, it is Raj or Sovereignty over Swa or oneself. Mastery of oneself is, therefore, the principle of freedom, what makes the problem pass from the social to the spiritual plane. Political freedom and national independence are negative and fictional, real alone is the sovereignty of each person in their inner tribunal.

The Kingdom of heaven, there it is - not a utopia, abstraction or system. And first of all it is said: The Kingdom of Heaven, not complete Socialisation and mechanised paradise. It is neither utopia, nor abstraction, nor system. It is life. The Kingdom of heaven is like the father of a family, The Kingdom of heaven is like a wild mustard seed... It is like the measure of yeast put into three measures of flour so that the dough rises... It is present as well as future, it is on the earth as in heaven, it is life. The Kingdom of heaven is in your heart.”⁶

Lanza was basically attempting to practice Gandhi’s concept of self rule in his Community experimentation and the kingdom of heaven in day to day life. The life in the community resembled a monastic or ascetic life marked by simplicity. The life in the Ark is basically a life of detachment and self renunciation. All resources are kept together and there are no personal possessions in the form of cash or kind. Daily life is really a religious or spiritual experience with meditation, prayer etc. The members live as single persons or as families with specific clothing and strict vegetarian diet. Only through

such a spiritual and disciplined life one can attain mastery over the self. In such a community, self rule becomes the part and parcel of life. They consider self-rule or self governance the ideal situation in which each individual is free to act according to his/her conscience.

Voluntary simplicity is the hall mark of the community life in the Ark. It emanated from a deep eco-consciousness. The Ark describes the necessity of voluntary simplicity in the following words: “Everyone knows these days that the planetary resources are limited. We are squandering the heritage from previous generations that we should be passing on to our children. Given the situation, members of the Ark choose to live in voluntary simplicity, each according to his or her own lights.... It is also the preference of living together in solidarity and well-being rather than having more and more.”⁷ The members of Ark are deeply committed to safeguard the common heritage of humanity by leading a life against the consumerist culture of the Western society. They don't want to fall into the vicious trap of consumerism which promotes the urge for having more and more. They are trying to build an economy of peace with emphasis on non-violence, the spirit of sharing and mutual aid.

The first lesson Lanza learnt from Gandhi was the significance of manual labour. The Community of the Ark attaches great importance to manual labour.⁸ Lanza said “It is in the making of things that human beings are themselves made” Therefore everyone should acquire the basic skills to fulfill the basic necessities of life – food, clothing and shelter. Each member is expected to work for about eight hours a day

or for as many hours as one's physical ability permits, including performance of household chores.

Work is looked upon as a creative expression representing the self of an individual. Each member honestly engages in work to repay the debt he or she owes to the society. You can see in the faces of the members of Ark a sense of satisfaction and joy in their work. Work has a rhythm and all work stops for a minute every hour. At that time they observe silence reflecting on the work done by them. They are striving towards a self-reliant economy free from the forces of the market. They try to free themselves from the clutches of machinery. They work with hands using simple tools. In the rural community of La Borie Noble, very little electricity is used except in few places like the bakery unit. They are totally against the use of nuclear energy for any purpose including the production of electricity. By abstaining from the use of electricity, they register a healthy protest against the misuse of technology and opposition to nuclear power. They embrace poverty due to their commitment to simplicity. Embracing poverty doesn't mean that you have to live in misery.

Following the path of Ganhi and Lanza, the members of the Ark look upon government as an embodiment of violence which perpetuates violence on people under the cloak of legitimacy. Mark Shepard beautifully summarizes the members critical attitude towards government in the following words. "The companions saw modern government as built on violence, because its final authority rests on force, or threat of it, from its military, police and prisons. They believe that force or violence against a person is never justified, whether it is by individuals

or by a government. When a government inflicts punishment on an offender, they said the crime is not corrected but doubled. In fact, they saw violence by government as more insidious than violence by individuals, because it hides behind a cloak of legitimacy”⁹

The decision making always involve exercise of power and authoritarian tendencies. It is very much against the spirit of non-violence. The beauty of the life of Ark is that the community takes all important decisions relating to the community unanimously by consensus. This process of consensus decision making is missing even in nuclear families. In case the members fail to reach unanimity on a particular issue they use non-violent techniques to iron out the differences. They start with methods like dialogue and discussions to understand another person’s point of view and try to arrive at unanimity on the issue. Sometimes they observe silence to calm down the heated arguments and exchanges of words. Prayer, meditation and spiritual exercises are also effectively used. In extreme cases, they may even resort to fasting which is the last resort in the hands of a practitioner of non-violence.

Singing, dancing, celebration, art work, calligraphy etc., are carefully interwoven into this nonviolent experiment to find the natural flowering of the talents of its members. Lot of space is given for aesthetics, creativity and self expression. May be the artistic bend of Lanza and his wife Chanterelle, a popular musician, have contributed to it. But this aspect is missing in the Gandhian Ashram and other organizations working in the Gandhian spirit.

The life in the Ark is marked by morning and evening prayers. The Ark has a marvelous collection of very brief prayers from the Christian faith including the ones written by Lanza himself. Though inspired by the spirit of Gandhi and the teachings of Jesus Christ it has no religious affiliation. The Ark welcomes people following different religious faiths. It believes that nonviolence exists within all the major religions of the world at varying levels. The General Chapter in 1984 made provisions for the entry of seekers of truth without having affiliation to any religion.

An official document of the Ark (2012) mentions two major crises which rocked the Ark during Lanza's life time. Joy Pyronnet was given the 'Patriarchal Responsibility' of La Borie Noble, who was the 'Captain of the Non-violent Civic Action', in the absence of Lanza del Vasto and Pierre Parodi. Joy favoured opening out towards the problems and aspirations of the world in the wake of momentum created by Non-violent Civic Action and the May 1968 Movement. As a result, difference of opinion between these personalities arose, which finally ended by the submission of Joy and the creation of a trio of 'Responsible Leaders', in the place of the Patriarch. The second crisis started with Charismatic Revival Movement during the seventies. Some of the friends left the Ark to form their own groups or religious revival communities. To cope with this situation Shantidas asked the Companions to suspend their vows and not to wear their crosses, and to prepare, like himself, to re-found the Ark. This time of suspension lasted two years up until the General Chapter of the Order in 1975.¹⁰ This General Chapter aimed at re-founding of the Ark by the formal approval of Constitution, Vows and the teachings. It made the

Ark Community a more structured one. The period from 1975 to 1992 was a period of constant growth and expansion and the number of communities expanded to 13 in France as well as Spain, Italy, Quebec and Argentina.

The Ark could not maintain the momentum for a long time after the death of Lanza even though the Community of Ark of Saint Antonie was founded in 1987.¹¹ It occupies part of the building of the former Abbey of St Antonie in St. Antonie l'Abbaye in Isere. This community is basically a training centre providing courses, sessions and accommodation to guests. It is regarded as an extension of Bonecombe Community in Aveyron established in the year 1980. Efforts were made to revitalize the Ark and a complete document on the founding principles and the new organization was voted upon in 2005 Chapter giving birth to the 'The Community of the Ark: Non-violence and Spirituality'. This document was confirmed in 2012 which provides a clear picture of the mission, foundational principles and the structure of new organization for the benefit of all its committed members as a reference point.

The Ark which consists of communities, friends and well wishers who pursue individually or in groups vigorously the ideals of Lanza and Gandhi. They are scattered throughout France, Switzerland Germany, Spain, Italy, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Ecuador etc. The Ark Communities could be described as the finest models of Gandhian ashram in the western world where members of different nationalities live together practicing a non-violent lifestyle. Non-violence clubbed with a deep spirituality is the key concern of the Community of the Ark. The simplification of life, nonviolent relationship and

struggle for justice and peace, respect for differences and religious reconciliation, the search for coherence or unity of life, the culture of living together, the constant practice of consensus as a mode of decision-making are some of the characteristic features of the community even today.

Notes and References

1. This talk was delivered by Louis Campana in January 2011 for the students of Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha.
2. This is culled from the letter which originally appeared in Lanza del Vasto's work "Le viatique" and was subsequently published in the "News of the Ark", special issue No.3, January - February 1991, as a tribute to Lanza.
3. Mark Shepard , *The Community of Ark* op. cit., p.29
4. Mark Shepard, *The Community of Ark* (California: Simple Productions), 1990 p. 13. <http://www.markshep.com/non-violence/Ark.htm>
5. *The Community of the Ark Non-violence and Spirituality*, Navigator 2012.
6. See Lanza del Vasto's introduction to the French edition of 'Hind Swaraj' .
7. *The Ark Community of Lanza del Vasto*, a brochure of the Communities of Ark, France
8. It is evident from the description of life at the Ark for the participants of Summer School and Workshops at the La Borie Noble. " Generally in the morning, after helping in the kitchen, there is work on the farm or in gardens with its working horses, its cows and hens, its arable farm, its haymaking and wood cutting, life unrolls peacefully and almost self sufficiently. Help is always welcomed. Occasionally there is work in the dairy, assisting with cheese making or in the bakery....After

lunch and siesta there is time for craftwork, woodwork, spinning, drawing and painting, for workshops and group discussions, visits to the pottery or bakery, for learning dance,...for thinking.”

9. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
10. *The Community of the Ark Non-violence and Spirituality*, Navigator 2012, p.7.
11. *The Ark of Saint Antonie*, a brochure of the Community of the Ark of Saint Antonie.

Chapter-4

Lanza Del Vasto and the Ark in Peace Action

In the preceding Chapter, we have seen the Community of the Ark is centered on the principle of non-violence and its tries to apply non-violence at all levels. Shantidas was so convinced that one cannot demonstrate non-violence in the public realm unless and until it is reflected in his or her day to day life. Lanza wrote “The proper preparation for non-violence is initiation into inner life, that is to say, knowledge, possession and giving of oneself.”¹ He initiated the members of the Ark into that inner life. The life in the Community was a nursery or training ground for non-violent action. It produced men and women with courage, conviction and inner strength. The obedience to vows in the Ark helped the members a lot in cultivating values of non-violence which made them fit instruments in fighting against injustice and working for the creation of an egalitarian society based on peace, non-violence and inner harmony.

Lanza was initiated to path of non-violence by Mahatma Gandhi and it became the mission of his life. Gandhi changed the very notion that non-violence is meant only for saints and seers. Lanza wrote “Anything is better than to excuse yourself with a trite remark such as, "Nonviolence is for saints, and I'm no saint. The point is to be a man.”² He approvingly quotes Gandhi “Non-violence is the Law of our Species, as violence is the Law of the Brute.”³ He explains further “By giving in to the law of the brute-the brute armed with intelligence-man brings about the deadening of his spirit and his ultimate destruction. It

is a question of being a man and saving your life-to give your life in order to save Life.”⁴ In order to save humanity from total destruction he dedicated his life for the cause of peace.

Lanza considered non- violence as something simple but subtle. Reflecting on non- violence he wrote “It is difficult to put into practice and even to grasp, being completely foreign to our ordinary habits. This problem becomes insurmountable when we think we understand-when we think that, obviously, nonviolence consists in the refusal to participate in any struggle whatever and in prudently keeping out of danger”.⁵ According to him nonviolence is essentially three things. a. The Solution of Conflict b. The Force of Justice c. The Lever of Conversion.

While discussing about the solution of conflict he asserts that the most important attitude is that non-violence is possible and it excludes four things neutrality, fighting, flight and capitulation. He reminds that your cause must be as right as two- and- two make-four, otherwise non-violence can do nothing for it. Further using the simple mathematical calculation, he argues that the force of justice is that everyman is forced to submit to the evidence that one-is equal-to-one. He underlines the significance of the force of persuasion, conviction and the power of accepted suffering. Lanza considered that the lever of conversion as the heart of the matter. He makes it very clear that the conversion of enemy should not be a means of attaining our end. What is important is object of non-violence. Then our real object should be ‘the changing of the enemy into a friend, of the wicked man into a just man, of the tyrant into a fair-minded and generous ruler’. According to him, the efficiency of non-violence is that it

destroys the justification based on the ‘false absolutes of technology, politics, strategy, economy, and science’.

Lanza was a real crusader of justice. He was convinced that non-violence or power of justice can serve only justice. He was in all praise of justice. He wrote his work *Warriors of Peace: Writings on the technique of Non-violence*:

“Justice, which is justness, or better still, in Gandhi's words, truth.

Justice, which is truth in action.

Justice is the first of the virtues, without which the others lose their value and become faults.

Justice is the evidence of kindness.

Justice is the law of life and the reason of harmony. Justice puts everything in its place and keeps it there, each thing being good in its time and place. ...

Justice is good, like music.”

The Community of the Ark has deep faith in the efficacy of nonviolence and it was in the forefront of no-violent direct action or *Satyagraha*. Lanza del Vasto wrote "It does not require the training of an army; it needs no jiu-jitsu. Control over the mind is alone necessary, and when that is attained, man is free like the king of the forest and his very glance withers the enemy."⁶ Lanza del Vasto's first involvement in non-violent movement was in India with Vinoba Bhave in the Bhoodan or land gift movement from January to May 1954. Vinoba Bhave was persuading the landlords to surrender voluntarily a part of their land for the distribution among poor landless peasants.

In December, 1956, Shantidas and a group of Companions went to Sicily and joined Danilo Dolci⁷ in a fast

for eight days to draw attention of authorities about the poor and miserable living condition of the people. The following year, Shantidas along with Bernard Gaschard and Pierre Parodi appealed to the conscience of the French Nation and the heads of Islam and to the leaders of the National Liberation Front of Algeria to do all in their power to stop the torture of political prisoners in the Algerian War. The two appeals were followed by twenty-days fast which stirred people from different walks of life. On the last day of the fast Lanza received a telegram from Vinoba Bhave “God bless your Satyagraha, I hope to help in melting my heart with love.” The media, youth, students and other groups began to voice their opposition against the torture. As a result the relations between the Christian and Muslim communities in Algeria gradually improved. It is pertinent to note even a general resigned rather than follow his superiors’ orders in Algeria.⁸

In February 1958, a separate independent organization viz., ‘Action Civique Non-violente’ was established with the aim of uniting people of divergent views in the movement dedicated to no-violent political action.⁹ It remained as the upper body for campaigns, training volunteers, enrolling members and maintaining contacts with other pacifist movements in France and other parts of the globe.

In 1958, they campaigned against the production of the first atom bomb by France by a nonviolent “invasion” of a nuclear factory at Marcoule. This non-violent action attracted media attention and aroused local farmers to protest against it. It was followed by several fasts, including the one at Geneva. Lanza was vehemently against the nuclear weapons. He wrote:

“The Bomb is the vilest of weapons, forbidden by definition, since there is no defense against it.

If defense is what makes combat legitimate, the ultimate weapon against which there is no defense is all offense and totally evil.

What is totally evil is also mad.

It is conceivable that a man should sacrifice himself for his land and his home, but if at the same time he sacrifices that for which he is sacrificing himself, his act is no longer a sacrifice, but suicide and an unpardonable crime.

To die in nuclear war is to die three times over: it is to die oneself, to die in one's children, and to die with the whole of nature.”¹⁰

During the time of war in Algeria from June 1959 to the summer of 1960, non-violent action was started against the internment camps where Algerians were detained on the ground of being 'suspected persons'. Non-violent activists went to these camps and demanded that they should be arrested on the very same charge of being suspects. This action was of immense help to people who refused to undertake military service in Algeria. Though the idea of substituting civil for military service in Algeria did not materialize, it eventually prompted the French Government to recognize the right of conscientious objection to military service.

In 1963, Lanza del Vasto, fasted for forty days in Rome during the Second Vatican Council asking the Pope John XXIII to take a stand on four crucial points: ‘to condemn the arms race, to balance obedience to all authorities (*Rm* 13) with conscientious objection, to introduce civil disobedience, to

introduce non-violence.’ The encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, which came out just at the end of the fast, gave positive responses to the first three points¹¹

The Ark played an important role in the struggle of farmers of Larzac plateau of Southern France to prevent the Government plan to expand the military camp of Larzac by taking huge areas of agricultural lands for weapon testing. They supported 103 farmers who did not want to sell their agricultural land for military use. Fasting, non-violent invasion of military camp, seven hundred kilometers walk to Paris, and sit in under the monumental Eiffel tower, legal battles, large demonstrations and all other non-violent techniques were effectively used in the struggle which continued for ten years. The victorious battle of Larzac¹² (1970-1980) is well known in the annals of history not only of France but also the whole of Europe. In addition the Ark was instrumental in leading a number of protest meetings, prayer meetings, and symbolic non-violent actions in different parts of the globe.

The Ark continues to lead the non-violent action with lot of vigour and zeal. The civil disobedience movements in recent years against genetically modified (GM) crops have created a lot of media attention and helped to mobilize public opinion against the genetically modified crops. The CANVA (Coordination of the Nonviolent Actions of the Ark) of St. Antonie l’Abbaye, specialises in non-violent action. This association regularly organises campaigns and supports those institutions and individuals engaged in non-violent movements.

Notes and References

1. Lanza del Vasto, *Warriors of Peace: Writings on the technique of Non-violence* (New York: Alfred A. Knof, 1974) p.32.
2. *Ibid.*
3. M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 11-8-'20.
4. Lanza del Vasto, *Warriors of Peace opcit.* p.32.
5. *Ibid.* p.4.
6. Lanza del Vasto's introduction to the French edition of 'Hind Swaraj'.
7. Danilo Dolci (1924 –1997) was an Italian non-violent activist best known for his opposition to poverty, social exclusion and the Mafia. He is popularly known as the "Gandhi of Sicily."
8. James Young and Marjorie Hope, "Gandhi's Disciple in the West", *Worldview*, May 1975 p.32
9. Lanza del Vasto *Return to the Source.*" (New York :Schoken Books, 1972), p.12.
10. Lanza del Vasto, *Warriors of Peace, op.cit.* p.104.
11. Antonino Drago "The Five Political Prophecies of Lanza del Vasto," *Gandhi Marg*, vol.37, Number1, April-June 2015, p.63
12. Roger Rawilson, *The Battle of Larzac* (Fellowship of Reconciliation: England).

Chapter-5

Epilogue

From the preceding chapters, the reader will get an idea about the life of an outstanding personality who made tremendous contributions in various fields. He was a philosopher, non-violent activist, poet, painter, sculptor, writer and musician. This work is intended to give a bird's eye view of the life of Lanza del Vasto, his historic meeting with Gandhi, influence of three months stay with Gandhi, his understanding of some of the fundamental principles and ideas of Gandhi, his contributions in area of peace and non-violence through his community experimentation and his struggles for creation of a just and peaceful society. From the study it is clear that he was a versatile personality who was eager to learn and transform life as per the new understanding about his life and mission.

Mahatma Gandhi was an inspiring source of influence for Lanza and he has drawn largely from his ideas and principles. At the same time, he combined these ideas and principles with teachings of Jesus Christ. He remained faithful to his religion and to the teachings of Jesus Christ. In fact he found in Gandhi, the practical application of the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount in day to day life. The contribution of Lanza is that he could successfully blend the ideas of Gandhi and Jesus Christ and that very much appealed to the Western mind. That is why, he is popularly known as Gandhi of France or of Europe. While applying Gandhi's ideas in the Western hemisphere, he has not made any compromise on the

fundamental principles, ethical and spiritual tenor of Gandhi. In fact, he went far ahead in his criticism of Western civilization and its institutions. It may perhaps be due to the fact that the problems created by Western civilization have heightened after the life time of Gandhi.

He was a popular writer and wrote extensively on areas of his concern. Most of his works were in French and other European languages. However, translations of some of his popular titles like *Return to the Source, Make Straight the Way of the Lord: An Anthology of the Philosophical Writings of Lanza del Vasto, Warriors of Peace: Writings on the Technique of Nonviolence, Principles and Precepts of the Return to the Obvious* and *Gandhi to Vinoba: The New Pilgrimage* are also available in English. As most of his works are in French, Italian and Spanish many people are not familiar with life and contributions of Lanza del Vasto. The present work is a modest attempt to highlight the contributions of Lanza in furthering the cause of peace and in the process how he became a real messenger of peace. It would not be an exaggeration, if we say that he was not only a messenger but also a unique and outstanding person who actualized the message of peace in real life through community experimentation and non-violent struggles.

After the death of Gandhi, the community life in the Gandhian ashrams has come to a stand still with limited number of people following certain things in a ritualistic manner without understanding its revolutionary implications. It is true that the number of persons staying in these communities of Ark has come down drastically after the passing away of the

founder and some of the communities were closed down. However, the members of these communities still follow the spirit of Lanza and Gandhi irrespective of the fact whether they live in community houses, neighbourhoods or cities. They continue the spirit of living together by engaging themselves in projects as an expression of their commitment to non-violence and peaceful social transformation.

Taking into consideration the challenges created by the modern industrial society and its pattern of development the time has come take up seriously the ideas of Gandhi and Lanza. It is the need of the hour and if we are not ready to take this challenge in time the future generations will have to face a disaster which may endanger the sustenance of all beings on this earth. The Ark gives hope for humanity. This hope is irresistible because it gives joy and meaning to life. All sensitive minds will take this message and ceaselessly work for a just and peaceful society.

Appendices

Appendix -1

Lanza del Vasto's Letter to Gandhi

The text of a letter written by Lanza del Vasto seeking Gandhi's guidance on June 1937, while he was on pilgrimage in the Indian soil.

Beloved Bapuji

I was meditating to write to you, but I was literally far from expecting you to come to me through a letter. I will always preserve this letter as one of the most precious things, which is a sign of love from a father and your concern for me. However I received the greatest gift which I hoped for. What more a man can ask to God than to have a clear and more than blessed understanding of what he was created for? On these sacred mountains, I pronounced my vows for life and laid out the plan of my future action, with the same zeal as when I was in love and dreamt of happiness. I was not fit for work in a village of India. When a human being, who was born as ambitious and combative, transforms completely to become a servant of peace, he cannot be satisfied with a kind of peace which is too peaceful and doing the service without any risk factor. In my home in the West, where peace is in greatest danger, when its lovers are most hated and fought, this is the scenario where I feel personally called for work. I will seek companions and lay the foundations of an Order of wandering brothers, dedicated to preaching of peace across the countries. Their vows will be of poverty, chastity, work, obedience and perpetual refusal for rest; their discipline will be that of an army; their weapon will be the sacrifice. If at the end of next

year, I managed to engage even ten or twelve men, by an oath towards me and between them, I will be certain that the seal of the will of God is on the work, and no human power will be able to stop its growth and development. In the name of the good of humanity, they will not take part in the revolution, because no good can come to the men, it can happen only through the improvement of men. The movement will be from the inside to the outside. Likewise it will begin with the villages and later extend to the cities. The reform will be operated not by gathering crowds, nor by public sermons, but it will be shaped by one man to another man, in secret. Because there is no salvation for the masses, but only for the men; it is one by one that all men can be saved. They will neither occupy an official position nor conquer power in the State. They will treat all States, nations or empires, liberal regimes or tyrannies as foreigners and adversaries. As long as these States cling to their sovereign rights, which have the privilege of murder, (justice and war). The civil authorities are founded nonviolence, chance and fraud. Therefore the members of the Order will strive to free men from the State and the spirit of the crowd, teach them to work for themselves and among themselves, prevent themselves from hazardous and easy comforts and its dangerous protections, from excessive competitions and its abuses. All these factors make a situation of unreal peace under the disguise of war. They will teach peace: that is not taking rest, but it is the sword, as Jesus said. The peace must not be desired out of fear for death and destruction. It must not be loved for the preservation of the pleasures of life, but it must be wanted as a duty of the spirit. Peace does not belong to cowards, but to those who resist violence from outside and

from within. Until now those men who have accepted war made heavy sacrifices for the same, similarly they must be ready to take the same risks for the conquest of peace. Our first battle, and victory, will be a refusal of military service in all countries at the same time. It will be a march of those who have been regimented to army, with banners and trumpets, saying no to the military barracks, but ready to end up in prisons. You must not laugh at this ambitious project even if it seems an exaggeration, dear Bapuji. Even if a small part of this dream comes to light, it will be something victorious forever. Moreover, this is my weakness, that if I don't visualize big things, I will not try for anything at all. Please pray for me, Bapuji, as I do myself, wishing the poet's dream come true, something alive, and something green, like a branch of a great tree that was born out of you. As Christians we knew it, but we did not understand that such attempts are not impossible and crazy. The lesson of your life taught us to believe in what we knew. I will come to Wardha and ask for your blessing, your advice, your word, which I badly need before leaving India, which I love, and where I would have liked to live all my life, if my life belonged to me. Please remember this humblest disciple and most obedient servant of yours.

Shantidas

This letter originally appeared in Lanza del Vasto's work "Le viatique" and it was subsequently published in the "News of the Ark", special issue No.3, January - February 1991, as a tribute to Lanza.

English Translation: Christophe Grigri

Appendix -2

The Mission of the Ark

The mission of the members of the Ark is to put into practice the spirit and means of nonviolence according to the situation in which they live, and according to the vocation of each person.

Rooted in its history of experience of nonviolence in all its aspects of life, the Ark shows that different ways of living, acting and entering into relations are possible, beginning with the close links established between spiritual life, ethics, social and political action.

This mission is vast; it allows each person and each group to find their place in working together towards more love, justice and peace in the world.

The mission is nourished by:

A common spirit which is a profound conviction only non- violence can allow men and women of all different cultures, to live in peace, a peace which is not just an absence of conflicts, but an overcoming of the latter, by a new way of being with others, by another type of relation people and peoples and by good management of common goods and resources, so that no one is deprived or excluded.

A culture which is based on the search for peace and justice by all means which respect mankind and the environment. Such a culture is lived within the community

home, in the fraternity, in the family, or by isolated individuals who are linked to the whole community by the same commitment. ...

A common direction which strives to spread this spirit and culture whenever possible and throughout the world by setting an example: by love and not force.

A spiritual nourishment which is common to all the sacred texts of different traditions, and by drawing inspiration from the non- violent lives of all the saints and prophets throughout the ages, since they have in common a life given to the service of their brothers and sisters, using the arms of peace, justice and charity of their time.

A common commitment of all the Companions and which is renewable each year.

Appendix -3

The Foundation Principles

1. Inner Conversion and Spirituality of Relationship

The non- violence which is experienced at the Ark requires a movement of returning within oneself, a movement of inner conversion - never achieved - in order to apprehend the inner unity of each creature and the unity of creation. It is based on what could be called a spirituality of relationship, and is the contemplation of the fact that we are all linked with each other and animated by the same breath. As strange as it may seem, the other person is my resemblance: we are alike!

The Ark adheres to the current of thought which recognizes the human being not only on the physical, psychic and social dimension but also on the spiritual dimension. It is this spiritual dimension which urges a person to achieve a state of being which remains subjective instead of objective; This state introduces the person into the mystery of life and death and enables he or she to go beyond the basic needs of having and making something, in order to aspire above all towards, - TO BE, to be fully oneself, dignified, upright and related to others.

The Ark recognizes in every man and woman this spiritual dimension regardless of religious beliefs. By drawing on the great sources of human wisdom, it proposes a path of self- knowledge, leading to the possession and gift of oneself. It incites each member-by means of simple exercises- to cultivate inner awareness of the self, beginning by a recall of the conscience, which consists of suspending all current actions and thoughts, in order to recentre oneself and to direct the inner eye towards that which is essential: the cultivation of our attention to others, service, hospitality and the presence of

the- All Other- through meditation and prayer. It invites everyone equally, to seek the internal unity of their being, by a well- understood asceticism (fasting, silence), by singing, dancing, artistic pursuits and manual work, and by relaxation, breathing and body exercises. Celebration and feasts lend a privileged community expression of unity.

Spiritual practices which are proposed by the Ark are an extension of the teachings of various religions and schools of spirituality, and which engages oneself in the quest of inner unity, greater openness and better relations to others. Lanza wrote, "Man is a living being who, if he does not have unity and conscience, at least is capable of unity and conscience and as a consequence of conscious union, or love".

N.B. Position of the Ark in relation to other religions

Since its foundation, the religious position of the Ark is based on a double principle: fidelity and deep rooted attachment to one's own tradition, and respect and openness towards other traditions.

The Community of the Ark respects and welcomes the spiritual path of each person and excludes all forms of fanaticism and sectarianism. Nevertheless it invites its members who have religious beliefs, to anchor themselves and make roots in a religious tradition to enable a full expression of their spiritual life, thereby avoiding confusion and syncretism.

The community remains structurally independent of all religious denominations, however it is possible that within the Ark, some members could conceive and practice their own common form of belief and faith.

2. Non- violence

"Non- violence: the solution of conflicts, the force of truth, lever of conversion"

If it was necessary the founding principles and orientations of the Community of the Ark in a word, it would be 'non- violence'.

The members of the Ark are not non-violent; they undertake to become it in full consciousness. Non- violence is a way of life, whereas violence, whether it is physical, psychological or institutional, is a path of death.* Non- violence is also a choice in life, since it engages us during our whole life. It is not simply a question of trying out non- violence in certain areas, but rather of trying it at all levels.

With non-violence, it is not about denying violence, but of transforming it into a constructive alternative, of refusing that which is deadly and destructive, in order to develop an active benevolence towards all living beings. Those who adhere to this, engage themselves in saying, NO, to violence in all its forms including one's own violence to start with.

To tend towards becoming non- violent, means starting to deal with one's own violence; not to suppress it, but to control it and convert this negative energy into positive energy. We are therefore always in the situation of experimenting non- violence without having to wait for the right moment.

In daily life, the demands of non- violence are compatible with respecting others and life itself. With the struggles that we have to face, the choice of non- violence means is coherent with our aspirations for more justice and peace. This search has an inevitable personal dimension- it concerns the work on and within ourselves; non- violence with friends, family and daily life; it should also be applied on a political and social level within a framework of campaigns and specific missions (reception, training, time spent living in the outside world, alternative living spaces, etc.) If a commitment to a particular political field is required a minimum of training is necessary. This does not mean waiting to be fully trained in

order to participate in a non-violent action (openly denouncing an injustice, civil disobedience): the action is in itself training and teaching.

Non- violence therefore, is primarily an experience, the expression of a need, a path. If well understood, far from hindering creative power and combative spirit, it will canalise them and give them meaning. This, or rather, these experiences, is a fact of life. "Non- violence and truth are like the two sides of the same medal," said **Gandhi**. In the same way that he himself considered his life as a series of experiences with truth, the life of a member of the Ark is a continuous experience in the search of truth and non- violence.

() The word violence in this context means people and structures that harm the integrity of men and women, and in a larger sense the destruction of the harmony of life.*

3. Service, Sharing and Work

“What right have you to give, you who have nothing that you haven’t already received, you, who has given nothing that you haven’t been given? Don’t give: share!”

Throughout the world, and notably in western society, we can notice that the human being is inhabited by a spirit of possession, profit and domination, which urges us to exploit others. Without obviously pretending to be free from this universal tendency, the members of the Ark intend to substitute it with a spirit of sharing and of service.

They discover the joy of sharing that what they have been given: time, work, money, spiritual life, experience and knowledge, rather than keep them for their own use and profit. Without neglecting the satisfaction of their needs - material needs, security, recognition -they are careful that these do not become unreasonable, so as to be attentive to the needs of others.

The members of the Ark consider their work to be a service which is given to others, and by trying to keep themselves free from harmful activities and from being accomplices of reasoning that exploits mankind, they ask themselves questions concerning the aim of their work: is it good for society? Is it useful? Then there is the question of the means used for their activity: do they respect the environment? Do they fulfill the requirements of justice and sharing?

Work is thus for them a tool of transformation of society, a permanent militant act, which contributes to the sharing of resources, wealth and the building of a more beautiful world. In a society where so many men and women are unemployed, it is certainly more dignified to be out of a job and occupied with lowly tasks but socially useful, than to have a 'good job' in an activity which is harmful. The value of work for a member of the Ark is not measured primarily in terms of income, of profit or productivity, but of participating in a more humane society. With this in mind, manual work and tasks which require physical effort finds its proper place, and is not reserved for those who are forced to do it, but is taken on as an indispensable service to the human community, and in which everyone as far as possible should take part.

The work however, as much as it is a contribution to others, is also a marvellous instrument of self - knowledge and personal accomplishment. "It is by making that man is made," said **Shantidas**. Through work, men and women can work on themselves and conserve an awareness and presence within themselves, to others and to the creation- this is particularly true for manual work. By having an occupation which we like, or by being available for tasks which have meaning, we are building ourselves and at the same time we are building a more humane society. This is however subject to the condition that work forms part of a harmony in life, but should not take up all of our time.

N.B.

Authority has its source at the same spring as the spirit of service. It is a task not an honour. It distinguishes itself from any will to have power for the sake of power and from any desire of personal advancement. It is a service, which means giving our time and skills in order to accomplish projects and further the mission of the Ark at different levels. Its aim is to help personal growth as far as possible and that of the groups.

4. Simple Living

"We must live simply so that others can simply live." Gandhi

The simplicity of life in the Ark is a voluntary choice of limiting the will to possess in order to allow the free development of our being. It is a non-violent action in the struggle against waste and monopolization. In the same way that the members of the Ark are not non-violent as such but tend towards becoming so, equally they try to simplify their lives. This voluntary simplification which is assumed, is not an end in itself, but a means; a means which is essential for the quality of life and wellbeing, for becoming more humane and free, and for assuming commitments which have been made.

For members of the Ark, sharing, the search for justice and solidarity with the poorest people, gives meaning to their choice of simplification in their lives. Through sharing, we can taste the fruit of being freed from the chase after superfluous material goods: this enables us to be available, and allows us to give time, presence and strength to friendships and deeper commitments.

The search for simplicity of lifestyles goes hand in hand with the search for beauty. Beauty is profound; it calms, gives joy, nourishes and energizes sensibility. It cannot be reduced to simple aesthetics.

"What is the truth of forms, the splendour of truth? It is beauty (. . .) the truth is the being, and to be is to be one, unified and attuned and that the outside expresses the inside"

Beauty then, is a powerful expression of a way of being and living in the Ark.

5. Coherence and Responsibility

"The most profound speculation concerning absolute Truth is not worth the least real step taken by a real person who advances in reality, since speculation is only a game with figures whilst the step is true. " Lanza del Vasto

Coherence, or unity in life, is a dynamic founding principle which links thought, speech and act. In other words, it is the adjustment of an act to an enlightened conscience.

Inner work, (based on being present at the present moment and nourished by meditation, prayer, the recalling of oneself, times of silence and retreat, etc.), leads to working for more justice and solidarity. This is why the Ark combines the two poles: spiritual life, and social commitment, the one being inseparable from the other.

Coherence is linked to responsibility: knowing how to measure the weight which we give to our word or commitment to our acts, this is essential. In a society where people are increasingly in difficulty with accepting responsibility, the Ark invites us to recognize the responsibility of our acts, and to accept the resulting share of goodness and error.

NB.

1. *From the common commitment to the Community of the Ark, there is a resulting co-responsibility between all committed members which is proportional and relative to the level of personal engagement. This co-responsibility is intended to favour proper judgment and working*

together. It is a reminder that it is coherence and responsibility provides a framework. In relationships between people however, co-responsibility does not replace civil and penal law, which can be used as a reference whenever necessary.

2. *The search for coherence and unity in life implies unity of the Community itself in respecting diversity of its members and of their opinions. This is put into practice by means of decision making and by achieving consensus whenever possible. Consensus allows debate, confrontations and even conflict: doubts and minority oppositions are noted in the text of the decision.*

6. Solidarity

“All men are brothers” Gandhi

The Community of the Ark forms part of those movements which serve mankind at the present time. Its members choose to work in a world which is their own even if they don't share all its values

Although large parts of the planet are given over to destruction and bloodshed, although the most brutal and barbaric actions hinder the fragile humanisation of mankind, and although even then, more and more islands of authentic levels of humanity appear and give hope, the Ark wishes to be an active minority amongst others.

This solidarity with all living beings has as its base the necessity of the absolute and indisputable respect of the fundamental or symbolic Law, which is the respect for Life and dignity for every living being. The reference to this law, which is included in the text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is at the heart of the non-violent actions of the Ark.

Each member, each project of the Community of the

Ark refers back to its specific identity (the specific way of acting-and relating to the Ark), and also its identity with all mankind (solidarity and partnership with others, whether persons or groups.)

Such solidarity with people looking for dignity, justice and peace, demands audacity and boldness, by objecting with strong actions and disobedience in relation to the disorder of established institutions. This is sometimes necessary and provides training for non- violent action and serves as preparation for such an eventuality.

Source : The Community of the Ark:Non-violence and Spirituality , Navigator 2012

Appendix -4

Common Prayers of the Ark

1

O God of Truth,
Whom various people name by various names,
But who art One, Unique, and the Same,
Who art The-who-is,
Who art in all that is
And in the union of all who come together,
Who art in the heights and in the abyss,
In the heavens without end
And the heart's secret shade
Like a tiny seed.
Praised be Thou, Lord, for our prayer fulfilled,
Since this our prayer is its own fulfillment,
Since by addressing Thee together, Lord,
We elevate our will, purify our desire,
And are of one accord.
And what more need we ask, if that is granted?
What more need we ask, unless that it should last,
O Eternal God,
All through our days and through our nights?
What more, unless to love Thee enough to love
All those who pray to Thee as we do,
Enough to love those who pray and think in other ways,
Enough to wish good to those who wish us evil,
Enough to wish good to those who deny Thee
or know Thee not,
The good of return to Thee.

Give us understanding of thy law, O Lord,
 Fill us with marveling and merciful respect
 For every living being,
 Love with no reverse of hate,
 The Strength and Joy of Peace.
 Amen

Lanza del Vasto

2

We are all strangers and pilgrims.
 Let us light a fire at the crossroads
 To call on the name of the Lord.
 Let us close the circle and make a temple in the wind.
 Let us make, of where we chance to be, a temple.
 For the time has come to worship in spirit and in truth,
 To give thanks in every place and at all times.
 Let us set a term to time, a center to outer darkness,
 And make ourselves present at the present.
 The present we pursued in vain throughout our days,
 For it was far from us at its time of being.
 Now, here it is, before our eyes and in our hearts, the present.
 Fire is the present burning and shining, the present praying.
 Fire is the sacrifice of what burns, warmth of life and joy to
 see.
 Fire is the death of dead things and their return to the light.
 Fire of joy! Suffering and joy within each other.
 Love is the joy of suffering.
 Fire is life and death within each other,
 Appearance being consumed and substance appearing.
 Let us sing glory in the tongue of fire, evident and clear to all
 men.
 And you, passersby on the road of the four winds,
 Step into the round and put your hands in ours.

Blow on us, Lord! Blow our prayer into flame,
So that our hearts of sticks and thorns and their fickle spark of
life
May somehow serve thy glory.

Amen

3

O Thou who art beyond all things,
How can we name Thee by another name?
What hymn can sing thy praise?
No word can convey Thee.
What spirit can grasp Thee?
No intelligence can conceive Thee.
Thou alone art ineffable;
All which is uttered has sprung from Thee.
Thou alone art unknowable:
All that has mind has sprung from Thee.
All beings celebrate Thee,
They that speak and they that speak not.
All beings pay homage to Thee,
They that think and they that think not.
The universal desire, each wailing sound, aspire to Thee.
All that exists prays to Thee,
And each being that reads Thy universe
Raises a silent hymn to Thee.
All that endures, endures in Thee only.
The movement of the universe unfurls in Thee.
Of all beings, Thou art the end.
Thou art unique, Thou are each, Thou art none.
Thou art not a single being,
Thou art not the sum of all beings.
Thou hast all names.
By what name could I call Thee,

O Thou who alone art nameless?
 What heavenly spirit could penetrate the clouds
 That veil the very heavens?
 O Thou the Beyond of all,
 By what other name can I call Thee?
 Have Mercy on us!
 Amen

St. Gregory of Nazianze, Bishop (4th century)

4

Most High, Almighty, Good Lord,
 To Thee the praises, the glory, the honour and the blessings.
 To Thee alone, Most High, do they belong,
 And no man is worthy to speak Thy name.

Praised be, my Lord, with all thy creatures,
 Especially Sire Brother Sun,
 By whom thou givest the light of day,
 And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,
 From Thou, Most High, he carries meaning.

Praised be, my Lord, for Sister Moon and the Stars in the sky,
 Thou hast formed them bright and lovely and fair.

Praised be, my Lord, for Brother Wind,
 And for the Air and clouds, clear skies and all weather,
 By which Thou givest sustenance to thy creatures.

Praised be, my Lord, for Sister Water,
 Who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be, my Lord, for Brother fire,
 By whom Thou givest light at night.
 And he is beautiful and joyous and mighty and strong.

Praised be, my Lord, for our Sister Mother Earth,
Who sustains and governs us,
And produces fruits, colourful flowers and herbs.

Praised be, my Lord, for those who forgive for love of Thee
And endure pain and tribulations.
Blessed are those who shall endure them in peace,
For by Thee, Most High, they will be crowned.

Praised be, my Lord, for our Sister Bodily Death,
From whom no living man can escape;
Blessed are those whom she will find in thy most holy will
For the Second death will not harm them.

Praise and bless my Lord and thank Him
And serve Him with great humility.

St. Francis of Assisi

5

Lord, make us an instrument of your pace,

Where there is hate, let us put love,
Where there is discord, let us put union,
Where there is offense, let us put pardon,
Where there is despair, let us put hope,
Where there is doubt, let us put faith,
Where there is darkness, let us put light,
Where there is sorrow, let us put joy.

Grant us, Lord, to seek, not so much
to be understood as to understand,
to receive as to give

to be loved, as to love.

For it is through giving that we receive,
Through forgiving that we are forgiven,
Through dying to ourselves
That we are reborn to everlasting life.

Give us Lord, Peace, Strength and Joy
And give us to give them to others.

St. Francis of Assisi

6

Blessed are the poor in spirit:
For theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are the meek:
For they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are the sorrowful:
For they shall be comforted.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for the cause of justice:
For they shall be fulfilled.
Blessed are the merciful:
For they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart:
For they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers:
For they shall be called the children of God.
Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the cause of right:
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Amen

The Beatitudes

7

Bless Lord this meal
In which you give us the strength to serve you,
Give bread to those who have none
And hunger and thirst for justice
To those who have plenty.

Amen

Appendix -5

Lanza Del Vasto: A Chronological Sketch

Childhood (1901-1919)

1901: Birth in San Vito dei Normanni, Southern Italy

1903-1904: Birth of the two brothers, Lorenzo and Angelo

1911: Father leaves the family

October 1913 - July 1920: Secondary School in Paris

Education (1920-29)

1920-1921: Philosophy Studies in Florence

1921-1925: Philosophy Studies in Pisa, Friendships

June 1923: Upset by the reading of *Ruysbroeck The Admirable*

September 1925: Reading of the works of Saint Thomas Aquinas

1926: Return to Florence, Friendship with the painter Giovanni Costetti

1927: *Conquistador di Vento* by Lanza del Vasto, Reading of the Old Testament

June 1928: Doctoral Thesis in Philosophy

1928-1929: Breaking away with Mary, a young American girl

Travels in Europe (1930-1936)

Summer 1930: One month in Germany

January-August 1931: Berlin

October 1931 - September 1932: Paris.

First of March 1932: Writes *La Vidriera*

End of March 1932: Meeting with the writer Luc Dietrich

October 1932 - December 1934: in Italy-Milan, Palermo, Rome

May - August 1933: Walk from Rome to Bari, Start writing *Principles and Precepts of the Return to the Obvious*

August 1933: Luc in Italy

November 1933: Luc in Florence.

February 1934: Begins the writing of *Judas*.

Summer 1934: Luc and his work *The happiness of the Sad people*.

January-July 1935: Paris.

Summer 1935: by bicycle , Paris-Caen, Caen-Florence.

October 1935 - December 1936: Tutor in Versailles, Finishes the book *Judas*

July 1936: Marseille, Begins the writing of *Gilles de Rais*

August 1936: Italy

November 1936: England.

The Pilgrimage to the Sources (1937-38)

December 22, 1936: In Genoa, Boarding the ship for India

January 3, 1937 - March 10, 1938: India

January 29, 1937: Meeting with Gandhi; three months in Wardha.

May 1937: Himalayas, Night from June 16 to 17: The call of God.

July 5: Visit to Shivananda.

July 20: Novice of the Sadhoek Sharma

August 20: Visit to Tagore in Bengal

September 1937: Three weeks with Gandhi.

October 1937 - February 1938: Himalayas

February 20, 1938: Goodbye to Gandhi

New Trips

End of March 1938: Egypt.

April 1938: One month in Italy.

April 29 - June 25, 1938: Paris, *Judas* (Grasset).

Summer 1938: Three months in Rhodes, Tutor

October - December 1938: On foot, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon

Christmas 1938: Bethlehem, First of January 1939: Nazareth

February 1939: Damascus, Beirut

March 1939: Constantinople

March 20 - April 10, 1939: Mount Athos

June 1939: Florence

July 10, 1939: Return to Paris

End of August 1939 - April 1940: Teacher in Switzerland.

April - June 1940: Tutor at Toulon.

July 1940 - December 1942: Marseille (and Allauch, near Marseille).

Autumn 1940: With Luc in Megève

June 1941: In Allauch with René Daumal, Meeting with Simone Weil and Chanterelle.

Summer 1941: With Luc in Lourmarin.

December 1941: Writes *The March of the Kings*

May 1942: with Luc, Lanza writes *Dialogue of Friendship*

Autumn 1942: The Nazis invade the “free zone.”

December 1942: Brief stay in Paris.

January - May 1943: writes *The pilgrimage to the sources* in Recologne.

Summer 1943: Marseille and the Alps.

October 1943: *The Pilgrimage to the Sources* (Denoël). Huge success

October 1943 - June 1948: Resident in Paris.

January 26, 1944: Birth of the Ark.

August 12, 1944: Death of Luc Dietrich.

The Postwar period (1945-1948)

January 1945 to June 1948: weekly talks, Saint-Paul street.

Spring 1945: Principles and Precepts of the return to the evidence (Denoël).

June 24, 1945: first Saint-John of the Ark. First vows

Summer 1945: in Recologne.

July 1946: Pilgrimage on foot to Chartres.

August 1946: Switzerland, Italy.

October 1946: moves to Marly, Talks on the Gospel.

Summer 1947: In Recologne with his mother.

January 1948: Death of Gandhi.

March 1948: Engagement with Chanterelle.

June 24, 1948: Weddings with Chanterelle in Crécy-en-Brie

The Community in Tournier, The Second Pilgrimage (1948-1954)

August 1948: Tournier in Charente. First Rural community.

October 1948: Conference in Brussels, Meetings in Paris.

January 1950: With Chanterelle in Brussels.

March 1951: Lanza and the community perform the Passion in Saint-Séverin (Paris).

Winter 1951-1952: first groups of friends of the Ark, Conferences in the cities.

June 1952: Closure of the community.

August 1952: The Lanza couple in Spain.

September 1952: Lanza del Vasto in Morocco, conferences

October 1952 - December 1953: Conferences in France, Belgium, Switzerland.

May 1953: in Morocco.

Summer 1953: Last Saint John celebration in Tournier

October 1953 - November 1954: The Ark in Tournettes-sur-Loup (Alpes-Maritimes).

End of December 1953: in Naples, boat to India

January - May 1954: In India with Vinoba: Bombay, Wardha, Gaya in Bihar.

The Community in Bollène, First commitments (1954-1959)

Autumn 1954: Lanza del Vasto and the Ark in Bollène (Vaucluse) for eleven years.

December 1956: Fasting in Sicily with Danilo Dolci.

May 1957: Fast in Paris against the tortures (Algerian War)

August 1957: In Argentina.

Summer 1957 - Summer 1960: a second community in Puymoyen (Charente).

Easter 1958: Demonstration at the Marcoule nuclear Plant.

July 1958: Fast against the bomb in Geneva.

January 1959: Shantidas designates Pierre Parodi as his successor.

April - May 1959: Uruguay, Chile, Argentina.

Summer 1959: demonstrations against the internment of the "suspects" in the Larzac.

November 1959: Mother dies in Bollène.

The Apostle of Non-violence in the world (1960-1974)

April 1960: Interview with Nehru in London

Spring 1960: Actions against the camps of the Algerian "suspects"

Pentecost 1961: Six talks on "the spiritual trinity"

September - December 1961: Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Argentina, Lebanon.

Lent 1963: Forty days of fasting in Rome.

Easter 1963: A part of the Ark is settled in La Borie Noble.

January - June 1964: Senegal, Uruguay, Argentina, Peru, Colombia, Portugal.

April 1965: with Pierre Parodi he visits Pope Paul VI *Noah* (Denoël)

October 1965: In Rome, where Chanterelle and other women fast for peace.

November 1965: Lanza del Vasto and the Ark establishes itself in La Borie Noble

January - December 1966: Argentina, Peru, Colombia, Canada, United States

January 1967: Pierre Parodi founds the Ark in Morocco (1967-1974)

September 1969: With Chanterelle in Quebec

February 1970: Fifteen days in India

March 1971: Active support for the march of Spanish objectors.

September - December 1971: with Chanterelle, Argentina, Canada, United States.

December 1971: Ten days of fasting in Montréal for Bangladesh.

March 1972: Fifteen days of fasting for the Larzac, Beginning of a long struggle.

May 1972: With Chanterelle, commemorative trip to San Vito.

Summer - Autumn 1972: The Charismatic Renewal affects the Ark

October - November 1972: Quebec, United States, Meeting with César Chavez.

June 1973: Suspension of the votes for two years, refoundation of the cCommunity.

February 1974: With Chanterelle in Morocco

October 1974: Founding of a Community in Truels of Larzac.

The Last years, New trips (1974-1981)

October - November 1974: Quebec, United States, especially California

Summer 1975: First General Chapter of the Ark

November 1975: Death of Chanterelle.

February - March 1976: Conferences in Italy and Spain.

Summer 1976: Demonstrations and a week's fast in Malville

Summer 1976: Foundation of several communities in France

November - December 1976: Canada, United States, Canada

January - Easter 1977: Last trip to Argentina

October 1977: Last trip to India

December 1977: Conference at Notre-Dame de Paris

1978: Four trips to Spain, one to Italy, one to Portugal

March 1978: Foundation of an Ark community in Quebec

October 1978: Four-day fast in Paris with the peasants of Larzac.

November 1978: March of the peasants of the Larzac to Paris.

May 1979: United States, Canada (last trip to America)

Summer - autumn 1979: Two trips to Spain, one to Italy, one to Portugal

December 1979: in Rome visits John-Paul II

1980: Three trips to Italy, two to Spain

Spring 1980: founding of the Bonnecombe and Grand Moulinié communities

March - May 1980: Australia, Japan

Summer 1980: Spain, Italy

October - December 1980: Spain, Basque Country, Granada, La Longuera.

January 5, 1981: Lanza del Vasto dies in La Longuera near Murcia

Source : <https://www.lanzadelvasto.com/fr/vie/>



The Main building of the Community of the Ark, La Borie Noble



The Author offering prayers in front of tomb of Lanza del Vasto at La Borie Noble



Assembling for evening prayer at La Borie Noble



Ploughing the land with the help of horses at La Borie Noble



The Author discussing with Michele Le Boeuf about the Community of the Ark



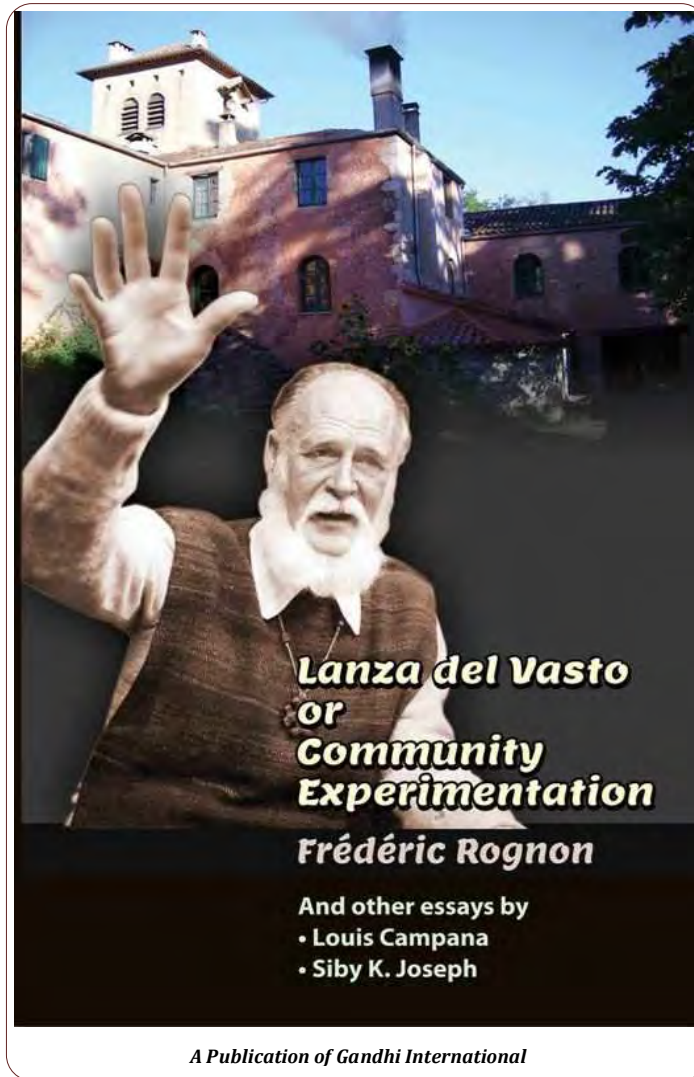
Louis Campana explaining about the walking stick of Lanza del Vasto



Therese Parody showing the personal belongings of Lanza del Vasto



The Community of the Ark in the village of St. Antoine l'Abbaye



This book deals with life and legacy of Lanza del Vasto also known as Shantidas, an Italian aristocrat, philosopher, thinker, artist, poet and above all an ardent non-violent activist. It comprises of five chapters focusing on his contributions towards peace and non-violence. It also has some important writings and documents of the Community of the Ark. Inspired by the writings of Romain Rolland on Gandhi, Shantidas travelled all the way from Europe to India to meet Mahatma Gandhi at Sevagram in 1937. His three months stay with Gandhi convinced him that non-violence and other aspects of Gandhian thought could provide an answer to the civilizational crisis afflicting the western society. Consequently, he became a true messenger and practitioner of peace and non-violence through Community experimentation and peace action. Barring English, there are lot of writings in some of the European languages on his life and work. This book is a modest attempt to fill that gap. We hope that this book will be of immense interest for academics, activists and even for general readers.



Siby K. Joseph is Dean of Studies and Research, Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha. He has a master's degree in Gandhian Thought and Peace Science and Ph.D. in Gandhian thought and Development Studies from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. He has edited a number of books and has published several monographs and articles on Gandhian Thought and Peace Studies. His books were published by Routledge, Concept, Manohar and many other publication houses. Two of his recent writings were published by Gandhi International, France. His homepage is <http://siby.iecit.in>

Gandhi International

37 Rue de la Concorde, 11000

Carcassonne, France • www.gandhiinternational.org

ISBN : 978-2-9559999-4-3



9 782955 999943