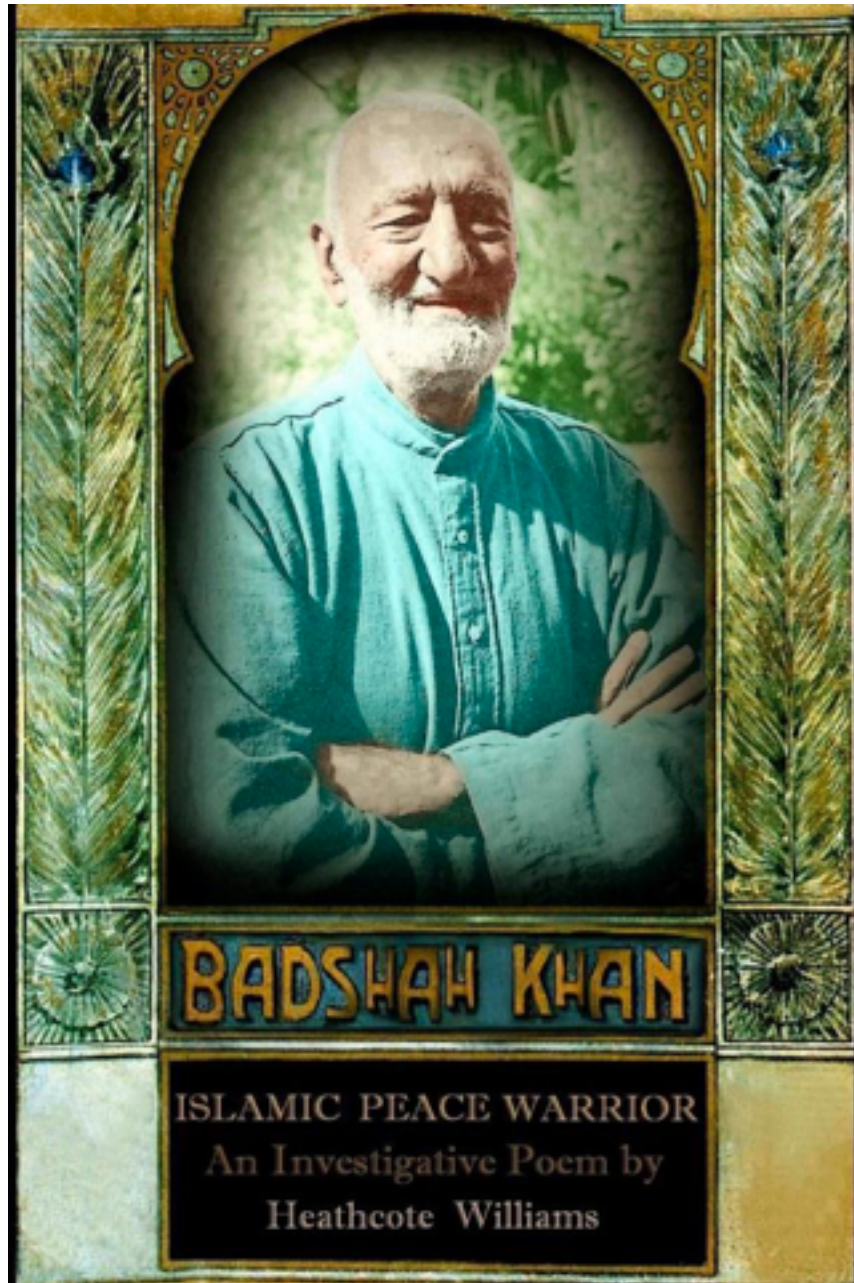


# The Gandhi Way



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*More information on Tore Naerland on page 22*

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# Gandhi on Islam and Communal Harmony

*Anupma Kaushik*

Islam is one religion which of late has been associated with terrorism and fundamentalism worldwide. Names like ISIS, Boko Haram, Al Qaeda, Taliban, Al-Shabaab, have become synonymous with fundamentalism and terrorism. (*Times of India*, 2015, 10) The troubled spots in the world today such as Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Libya and Afghanistan where violence and fundamentalism have disturbed the peace are mostly associated with Islam. (*The Hindu*, 2015, 12) This raises the question whether Islam is a peaceful religion or not? However this is not a new question for a country like India which had a huge Muslim population living with people of other religions at times peacefully but at others not so peacefully. Even in the pre-independence era leaders like Gandhi had to deal with this issue. Some of his arguments were unique while others were not.

Gandhi claimed that he had read the Quran more than once and also many books on the Quran and the Prophet. (Gandhi, 1949, 235) He also claimed that the Prophet often fasted and prayed and that the Prophet had revelations not in moments of ease and luxurious living but when he fasted and prayed, kept awake for nights together and would be on his feet at all hours of the night as he received revelations. Gandhi claimed that he had cultivated respect for Islam. (Gandhi, 1949, 94) He clearly saw the difference between the teaching and practice of Islam. He regarded Islam as a religion of peace. He claimed that there is nothing in the Quran to warrant the use of force for conversion. He also claimed that the holy book says in the clearest language possible that there is no compulsion in religion. To him the Prophet's whole life was a repudiation of compulsion in religion. He argued that Islam would cease to be a world religion if it were to rely upon force for its propagation. (Gandhi, 1949, 19) He held the view that Islam in the days of Harun-al-Rashid and Mamun was the most tolerant amongst the world's religions but there was a reaction against the liberalism of the teachers of their times. The reactionaries had many learned, able and influential men amongst them and they nearly overwhelmed the liberal and tolerant teachers and philosophers of Islam. He believed that Muslims are still suffering from the effect of that reaction, but he believed that Islam has sufficient in it to become purged of illiberalism and intolerance. (Gandhi, 1949, 99)

Muslims argued with Gandhi claiming that he is wrong in saying that Islam enjoins nonviolence upon its followers because the Prophet himself met force with force at Badr. Muslims even argued that the use of force is allowed on particular occasions specified by Islam and especially against non-Muslim Governments Islam prescribes only the sword. (Gandhi, 1949, 261) Gandhi accepted that being a non-Muslim he can always be challenged and hence is

at a disadvantage while interpreting the Quran. However he argued that he was aware of the battle of Badr and similar incidents in the Prophet's life and also of the verses in the Quran that contradicted his claim of Islam being a peaceful religion. He asserted that it was possible that the teaching of a book or a man's life may be different from isolated texts in a book or incidents in a life. (Gandhi, 1949, 262) The same goes for the Quran and the Prophet and to Gandhi the central teaching of the Quran remained that of peace. (Gandhi, 1949, 263)

He found Muslims to be brave, generous and trusting if their suspicions were disarmed. (Gandhi, 1949, 62) He however acknowledged that in his experience he has found that Muslims are as a rule bullies. (Gandhi, 1949, 48) However he tried to explain this behavior by stating that although nonviolence has a predominant place in the Quran, the 1300 years of imperialistic expansion has made the Muslims fighters as a body. They are therefore aggressive. Bullying is the natural excrescence of an aggressive spirit. (Gandhi, 1949, 66) He claimed to have read the Quran and to him it did not sanction or enjoin murder. (Gandhi, 1949, 125) He believed that Muslims have an ordeal to pass through. He felt that they were too free with the knife and the pistol. He cautioned that the sword is not an emblem of Islam, but clarified that Islam was born in an environment where the sword was and remains the supreme law. He lamented that the sword is too much in evidence among the Muslims despite the message of the Prophet. He advised that it must be sheathed if Islam is to be what it means – peace. (Gandhi, 1949, 131)

Gandhi acknowledged that some passages can be quoted from the Quran which are contrary to peace. But he argued that the same can be found in Christianity and Hinduism as well. He argued that Islam is a comparatively new religion and is yet in the course of being interpreted. He rejected the claim of Maulvis to give a final interpretation to the message of Mohamed. (Gandhi, 1949, 134)

He clarified that however good Islam may be in the abstract the only way it can be judged is by the effect produced by each of its votaries considered as a whole. (Gandhi, 1949, 63) He told the Muslims that they cannot protect Islam with the lathi (stick) or sword. The age of lathi is gone. A religion will be tested by the purity of its adherents. He argued that if a religion is left to the goondas (criminals) to defend it, it will do serious harm to that religion including Islam. Islam will in that case no longer remain the faith of fakirs (mendicant monks) and worshippers of Allah. (Gandhi, 1949, 78)

He objected to the destruction of Hindu temples by Muslims. (Gandhi, 1949, 71) He claimed he had read Maulana sahib's *Life of the Prophet* and also *Usva-e-Sahaba* and insisted that Islam never sanctioned destroying the places of worship of other religions. (Gandhi, 1949, 139) He acknowledged that he had found difficulty in Muslim circles about invoking reverence for the Hindu Vedas and incarnation. (Gandhi, 1949, 98) He expected Muslims

to tolerate other religions. He reminded Muslims that Islam is judged by their conduct. (Gandhi, 1949, 72) However he also argued that when a person of any religion does evil, it is an evil done by one person against another and each one should personally try to remove the evil because we are persons first and our religious identity is secondary. One should not blame the Muslims as a whole for some evil committed by a person or a group of persons. (Gandhi, 1949, 22) He explained that when blood boils, prejudice reigns supreme; man whether he labels himself a Hindu, Muslim, Christian or what not becomes a beast. (Gandhi, 1949, 44)

He argued that a Hindu should love a Muslim even if the latter is likely to injure him or has already injured him. He must not quarrel with an ignorant Muslim who does not know his own religion. (Gandhi, 1949, 23) He argued that if a Muslim is evil it means that we had not cared for him. He has not been treated as a friend and neighbour to be reformed and respected. (Gandhi, 1949, 24) He sought to gain Muslim friendship through love. (Gandhi, 1949, 26) In his characteristic nonviolent arguments he argued that if only one party were to continue its guilt and the other consistently remained patient and suffering the guilty party would be exhausted in the effort. (Gandhi, 1949, 37) But if we answer an abuse with a slap, a slap is returned with a kick, the kick then is returned by a bullet and so the circle of sin widens. But generally those who believe in taking a tooth for a tooth after a time forgive one another and become friends. So let us recognize this rule of mutual forgiveness and forget one another's wrongs. The easiest method of achieving peace is to give up the idea of complaining against one another and to concentrate our attention upon taking preventive measures so that there is no recurrence of madness. (Gandhi, 1949, 38)

He argued that religion is being interpreted in the lives of those who are living these messages in silence and in perfect self-dedication. The seat of religion is in the heart. He argued that an attitude of nonviolence in mutual relations is an indispensable condition. People must not become violent over religious matters. (Gandhi, 1949, 47)

When he received reports of acts of violence by Muslims he investigated the facts before passing judgment. (Gandhi, 1949, 55) He had to deal with cases in pre-independent India where Muslims had abducted Hindu boys and girls who were forced to embrace Islam. The remedy he suggested was nonviolent resistance and if that is not possible then through violent self defense. (Gandhi, 1949, 119) He received complaints that Muslim men invade Hindu quarters and insult Hindu women. They also take goods forcibly from Hindu shopkeepers. (Gandhi, 1949, 152) Gandhi termed such men who let their women be abused and their goods be taken by force, cowards. He said where there are cowards there are going to be bullies. Hence the cowards need to be taught how to be brave. (Gandhi, 1949, 152)

He claimed that he can never be an enemy of Muslims no matter what any one or more of them may do to him or others. (Gandhi, 1949, 163) His ultimate remedy was to deal with the wrong but not to hurt the wrong doer.



(Gandhi, 1949, 163) Thus to him the ultimate answer lay in the concept of 'Live and Let Live' or mutual forbearance and toleration in life. He claimed that this is the lesson he had learnt from the Quran. (Gandhi, 1949, 236)

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## Our Common Identity: Citizens of the World

*Shaheen Choudhury-Westcombe*

This article was written in 2005 as a response to the 7/7 bombings in London. It was published in the Bangladesh *Daily Star* in 2005 but its continuing relevance is clear.

The rush hour train pulled out of my local station. I had managed to grab a seat. I looked round, there were people of every description. They were all ordinary people making their way to work or to their daily business.

The woman opposite wore a gypsy skirt and a pink sleeveless top. Her long silver earrings with strands of beads touched her shoulders as she looked down and took out an Avon catalogue from her embroidered handbag.

Someone brushed against me. I looked up. It was a young black man wearing jogging pants and trainers. I noticed the words on his white wrist band, Make Poverty History. He turned his baseball hat and I could see his earphones. He moved with the rhythm of the music that only he could hear. On the other side sat an impeccably dressed man in a dark suit. He carried a black case which probably contained a laptop. He looked like the IT whizkids of my office. The person sitting next to me was frantically pressing the numbers on his mobile telephone. He soon started a conversation in a language which I hardly recognised. He was probably from some East European country. I pulled the end of my sari and draped it round myself like a scarf. It was the 11th of July, only 4 days after 7/7.

I had ceased to be a commuter many years ago. I was on my way to Waterloo to catch a train to Dorset to visit my aunt who was in hospital. It was just before 9am. I could not help thinking of the outrageous events of the previous Thursday that had not only shocked the Londoners but the whole planet. The people on the ill-fated tube trains and bus were very much like the people around me. They were ordinary people, innocent victims of a tragedy that cannot be justified. I tried to think why this happened ... and why this way ...? What were those four young people trying to say by ending their

own lives and the lives of so many others ... ? If it was the Iraq war, they had killed those very people who had marched on the streets of London with anti-war banners. I thought of my 70-year-old Jewish friend who had been on the march to register her protest. The conflicts and politics of this world are very complex.

I looked out, at a distance I could see a row of shops, a Chinese take away, a tandoori restaurant, a fish and chip shop followed by a large sign saying, Doner Kebab Sold Here. I thought of the fusion of cultures. I felt enriched by the diversity of the environment I lived in and appreciated multiculturalism once again. We have many commonalities and numerous differences. This is what makes the world interesting.

I noticed a church spire. It reminded me that only a few blocks away was another church hall where we ran mother-tongue classes for Bangladeshi children. On many occasions, the Muslim children have celebrated religious events there. The non-Muslims had also joined in and the church welcomed us with open arms.

The train stopped at Lewisham. The smartly dressed office workers who were probably heading for the Canary Wharf area rushed out towards the docklands Light Railway platform. A number of people stepped in through the open door.

A young woman wearing a hijab (headscarf) walked in. She carried with great difficulty, a bag that was loaded with heavy books. I could see the words Gray's Anatomy. She was probably heading for Guy's medical school. Behind her was an Asian man in his early twenties with a rucksack and a mobile telephone in his hand. I noticed the discomfort among the fellow passengers immediately. They all looked at him. I could read the thoughts that crossed everyone's mind. Someone next to me got up quickly and rushed towards the door. He jumped off at the next station. I wondered whether that was his real destination.

The train moved on. I had been pre-occupied with my thoughts. I could see the headlines of the tabloid newspaper that someone was reading. There were rows and rows of photographs of the victims of 7/7. The three words that caught my eye from the headlines were Bombs, Terrorists and Grief.

I thought of a project that I had set up in Waltham Forest, an East London borough, just before 9/11. Titled the All Faiths Project, it was a partnership developed in collaboration with the leaders of the faith groups in the area – the Borough Dean of the Church of England, the Rabbi, and the Mosque Imam, among others. The aim was to promote respect, communication and understanding between the various communities. The media had referred to the project as One Love.

I was engrossed in my thoughts again. I am a Bangladeshi Muslim by heritage but my childhood friends were of all denominations – Hindus, Christians and Buddhists. I was raised in a secular environment, we celebrated everyone's festivals. I am married to someone who is from a

Methodist background. My adopted country Britain is the most diverse nation in the world. The permutations and combinations of cultures, nationalities, ethnicity, faiths and beliefs around me are endless. The words respecting one another, living in harmony and unity in diversity echoed through my mind. The train had stopped by then. I was miles away in my thoughts. My husband gently nudged me. I was still thinking about the several identities that each one of us have. I picked myself up and looked out of the window. Someone walked past. The slogan on his T-shirt said One World. Yes, we have one identity in common. We are all citizens of the World.

Shaheen Choudhury-Westcombe is a member of the Gandhi Foundation Executive and of Kingsley Hall trustees. She trained as an architect but mid-career had a change of profession. She joined local government in London and worked in various management positions in Social Services and Community Development. Shaheen was awarded an MBE for her contributions to community relations.

### Gandhi Foundation News

#### **Staff changes**

Sadly, due to the Gandhi Foundation's reduced grant income we have had to say farewell to **Diane Gregory** and partner **Matthew Bain** who have provided a very efficient website service for the last seven years. Matthew set up the website as a volunteer before their company Rohita later took on its maintenance and development. We are pleased that Diane and Matthew will continue to take an interest in the GF as honorary Life Friends.

**William Rhind** will continue as our very active Outreach Worker but the Committee has had to reduce his hours.

We are fortunate that a member of the GF Executive Committee, **Trevor Lewis**, who already plays a large part in running the Summer Gathering has offered, due to his recent retirement from full time employment, to look after the website. Look out for some changes there soon.

#### **Subscriptions**

Due to the GF's reduced income the EC has decided to raise the subscription to £20 (it has been at £12 for many years). The concession rate for those on low incomes is now £10. The Committee wish to thank those who already give more than the minimum. For those who pay yearly by cheque they will receive notification by post when due to renew. We would appreciate if those who pay by Banker's Order were to ask their bank to increase it to the new level. For those who pay through the website, the new rate will be advertised there.

The GF's Academic Adviser, **Antony Copley**, former Reader in History at the University of Kent and more recently Honorary Senior Research Fellow has been appointed Honorary Professor at the University. He is the author of a number of books on Indian themes and other subjects, including *Music and the Spiritual: Composers and Politics in the 20th Century* and *Gandhi: Against the Tide*. Congratulations Antony!



## Gandhi-Chaplin Memorial Garden

On 22 September 1931 Mohandas Gandhi met Charlie Chaplin, a man he did not know until he was told who he was, at the home of Dr Katial in Newham, east London. Gandhi was visiting London for the Second Round Table Conference while the famous film star was promoting his latest film, City Lights. Gandhi had never seen a film but became interested when he heard that Chaplin had been brought up in the East End of London.

On 20 May 2015 the event was celebrated by the official opening of a garden commemorating the meeting 80 years earlier. The inauguration of the garden was attended by the granddaughter of Chaplin, actor Oona Chaplin.

The garden is a community creation and the Mayor of Newham said: “The aim of the garden is to provide residents with the opportunity to meet, share ideas, build friendships as well as inspire and influence the world”. Schoolchildren helped to design four mosaics referring to Gandhi and Chaplin now placed along the footpath.



Oona Chaplin, ‘Charlie Chaplin’, Kim Inam of Newham Council, William Rhind of the Gandhi Foundation at the opening event

# How can we learn from history to build a peaceful future ?

*The author of 'Learning the Lessons of War', published recently in the SGI Quarterly magazine, a Buddhist forum for peace, culture and education, Peter van den Dungen, has been at the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, UK, since 1976. A peace historian, he is founder and general coordinator of the International Network of Museums for Peace.*

Hegel's "We learn from history that we do not learn from history" is a well-known saying. Given the continuing prevalence of war, it can also be said that we certainly do not seem to learn from war, such a pervasive feature of history. However, Immanuel Kant, a great German philosopher and one of the most profound thinkers on war and peace, argued in the late 18th century that humankind learns from history and war, but only the hard way.

After the Napoleonic Wars (of which Kant witnessed the beginning), the main European powers instituted a 'concert' system to prevent a similar violent disruption of the established international order.

A century later, the horrors of World War I resulted in the creation of the League of Nations, the first organization of its kind, which was meant to limit the recourse to war. It also established agencies and the Permanent Court of International Justice in order to address issues that otherwise might result in war.

These new institutions proved too weak to prevent another world conflagration, which occurred a mere two decades after the first one. During World War II, plans were laid for a successor world organization. The onset of the Cold War, the antagonism between the main powers since then and inherent weaknesses have made the United Nations a rather ineffective instrument for keeping the peace. At the same time, it cannot be denied that it pioneered new techniques (not even foreseen in the Charter) to limit or prevent war, such as UN peacekeeping operations.

The end of World War II also saw the beginnings of a process of economic and social cooperation that resulted in a new political entity, the European Union. The need for this, as the surest way to abolish war and poverty, was urged by the organized peace movement in the 19th century, and similar ideas had been put forward in peace plans formulated by visionaries in earlier centuries.

World War II had other profound consequences, particularly for the two countries that were widely regarded as responsible for it – Germany and Japan. Apart from the terrible loss of civilian life and destruction of their cities, Germany was divided and Japan became the victim of the use of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Both countries adopted peace constitutions with self-denying ordinances regarding their military capabilities and intentions. But in other respects, Germany learned lessons

and pursued policies with the aim of achieving peace and reconciliation with its erstwhile adversaries, which have largely been lacking in Japan. They involve elements of apology, compensation, repair and restitution – expressed in moral, material and symbolical terms. Without such a deliberate and sincere strategy on the part of Germany, the project of European unification (of which the country has been the main pillar, together with France) would have been impossible.

If Japan has learned lessons from the atrocities and crimes committed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the same cannot be said of the world as a whole.

Arnold Toynbee writes (in his autobiography, *Experiences*) that he had been jolted out of the traditional accepting attitude to war by the slaughter of half of his friends in World War I. The same revulsion against war was widespread in its aftermath. He noted that such revulsion "ought [to] have been total and universal from the moment . . . the world entered the Atomic Age." He found that the American people, victorious in two world wars, had succumbed instead to militarism. Toynbee wrote this during the Vietnam War. Since then, the trauma of that war has been overshadowed by the events of 9/11, and militarism has become even more pervasive in American society.



Airing books containing the names of atomic bomb victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park

An appropriate, meaningful and fruitful remembrance would amount to the initiation of nothing less than a worldwide program of peace education as



part of the development of a comprehensive culture of peace. That peace is possible – indeed, that it is imperative for human survival – should be taught and learned in schools and universities and through peace museums.

In the modern world, museums are pre-eminent institutions, widely regarded as guardians of high culture that fulfil a major role in public education. It is telling that, whereas war and military museums are widespread (with hundreds of such museums in the US and UK alone) and often well-funded, peace museums are hard to find, with the singular exception of Japan. Likewise, war monuments abound, whereas antiwar and peace monuments are far less numerous. History textbooks have traditionally been dominated by war and its pretended heroes, with opponents of war and advocates of peace at best relegated to footnotes. The "invisibility" of peace in education, institutions and public life generally is a great hindrance to learning about peace and working toward it. In particular, museums honouring peacemakers of the past and present would inspire and encourage visitors to believe in peace and recognize their role in helping bring it about.

**In this way, perhaps, Hegel's sombre maxim may yet prove to be wrong.**

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## **Interfaith Peace Treaty**

Beneath is an Interfaith Peace Treaty composed by Dr Thomas Clough Daffern

We are gathered together as the intellectual and moral and spiritual authorities of our respective traditions, in order to affirm and swear in solemn oaths and affirmations that we hereby declare a lasting and inviolable Interfaith Peace Treaty between our respective traditions.

We, the followers of various religious and philosophical traditions, hereby declare a lasting peace treaty between our respective faith perspectives.

Whereas the world is suffering from inter-religious wars, including civil wars

Whereas for centuries mankind's social and intellectual and emotional life has been rendered insecure by wars and the constant threat of wars, which have often had a dimension of religious difference involved

Whereas mankind still suffers from the grave threat of nuclear war and omnicide, either deliberately launched or accidentally caused

Whereas as long as representatives of our respective faith traditions remain in violent conflict, we are not able as one humanity to devote the energy, wealth and ingenuity we require to solve the other global problems facing the planet (poverty, unemployment, social development, equality social justice, environmental conservation, sustainable development etc.)

Therefore we are resolved, as responsible and visionary intellectual and spiritual leaders of the various faith traditions of mankind, that we shall utter, affirm, declare and swear this permanent INTERFAITH PEACE TREATY

And in so doing we appeal to all the other responsible and enlightened leaders and followers of all the faith traditions of mankind to subscribe their signatures and oaths to this sacred text, and to follow it henceforth, now and forever.

***We therefore swear, affirm, declare and resolve, henceforth:***

1. That although we may differ in our respective cosmologies, worldviews, eschatologies and theologies, we agree that henceforth we will engage solely in non-violent academic, intellectual and philosophical debate about these differences.
2. That we will refrain from violent rhetoric, insulting and harmful words, verbal or physical abuse, against our fellows and colleagues and intellectual opposites, and seek simply to persuade through rhetoric, reason, truth and evidence.
3. That we will refrain from attacking, hurting, wounding, killing, kidnapping, injuring, torturing, or in any way applying physical violence to each other's followers, supporters and believers.
4. That if any members of our respective traditions continue to engage in such acts of physical or spiritual violence, we will expose them to the critiques of reason and love, and urge them to change their ways, and to subscribe also to this Interfaith Peace Treaty.
5. That we undertake to encourage serious study, research and analysis of our respective intellectual, cosmological and spiritual differences; we promise to make available books, libraries, academies and colleges where scholars can translate works between our respective traditions, and engage in comparative and interfaith philosophical teaching, seeking to find the common core truths of all traditions, faiths and belief systems on the planet.
6. That in undertaking interfaith scholarship, diplomacy and conferencing, we promise to engage politely, respectfully and without verbal, mental or physical violence, cruelty or rudeness.
7. That we also undertake to create a new era of interfaith cooperation in the world, in which religion no longer has a bad name as a source of social and civic extremism, creating zones of fear, intolerance and ignorance, in which personal security and intellectual freedom are absent, and we seek to advance instead *Zones Of Intellectual, Spiritual And Moral Development*, in which freedom of thought, courtesy, honesty and imagination can empower people to explore the most loving and wise aspects of their traditions.

To see all 56 clauses go to:

<https://interfaithpeacetreaty.wordpress.com>

# Jesus – Prophet of Peace

*Brian Cooper*

I understand Gandhi said he held Jesus of Nazareth in the highest regard, but had been put off becoming a Christian because of the Church's failure to abide by his teachings. The latter was surely so in respect of Jesus' message of peace and nonviolence, which I believe was a core part of his mission.

The Jewish scriptures as known to Jesus contained, amid much blood-soaked history, early prophetic aspirations for universal peace. The 8th century BCE prophet Isaiah's declaration that God willed a world without war, foreseeing nations beating their "swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" [Isaiah 2.4], was repeated by contemporary fellow-prophet Micah [4.3]. Isaiah further foretold Israel's future Messianic figure would be accorded the title of **Prince of Peace** [Isaiah 9.6].

In mid-1st century CE, the Gospeller Luke recorded that some 60 years earlier the birth of a special child in Bethlehem in Palestine was accompanied by an angelic host proclaiming "peace on earth". This child was Jesus, born around 4-6 BCE in the reign of Augustus, emperor who had established peace across the Roman Empire after long civil wars, and had dedicated in Rome a great temple to Eternal Peace. About the same time, the Gospeller Matthew recorded the child had grown up to become a radical Jewish rabbi and prophet, who once preached to crowds on a mountainside that peacemakers were so blessed in God's sight, they would be called God's children [Matthew 5.9]. Even more remarkably, Matthew and Luke agreed this same Jesus had proclaimed a radical new moral injunction and ethical message: "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" [Luke 6:27 & 35 and Matthew 5.44].

## **The Blessedness of Peacemakers and The Call to Love One's Enemies**

These sayings of Jesus are his foundation imperatives for peace: that God's kingdom here on earth is, at its heart, about creating and building peace, responding to enmity with love in action, and rejecting violence for the way of nonviolence. These foundation sayings have inspired peace witness and nonviolence down the ages – from Early Church pacifism and St Francis' peace missions to Martin Luther King's anti-racism crusade and anti-apartheid nonviolence – by many both within and outside the Christian Church.

*What was this 'peace' that Jesus was talking about ?* In personal terms, the peace of 'inner calm' a psychic and spiritual reality, can be assumed: but sparingly specified in the Gospels [eg John 14.27], this is affirmed by Paul in his Letters as a state of reconciliation with God [eg



Ephesians 2.14; Colossians 1.20]. In societal terms, Jesus inherited the ancient Jewish prophetic tradition of Isaiah and others, in which *peace* – ‘shalom’ – meant negatively the absence of war, violence and oppression, and positively all making for human wellbeing: right relationships of persons, families, communities, nations; social justice; general prosperity. ‘Shalom’ meant all that. In Matthew’s Beatitudes [Blesseds] [Matthew 5.1-12], the poor, those who mourn, the meek, those hungry for righteousness, and others, are all people desperately needing, and/or striving for that shalom, that wholeness of life. Accordingly, ‘peacemakers’ were the people doing those things. Jesus said such people were God’s special children.

All Jesus’ acts of love-in-action and compassion were peace-making acts: feeding the hungry, curing the blind and disabled, healing lepers and mentally disturbed people, and reaching out to prostitutes and hated tax collectors. All these people were the dispossessed of 1st century Jewish society, on its margins and social outcasts. By healing, including, embracing, and affirming such people, thereby giving them full human dignity, Jesus was ‘making peace’.

### **What about ‘Love your Enemies’ ?**

1st century Palestine Jews were a people under alien Roman occupation, but Jesus in no way supported or had sympathy for those advocating and active for violent resistance to Roman power – the Jewish nationalist Zealots. Indeed, Luke hints Jesus’ twelve disciples included at least one ex-Zealot [Luke 6.15 – “Simon, who was called the Zealot”] converted to Jesus’ way of peace. For his call to “love your enemies” certainly ruled out armed resistance, and was all about rejecting violence and breaking its cycle by reconciling actions. When a Roman centurion, officer of the occupying power, asked Jesus to heal his servant, he did so readily. Significantly, when Peter drew a sword to defend Jesus in Gethsemane when he was betrayed, Jesus rebuked him, declaring “Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword”.

### **Major incidents in Jesus’ final days clearly show his rejection of violence**

1. Immediately before entering Jerusalem for the final week of life, culminating in his death, Jesus paused, looked across the city, and wept over it, proclaiming: [Luke 19.41-44]

*Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace. But now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and dash you to the ground, you and your children, and they will not leave one stone upon another in Jerusalem – because you did not know the time of your visitation. [ie not recognise and accept Jesus’ message]. Jesus foresaw Jewish nationalists would one day rise against the Romans,*

with disastrous results: the Jewish Revolt of 66CE led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70CE. Jesus knew violence would lead to even worse violence.

2. Jesus entered Jerusalem as the Prince of Peace: Jesus deliberately staged the final phase of his march on Jerusalem – his entry into the city – to proclaim his peaceful kingship. He prearranged with supporters to have a young donkey for him; Jesus mounted it and rode into Jerusalem, symbolising his peaceful kingship and humility. Matthew records he consciously and deliberately fulfilled the words of the 6th century BCE prophet Zechariah:

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, Humble and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass. [Zechariah 9.9]*

Significantly, that passage continues with very specific divine rejection of war:

*I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow will be cut off; he will speak peace to the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river [Euphrates?] to the ends of the earth.*

Jesus staged his triumphant entry [celebrated by Christians as ‘Palm Sunday’] in that way because he wanted his fellow Jews to be absolutely clear about his peace message and peace challenge to them. The Jews cheering Jesus and strewing his way with palm branches, knew their scriptures and history, and would have called to mind the day over a century before [165BCE] when the Jewish hero-leader Judas Maccabbeus came into Jerusalem on a white war-horse with a conquering army, cheered by palm-waving crowds. Jesus’ symbolic action made very clear he was a very different leader, one who rejected militarism and violence.

3. The Last Passover: The Gospels tell of Jesus gathering his disciples in the Upper Room for their final Passover Meal before his betrayal. Passover was no purely religious ceremony. If it had been, the Romans would not have drafted in extra troops and put Jerusalem on high security alert under the governor, Pontius Pilate. They did that because Passover was both *a religious and political observance*, commemorating the liberation of the Jews from bondage in Egypt some 1500 years before. It was a liberation through violence – the ‘divine’ destruction of Pharaoh’s army in the red sea, after many plagues and killing of Egypt’s first-born [Exodus chapters 6-14].

At the Passover meal, the senior Jewish male in the family would tell the story – and proclaim Jewry’s coming liberation. In 1st century Palestine, that meant throwing off the Roman yoke by some great violent action – hence the

nervousness of the Roman authorities. Passover stood for the primitive understanding of the Israelite deity Yahweh as God of battles – the one who slaughtered the Egyptians and later gave the Israelites go-ahead to drive out or slaughter the inhabitants of Canaan – Amorites, Canaanites, and others – “they utterly destroyed them and their cities – there was not one survivor left” [Numbers 21] – to establish a “Promised Land’. It is the first recorded instance of genocide.

The Gospel accounts make clear Jesus would have none of that violent Passover narrative. He totally rejected the whole narrative of nationalistic remembrance of violent liberation, all pre-occupation with an inward looking past, all vengeful and violent understandings of God. Instead, he made that Last Passover meal a communal celebration of his future Kingdom of the things of peace.

### Conclusion

Jesus’ actions as much as his words make clear *his life was one of peace and for peace*. Tragically, the Christian Church and ‘Christian’ nations have not, since the 4th century, taken this absolutely seriously. Jesus’ peace ethic has generally been deemed too idealistic – or for some far-postponed future. Crusades, religious wars, and World War One – a civil war within Christian Europe – show the terrible price of this failure. Jesus still weeps over a world not knowing what makes for its peace.

Brian Cooper is a Baptist minister and Churches & Inter-faith Secretary of Uniting for Peace.

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## Book Reviews

**Badshah Khan: Islamic Peace Warrior** An investigative Poem by  
Heathcote Williams, Thin Man Press 2015 81 pp. £8.99 ISBN 978 0  
9930141 23

This long poem begins with the striking words:

*In the Qur’an’s retelling  
Of the story of Cain and Abel,  
Abel tells his murderous brother,  
“If you stretch your hand against me to slay me,  
“It is not for me to stretch my hand against you to slay you;  
For I do fear Allah.”* [Qur’an 5:28]

The author uses this “golden text of Islamic nonviolence” to introduce Abdul Ghaffar Khan (later known as Badshah Khan meaning ‘King of Kings’) to the reader. Khan was a contemporary of Gandhi, a colleague in the Indian National Congress, and one of the most committed to nonviolence throughout his long (97 years) life.

Heathcote Williams is a prolific writer of plays and polemical poetry many of which have been adapted for film and television. Some of his titles are *Whale Nation*, *Falling for a Dolphin* and *Autogeddon*. We are fortunate that he has now turned his talent to such a man as Ghaffar Khan.

Khan was a Pashtun born in 1890 in the North-West Frontier of British India and whose father was a wealthy landowner. The Pashtuns were noted for their warrior nature and caused the British a great deal of trouble. But Ghaffar Khan was different; although 6 foot 5 inches in height and strong in muscle, from an early age he was drawn to social reform among his people. From Gandhi's perspective Khan had the perfect background for a satyagrahi, someone who could have been a brave fighter but who renounced that path and became a peace warrior instead. Remarkably his inspiration came not from Hindu, Jain or Buddhist sources but from Islam.

The meaning of jihad has often been distorted as it is fundamentally about spiritual struggle within the individual and it is not primarily a military struggle, although historically it has often been the latter. Like many reformers he had his enemies, in his case the upholders of the traditional practices and beliefs of the Pashtun such as the inferior position of women, and meeting force with force. Khan encouraged the spread of education and taught the equality of women and men, and his popularity grew among his people. His other enemy was the British Raj: after the Amritsar Massacre in 1919 martial law was declared and he was arrested and put in chains. There were to be many periods of imprisonment throughout his life.

In 1929 Khan formed a nonviolent army called the Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) whose members took an oath of allegiance; women and non-Muslims could join. They wore a uniform of red which gave them the nickname Red Shirts, and they marched and drilled and had officers like conventional soldiers but without arms. They showed extraordinary courage in the face of the brutality of the British army and on one occasion the Garhwal Rifles mutinied as they could not continue firing on people who did not retaliate. The Khudai Khidmatgar grew in strength to around 100,000. Part of the pledge was:

With sincerity and faith, I offer my name for the Khudai Khidmatgar;  
I will sacrifice my wealth, comfort and self in the service of my nation  
And for the liberation of my country.

I shall help the oppressed against the oppressor.

I will always abide by the principle of nonviolence.

Sadly when independence was achieved it was accompanied by the splitting of India along religious lines, something that both Khan and Gandhi strongly opposed. Khan's struggles did not end with the creation of Pakistan of which he became a citizen. Following independence Khan asked for an autonomous province for the Pashtuns but was imprisoned along with many of the KK members. He spent much of the next 40 years in repeated imprisonments often in conditions worse than he endured under the British.

Almost three-quarters of the way through the poem it shifts its focus to another Empire that has blighted the land of Afghanistan, that of the American. Here it is certainly polemical. According to Williams (he cites sources) the American regimes of the 1970s onwards enticed the Russians to send troops to Afghanistan so that the Americans could then be seen as coming to Afghanistan's aid and a Russian 'Vietnam' would be created, ending with the Americans winning the Cold War. The Americans supplied to Afghanistan sophisticated weapons to be used against the Russian forces. Extreme Islamic groups now well-armed sprang up; the Pakistanis got worried, with good reason; and one irony is that the pro-American but ultra-conservative Islamic Saudi Arabia had supplied a good portion of the money needed to arm the Afghans; et cetera. It is mad enough to be true. Apparently in 2005 Donald Rumsfeld gave the reason for not releasing figures of the civilians killed by US forces as "Death has a tendency to encourage a depressing view of war"; and last year *The Guardian* reported that the non-release of photographs of Afghans tortured in American jails was because it was "bad for the nation's image".



During the communal riots and massacres that accompanied the partition of India ten thousand Khudai Khidmatgar intervened to protect Hindu and Sikh minorities in the city of Peshawar. Gandhi calmed the cities of Calcutta and Delhi virtually alone. As Williams says, Ghaffar Khan's worldview was breathtakingly simple: "I regard nonviolence as love and violence as hate". This powerful poem will hopefully be read by many. Badshah Khan is one of the great figures of the 20th century who needs to be much better known than he is and at this time is particularly relevant as a Muslim who advocated and lived a courageous nonviolent life.

*George Paxton*

**The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi for the Twenty-First Century**  
edited by Douglas Allen, New Delhi, Oxford University Press 2009, 263 pp.,  
Rs. 695 (ISBN-13: 978-0-19-569965-4, ISBN-10: 0-19-569965-3).

The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi for the Twenty-First Century has always been a discourse of wide debate. The editor of this book, Douglas Allen tries to shed light on this notion that Gandhi's philosophy transcends the barrier of time. It is relevant today as much as it was during his period. The editor has summarized views of the twelve different contributing authors on Gandhi. Gandhi's philosophy has been presented in a number of contexts ranging from his ideas on religion, violence, and satyagraha to his conception of a new society.

The first chapter focusses on Gandhi's ideas on religious tolerance and acceptance of inter-religious views. Bhikhu Parekh in his essay *Gandhi and Interreligious Dialogue* states that Gandhi always believed in pluralism, self-transformation and never accepted the idea of a particular dominant religion. The author wants to propagate this idea that Mahatma Gandhi believed in interaction between diverse religious ideas. In his view, there has been a supreme energy which governs the entire universe. This chapter of the book highlights this Gandhian stance that there is no religion which may talk 'absolute truth'. Therefore, there is a need for inter-religious dialogue.

Anthony Parel in *Bridging the Secular and the Spiritual* focusses on Gandhi's philosophy of spirituality among worldly affairs. The author asserts that Mahatma Gandhi connects the political and the economic pursuits with spirituality. In other words, the goal of *Moksha* may be achieved by associating with worldly affairs rather than renunciation of the world. The author visualizes the *Purusharthas* which consist of *Dharma* (religion/ethics), *Artha* (wealth/power), *Kama* (pleasure) and *Moksha* (spiritual liberation).

*Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy of Violence, Non-violence and Education* written by Douglas Allen stresses more on Gandhi's views of the vicious cycle of violence. He portrays Gandhi's viewpoint that violence is spread in many forms like economic, psychological, political, educational etc. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi, in Allen's views, focusses on freedom of oneself from never-ending cycles of violence through establishing causal determinants of a phenomenon. The author of this chapter states that Gandhi equates violence with exploitation.

Vinit Haksar in *Satyagraha and Right to Civil Disobedience* outlines the Gandhian philosophy of Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience in the context of Satyagraha. The author attempts to examine philosophical questions underlying Gandhi's appreciation for satyagraha. He shows major similarities in the views of Gandhi and John Rawls on Civil Disobedience. While John Rawls believes that civil disobedience is the final device to maintain stability of a just constitution, Gandhi relates it to non-cooperation with injustice.

In *Three 9/11s: Satyagraha or Terrorism*, Richard L Johnson continues the analysis of Satyagraha through examining three historical 9/11 illustrations of terrorism. He states that the Gandhian philosophy of Satyagraha is relevant in this



21<sup>st</sup> century which provides us alternatives to tackle the problem of terrorism. The author has narrated three major incidents in the world that occurred on September 11, such as the Satyagraha campaign launched in South Africa on September 11, 1906; US and Chilean imperialist terrorist campaign on September 11, 1973; and the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 in the US.

In *Non-violence as a Civic Virtue: Gandhi and Reformed Liberalism*, Nicholas F Gier formulates Gandhi's philosophy from a civic virtue point of view. He portrays Gandhian philosophy from post-modernist and liberal points of view. He states that Gandhi affirms freedom of the individual and advocates a liberal approach but desists from interpreting social atomism where radical individualism prevails. Gandhi thought that soldiers are fit to be good satyagrahis because their courage will be essential to non-violent revolution.

Fred Dallmayr in *Gandhi and Islam: A Heart-and-Mind Unity?* discusses heart-mind unity in order to unite a community fragmented into Hindus and Muslims. He makes Gandhi's ideas relevant to the need for inter-communal harmony in today's India. The author deals with Gandhi's engagement with the Muslim question. He states that Gandhi's commitment to inter-faith and inter-communal harmony was shared by prominent Muslim leaders.

In *Gandhi's Religious Ethics*, Joseph Prabhu highlights three key concepts, namely religion, ethics and politics. He asserts Gandhi's views on 'religious ethics' as well as 'ethical religion' through analysis of moksha and dharma. Gandhi's ethics are tied up with his religion. Gandhi's ethics has its own spiritual cast. Gandhiji disagrees with the conventional political idea that the ends justify the means. The author states that the ideal of moksha trumps the claims of dharma, the exact relation between two ideals.

Naresh Dadhich in *The Postmodern Discourse on Gandhi: Modernity and Truth* showcases his confrontation with modernity as well as his post-modern thinking of truth. Gandhi has been seen as a moral reformer. The author says that Gandhi's absorption of modern idioms and understanding of reality made some scholars comment that Gandhi borrowed far more from modernity. The author states that truth keeps a vital position in Gandhi's thought.

Makarand Paranjape in *The 'Sanatani' Mahatma: Rereading Gandhi Post-Hindutva* presents a creative and challenging analysis of a perpetual and enduring Gandhi. The author portrays how the Sanatani (orthodox) religious view is opposite to the Gandhian view. In validating Indian Hindu Sanatanism, Gandhi has interacted with pro-sanatani, non-sanatani and anti-sanatani views.

Margaret Chatterjee in *Gandhi's Conception of a New Society*, offers an explanation of the contemporary period of Gandhi and the modern period. She tries to showcase Gandhi's clarification about an ideal society based on reformulations and reconstructions. The author says that Gandhi was acutely aware of the ills of his own society. His conception of a new society was actually a search for a just social order. Margaret Chatterjee analyses distinctions between the state and society.

In *The Anatomy of Non-violent Revolution: A Comparative Analysis*, M.V Naidu contrasts Gandhi's revolution in India with the French revolution, the American revolution and the Russian revolution. The author focusses on achievements of a Gandhian approach in the first fifty years of independence and compares with that of other global revolutions. He says that the Gandhian revolution was a popular uprising which mobilized millions of people against the British Raj. He further states that the success of the Gandhian revolution inspired many revolutions around the world. One of its deep impacts was on the US where Martin Luther King, Jr. organized nonviolent revolution.

The overall ethos of this book states that the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi is relevant in various aspects even in the contemporary period.

*Neelmani Jaysawal*, Dept of Social Work, Visva-Bharati, Sriniketan, West Bengal

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## Tore Naerland – GF Peace Award recipient 2015

Tore has been travelling by bicycle promoting peace, particularly nuclear disarmament, since 1971. Being partially sighted he travels on a tandem with the support of others. *Bike for Peace* has co-operated with environmental organisations, political parties, and has supported churches, humanitarian organisations, sports organisations etc. all over the world, including 'Mayors for Peace'. It was formed in 1978 and over 100 countries have now been visited, particularly trying to bring people from different sides of conflicts together through the peaceful sport of cycling. Tore has met Nobel Prize winners, Pope Francis and the UN Secretary General, but especially ordinary people of many different nationalities to help bring about a more peaceful world. He will be coming to London later this year for the presentation.

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The Peace Agenda is the name of a campaign that Conscience launched in May. There are three aims.

1. To introduce a parliamentary Bill to coincide with the centenary of conscription in this country that will permit income tax payers in this country to object to their taxes being used to finance military expenditure and divert them to peacebuilding. They are looking to launch this in September.
2. To persuade people that development aid should be viewed as a form of security.
3. There should be a minister for peacebuilding so that this can have a champion in the heart of government.

## **Pilgrimage to Paris for Climate Change Conference**

This UN Conference takes place 30 November to 11 December 2015 and the Pilgrimage from London will reach Paris on Friday 27 November for events at the weekend. William Rhind will be going and if you are considering joining in contact William for more details at [william@gandhifoundation.org](mailto:william@gandhifoundation.org)

*Scientists for Global Responsibility* in their 'Summer Newsletter Extra' have examined by how much carbon dioxide emissions need to reduce to keep the earth's temperature to no more than a rise of 2 degrees, this being necessary to avoid the most severe effects of climate change. Because developing countries will increase emissions to raise standards of living the richer countries need to reduce carbon emissions faster than so far agreed. The EU and UK have agreed to 40% reductions by 2030 but Prof Kevin Anderson of the University of Manchester claims that a reduction of at least 80% is required. Clearly the politicians need to raise their sights. The focus should not be on new sources of fossil fuel (fracking?) but much less dependence on this energy source.

The intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that global spending to mitigate and adapt to climate change is around \$364 billion per year at present. In contrast, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) gives global military spending in 2013 as \$1.75 trillion, nearly five times as much. Action for disarmament would be a good idea.

## **Other events**

**Kingsley Hall Open Day** this year, being part of London Open House, is on Saturday 19 September from 11am. Tours of building from 12 noon. Café also.

### **International Day of Nonviolence & Gandhi's Birthday**

Friday 2 October 2015 at Tavistock Square, London from 11am -12noon

Organised by the India League and Indian High Commission

**The GF Interfaith Celebration in 2016** will be held in Kingsley Hall on 30 January with the theme of Interfaith and Animals. More details to follow.

### **The United Nations at 70 – What Prospects for Peace?**

Wednesday 23 September 2015 at 6.30pm

Hilton London Euston, 17-18 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0HT

Keynote speaker: Clare Short, former Secretary of State for International Development

*Uniting for Peace*, 14 Cavel Street, London E1 2HP;

Registration: Vijay Mehta – [vijay@vmpeace.org](mailto:vijay@vmpeace.org); 0207 791 1717

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## **Correction**

*The Gandhi Way* No.124 Summer 2015

There is a write up 'Prospects for Indian Democracy' by Vasant Kumar Bawa. There is a mistake in the para heading 'Comments by Political Analysts'. On page 10, it has been stated that Prakash Karat has been succeeded as General Secretary of the Communist Party (Marxist) by Praful Bidwai, who hails from Andhra Pradesh. This is incorrect information. Actually Prakash Karat has been succeeded by Seetharam Yachuri who hails from Orissa.

*M R Rajagopalan*, Managing Trustee, Gandhigram Trust, Gandhigram 624 302, Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu, India

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## The Gandhi Way

Articles, book reviews and letters of a specifically or broadly Gandhian nature will gladly be received by the Editor. Maximum length 2000 words.

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