

The Gandhi Way



Newsletter of the Gandhi Foundation

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Gandhi Foundation Summer Gathering 2016

Saturday 23 July - Saturday 30 July

Economics as if People Mattered

at St Christopher School, Barrington Road,
Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 3JZ

Further details and booking –

gandhisummerngathering@gmail.com or 01932 841135

or The Organisers, Summer Gathering, 2 Vale Court, Weybridge KT13 9NN

*See also the report of last year's Gathering in this issue
for what to expect during the week*

GF Annual Lecture 2016

will be given by the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams
on Saturday 1 October 2016

*Venue and topic have still be be confirmed
and will be given in the next issue*

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Gandhi – The Sanctity of Life and the Ethics of Diet

Graham Davey

Gandhi is best known for his commitment to social justice, harmony between religious communities and nonviolence but animal welfare was also a fundamental principle throughout his life and I aim to show how he practised it and the basis for his thinking. Agriculture and animal husbandry have suffered enormous changes in the years since Gandhi's death and I shall outline some of the reasons why I believe there is even greater need now to follow his example.

As a boy, Gandhi befriended animals and was influenced by his mother who was a devout Hindu and sympathetic to Jains. On leaving for England in 1888 he promised her he would continue to abstain from eating meat and this led him to become an active member of the London Vegetarian Society. His first public speech was on animal cruelty and he wrote articles defending vegetarianism while in London and, later, in South Africa. In the two ashrams he set up in South Africa he and other members wrestled with the problems of dealing with snakes and scorpions while maintaining the principle of ahimsa, nonviolence.

Soon after his return to India in 1915 he witnessed and was appalled by the mass slaughter of sheep at the temple of Kali in Calcutta. In 1917 he remained very weak after ending a fast and was persuaded that his vow of abstinence from animal products applied to cow's milk but not to goat's. On taking goat's milk, he soon recovered his strength but he bitterly regretted it and many years later described it as "the tragedy of my life". As a Hindu, Gandhi revered the cow, seeing it as a symbol for the entire non-human world. He regarded cow-protection as a means of purifying Hinduism.

The principles on which Gandhi based his vegetarianism went well beyond refusing to kill animals. He believed that all living creatures are infused with the divine and that there is consequently a spiritual unity between humans and all other species. There is therefore a need to cherish and respect all life forms.

As a Hindu, he believed in the law of karma that teaches that all our actions have consequences for good or ill. The principle of reincarnation requires us to care for all other life forms because they form, with humans, the complete web of life. It follows that any act against another life form has ethical repercussions.

Finally, for Gandhi, nonviolence was much more than the negation of violence. He expanded the concept into positive, outgoing compassion and concern for all that lives. The Golden Rule that we should treat others as we would wish them to treat us, he applied to all animals. He accepted that some violence is inevitable even with a vegan diet but it could be minimized by following his ashram rule of control of the palate i.e. eating, not for pleasure

but for survival. This is a rule we are mostly happy to ignore at the Gandhi Foundation Summer Gathering.

The present situation in agriculture is very different from what Gandhi was familiar with and I believe he would be deeply saddened by the current treatment of animals. There is, firstly, the cruelty involved in so-called sports. Bull-fighting in Spain and using migrating birds for target practice in some Southern European countries are fortunately not practised in this country but, on the other hand, forty million pheasants and partridges are mass-produced in Britain each year to satisfy a primitive urge some people have to kill. Cruelty in horse-racing is rarely publicised but over 400 horses are raced to death in Britain each year and several thousands more healthy thoroughbreds are killed for meat after being retired from racing rather than being allowed to live their normal life-span.

Gandhi was a forthright opponent of vivisection. He would have challenged its relevance for the promotion of human health and promoted other ways of investigating ailments that do not cause animal suffering. I believe he would have condemned experimenting on animals for the sake of testing cosmetics together with some other forms of research.

It is in the area of agriculture that the biggest changes have taken place during the last 68 years. Meat production has been industrialised with creatures treated as no more than units of production. With better transport facilities and no prospect of significant increase in demand, competition for market share has forced many traditional farmers out of business and factory farming has taken over.

Visually, the most obvious change is the transfer of animals from fields into large buildings. These carry high fixed costs so profits come from dense packing and fast breeding. Chickens are slaughtered after 42 days, half the time it would have taken in Gandhi's time. Annual throughput in the UK is 800 million meat chickens, 9 million pigs, 2.6 million cattle and many more uncounted animals that are sick, injured or unwanted.

The pressure to deliver meat and dairy products with profit but at a competitive price causes ill-health and suffering. Whereas a cow in its natural surroundings would produce about 1000 litres of milk a year, the modern dairy cow produces from 6000 to 12000 litres and spends almost its entire life pregnant or lactating until it is butchered because no longer profitable. The accelerated growth of chickens causes heart, lung and joint problems. Immediate access to food means that chickens have nothing to do for most of their time so resort to feather-pecking and, in extreme cases, cannibalism. To counteract this they are subject to beak-trimming which is painful and denies them the ability to forage in a natural way. Pigs may also be densely packed and their fast growth rate causes similar health problems. The tendency of frustrated animals to fight is tackled by docking the tails of pigs, trimming their teeth and castration, not necessarily with anaesthetic.

Sheep are generally less subject to the rigours of factory farming but European subsidies account for some 40% of a hill farmer's income so profits come from holding the maximum number of animals and providing the minimum care. Hormone treatment is used to force ewes to produce triplets and sometimes three 'crops' in two years. In the 1990s 22 million lambs were born annually in Britain of which some 4 million died within the first few days. The lactating 'childless' ewes are needed to feed the third lamb of triplets because the ewe has only two teats and there may be cruelty involved in forcing the foster ewe to accept a lamb that is not her own. As with pigs, docking of tails and castration are often done without anaesthetic.

The health problems resulting from driving animals to produce meat and milk far beyond their natural limit has been met by the widespread use of antibiotics for prevention of disease rather than cure. In the UK, 45% of all antibiotics used are administered to animals and while this is better than the 80% in the USA, it is four times as much as is used for animals in Denmark. Scientists are becoming increasingly aware that the overuse of antibiotics is tending to develop strains of bacteria which may attack humans and for which we will have no cure.

A form of cruelty that has attracted public attention in recent years is the large-scale transport of live animals. The principle of free movement of goods within the EU means that animals are often subjected to long distance travel by road and water which is a frightening experience for them in any circumstances. When the transport arrangements fail, provision for the animals will be expensive if not impossible and they suffer all the more. Over 3 million animals are exported alive out of the EU every year for slaughter, fattening or breeding and distances of up to 2500 miles have been noted e.g. from Ireland to Kazakhstan. The animals have no protection from EU legislation once they are outside Europe.

Other species used for food also suffer. It is estimated that there are over 300 million rabbits farmed in Europe for their meat and they have no welfare laws to protect them from cruelty. The fishing industry is criticised for over-fishing and its failure to avoid killing unwanted species. Farmed fish could be stunned before slaughter but often are not because of the cost.

Since Gandhi's time legislation has been introduced to stop the worst excesses but rules are difficult to enforce. Many farming practices are carried out in isolation and there are huge numbers of animals involved. Legislation for animal welfare is often opposed by the powerful agricultural lobby and weakened in its passage through Parliament. A Conservative government is particularly susceptible to pressure from farmers but all MPs are hesitant to support legislation which may increase the price of meat.

Those who advocate a meat-free diet point to the dangers of eating too much red and processed meat and claim a link with obesity, diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. The issue can also be related to the problem of feeding a growing world population, this being not so much the increasing number of human beings on the planet as the changing life-styles of billions

of people who aspire to a western diet and increase their consumption of meat. The use of fertile land then becomes much more inefficient because the area needed to provide forage for meat and dairy produce is 8 to 10 times the area of crops which would give humans a satisfactory diet if eaten directly. At present about a third of all cereal production goes to industrial livestock and it is estimated that this amount could feed 3 billion people. Food production is increasingly affected by climate change and scientists point to the harmful emission of methane associated with the meat industry.

I believe Gandhi would look on the present situation with sadness but also with hope, emphasising the progress that has been made in providing for animal welfare and working steadily to persuade legislators to pass appropriate laws and to strengthen the enforcement of existing ones. He was rarely, if ever, judgmental and his attitude to those who know the facts about the meat and dairy industries and continue to consume both would be to invite them to reconsider the principles by which they try to live and to make sure that they can reconcile these with their daily food.

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## Gandhi and His Diets

*George Paxton*

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is one of the most widely recognised vegetarians. But during his life his diet ranged from temporary meat-eating to veganism and fruitarianism.

Gandhi was brought up as a non-egg eating vegetarian within a Vaishnava Hindu family whose home state was Gujarat. However as a schoolboy he came under the influence of a Muslim boy called Sheik Mehtab who convinced him that Indians would have to eat meat if they were to expel the British from India. Europeans were stronger than Indians because they consumed meat, Mehta claimed. Mehtab was a meat eater and was strong in body whereas Gandhi was slightly built and was not athletic. So Mohan was persuaded and one day he ate some goat meat supplied by Mehtab. He did not enjoy it but saw it as a duty. The result was a nightmare in which he imagined the goat bleating within him. In spite of this he continued to eat meat from time to time, but another factor made him give up before long and that was the realisation that he was deceiving his parents and so the meat eating phase ended.

When he decided to go to Britain to train in law at the suggestion of some of his family, his mother was most unhappy as strict members of his caste were opposed to overseas travel. His very devout mother was only persuaded to give her blessing when he took a vow which included keeping a vegetarian diet.

In London Gandhi at first had great trouble getting a nutritious and filling meal until he went in search of a vegetarian restaurant which he had heard existed and came across one in Farringdon Street, not far from the Inner Temple where he had enrolled to study for the bar. In addition he found for sale in the restaurant Henry Salt's *A Plea for Vegetarianism* which he bought. This was probably shortly

after his 19th birthday in 1888 and immediately on reading it he became a convinced vegetarian. Soon he joined the new London Vegetarian Society and a little later became a member of its committee. So not only did he keep his vow but he became a proselytising vegetarian.

On his return home to India as a newly qualified but inexperienced barrister he had to concentrate on earning a living for his wife and two children (he and his wife Kasturba were married at age 13) and to pay back his brothers who had financed his studies. Immediate success in a legal career eluding him in India he took up a contract to work in South Africa for a year. Although unplanned, this was to become his home for some 20 years. At first settling in Durban he eventually set up practice in Johannesburg where he not only ate in the few vegetarian restaurants there but supported them financially from his now substantial income. Unfortunately some of them were financially unsuccessful and he lost a significant sum when one he had backed failed. Many of the Europeans who were to become his colleagues and fellow campaigners he met in these restaurants.

During his years in South Africa Gandhi experimented with his diet with two motivations: improving health and developing self-control or brahmacharya. At different times he cut out from his diet – salt, pulses, tea and other items. At one time he became an enthusiast for raw onions which he had heard purified the blood and so ate them every day. Other friends took this up too and jokingly formed themselves into The Amalgamated Society of Onion-Eaters. However after a while he cut out onions too.

It was in South Africa that Gandhi was first attracted to the idea of growing one's own food. He had known of Tolstoy's own working on the land even although he was born into the Russian aristocracy, and after reading Ruskin's *Unto This Last* on a train journey from Johannesburg to Durban he determined he would obtain a farm. So he bought 100 acres known as the Phoenix Settlement some 14 miles north of Durban. This was the first of several 'ashrams' established by Gandhi in his lifetime, principally two in South Africa and two in India. All residents were expected to take part in the manual labour and the ideal was self-sufficiency although this was not fully achieved in any of them. With his many commitments Gandhi himself was frequently away but his personality nevertheless shaped the character of the ashrams. The food was simple and vegetarian.

The second ashram, 21 miles from Johannesburg, was financed by his great friend Hermann Kallenbach, architect and colleague in the human rights struggle, who named it Tolstoy Farm. It was principally to house the families of satyagrahis who had been imprisoned and functioned only from 1910 to 1913. It was about 1,100 acres in size and had about a thousand fruit trees: oranges, peaches, apricots, figs, almonds and plums.

It was here that Gandhi was to make the biggest change in his diet. According to a leading Jain called Raychandbhai whom Gandhi met in India, milk stimulated passion. While Gandhi was considering whether to give up milk he read that cows and buffaloes were subjected to cruel treatment by their keepers. He discussed the matter with Kallenbach and to his surprise Kallenbach suggested they give up milk which they did there and then. This was in 1912 in the middle of the satyagraha campaign. Gandhi was 42. But Gandhi then went further and decided to live on a pure fruit diet.

No great change in Gandhi's diet took place for several years. He and Kasturba left South Africa in 1914 and after a short stay in London they arrived in India at the beginning of 1915. Three years later he fell seriously ill with dysentery and over the following weeks he became progressively weaker while doctors tried to persuade him to take meat broth or eggs or milk, all of which he refused. He, and those around him, began to despair of his recovery. One of his doctors said: "I cannot rebuild your body unless you take milk". Gandhi replied: "I have a vow against it". Gandhi continues in his Autobiography: 'I told him the whole history and the reasons behind my vow, how, since I had come to know that the cow and the buffalo were subjected to the process of *phooka*, I had conceived a strong disgust for milk. Moreover, I had always held that milk is not the natural diet of man. I had abjured its use altogether. Kasturbai was standing near my bed listening all the time to this conversation.'

'But surely you cannot have any objection to goat's milk then,' she interposed.

'The doctor too took up the strain. "If you will take goat's milk, it will be enough for me", he said.

'I succumbed.'

Gandhi started to drink goat's milk and he began to recover. It remained part of his diet for the rest of his life although he regarded it as a moral failure having to do so. He later changed to a diet of only five different items per day. This diet was very monotonous by most standards but Gandhi regarded eating as something whose purpose is to keep one alive and not for pleasure.

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1916 - Conscience - 2016

On 2 March 1916 conscription for military service was introduced in Britain but at the same time those eligible to serve could apply for exemption on grounds of conscience and might be granted this after appearing before a tribunal. Today we have no bodily conscription but there is a financial conscription – taxes levied pay for preparation and fighting of wars.

Conscience, formerly the Peace Tax Campaign, is planning a Taxes for Peace Bill to be read in Parliament on the centenary of the Military Service Act. It seeks the right to allow income tax payers who object on the basis of conscience, thought or religion to that part of their tax that at present is spent on financing arms, weapons, military activity and the Ministry of Defence to direct that part of their tax to be spent on non-military security – peaceful conflict prevention and resolution.

Strong support has been given by Natalie Bennett, Leader of the Green Party, and also Labour MPs, Ruth Cadbury, John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn (Gandhi Foundation Peace Award recipient 2013). In support of the Bill you can fill in a form obtainable from

Conscience, 1b Waterlow Road, London N19 5NJ

or on the website www.conscienceonline.org.uk

The Vegan Organic Network

Social Change, Social Values, Social Media and Nonviolence

David Graham

Members of The Vegan Organic Network (VON) support this declaration in our basic leaflet: Vegan organics is but one aspect of a dynamic culture. Our commitment is to peace and justice for people, animals and the environment in a sustainable balance. To achieve this we must change our lifestyles and introduce a philosophy which will continue to maintain our unique planet. We are motivated by our awareness of the great unease in society that we are moving towards a world that can no longer sustain life in the natural way it has always evolved. The Vegan Organic Network attempts to come to grips with politics and ethics in everyday living. We must work for a world where we speak and act with the poor, the oppressed, the dispossessed and for those who cannot speak.

Human and Animal Rights to Life

The Vegan Organic Network unambiguously embraces these Articles in relation to people **and** animals. Declaration of Human Rights states:

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life

No one shall be condemned to the death penalty, or executed. **big gap**

Article 4

No one shall be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment **another big gap**

Article 5

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude. No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour. Trafficking in human beings is prohibited.

The fundamental farming and growing principles of the Vegan Organic Network (VON) were established in 1996 by three peace and human rights activists and declared that the Network was a transitional movement that encompassed a dynamic culture based on nonviolence, cooperation, social justice and compassion. They identified that there was a growing awareness about climate change and the emissions from animals that contributed to this. This gave added impetus to the growing ethical and ecological vegan movement.

All three had a background in food and farming. They discussed the lack of knowledge amongst vegans that despite the vegan label on food, few are aware how food is grown. In order to rectify this we organise visits to stockfree organic farms where they can see crops grown by this system with the

farmer explaining and demonstrating how fertility is maintained without the use of animal manure or fish, blood and bone from slaughter-houses. VON further promotes this cruelty-free method by DVDs, leaflets, its journal *Growing Green International* and stands at vegan and green fairs and events like the annual party on Snowdon summit. There is an advisory panel that answers queries from commercial farmers and home growers.

Eight Billion Reasons for Supporting the Vegan Organic Network

About 43 million acres of land is used for farming in the UK. About one third is rough grazing (mainly moorland), a further third is permanent pasture. Rather more than another third (38%) is classed as arable. Of this more than 60% is used to feed animals – while a child dies every 3 seconds from malnutrition and 24 million people starve in the world. Defra (Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) state that we eat 9.8 million pigs, almost 15 million sheep, 18 million turkeys, 14 million ducks, 2.6 million cattle and over 945 million chickens. Add to this 4.5 billion fish and 2.5 billion shell fish, a total of over 8 billion animals are killed in the UK each year. You can choose not to participate in this destruction of life and the eco-system.



Vegan Farmers from Atlanta

The only clear and unequivocal ethical position is that of vegans who have ruled out rearing farm animals altogether. The Vegan Organic Network's Stockfree Organic Standards maintains soil fertility using vegetable compost, green manures, crop rotation, mulches, undersowing and methods that are sustainable and ecologically viable. Affiliated farms do not use herbicides, pesticides, artificial fertilisers, and animal manure and slaughterhouse by-products as used by most organic farmers.

To date, 2016, VON's Directory lists 100 commercial farmers and growers in Britain and abroad feeding several thousand people every week. This demonstrates that food can be grown in compliance with VON Standards and the values of nonviolence. Although organic is less cruel than factory farming, there simply is not enough land to rear animals by the conventional organic method. It is even more disastrous and irresponsible to argue for more land to be used so that animals can be kept non-intensively and fed organically. For example Tolhurst Organic Produce in Berkshire has been entirely Stockfree since 1997. It is the longest running organic horticultural Stockfree unit in the UK and probably in Europe. It was established to address difficulties that growers experience in sourcing suitable organic inputs to maintain viable and sustainable cropping. As part of the Vegan Organic Network, Iain Tolhurst together with Jenny Hall, a highly respected vegan organic farmer in Merseyside, designed the first set of Stockfree Organic Standards, currently managed by the Soil Association.

VON believes that we can act as a catalyst to bring about agricultural, cultural and social change. We can only achieve these aims with your help, and that of those groups and organisations with similar aims. Join us – work with us ! Much emphasis is now put upon a vegan diet as being healthy. VON considers that vegans are healthy not only because of their refusal to eat animals, but because this refusal is based upon an active philosophy that considers human and non-human life to be worthy of respect and the right to live in peace and security. Help us to move towards a world where animals are not sacrificed for human greed and ignorance, and where people themselves can understand that they need not be brutalised by this senseless slaughter. And fundamental to our actions is the power of nonviolence.

Nonviolent Theory and Action

A dramatic example of the influence of nonviolent theory is this: in June 2015, 17 young Angolan activists were charged with rebellion against the state for organising a reading of a US academic's book, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: a Conceptual Framework for Liberation*. The charges included acts of rebellion, and planning mass civil disobedience in the capital Luanda. Gene Sharp's book, published in 1993 and translated into at least 30 languages, has been an inspiration for activists around the world and has provided them with a strategy for the peaceful overthrow of repressive regimes.

Peaceful revolutions have been attempted over the years with varying degrees of success, as with the Arab Spring. Nonviolence poses a challenge to the state that cannot be defeated by killing, torture and the imprisoning of those protesting – because the oppression and injustice still remains. The belief, the philosophy that inspires courage, lives on and will re-emerge as it has done for centuries.

One would think that nonviolence would be embraced, or at least tolerated, by those in power because it does not pose a violent and subversive

threat and offers a road to possible conciliation. Consider Northern Ireland: in one's wildest dreams would we have ever imagined that Ian Paisley would sit down with, let alone shake hands with, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness ? Lion and lamb ! A political and nonviolent settlement of a bitter and bloody war. It was thought too that there would be a bloody war in South Africa in order to overcome apartheid, but Nelson Mandela's amazing spirit enabled a different path to unfold. And, while social and economic justice has yet to be achieved, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has laid a solid foundation for peace, and overcome much bitterness. Consider also the resilience and courage of Aung San Suu Kyi who was held in house arrest or in some form of detention for 15 years by a brutal Myanmar military regime. Like Gandhi she has become an international symbol of peaceful resistance in the face of oppression.

Furthermore those not directly involved with nonviolent uprising, and who are the victims of poverty and injustice, provide moral and sympathetic support to the active resistance. This, over time, challenges those in power, and prefigures a change in how society functions. For the most powerful and dramatic change is when there is a shift, a challenge, to the ingrained and dominant culture, which is replaced by one that rejects violence and shapes how we think, how we live, how we respond to others and the world around us. This change is happening and in my opinion veganism, which encompasses human and animal rights, is a driving force for this change.

Social Media and Generational Change

Since VON was founded in 1996 many of those who had difficulty in making their voices heard have, through the internet, found nonviolence a powerful tool in the defence of both human and animal rights. There is nothing new in the concept and practice of nonviolent thought, theory and action that informed and informs what I have briefly described above. What is new is the social media that has expanded our reference group enormously – online communications and the resultant exchange of information and ideas. It appears that the solidarity we experience on anti-war, anti-poverty and for peace and justice demonstrations now reaches out not only across our country but across the world. The personal has become a political statement that is embraced by millions. What does it signify when a small organisation like VON organises a vegan event in Chorlton, where I live, and attracts over 2,400 visitors paying to attend ? What is the significance when events like these (some smaller, many bigger) are repeated all over the country ? Has social media enabled the development of a profound cultural change, encouraging more people to question violence and to discard the consumerism that is destroying the world ? This social media generation paid their £3 to overwhelmingly vote for a leader of the Labour Party, a vegetarian who said he would work for a kinder more compassionate world, and that he would never press the nuclear button.

Food and how we grow it is the basis for all life. Vegans have made a life enhancing choice that they will not kill, or have others kill for them, in order to live. A choice that has the potential to usher in the caring society we all strive for; but the first step must be to cherish and preserve the fertile earth. VON's work complements and extends the ideals propounded by Gene Sharp. We are, quite literally, sowing the seeds that will nurture and give hope to the upcoming generation in their struggle for a compassionate world. The principles that inform the farming and growing methods that we promote firmly place vegans as both evolutionary and revolutionary. For the vegan, whether revolutionary or evolutionary, the ends and the means are one.



VON welcomes membership from all those who are concerned with ethical food production and social justice. Membership subscriptions and donations help VON provide bursaries to students to work and study on a vegan organic farm and attend courses, also to make grants to farmers where there is special need. Membership forms available at:

www.veganorganic.net or membership@veganorganic.net

General enquiries: david.graham330@gmail.com, or: Anandavan, 58 High Lane, Chorlton, Manchester M21 9DZ.

VON members are currently helping refugees in Greece and Calais, and in Manchester they have organised vegan feasts and film show evenings for homeless people.

David Graham himself has a long history of involvement in all kinds of radical activity. Back in 1955 he spent a year in prison as a conscientious objector (conscription was then still in force). Soon after his spell in prison he hitch-hiked to India and worked with Vinoba Bhave's Land Reform movement, and with the Gandhian movement. Jane, his wife and VON co-founder, was also a guest in Holloway Women's Prison following her occupation of the American Embassy in protest at the war in Vietnam.



Gandhi Summer Gathering 2015, 25 July-1 August

Linnet Drury

Welcome to the Gandhi Foundation Summer Gathering, and welcome into a world of interesting and thought-provoking ideas, delicious homemade food, craft workshops, contributions, sharing and communal opportunity ! I always look forward to this event, from the inclusive talks to *shramdana*; cleaning and cooking for the community. I suppose *shramdana* is just chores, but it also is an opportunity to explore the beautiful buildings ! This year it was in a romantic abbey building with kitchen gardens, bee-hives, forests, and shady courtyards with panelled halls. Crafts were fun and profitable, ranging from painting, sowing, and calligraphy to stop-frame animation (featuring Gandhi himself!). Anyhow, nothing can reproduce the awe and wonder felt at the end of the Gathering's insightful talks.

A day at the GF Summer Gathering looks like this: firstly, early (optional!) yoga in a quiet room, then a buffet breakfast (maybe with yesterday's fresh bread rolls) before a quarter hour meditation with candles. After sharing information and hopes for the day we have a talk on the topic with a range of readers and activities, followed by *shramdana* (group chores – Gandhi style). After a homemade lunch, there is some free time before craft workshops take place with dinner, entertainment, parties and meditation provided after. Hopefully you fall asleep with the pleasant fulfilment Gandhi strived for !

This year the gathering took a difficult theme: *Gandhian values in the digital age*, but planned subthemes guided our sessions. On the first morning session we read Gandhi's own words condemning technology, but how Schumacher developed it into easier 'practical action'. The next day we looked at the evolution of the computer. I found this bit really interesting as I found out that computers were almost invented in 1837 by Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage, the next computer being made in 1940s ! The third session gave us some surprises – as the results of a technology questionnaire came in ! Most were expecting that the younger generations would have the most tech, but the fact was that those from 41-60yrs had and used computers most; followed by 21-40yrs. Could this be because those who have jobs use most technology, and could it explain the rise in higher professions and greater inequalities?

However, in the next session we learned about the internet and the maker movement in the USA and about how people have grown their own food and made their own crafts and clothes, selling them on the internet on sites such as *Etsy*. This was my favourite session and I felt inspired to join in. These were Gandhian practical principles that we could all practise. At the end of the session we concluded that even though technology was causing inequality within and between economies, it could have positive benefits inspiring people to take up their own craft.



Trudy Lewis &
Brian Parker



Shailendra, Ruth Drury,
Andrew Scott and Ivo Drury



William Rhind with the
Begum family

On the last full day we identified five social values and three personal values that Gandhi lived by and tried in small groups to answer the question, 'For each of these eight values, will it be more or less widely practised in thirty years' time ?' The answers showed a fair amount of agreement over those areas of life where improved information technology would be beneficial and those where it would be neutral or harmful. On the final morning we considered practical arrangements for the Summer Gathering and chose a theme for which the provisional title is Gandhian Economics, with special reference to alternative forms of ownership in business and industry.

And so ended a week where we could immerse ourselves into good principles, knowledge and fun crafts. We are all excited about the 2016 Gathering, where we hope we will all experience the excitement and opportunity again at the Gandhi Foundation Summer Gathering.



Some of the participants at the Summer Gathering 2015
at The Abbey, Sutton Courtenay

(Photos of The Summer Gathering by Jane Sill)

Gandhi Bashing: Why Some Indians Love to Hate Gandhi

Anupma Kaushik

Gandhi is greatly admired by some and detested by others says historian Ramchandra Guha.¹ Einstein had once said that “Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.” His prophesy has come true but in a negative sense as Gandhi bashing has become fashionable today. As director of the popular movie *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* Rajkumar Hirani says, Gandhi bashing was a fashion till I watched Attenborough's Gandhi.² The reason may be that some people feel powerful or get a high by criticizing great men and women. These are the people who do not have the will, vision and capacity to sacrifice their personal gains to a larger interest and think that if they cannot sacrifice their self interest then others too cannot do it. Such people always ask why Gandhi did not do this or he could have done that too. Such people today find it difficult to accept the fact that a selfless man, who strongly believed in his principles existed. Such people have stopped believing that selfless altruistic people can exist. They reject the idea of a man standing up for his principle in the toughest of situations. They convince themselves that Gandhi must have benefitted by doing this somehow and probably they are hearing only one side of the story. They are sure that people like Gandhi cannot exist in reality as they do not actually see many such souls in day to day lives and hence are ready to say and believe the worst about Gandhi. Moreover they themselves are guilty because they were weak when they had a choice between instant gratification and long term principles. When such people get the technology to air their views they can easily put their views on a public platform in the form of articles, books and also on social media. The problem is that they read a few lines and pages or hear someone say a few lines and start thinking that they know Gandhi and can make statements authoritatively. Some people also think that Gandhi bashing makes them look cool as this idea is contrary to mainstream thinking. They do not take time to read from authoritative sources and have a distorted image which they further propagate. Those who have read some authoritative work on Gandhi think that he was too serious and great. People do not realize that he was a normal principled person and who could not be expected to execute miracles like stopping the partition of India. As Dr Abhijat Joshi, writer of the popular movie *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* says: “it was important for us to dispel the myth about Gandhi being a sedate, ascetic person. We wanted to show his other side – witty, humorous, light-hearted and creative”.³

Another reason may be the misuse of his name and legacy by politicians in independent India. The politicians who came to power used his name to gather votes and then indulged in corrupt practices hence his name got tarnished too. The sectarian politicians and their supporters who thrive on sectarian support see every issue from a sectarian point of view. They have created or chosen their leaders or idols from a sectarian perspective. To

illustrate, Dalit leaders have Ambedkar as their icon and Dalit intellectuals, politicians and supporters will not hear a word against Ambedkar – but Gandhi was never a sectarian leader. He was a nationalist and no caste, region or religious group can claim him solely as their own hence he does not have supporters and defenders the way Ambedkar has his defenders. Moreover as the sectarian leaders and their supporters see Gandhi from a sectarian point of view only they always ask what Gandhi did for their group ? And since what Gandhi did for their group was not as per their expectations hence they can criticize Gandhi. People fail to understand that Gandhi was not a sectarian leader and took decisions and stands based on certain principles which is what made him the Mahatma.

There is another group of intellectuals who have realized that publications in the name of Gandhi sell and they sell even more if they are controversial, so find something sensational about Gandhi to sell. Such intellectuals do motivated research on Gandhi and publish it to make a name and some money. Maybe they also believe in their criticism of Gandhi.

In a democratic country like India freedom of speech and expression is guaranteed and it will be used by people according to their understanding of Gandhi and maybe it is too much to expect that everyone will understand or even try to understand Gandhi and invest time and energy in that task.

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### *Blessed are the Peacemakers*

Fr. John Dear, internationally known peace activist and writer, will be speaking on the Beatitudes on Thursday 31 March 2016 in Bloomsbury Baptist Church at 7pm.

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Bike for Peace

The Gandhi Foundation International Peace Award 2015

Graham Davey

Committee Room 2 in the House of Lords was crowded on 4 November 2015 for the presentation of the Peace Award to *Bike for Peace*, a Norwegian-based movement using cycling to promote the idea of a nuclear-free world.

The Gandhi Foundation president, Bikkhu Parekh, welcomed everyone and there was a special welcome for Godric Bader, the previous holder of the Award. Those who had nominated *Bike for Peace* paid tributes to its founder, Tore (pronounced Toray) Naerland, for his single-minded pursuit of a world without nuclear power or weapons.

Tore spoke briefly about his background and his charisma was expressed with one or two sweeping gestures which caused the statuette of Gandhi to be moved to a safer distance. He said that as a boy he had dreamt of being a top footballer but lost his sight and switched his admiration from sportsmen to people like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Aung San Suu Kyi and others, all of whom adopted the principle of nonviolence. Being blind had not prevented him from cycling the world with his message of rejecting nuclear weapons and their associated technology.



The main account of the work of Bike for Peace was given by its Vice-president, Frank Tomlinson. He said Tore had been very active in the struggle for human rights world-wide since 1971 and in 1976 he had extended his concern to equal rights for minority groups and people with disabilities. His commitment to promoting peace and understanding resulted in the first peace ride he organised in Northern Ireland in 1978. The following year he had cycled on a tandem round the world for the first time travelling from London to Rome, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hong Kong, Japan, coast to coast in the United States and then back to London. All the way he was meeting key people, speaking at meetings and visiting schools including schools for the blind. Meeting victims of the Hiroshima bomb in Japan committed him to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Since then, Bike for Peace had organised activities in 110 countries spreading peace, humanity and care of the environment. The approach has been to make as much contact as possible with ordinary people and to enthuse them to do all they can to achieve world peace. In 1988 Tore had led a peace boat trip from Norway to Poland with 360 participants until the boat was arrested outside Gdansk. In November 1989 he had spoken to an audience of 200,000 in Leipzig, East Germany, and the next year he had gone to Berlin to participate in the demolition of the Berlin Wall.

In January 1992, Tore and others had been the first West Europeans to visit the secret nuclear cities in Russia, among them Arzamas 16. As a result of this visit, in May 1992 a conference was held in Stavanger, Norway, devoted to these nuclear cities under the name "From nuclear weapons production to civil industry".

More cycle tours took place including another one round the world in 1995 which was notable for the experience of crossing the Gobi Desert in Mongolia. A tour in 1999 from Beijing to Bergen had Kazakhstan as one of its highlights because from 1949 to 1991, people there had experienced almost 500 nuclear bomb tests in the Semipalatinsk region. In 2011 Bike for Peace, together with local Kazakh authorities had organised a 30 day peace ride within the country.

Since 2006, Frank said, Tore has been very active for peace, democracy and human rights in Burma/Myanmar. The elected member of the parliament 1990 in Myanmar, Kyaw Thwin, encouraged him to work with the NLD party of the country. Tore had also had many meetings and conferences with Aung San Suu Kyi, who is an avid follower of Gandhi in her work. In 2014 Tore was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his work for peace and democracy in Burma/Myanmar.

Frank told us that from 2000 to 2014 Bike for Peace had organised 15 bicycle rides for peace and friendship in Vietnam, from Hue to Saigon. During these rides the participants had given their support and donations to orphanages, day-care centres, schools etc. One of the latest projects, "Around the World in 72 days" during spring 2014 had been run to support the campaign to abolish nuclear weapons within 2020. This project had been in

cooperation with Mayors for Peace which was founded in Hiroshima in 1982 and includes more than 6000 mayors worldwide who work to abolish nuclear weapons.

During the project the participants had met with Pope Francis in Rome and the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon in New York. In addition they organised around 200 meetings with mayors, local politicians, mass media, schools, peace organisations, bicycle organisations, members of parliament etc. in Norway, England, France, Italy, China, Japan and the United States.

Frank continued, the goal for Tore and for Bike for Peace continues to be making the world a peaceful place in which to live, a world without nuclear weapons, a world where the rich countries show solidarity with the Third World, a world where human rights are respected and further developed. The bicycle is a symbol of this goal as it is not harmful to the environment and is the means of transport for millions of poor people.

Bike for Peace believes that more of the 7.4 million people on the planet must tell world leaders that we demand to live in a world free from nuclear weapons and the danger of instant extermination whether by use or accident. It is now known that nuclear weapons kill and maim through lethal radiation the generations that follow an initial detonation. Bike for Peace appeals to every man and woman to do what they can, writing letters to newspapers and social media, attending peace marches and cycling with the message that all nuclear weapons must be eliminated. The organisation continues to ride together with ordinary people in the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi.

After the talk, a short film about Bike for Peace was shown and the audience was left with great admiration for Tore Naerland, for the way in which he had met challenges of body, mind and spirit and inspired so many others. Bike for Peace was a worthy recipient of the Award.

Martin Luther King's Timeless Vision

Michael Nagler

He came out against the war. Against all advice.

In his famous speech opposing the Vietnam War at New York's Riverside Church on April 4, 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King announced to the world his departure, or rather expansion, of his role as civil rights leader to that of a prophet warning "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world, my own government," that they had put themselves on a course "approaching spiritual death."

Just as Gandhi honed his nonviolence in South Africa and then felt that he was ready to carry the struggle into the heart of the empire, King here announced that he had enlarged his passion from those of his own race in one region of the country to the policies of that country itself. And just as Gandhi knew that his real target was larger still, that in offering "an ocular demonstration" of the power of

nonviolence he was really offering humanity a way out of its turmoil and suffering, I will argue that no less was true for King. In the Riverside speech he said:

“Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken.”

A recent commentator has pointed out that four things right now are degrading our image in the world: Donald Trump (and the fact that people take his candidacy seriously), our heavily armed—and sometimes shooting—presence in more than 100 sovereign nations, police abuses of power, and guns. Are they not all symptoms of the “madness” that lay, and still does, behind King’s use of the term to refer to the most glaring symptom of his day, the Vietnam War ?

The term “perennial philosophy” (from the older Latin version, *philosophia perennis*) was popularized by Aldous Huxley to refer to a perennial strand that runs through the theology, and later the worldview generally, of virtually all known civilizations. The term that’s most commonly used today, coined in 1978 by Thomas Berry, is the “New Story.” Somewhat misleading (since it’s far from new), but useful enough: this “story” holds that life is sacred, that we are put on this planet for a sublime purpose – namely to realize that sacredness and live up to it – toward which we are moving more or less consciously and more or less erratically. When a people loses sight of this high purpose it drifts off the path to that extent, and can veer towards the “spiritual death” of which King spoke.

Today in particular we have drifted dangerously far indeed, and because we have for the first time the raw power to destroy life on Planet Earth the return to perennial truth could not possibly be more urgent. King, like Gandhi, was fully aware that ultimately he was engaged in this very struggle. Let me cite just three elements of his vision that show this, starting from his own words:

- *We must rapidly begin the shift from a “thing-oriented” civilization to a “person oriented” civilization.* The rediscovery of the path is always a rediscovery of our selves, of our true nature. It means, among other things, a rediscovery that we have resources within us that make it quite unnecessary for anyone or any civilization to exploit the Earth – or one another.
- *I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be; and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.* Our true relationship to one another is not competition, but We need each other. The organizing principle of human life is neither uniformity nor separateness, but unity-in-diversity.
- *Man must evolve for all human conflict a method that rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love,* Nonviolence (aka love in action) is as at home in the ‘New Story’ as violence was in the one where we now find ourselves. I would go further: nonviolence is *essential* to the contemporary recovery of the perennial philosophy, as violence became inevitable when we drifted away from it.

It is because we did not follow King that far that we are losing ground even in the particular area where many did follow him, the delegitimization of racism. This

shows us exactly what we must do: learn and institutionalize nonviolence in its full bearing, including its setting in the worldview of connection and complementarity. Fortunately, this is happening, here and there, and slowly increasing. We do not have to invent it out of whole cloth; but we do have to get behind it with our individual drive and talents and together make it the contribution of our age.

*This appeared on **Transcend Media Service** on 25/1/16, an excellent weekly compilation of peace oriented articles. Michael Nagler is a Professor Emeritus at the University of California. Ω*

Bimal Prasad 1925-2015

The recent death of the doyen of Indian historians reminds readers of *The Gandhi Way* of the tremendous range of histories. A former Dean of the School of International Studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University, his numerous assignments within India and abroad included a period as President of the Gandhian Institute of Studies at Varanasi which was founded by Jayaprakash Narayan (1902-1979). The task he set himself in his book *Gandhi, Nehru and JP – Studies in Leadership*, was a unique one. His aim was to show that the three great leaders can be regarded as complementary to each other. It is a thesis to which he attached great importance – his favourite work. It is to his approach to Gandhi that the following lines are devoted.

The war was over and Bimal Prasad writes: “It was not his non-violence which was new, but the message of fearlessness and the call for non-violent action or struggle The essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth, and action allied to these, always keeping the welfare of the masses in view”. There were waves of struggle, with periods of rest and recuperation, grouping of forces. Timing was all-important in the ‘constructive programme’ carried on *pari passu* along with participation in the parliamentary programme. In other words the masses were receiving a political education. Gandhi’s sense of the ‘exigencies’ of situations was central to his organisational skill and his decision-making. He denied that he ‘created’ situations but said that he could “almost instinctively feel what is stirring in the heart of the masses”. The Congress was truly a national organisation and committed to vital social change.

A historian’s craft leads him to trace both continuity and change. Bimal Prasad shows how Gandhi looked ahead, envisioning what India’s relation to other countries could be when freedom came. In the months preceding his death Bimal Prasad was working on Nehru’s foreign policy, but he pointed out that it was actually Gandhi who initiated thinking in the pursuit of peace as a goal for self-governing India.

Gandhi paid close attention to the selection of leaders, taking account of their suitability for various assignments. Simplicity and readiness to suffer deprivation were essential, and Gandhi’s life style was a model. He gave young leaders every support. The masses could not come close to the Congress if they saw that leaders were seeking the limelight or retaining their wealth.

For JP, his message is his life. For Gandhi his life is his message. Can politics and ethics coexist? Gandhi’s life and thought provide an answer within the context of his times. It is a question which exercised Bimal Prasad’s mind and he wrestled valiantly with it throughout his life.

Margaret Chatterjee

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