

The Gandhi Way



Gandhi in London 1931, painted by Oswald Birley

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The Gandhi Foundation Ashram Experience 2018

(aka Summer Gathering)

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See also Page 14 for further details

New data protection rules

New tougher General Data Protection Rules are being introduced in May to place tighter controls on the gathering and use of people's personal information.

The Gandhi Foundation will continue to communicate to Gandhi Foundation Friends and send them *The Gandhi Way* in the usual way, as they are paid subscribers to the organisation.

We never share the personal details of any of our GF Friends outside of the organisation.

We are in the process of drafting a new data protection policy reaffirming this commitment to the privacy of our GF Friends and reflect any further requirements in the new data protection rules that are coming into force.

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Following in Some Famous Footsteps

Mary Holmes

I've aimed to describe here how Action Village India came into being with particular emphasis on the Gandhian link. There's more about the projects we support in India on our website www.actionvillageindia.org.uk.

Action Village India is a UK based charity which helps fund and support 6 partner organisations in India. When I've used the term 'partner' I mean the organisation and its leadership rather than a specific individual.

'The future depends on what you do today.' Readers of *The Gandhi Way* will I'm sure recognise Gandhi as the source of this quotation. It's the kind of idea that informs the Indian partner organisations that we, at Action Village India, support. These organisations are staffed by very experienced, practical people.

Changing lives

Our partners work in rural India in the Gandhian tradition of nonviolent action. Just as Gandhi himself suggested in his work on village life, they start with the poorest and most marginalised. For example women's self-help groups which are much more than simple savings schemes. These groups bring women together to talk about their problems and find solutions. Over the years women, whose voices used not to be heard outside their home, now feel able to speak out.

The organisation that became Action Village India (AVI) was started by a group of people who loved India and had worked there and wanted to have what was essentially an India interest group. Then they were asked to raise money for a project and the group decided to become a registered charity. That was 30 years ago. While fundraising has become an essential part of the work of AVI we still are a group with a huge interest in India and concern for people there.

Each of our original five long term partners was taken on because the partner was well known to one of AVI's original founders. Our aim has been to learn about the partners and provide support for their work in so far as we are able to raise the necessary funds. It is the partners who make the decisions about needs not people at AVI.

As mentioned earlier the partners all work in the Gandhian tradition but they are very different organisations ranging from a girls school and Gandhian community in Himachal Pradesh in the North of India, to the original

agricultural project we supported in Tamil Nadu in the South. Each is very much a local organisation seeking to meet local needs. These might be to find sustainable ways of earning a living, to support a particular marginalised community, or to improve help and access for disabled people. Local authorities and the police are not always on the side of the poor in rural India and our partners act as friends and mentors in lives where such support is often needed – and is invaluable.

Two of the partners, Lakshmi Ashram in Kausani and Kerala Gandhi Smarak Nidhi date back to the mid-1940s and the aftermath of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. Two others, NBJK in Jharkhand and ASSEFA in Tamil Nadu were both set up nearly 50 years ago to support the landless who had received land in the 1950s through the Bhoodan land reform movement, led by Vinobe Bhave, often seen as Gandhi's spiritual heir.

The partners have grown and developed during the last 30 years and are now able to respond to a wider variety of needs. Two aspects of their work AVI currently supports are agriculture and girls' education. Ensuring agriculture can provide a sustainable living so that rural people do not feel forced to leave the countryside for a precarious life on the edge of the city, is one current concern, while our partner in Bihar and Jharkhand has developed a scheme so that some of the poorest girls can stay on at secondary school rather than marrying at a very early age.



Ekta Parishad and land for the landless

Ekta Parishad (Unity Forum) is our sixth partner. Ekta is a grassroots people's movement, active across India, which wants to see the country's natural resources - especially land - distributed more fairly so that people can be self-reliant – just as Gandhi advocated. AVI started to support some of Ekta's work in 2001 and as with all our partners we have been proud to be associated with them.

Led until recently by the charismatic Rajagopal, Ekta Parishad followed quite literally in Gandhi's footsteps, organising marches to draw attention to the problems of land and landlessness. Poor people often don't own the land on

which they live so they have no security. Others own the land but the title deeds are missing. As visitors to India will know, it's sad to see whole families who lack the security of their own home living in railway stations or beside the road.

Rajagopal and Ekta Parishad organised a march of 25,000 people along a 300 kilometre route to Delhi in 2007. The Indian government promised land reform but was slow to make good on its promises. Another massive march in 2012 (picture below) was – wonderfully – able to get agreement with the government on many of the issues. Very importantly the decision was made that a small area of land should be made available for every homeless family on which they could build themselves a house. Also in rural areas families would receive an allocation of land so they could grow their own food and be more self-sufficient.



Watchers across the world were delighted. It was an amazing result though of course everyone knew there would be difficulties in getting the federal government and the states to implement the reforms called for and make land available. However progress was made, but then in 2014 the government changed and things became more difficult. Even the fact that plans for reform have been spelt out so clearly is good in itself, but in 2018 there is still a long way to go.

A changing world

This brings us to the world beyond the village. Yes 'Shining India' with its years of high economic growth, its new enlarged middle class and IT capabilities is a reality. However what is less often discussed is that some

700,000,000 people still live in villages, often in poverty and with very inadequate services. There is huge pressure on land for roads, factories and housing so the price of land goes up and people are tempted to sell up and try their luck in the city. Across the country jobs for the unskilled are disappearing fast. Prices are rising. So in spite of India's economic miracle around 45% of children under five in India were reported to be malnourished in 2017. What was a miracle for some has adversely affected the lives of others.

The world has changed enormously since Gandhi's death in 1948. How would he have approached modern India ? What would he have seen as the way forward ? I think he would still have started with the poorest and most marginalised and would still have wanted to ensure they could share in the country's resources including its land. But would an iPhone have replaced his spinning wheel or be used alongside it ? What do readers think ?

Learning and sharing what we've learnt

Initially AVI was run by volunteers but once we could afford to pay a salary Ivan Nutbrown became the AVI Co-ordinator. He was one of the original founders of the organisation and already knew all the partners. He has been a tower of strength throughout the 30 years of AVI's existence and helped us develop into a viable organisation through his knowledge and amazing network of contacts.

One of Ivan's excellent ideas was to get representatives from each of the six partners together every two years at a forum to share ideas and discuss problems and visit work being done by the partner hosting the forum. This proved very fruitful. For example one partner had received a grant to improve recognition and access to rights and benefits for people with disability. Another partner studied what was being done and decided to implement a similar scheme.

It's not just a partners' forum because a group of trustees and supporters also come for part of the time and can learn more about the work in India. This means trustees are better able to explain to donors how funds are used and the difference that support can make. All trustees and supporters travel at their own expense.

AVI has an office in Dalston and we are always delighted to welcome people to our events, for example when we have visitors from India who talk about the projects. It's an inspiration to hear Rajagopal. Every year we raise money

with a walk around the beautiful lake at Virginia Water – on 7 July this year. Come and join us.

A major AVI supported activity is the Madras Café which provides delicious Indian food at the WOMAD music festival. Last year brilliant volunteers raised over £16,000 for AVI. There's an excellent Café cookery book too if you'd like to try out the recipes we use.

I am hoping that this year 2018 AVI will do more to link up with other groups such as the Gandhi Foundation and Jeevika when there is so much we could learn from each other and share. Of course we all have constraints on our time but speaking personally I always come away feeling strengthened after spending time with like-minded people.

Mary Holmes is a Friend of the Gandhi Foundation.

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### **Namaste, Gandhiji**

Poem by Leonard Dabydeen

Footprints on the sands of time  
glow with birthmark  
each glittering step  
unshaken and challenging  
not by yielding to temptation  
but thirst for truth  
for the awakening of men  
for soul-searching  
in glimpses of the Transvaal  
for monsoon moments  
in vestibules of maharajas  
turnstiles in South Africa  
under a mango tree in India  
ricocheting in global rumbles  
for peace and non-violence  
and as the wind whispers  
in a stormy weather  
where wars create bedrocks  
for sleepless journeys  
I clasp my hands  
in solemn gesture  
as if it were the beginning  
of the end  
namaste, Gandhiji.

## THE GANDHI PEACE CENTRE

The Balaji Temple Campus, Sandwell & Dudley  
*John Rowley*

On 11<sup>th</sup> April, I went to see this newly-built and extraordinary Gandhi Peace Centre for the second time. Felix Padel came with me. We were there on Bhikhu Parekh's behalf. We were met by Deepak Naik, Director, and Jyoti Behen, Treasurer. Dr Ratnam, Chairman, gave us a brief introduction but then had to leave.

The proposal to build a Hindu Temple was first made in 1986. The 23 acres they now own was eventually bought in 1994; it is a reclaimed rubbish tip ! Four other sites had been tried before but there was such strong opposition from local communities that their politicians refused planning permission. This was only given after the Trustees had been granted Millennium Community funding through the



local Development Corporation. Construction started in 2000 on the Community Hall. There are now huge and wonderful Temples to Ganesh, Shiva and others at the centre of the campus. They receive some fifty thousand visitors a year, including about five thousand children.

Surrounding these near their boundary are seven large, grass-covered mounds. Rowan Williams blessed the one dedicated to Christianity and Lord Bilimoria inaugurated the one to Zoroastrianism. The others are dedicated to Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Judaism and Daoism. The plan is that each Faith will contribute a suitable structure. At the moment, there is only one which the Anglicans built and is



designed for large meetings, not worship. If The Gandhi Peace Centre is a success, the other Faiths may well be encouraged to make their contribution.

The vision is of visitors walking around the campus on a brief 'interfaith pilgrimage', as it were. They can see and begin to appreciate icons and symbols, they can observe rituals and hear music and prayers, they can meet practitioners for a chat who will introduce them to their sacred texts. There is much to do before that becomes possible.

The Gandhi Peace Centre was first proposed by the previous Chairman, Mr Rao, who said that "Gandhi's thoughts and actions are still of great significance today and, if we sincerely desire a society based on peaceful dialogue and coexistence, we should practice what he taught."

In 2016, The Birla Foundation decided to fund his vision. They designed and built this very elegant structure. As you can see, it is cylindrical, made of concrete and pale brick, has two floors and is set against a wooded hill behind. Birla's photograph collection, a library and classrooms will be on the ground and a huge, well-lit meeting space available above.

Deepak Naik and the Trustees are now preparing an Action Plan for the first 3 to 5 years after the inauguration this coming October. The strategy is to be both pro-active amongst the local communities [Out-reach] and to organise programmes and events that will encourage them to visit [In-reach].

The Peace Centre will be an independent organisation with its own elected officials.

Readers are welcome to visit the campus now. I shall keep you up to date about the arrangements for the Inauguration.

**John Rowley** is a long term Trustee of the Gandhi Foundation.

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## **Some Events**

Sat 23 June 33rd *Annual Multifaith Pilgrimage for Peace*, London organised by Westminster Interfaith; Tel 020 7931 6028; [www.westminsterinterfaith.org.uk](http://www.westminsterinterfaith.org.uk)

Mon August 6th *Hiroshima Day* at Tavistock Square (12-1) organised by London Region CND.

Thurs August 9th *Nagasaki Day Peace Walk* from from Westminster Cathedral to the London Peace Pagoda followed by Lantern-floating Ceremony at sunset.

Tues October 2nd *Gandhi's birthday* at Tavistock square (11-12) organised by the High Commission of India and the India League.

# The Pleasure of Pigeons !

## Geoffrey Thomas

If our sense of right and wrong had not become blunt, we would recognise that animals had rights, no less than men.

M K Gandhi *Harijan* 13/4/35

I do believe that all God's creatures have the right to live as much as we have.

M K Gandhi *Harijan* 19/1/37

Being a registered blind person with a total sight loss, I have always found nature highly enjoyable. The sounds and atmosphere of wildlife around me captures my attention and makes me feel calmer. When you cannot see, sounds become much more important in creating a picture in the mind of surroundings and can help to build a real sense of place. My connection to nature is often added to by a sighted person's description of what they see but I cannot hear.



For instance, a beautiful grey squirrel silently sitting in a tree would be completely unknown to me without the help of another's description. Birds are so noticeable though as they sing and announce their presence from dawn to dusk each day. Even the owls call at night letting me know they are living their lives around me.

In my garden, the pigeons have added so much to my pleasure as they have begun to fly to me for treats. They land on my lap and arms and sometimes even onto my head. I can hear them coming closer as they are one of the few birds which have squeaky wings as they fly ! They have become friends and each bird has its own personality and character. I can easily recognise regular visitors by their behaviour. One has more scratchy feet from the others as he climbs up my leg to sit on my lap for a few seeds or peanuts. Another plays with my fingers, another allows me to feel his beak and some

like me to stroke them, or tickle their necks and under their wings, when they stay for a while after feeding.

One magic moment happened when a racing pigeon visited me one day, landing more gently than the others on my arm. This bird was clearly used to being handled and nestled against my chest when taking some food. I felt this sleeker, more muscular, bird and noticed four rings, two on each leg. Then, after eating and staying a short while for a preen, away it flew on its homeward flight. A true privilege to meet this bird on a sunny afternoon amongst my regulars !

It amazes me that wild pigeons will allow me so much contact and visit me without any fear and it makes me very happy. I now have a clear picture in my mind's eye of these wonderful, beautiful, birds with their soft feathers, clawed feet, mobile necks and gentle beaks. The way they come to see me is really special and I appreciate the time we spend together so much. These moments should be treasured in our busy lives and you too might benefit from a little time spent with these pleasurable pigeons – why not give it a try ?



Photographs by Geoffrey's wife Jane, a GF Friend.  
Many of her beautiful and diverse photos can be seen on [janeincolour.com](http://janeincolour.com)



# Nine-Elevens Distinguished

*Ramnarine Sahadeo*

Teacher: *Who can tell me what happened on nine eleven ?*

Student: *The one from the East or the West. Remember Mark Twain (quoting Kipling) said that "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet" .*

Many of us who sat in our living rooms and watched in disbelief as the events of September 11, 2001 unfolded were left with the belief that humankind will forever be involved in internecine conflict. Mention nine-eleven today and our thoughts rush to the image of the twin towers in New York crumbling and taking with them the lives of thousands of innocent people from various religions, races and nationalities. The world has not been the same since that infamous date in 2001. However, lest we associate all nine-elevens with division, hate, destruction, and cowardice, we should be reminded of similar dates in history which are famous examples of unity, love, hope, and courage. Yes, we must fight injustice wherever it occurs but we can do so by peaceful means without destruction of property and loss of precious lives.



This article hopes to distinguish 2001 from two other nine-elevens in the hope that mankind will not permanently associate the date with negative events. I am sure that further research will disclose more evidence of goodness on that same date but this article will restrict itself to the philosophy and practice that originated from the culture that will forever be known as the Empire of the Spirit, the Vedic Saraswati Civilization.

Peculiarly enough the first event also took place on American soil and also had a lasting impact on humankind. On **September 11, 1893** North America was first introduced to the unifying potential of the universal message of Bhagvad-Gita. It was on that day that the dynamic **Swami Vivekananda** first addressed The Parliament of Religions in Chicago and planted the seeds of a philosophy of love, peace and unity, desired by the vast majority of humankind. The delegates gave him a standing ovation when he addressed them as "Sisters and Brothers of America".

He left an indelible impression with his words:





“It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of the mother of religions, and I thank you in the name of millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects...”

Vivekananda (wearing turban) speaking at the convention

... “The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is itself a vindication, a declaration to the world, of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita:

*Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him;*

*All men struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me.*

Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often with human blood, destroyed civilizations, and caused whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time has come; and I fervently hope, that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.”

Although the 2001 nine-eleven and the events thereafter demonstrate that we have not seen the death-knell envisioned by this eloquent, spiritual icon this does not mean that the philosophy he espoused has lost its relevance. Humankind still has to learn and practice it for these universal teachings remain the elusive but ultimate goal for all civilized nations with basic laws respecting fundamental freedoms.

Today the landscape of most major cities in Canada, USA, and Europe are dotted with numerous awe inspiring Hindu temples which will hopefully help in spreading the message of love and peace. However, there is great concern that materialism, ignorance, short sightedness and the thirst for immediate

gratification may cause many to depart from the wisdom and spiritual values that are the very foundation of the Vedic Saraswati civilization.

Another nine-eleven worth repeating took place in South Africa that also originated from the philosophy of nonviolence repeatedly expounded in the Gita. On **September 11, 1906** (a nine-eleven of peaceful protest) Gandhi adopted the first mass protest meeting involving the concept of **Satyagraha** to oppose the passage of the law compelling registration of the colony's Indian population. The next 7 years of struggle resulted in all forms of nonviolent protests, and eventually the public outcry over the harsh treatment of the peaceful protestors caused General Jan Christian Smuts to compromise with Gandhi. As the concept of Satyagraha matured it became more and more refined and was the main weapon in the struggle for Indian Independence. It became known as the moral equivalent of war.

Injustice is not new to the world and too many find justification for it as it benefits one individual or group over others. However, as Mahatma Gandhi stated "Truth and Justice" will in the end replace all the despots and dictators but not by methods of mass destruction. If the results are going to be sustained over a long period of time, the change must be brought about by peaceful disobedience and non-cooperation with evil.

Albert Einstein said about Gandhi that the generations to come will hardly believe that one of flesh and blood actually walked on this earth. That time is already upon us and therefore we must revisit his spirit, his teachings "my life is my message" and distribute throughout the globe the source of his inspiration, the Bhagavad-Gita.

It is the Duty of all who feel that the thoughts, words, and deeds of this humble man can still make a significant contribution to our lives and the societies in which we live to promote his life and its message.

Ramji can be contacted at [ramjihindu@rogers.com](mailto:ramjihindu@rogers.com)

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### **The Gandhi Ashram Experience, Letchworth 21-28 July 2018**

External speakers during the week will include **Duncan McNair** who heads *Save The Asian Elephant*. He will talk about their campaign to end terrible cruelty to elephants that work in India's tourist trade.

Also **Ruhul Abdin**, who amongst many other Gandhi inspired projects, runs the *Kutkut Mental Health* campaign in Bangladesh. He will talk about mental health similarities and contrasts in Bangladesh and the UK.

As an innovation we shall be holding the Gandhi Foundation's AGM on an afternoon during the week. Δ



In 2008, the United Nations [said](#) that \$30 billion per year could end hunger on earth, as reported in the [New York Times](#), [Los Angeles Times](#), and many other outlets. The Food and Agriculture Organization has not updated that figure since 2008, and has recently told us that such figures do not require much updating. In a separate [report](#), most recently published in 2015, the same organization provides a figure of \$265 billion as the cost per year for 15 years to permanently eliminate extreme poverty, which would eliminate starvation and malnutrition — a broader project than just preventing starvation one year at a time. The FAO's spokesperson informed us in an email: "I think it would be incorrect to compare the two figures as the 265 billion has been calculated taking into consideration a number of initiatives including social protection cash transfers aimed at extracting people from extreme poverty and not just hunger."

In 2017, the annual Pentagon base budget, plus war budget, plus nuclear weapons in the Department of Energy, plus Homeland Security and other military spending totaled well over [\\$1 trillion](#). This was prior to Congress boosting Pentagon spending by \$80 billion in the 2018 budget and passing major increases in nuclear weapons spending, Homeland Security, etc.

3% of \$1 trillion = \$30 billion.

So, 3% of U.S. military spending could end starvation on earth.

22% of \$1.2 trillion = \$265 billion.

So, 22% of U.S. military spending for 15 years could permanently end extreme poverty globally.

**World Beyond War** has been displaying posters like this with different messages in cities of the USA. Their website can be found at [www.worldbeyondwar.org](http://www.worldbeyondwar.org)

# Book Reviews

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## **A Global Security System: An Alternative to War** 2017 Edition

Published by World Beyond War

The many writers of this report believe that the historic end of war is now possible. The book is based on the work of many experts in peace studies and international relations.

That warfare is still with us is not, according to Hannah Arendt (in *On Violence*) a death wish of our species nor some instinct of aggression but “the simple fact that no substitute for this final arbiter in international affairs has yet appeared on the political scene”. This book lays out a plan for a global security system as a substitute for the traditional ‘final arbiter’.

The disadvantages of war are not difficult to describe: deaths, maiming, mental trauma, torturing, rape, disease, refugees, destruction of homes, schools and hospitals, cultural losses, waste of resources, eco-system destruction, and the effects which linger and lead to further wars.

We need a new concept of security. The current security dilemma has been described as “actions taken by one state to enhance its security will necessarily decrease the security of other states. By acting to defend itself a state may inadvertently provoke aggressive reactions from its rivals” (Levinger). We need security which is people centred and emphasises physical safety, economic and social well-being, respect for their dignity and worth as human beings, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

But no single approach will end war – a range of institutions are required as well as a mental reorientation. The creation of peace institutions began over a century ago with the International Court of Justice to adjudicate on interstate conflict but although there have been many organisations and treaties since much more is needed on that front. The International Criminal Court, established in 2002, should be strengthened. It is a court of last resort after a state party has been given the first opportunity to try alleged criminals. The United Nations General Assembly should be reformed, perhaps with a second chamber with the number of seats related to each country proportional to population and resolutions requiring passage by both chambers; and reform also of the Security Council with its five states holding a veto over resolutions.

International law consists of ad hoc treaties and there is no governing body or defined area of concern. Moreover, some major states do not recognise particular treaties and they need to be pressured to comply with them.

The authors list 30 steps that they believe should be taken – here are a few not already mentioned: a) a non-provocative defence posture should be taken by eliminating long-range weapons, overseas bases – particularly significant for USA with its approximately 800 bases around the world –



aircraft carriers and submarines, b) outlaw the arms trade – which weapons the seller has no control over after the weapons are delivered, c) eliminate nuclear weapons – the 2017 International Treaty is an encouraging development, d) each country develop a civilian-based defence force which would use non-cooperation with an invader, e) develop nonviolent international peacekeeping forces to go to areas of trouble.

A less direct matter but of great importance is a fairer and sustainable economic system which would remove some of the underlying causes of war. Control of oil and water resources can be a source of tension between states and high youth unemployment in developing countries can provide recruits for extremist groups. At present the global economy is administered, financed and regulated by three organisations – the World Trade Organisation, The International Monetary Fund and ‘The World Bank’. These however are dominated by the rich countries and their policies tend to favour ‘free trade’ which is more one-sided rather than free. Poor countries often get into debt and then ‘austerity plans’ are imposed which mean cuts in education, health and other social support. Agriculture too becomes more oriented to the wants of the rich countries and subsistence farmers get pushed out. The eco-systems tend to suffer too. There thus needs to be a shift from ‘free trade’ to fair trade brought about by a greater awareness of economic justice. The practical changes ensuing would improve the environment which would benefit everyone on the planet eventually; and the reduction in inequality between countries would reduce the likelihood of large scale immigration.

But as well as creating new structures and institutions we need to create a culture of peace, ie a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behaviour so that there is no need for violence. Although over the last two centuries there have been some terrible outbreaks of violence between states made all the more terrible due to technical developments, the period has also seen the development of peace movements and the creation of institutions to reduce the likelihood of war. Early in the 19th century individuals began to come together to work for peace, followed by organisations such as the League of Nations and the United Nations while the idea of international law emerged along with peacekeeping forces. Independently arose the idea of nonviolent action, developed especially by Gandhi and now developing further by others and applied increasingly in diverse circumstances. A large literature of peace is being built up although it is still more common for the history of warfare to be studied in our schools and universities than the history of peace.

Another factor that bears on war and peace is religion and while Britain is becoming more secular that is not true of many other countries. Unfortunately religious belief is not always a positive influence in society. We have become familiar with Islamic extremism, especially in the Middle East, but Christianity can be intolerant too such as in the USA, or Buddhism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, and sometimes Hinduism in India.

The authors look at the Just War theory that has been the general approach at least in Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The conditions laid down for this are however open to interpretation and in practice can lead to almost any war being justified. But things may be changing at least in the Catholic Church for a conference was held in 2015 hosted by the Vatican called 'Nonviolence and Just Peace: Contributing to the Catholic Understanding of and Commitment to Nonviolence' the conclusion of which was that the Just War doctrine should be abandoned. Since the Golden Rule is found, expressed in different ways, in all the major religions they should be a force for peace. Religious leaders have been among the most outstanding advocates and exemplars of peace in the 20th century – the Dalai Lama, Martin Luther King, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Abraham Heschel, Gandhi.

The authors conclude: "War is always a choice and it is always a bad choice. It is a choice that always leads to more war. It is not mandated in our genes or our human nature. It is not the only possible response to conflicts. Nonviolent action and resistance is a better choice because it defuses and helps resolve conflict. But the choice for nonviolence must not wait until conflict erupts. It must be built into society.... For peace to prevail, we must prepare equally far in advance for the better choice. If you want peace, prepare for peace."

This is an outstanding publication produced by the American based organisation World Beyond War. They also have an online course Study War No More at [GlobalSecurity.WorldBeyondWar.org](http://GlobalSecurity.WorldBeyondWar.org)

*George Paxton*

**Political Tribes** Amy Chua Bloomsbury £20 pp.293 ISBN:978-1-4088-8157-6

### **Exclusive Tribes and Inclusive Faith**

An inter-faith worker much experienced in the Middle East once told me: "You can only be effective in those societies if you understand and work with people's tribe. For most people that is their primary allegiance – stronger and more important than national identity". Yale professor Amy Chua would certainly endorse that: her book *Political Tribes* argues most people have an instinctive desire to belong to a group, for such gives its members a sense of belonging, social solidarity, and personal meaning within a collective identity.

Such may be innocent enough but becomes dangerous when defined over against 'the other' – from the realm of international relations when competing nationalisms lead to conflict, to the misuse of sport when enthusiasm for one side turns to violence against the other, as in football hooliganism or Celtic versus Rangers sectarianism. Chua sees US policy makers' naive failures to understand tribal mentalities as key factors in US foreign policy disasters. Gross ignorance about Iraq's Shia-Sunni faith divisions was a major cause of post-invasion catastrophe; not grasping the

Taliban is a national resistance of Pashtun tribes explains much about US continuing failure to achieve peace in Afghanistan. By contrast, imperial Britain studied closely its subject peoples' tribal cultures – and used its findings to enhance its 'divide and rule' policies.

Chua's analysis, primarily reflecting America's ongoing cultural-political malaise, is overall too pessimistic; many people today belong to a range of loose affiliation and information networks rather than exclusive tribal entities. Current emphasis on inclusiveness militates against the latter; belonging to several groups – political, religious, sport, interest, online – does not constitute exclusive tribalism. Populist movements eg. Front National in France, Alternative for Germany, are dangerously tribal and exclusive, but also highly volatile, as the collapse of UKIP clearly shows.

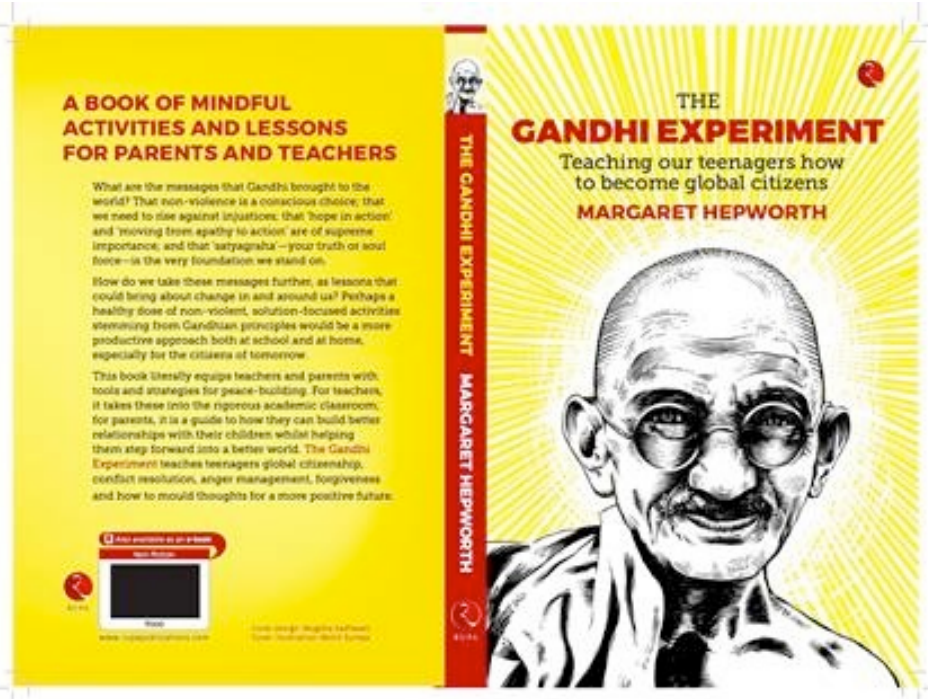
Focusing on America, Chua sees its trumpeted success as melting-pot of immigrant races compromised by lack of official recognition of ethnic tribal identities: resultant culture wars are now tearing America apart. Is religion part of this tribal maelstrom ? White Protestantism's historic majority is declining, from challenges including tribal faith sub-cultures, such as the weird 'narco-saint' cults of Our Lady of the Holy Death and Jesus Malverde. These embrace millions of Mexican-American drug users and ex-addicts – “a group affiliation responsive to their sense of exclusion”. Prosperity Gospel, an unorthodox form of Christianity preaching being rich is divine, is another challenge. With thirty mega-churches, celebrity TV preachers and pro-Trump sympathies, it offers millions of marginalised Americans “hope, direction, a community of similarly situated peers – and a more dignified self-image”.

Apart from such exotic examples, religion as tribalism is little discussed by Chua. This is a pity, for faith entities exemplify both best and worst in tribalism – from conflict to reconciliation in Northern Ireland, and broadly from ignorance and suspicion between faiths to deeper mutual understanding, ecumenism and inter-faith encounter. Religions give their adherents core features of the tribe – belonging, solidarity and meaning – yet can transcend self-imposed limits and rejection of 'the other', because of their intrinsic universalism. The major faiths (and some New Religious Movements) have followers worldwide; such global faith fellowship both proclaims and is prophetic of the essential unity of all humanity under the Divine. Christianity's classic statement – “The Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man” – may now seem somewhat dated, but its message is perennial, that the global family is called by the Divine to dwell in peaceful fellowship and spiritual harmony. Embracing this exalted vision overcomes all exclusive tribalism.

*The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens. Let not a man glory in this that he loves his country. Let him rather glory in this that he loves his kind.*     Baha'u'llah                      **Brian Cooper** (Co-Ordinator, Uniting for Peace)

The GF has received the following notice of a book from **Margaret Hepworth** which we hope to review in the next issue of *The Gandhi Way*:

I am writing to you as the founder of the social enterprise, The Gandhi Experiment, based in Melbourne, Australia. My workshops and forums teaching global citizenship, nonviolence as a conscious choice, and that 'change begins with me', have been taken across schools in Australia, India, Pakistan and Indonesia.



I want to let you know that I have now published a book: ***The Gandhi Experiment – Teaching our teenagers how to become global citizens***. The book was written with the purpose of bringing the essence of Gandhi's teachings into a modern day context; of finding ways to really unravel hate and fear, for young people (indeed anyone) today.

The book has successfully brought these lessons into classrooms and forums. Whilst written for teachers and parents, I have had students emailing me to let me know the impact it has had when they have personally read the book for themselves and more recently, a counsellor explaining how she used the lessons to aid her in a family conflict situation. It has also been endorsed by Rajmohan Gandhi, Gandhi's grandson.

You can order *The Gandhi Experiment – Teaching our teenagers how to become global citizens* through Rupa publishers [sales@rupapublications.com](mailto:sales@rupapublications.com) ISBN 978 81 291 4770 7 Of course, it is also available through [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk) and local bookstores.

*"A much needed text to return the world to its roots: peace education... these activities and ideas are pivoted towards building a future built on the roots of sustainable peace."* Kirthi Jayakumar Author, Lawyer, Peace activist.

[www.thegandhiexperiment.com](http://www.thegandhiexperiment.com)





**Glocalisation**, Gandhi in the Modern Era, a painting by Gireesan Vadakkencherry, Secretary of the Gandhi Peace Fellowship, Kerala. Gandhi's role in nation making has been forgotten in the era of globalisation.  
[buddhasilent@yahoo.co.in](mailto:buddhasilent@yahoo.co.in)

# Enlightenment and Social Hope

In his 1784 essay on the nature of Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant declared: “Enlightenment is liberation from self-imposed immaturity.” He also noted that, if I may be so bold as to paraphrase: “We live in an age of enlightenment, but we do not yet live in an enlightened age.” Kant’s observations ought to give us pause. They are worth pondering. They are as relevant today as they were in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. To reflect upon them with the seriousness they deserve, we might begin by noting that one hundred years later, another German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, said of the same Prussian country in which Kant wrote his revolutionary *Critique of Pure Reason*: “This nation has made itself stupid on purpose.”

Nietzsche’s observation applies to America today. So does the maxim by George Santayana: “Those who don’t learn from history are condemned to repeat it.” Let us then pause a moment to reflect upon the possibility – indeed, the necessity – of what Richard Oxenberg calls “heart-centered rationality.” Heart-centered rationality is a way of referring to The Golden Rule, revived by Martin Buber in the Kantian-based ethics of his book *I and Thou*. Kant and Buber argue for the innate dignity of every person; a dignity worthy of respect. In order, then, to put an end to what the post-Kantian philosopher Hegel called “the slaughter-bench of history,” we need an ethical, educational, and cultural revolution; one in which cooperation has primacy over competition, and which embraces what the Dalai Lama calls “a common religion of kindness.”

Accordingly, we must recognize that our collective survival now depends upon a global commitment to what might best be called The Enlightenment Project. This, of course, returns us to Kant’s definition of enlightenment, which I would now like to elaborate with reference to other major figures in the history of philosophy and the pursuit social justice. We might begin by noting that during America’s wars on Puerto Rico and the Philippines, Mark Twain declared: “America’s flag should be a skull-and-crossbones.” And when Mahatma Gandhi was asked what he thought of Western civilization, he replied: “I think it would be a good idea.”

Liberation from self-imposed immaturity is liberation from social conditioning. Liberation from social conditioning is escape from Plato’s cave. Escape from Plato’s cave involves appreciation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s tragic dictum that “man is born free, but is everywhere in chains” – what Eric Fromm calls “chains of illusion.”

To break the chains of illusion is to become what Albert Camus calls a “lucid rebel.” A lucid rebel engages in Promethean protest against the vast

ignorance that Buddha recognized as the primary cause of suffering. Ignorance, Buddha said, manifests primarily as greed, hatred, craving, clinging, and delusion. To overcome such ignorance is to embrace the point of Karl Marx's observation: "The demand to abandon illusions about our condition is a demand to abandon the conditions which require illusion."

For example, the primary function of the U.S. military is make the world safe for the Fortune 500. The primary function of U.S. education is to ignore. To awaken people to these nefarious facts, Martin Luther King declared: "Wealth, poverty, racism, and war – these four always go together." Hence the only way to move from an age of enlightenment to an enlightened age is to recognize that "these four" vices are inextricably entwined with pervasive political sophistry, a lapdog mainstream news media, and jingoistic pseudo-history in what Gore Vidal calls "The United States of Amnesia." Equally relevant here is Mark Twain's observation: "It is easier to fool people than to convince them they are being fooled." Also worth noting is that Emerson, Twain, and William James were members of The Anti-Imperialism League. The point is this: The U.S. will never be the country it ought to be, and will never be at peace – either at home or abroad – until it eliminates Presidential pardons, throws corporate and Presidential criminals in prison, conscientiously repents for America's Indochina Holocaust (euphemistically called The Vietnam War), dismantles the American empire (the largest and most globally devastating in world history), and transfers most of the Pentagon budget to an educational system in which schools are gardens and palaces of self-actualization, enlightenment, and cooperative creative evolution.

Standing before Michelangelo's statue of David, the poet Rilke said: "I must change my life." A Catholic bishop, after reading the Dalai Lama's autobiography, said in his New York Times book review: "We must change our lives." Hence we might conclude that Kant implicitly points to a national motto that ought to read: "Treat all people always as ends in themselves, rather than merely as means" to personal gain. Hence also – as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Kant would applaud – we should revise America's Pledge of Allegiance to read: "I pledge allegiance to the planet and to all the people and creatures on her; one ecosystem, with nourishment and beauty for all."

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***Stephan Schindler***

This article originally appeared on Transcend Media Service on 16 April 2018.



# The Gandhi Foundation

The Foundation exists to spread knowledge and understanding of the life and work of Mohandas K Gandhi (1869-1948). Our most important aim is to demonstrate the continuing relevance of his insights and actions for all of us.



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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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