

The Gandhi Way



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Annual Gandhi Foundation Lecture 2019

by **Gopalkrishna Gandhi**

diplomat and writer, grandson of M K Gandhi

Atonement in Politics: Perspectives from Mahatma Gandhi

The Nehru Centre, 8 South Audley Street, Mayfair, London W1K 1HF

Friday 31 May 6.30pm - 8.15pm

More information on the Lecture and the Lecturer on page 23

Gandhi Ashram Experience 2019

Saturday 27 July - Sat 3 August 2019

Thinking about change: Thoughts are the seeds of action

at St Christopher School, Letchworth

To request an application form:

email gandhisummerngathering@gmail.com or William@Gandhifoundation.org

or 33 The Crescent, Wimbledon, London SW19 8AW

Gandhi 150th Anniversary Conference

Global Co-operation House (Brahma Kumari's HQ)

65-69 Pounds Lane, Willesden, London NW10 2HH

Provisionally 27th or 28th September 2019

The Conference will include the postponed 2018 GF Peace Award to Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples, and a representative of Mines & Communities as well as other topics

Further details in next issue

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Human Rights and Interfaith Harmony

Gandhi Foundation Multifaith Celebration 2019

Jane Sill

The annual commemoration of Gandhi Ji's assassination took place this year on 9th February as part of Interfaith Harmony Week and also to mark the 70th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the 150th anniversary of Gandhi Ji's birth year. The evening was organised by Saara Majid on behalf of the Gandhi Foundation who also performed with Sacred Sounds. The setting was the beautiful Unitarian Church in Golders Green. The church has been lovingly maintained with many original features, such as a beautiful painted pastoral scene depicting a deer park which had been created especially for the space, as had the organ, nestled neatly in an alcove beside. This formed the backdrop to a rich offering of prayers, thoughts and music from many traditions which was enjoyed by a large audience of all ages and backgrounds.



The evening began with the familiar chanting of Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo, by Reverend Nagase from the London Peace Pagoda who was accompanied by Sister Marutasan, the nun in charge of Milton Keynes' Peace Pagoda.

There followed an address by Rev Feargus O'Connor, Minister in charge of Golders Green Unitarian Church, who spoke on 'The Golden Rule, Compassion and World Religions'. Drawing on The Charter for Compassion Rev O'Connor described how the principle of compassion is the Golden Rule that lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, 'calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves'. As the Charter states, "Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect". This ethic inspired spiritual teachers from all faiths, such as Confucius, Buddha, Rabbi Hillel, St Francis of Assisi, the Sikh gurus and many others. Rev O'Connor then went on to quote from a selection, including Gandhi Ji: "Our innermost prayer should be that a Hindu should be a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim, a Christian a better Christian. I broaden my Hinduism by loving other religions than my own ... All religions are true". This sentiment is echoed by HH Dalai Lama: "My fundamental belief is that all religious traditions have the same potential to make better human beings, good human beings, sensible human beings, compassionate human beings". Rev O'Connor concluded by hoping that each of us "pledge ourselves to ... build that ideal human commonwealth which alone can bring about the happiness and wellbeing of all".



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Left - Rev Feargus O'Connor (Golders Green Unitarians), 3rd L - Mark Hoda (Chair, Gandhi Foundation), Far Right - Saara Majid with members of Sacred Sounds

There followed a series of beautiful musical and poetical offerings, including a Hebrew Prayer, 'Ma Na'vu, al heharim'; a Medieval Christian Hymn, 'Balulalow'; a Bosnian Sufi Blessing, 'Salla Aleijke', and a selection of poems by Dennis Evans, a member of the Church and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. They offered deceptively light hearted, closely observed vignettes of everyday life:

Bubbles for Peace

There were Reverends and Rockers

Housewives and children.

There were old friends and new friends,

Politicians, policemen.

There were Christians and Muslims,

Communists and Buddhists.

And banners, such banners,

Banners for peace.

There were dancers and drummers,

And children in pushchairs.

There were priests and our poets,

And grannies in wheelchairs.

There were students and stilt walkers,

And a brave paraplegic.

And a many with his toy gun,

Lit by his laughter,

Blowing bubbles, such bubbles.

Bubbles for Peace .

London Peace March, 15 February 2003.

After a short tea break which gave time for people to mix and chat, there was an address on the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights which celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2018. This was concluded by an appeal on behalf of Medical Aid for Palestinians towards which all proceeds from the evening were donated. There followed a beautiful 13th century Iranian song, 'Bani Adam or Sons of Adam' by Saadi which described all our lives as limbs of the same body. Mark Hoda, Chair of the Gandhi Foundation, spoke on Gandhi Ji's emphasis on duty rather than 'rights'. This was echoed by Saara Majid who reflected on how each of us can help make the standard of universal human rights a reality in society, by quoting from Eleanor Roosevelt: "Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small

places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”

Beautiful renditions of Bikhodee, ‘Without Self’ by Rumi, Gandhi Ji’s Salt March song, ‘Ragupati raghava ...’ and ‘Bread & Roses’, a protest song from the American Women’s Movement (1912), brought to an end an evening celebrating the richness and diversity of our common humanity.

Jane Sill is a member of the Gandhi Foundation’s executive committee.

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## Other Events

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|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wed 15 May  | International Conscientious Objector’s Day at Tavistock Square, London at 12 noon.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Sat 8 June  | Annual Multifaith Pilgrimage for Peace, London organised by Westminster Interfaith. Tel: 020 7931 6028.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Sat 22 June | 34th Annual Celebration of the London Peace Pagoda, Battersea Park 2pm. Tel: 020 7228 9620                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Tues 6 Aug  | Hiroshima Day – Tavistock Square 12 noon.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Thurs 9 Aug | Nagasaki Day – Peace Walk from Westminster Cathedral to the London Peace Pagoda followed by Lantern Lighting Ceremony at sunset.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Wed 2 Oct   | Gandhi’s 150th Birth Anniversary at Tavistock Square at 11am organised by the Indian High Commission and the India League.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Sun 20 Oct  | <b>Inspiring Indian Women – Dance for a Cause</b><br>A not for profit organisation based in London is putting on a dance performance in association with the notable choreographer Sandeep Saporikar at Mahatma Gandhi Hall, YMCA, Warren Street, London, 6-10pm, £15.<br><a href="http://www.inspiringwomen.org">www.inspiringwomen.org</a> |



## News

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It is four years since the Saudi-led coalition launched its first **airstrikes in Yemen**. During these four years 60,000 have been people killed by the conflict, and many more have died as a result of the humanitarian catastrophe that has ensued. Attacks have hit schools, hospitals, weddings, funerals, food supplies and a bus full of school children. The coalition is deploying UK made aircraft in combat missions, dropping UK-made bombs and firing UK-made missiles. The UK government has enabled the war with more than £5 billion of arms sales, military support and training.

Yet the Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said on 26 March 2019 that ending the UK's arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE would be "morally bankrupt". (Campaign Against the Arms Trade)

On 30 January 2019 members of the Hindu Mahasabha recreated the **murder of Mohandas Gandhi** in Aligarh during which they shouted 'Long Live Nathuram Godse' (Gandhi's assassin) and declared that they would repeat this enactment every year.

A few years ago the President of Congress Rahul Gandhi, son of Sonia and the late Rajiv Gandhi, stated that supporters of RSS (ideologically linked to the Mahasabha) had killed Gandhi which led to a case filed against Rahul with the demand that he apologise.

The leading force of Hindu nationalism today is the BJP, the party of Government led by Narendra Modi who praises Gandhi from time to time but is a strong promoter of Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) which often leads to discrimination against Muslims.

(*Why Recreating Gandhi Murder ?* by Ram Puniyani on [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu))

Spain's Supreme Court has upheld a **ban on the torture of bulls** during the Toro de la Vega festival. In 2016 the regional government outlawed the stabbing to death of bulls with darts and spears at the festival but the local council then appealed to the Supreme Court which has however rejected the appeal. (PETA UK)

The Royal College of Physicians decided in March after a poll of members that they would take a neutral stance on the issue of **assisted dying**, changing from opposition to it. The voting was 31.6% supportive of assisted dying (an increase since 2014), 43.4% against. The Royal College of Nursing already held a neutral position.

A majority of the British public support a change in the law to allow assistance to die. Every 8 days someone travels from Britain to Switzerland for an assisted death but this is not an option for most people as it costs around £10,000. Legalisation of assisted dying, an expression of compassion

and freedom of choice, is gradually spreading in parts of Europe, USA, Canada and Australia. (Dignity in Dying)

In Scotland in the 18 months to September 2018 almost 500,00 **emergency food parcels** were given out by food banks. In areas where Universal Credit had been introduced food bank use increased by 52%. Scottish ministers have promised to bring in a new income supplement for those on the lowest incomes but not till 2022. (Sabine Goodwin, Independent Food Aid Network)

According to scientists a single piece of **food waste**, like a banana skin, can be made to produce sufficient energy to charge a mobile phone twice over. Waste food put in an Anaerobic Digestion facility can be converted by micro-organisms to give off methane gas which can be used to generate electricity. (*The Herald* 25/4/19)

A recent UK parliamentary report on the **clothing industry** reveals that the manufacture of clothing produces more pollution than international aviation and shipping combined. Yet fashion clothes sold cheaply are often hardly worn before being discarded. In the UK 11 million items of clothing are thrown away weekly.

It takes around 2,000 gallons of water to make just one single pair of jeans ! This is equivalent to the amount of water the average person drinks over a period of seven years. World clothing production doubled between 2000 and 2014.

Delhi is notorious for its **air pollution** but there is hope for the future. Under the Paris Agreement India committed to 40% renewable energy on their grid by 2030. But four years later they look as if they can reach 60% renewable by 2027 due to the rapid expansion of solar energy production. (*The Herald* 7/4/19)

With **climate change** emerging as the greatest challenge of this era, energy transition becomes the core area of concern for all developed and developing nations. ‘India has set a target of 100 gigawatts (GW) of installed solar energy capacity by 2022. India has also announced plans to cancel 14GW coal plants. India is now committed to sell only electric cars by 2030. India is heading towards a leadership role in global climate change governance at G20 and COP23 Forums.’ (*Gandhi Marg* Vol 40 No 1 & 2, 2018)

**China is changing** – in unexpected ways. Five years ago, on March 4, 2014, China made a serious national decision. The 3,000 delegates to the National People’s Congress voted to reassert greater national control over development through conscious plans to reduce poverty, increase social programs and benefits, combat extreme pollution and build a sustainable environment.



This was a break from China's 35-year policy of stressing economic growth ahead of the environment and of health and social benefits for the working class. An article titled "Four years after declaring war on pollution, China is winning" ran in the March 12, 2018, New York Times: "To reach these targets, China prohibited new coal-fired power plants in the country's most polluted regions, including the Beijing area. Existing plants were told to reduce their emissions. If they didn't, coal was replaced with natural gas. Large cities, including Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, restricted the number of cars on the road. The country also reduced its iron- and steel-making capacity and shut down coal mines." ..... Other decisions in the war on pollution included the dramatic decision to stop or delay work on over 150 planned or under-construction coal plants. (Extracted from article by Sara Flounders 'Planning Can Save the Planet: China Chooses Renewables' in Workers World and republished in Transcend Media Service 29/419.)

In spite of its many imperfections the UK has been placed 15th (out of 156 countries) by the United Nations in its **World Happiness Report**. The top countries are all small north European – Finland (first), Denmark, Norway, Iceland, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, with New Zealand and Canada coming 8th and 9th. The lowest ranking were South Sudan, Central African Republic, Afghanistan. High taxation to provide good social services seems to be a factor in high satisfaction.

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The Life Style Movement

Founded in 1972, the Life Style Movement exists to encourage and enable people to live in a way that is less damaging to the planet on which we all depend. The founder, Horace Dammers, emphasised the connection between the affluence of some and the poverty of others and coined the slogan, "Live simply so all may simply live". The Movement publishes a newsletter, *Living Green*, three times a year containing articles and information about simple living, household tips, recipes etc and activities for children.

All supporters of the Gandhi Foundation are invited to the LSM annual conference which takes place from Friday 16th to Sunday 18th August at Minster Abbey, Church Street, Minster, Nr Ramsgate, Kent CT12 4HF. There is easy travel by train from London. The theme this year is '**Co-operatives – working together for change**'. Full board is provided for the weekend and the cost is £120 for a single room or £110 per person sharing a twin room.

For further information or to book a place, please contact Graham Davey, tel 0117 909 3491 or graham.davey29@yahoo.co.uk

Our Future World

by Leonard Dabydeen

*“In the end all men have to die. He who is born
cannot escape death.” ~ Mahatma Gandhi – Speech
at Prayer Meeting, New Delhi, January 15, 1948.*

They who live by their own chagrin, acquire
moth that spiral in their mind without peace;
fetch hate, animosity as desire
never to see our world a happy place.

Often times by foolish wit denigrate
our hopes and dreams far beyond squint of eye,
they criticize and also peculate
day by day they usher grandiose lie.

Step by step we massage Gandhian thoughts
and follow in faith a path righteous
ahimsa our kindled lamp against krauts
satyagraha our stand prestigious.

Walking in Mahatma’s footpath joyous
we build our future world so enormous.

Leonard Dabydeen is a Guyanese-Canadian Licensed Paralegal by the Law Society of Ontario (Retired) and a Commissioner of Oaths and Affidavits for Ontario. He is also a published author, freelance writer, poet and book reviewer in English literature. His books include *Watching You, A Collection of Tetractys Poems*, Exlibris Publishers (2012) and *Searching For You, A Collection of Tetractys and Fibonacci Poems*, Exlibris Publishers (2015).

Can We Imagine Peace for Palestine ?

Richard Falk

While waiting without positive expectations for the Trump 'deal of the century' the Palestinian ordeal unfolds day by day. Many Israelis would like us to believe that the Palestinian struggle to achieve self-determination has been defeated, and that it is time to admit that Israel is the victor and Palestine the loser. Recent events paint a different picture. Every Friday since the end of March 2018 the Great March of Return has confronted Israel at the Gaza fence. Israel has responded with lethal force killing more than 250 Palestinians and injuring over 18,000, using grossly excessive force to deal with almost completely nonviolent demonstrations. The world allows these weekly atrocities to go without any concerted adverse reaction and the UN is awkwardly silent.

It would seem that there is a feeling in international circles that nothing much can be done to bring about a peaceful and just solution at this stage. Such a conclusion partially explains the various recent moves in the Arab world toward an acceptance of Israel as a legitimate state, which has included diplomatic normalization. Beyond these developments, Israel has joined with Saudi Arabia and the United States in a war mongering escalation of an unwarranted confrontation with Iran. In addition, Israel and Egypt are collaborating on security issues at the border and in the Sinai, as well as in developing off shore oil and gas projects.

All and all, this is a moment for stocktaking with respect to this conflict that has gone on for more than a century, and assessing what would be the best way forward.

A fundamental point is how peace might be made in a manner that realizes the fundamental right of the Palestinian people to achieve self-determination in a territorial space that was for centuries their own homeland. The prevailing assumption had been that a solution would be achieved by geopolitically framed negotiations between Israel and governmental representatives of the Palestinian people. The framing was entrusted to the United States, which itself insinuated a fatal flaw into the diplomatic process if the goal was to achieve a peaceful compromise that was fair to both sides. How could this happen if the stronger party had the unconditional backing of the geopolitical intermediary and the weaker party was not even clearly the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people ?

Additionally, this already flawed framework was further abused by subordinating the so-called peace process to Zionist expansionist goals, expressed by annexing Jerusalem, denying refugee rights of return, and

expanding unlawful settlements in occupied Palestine. Such a geopolitical framework, associated with the Oslo Framework of Principles, as adopted in 1993, has by now been widely discredited but not before Israel had used the past 25 years to achieve their expansionist goals, making the establishment of an independent Palestinian state a political impossibility, and putting the Palestinians in a far weaker position than when the Oslo approach was adopted.

Against this background, the perverse failure of the top down approach to a sustainable outcome has led to a public attitude of defeatism when it comes to achieving a peaceful compromise. The residual top down option is the coercive imposition of 'peace' by declaring an Israeli victory and a Palestinian defeat. In other words, if diplomacy fails, the winner/loser calculus of war is all that is left over.

Such thinking, although prevalent in elite circles, overlooks the historical agency of people, both those resisting injustice and those mobilized throughout the world in solidarity. These are the bottom-up kinds of political dynamics that changed the history of the last century. It was national mass movements that challenged successfully, although at heavy human costs, the unjust structures of colonialism and South African apartheid, and eventually prevailed despite military inferiority and geopolitical resistance. In other words, people had the superior historical agency despite their inferior capabilities on the battlefield and diplomatically. This populist potency is a reality with a potential to subvert the established order and for this reason is treated as irrelevant by mainstream thinking and policy planners.

It is precisely on the basis of this deconstruction of power and change that hope for a brighter Palestinian future lies. The strength of the Palestinian national movement is on the level of people as fortified by the moral consensus that Israeli apartheid colonialism is wrong, indeed a crime against humanity according to international criminal law [see Article 7 of the Rome Statute governing the International Criminal Court and the International Apartheid Convention of 1973 on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid] It is this bottom up process of struggle, spearheaded by Palestinian resistance and given leverage by global solidarity initiatives such as the BDS [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions] Campaign as it gains momentum and heightens pressure. Historical outcomes are never certain, but the flow of history has been against this Israeli/Zionist combination of colonial appropriation of Palestine and the apartheid structures relied upon to maintain the subjugation of the Palestinian people.

Against this background, some general propositions can be put forward.

The Two-State Solution Is Dead

For several years, at least since the de facto abandonment of the Oslo diplomacy in 2014, the two-state solution has not been seen as a viable political option. Yet it continues to be affirmed by many governments and at the UN. This is not because there is any belief that it might finally happen, but because every other outcome seemed either impossible or too horrible to contemplate. In other words, many leading political figures and opinion leaders held onto the two-state approach as an alternative to zero. This reflects an impoverishment of the political and moral imagination, only capable of conceiving a solution to conflict as deriving from top down approaches; bottom up approaches are not even considered.

It seems better to admit the defeat of two-state diplomacy and take account of the existing situation confronting Palestinians and Israelis so as to consider alternatives. To come to this point, it might be helpful to explain why the two-state solution has become so irrelevant. Above all, it seems evident that the Likud leadership of Israel never wanted an independent Palestinian state established. Netanyahu pledged during the 2014 presidential campaign in Israel that a Palestinian state would never come into existence as long as he was Israel's leader.

Perhaps, more fundamental, the settler movement has passed a point of no return. There are more than 600,000 Israeli settlers living in more than 130 settlements spread all over the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Settler leaders believe that the settlements have so changed the map of Israel to exclude any possibility of an independent Palestine, and their leaders now envisage the settler population growing to 2,000,000 to drive this point home.

True, the Palestinian Authority has long seemed ready to accept even a territorially abridged state, ceding sovereignty over the settlement blocs near the border, but insisting on its capital being in Jerusalem. A broad spectrum of Israeli political leaders agrees that the future of Jerusalem is non-negotiable, and that the city will remain forever unified under sole Israeli sovereignty and administration. Under these conditions it can be safely concluded that it is no longer plausible to consider seriously the two-state path to peace between the two peoples.

The Arab Accommodation Is Tenuous

Israel feels little pressure to seek a political compromise given present conditions. With Trump in the White House and Arab governments scrambling toward normalization and accommodation, Israeli leaders and public opinion seem ill-disposed to make concessions for the sake of peace. As such keeping the two-state non-solution alive as a Zombie solution is a way

to proceed with Israel's continuing efforts to expand the settlements while implementing its coercive version of a one-state solution.

There are strong reasons to feel that this Israeli confidence that the Palestinian demand for rights can be indefinitely ignored is premature and is likely to be undermined by events in the near future. For one thing, the Arab moves toward normalization are unstable as is the entire region. If there is a renewal of Arab uprisings, in the spirit of 2011, it is quite possible that support for Palestinian self-determination would surge to the top of the regional political agenda, stronger form than ever before. The Arab people, as distinct from the governments, continue to feel deep bonds of solidarity with their Palestinian brothers and sisters.

Beyond this, should Trump presidency be defeated in 2020, there is likely to be an Israeli reevaluation of their interests. Such a prospect is heightened by signs that Jewish unconditional support for Israel is dramatically weakening, including in the United States. Furthermore, the global solidarity movement supportive of the Palestinian national movement is spreading and growing. It is becoming more militant, engaging moderate global public opinion, and has the symbolic benefit of strong backing in South Africa, which sees the fight for Palestinian rights as analogous to their own anti-apartheid campaign.

What Next ?

Two conclusions emerge from this analysis: first, a continued reliance on the two-state diplomacy within a framework that relies on the United States as an intermediary or peace broker is now irrelevant and discredited. It is at this point only a distraction. Secondly, despite Israel's recent gains in acceptance within the Middle East and its one-sided support in Washington, the Palestinian national movement persists, and under certain conditions, will mount a threat to Israel's future.

In light of these conclusions, what is best to be done ? It would seem that only a democratic and secular single state could uphold self-determination for *both* peoples, holding out a promise of sustainable peace. It would need to be carefully envisioned and promoted with international safeguards along the path toward realization. It does not seem a practical possibility at present, but putting it forward as the only outcome that can be regarded as just avoids despair and holds out hopes for a humane peace when the time is right. Such an outcome would require a major modification of Israeli goals.

In such a binational situation, the newly created single state could offer homelands to Jews and Palestinians, while finding a name for the new state that is congenial to both peoples. Maybe this will never happen, but it the most sustainable vision of a peaceful future that responds to decades of

diplomatic failure, massive Palestinian suffering and abuse, and recognizes the moral authority and political potency of national resistance and global solidarity, a legislative victory by that unacknowledged Parliament of Humanity.

Richard Falk is a member of the [TRANSCEND Network](#), an international relations scholar, professor emeritus of international law at Princeton University, author, co-author or editor of 40 books, and a speaker and activist on world affairs. In 2008, the [United Nations Human Rights Council](#) (UNHRC) appointed Falk to a six-year term as a [United Nations Special Rapporteur](#) on “the situation of human rights in the [Palestinian territories](#) occupied since 1967.” Since 2002 he has lived in Santa Barbara, California, and taught at the local campus of the University of California in Global and International Studies, and since 2005 chaired the Board of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. His most recent book is *Achieving Human Rights* (2009).

This article originally appeared on Transcend Media Service (TMS) on 25 Feb 2019.

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## Reviews

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**Faiths Together for the Future:** The Story of the World Congress of Faiths and the growing global Interfaith Movement to heal the World, Marcus Braybrooke, Braybrooke Press 2019

Faiths uniting in public solidarity after a terrorist attack; engagement in dialogue and study for mutual understanding; holding a joint Holocaust Memorial event; proclaiming 'faiths united for world peace'; faiths cooperating to tackle community issues especially racial and religious discrimination, and hate incidents; taking part in Commonwealth Day events and other civic functions – such are among the many features of the Inter-Faith Movement in Britain today. Especially but not exclusively in major big multi-ethnic urban areas, inter-faith councils, faith centres and concerned individuals pursue cooperation between different faiths for the common good. Mid-20th century saw the Ecumenical Movement of Christian Churches deemed "the great new fact of our time"; the same could certainly be said now of the Inter-Faith Movement.

Initiator, exemplar and inspiration over many decades, the World Congress of Faiths (WCF) has played a very significant role, one today often unrecognised. Rev Marcus Braybrooke's latest book is essential reading both for those

already active in inter-faith, and for anyone wanting to understand its motivations and achievements to date. A retired Anglican priest with some fifty years devoted to inter-faith work, current WCF Joint-President and prolific author on religions and inter-faith, Braybrooke gives a comprehensive fact-packed survey, illumined by many uplifting quotes from faith leaders, of the British and wider global experience. (Despite its name, WCF is a British body with global contacts, not a world federation.) Yet he frankly records the suspicion and misunderstanding of Christian leaders in early decades.

Colonial officials' interest in non-Christian faiths they encountered (especially in India), Queen Victoria's 1858 declaration of 'respect for all religions', and 1924 London Religions of Empire Conference, confirm imperial roots of inter-faith and latter event as impulse for foundation of WCF in 1936, notably through the zeal of Sir Francis Younghusband (1873-1942). A parallel major inspiration were the 1893 and 1933 Chicago World Parliaments of Religions. Braybrooke rightly stresses Younghusband's key role in WCF and his lasting vision of cooperation of major faiths to build global fellowship and peace. Establishment figure – British Resident in Kashmir in 1906 and Knight Commander of the Star of India in 1917 – and mystic deeply affected by faith encounters in India and Tibet, his personal Anglicanism stressed Jesus' 'intense humanity'. Supremely, he urged religion as sure foundation for human unity and concord.

The 1936 World Congress in London, notable for lofty statements by Russian Christian philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev and eminent Hindu Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, launched WCF work to this day. Braybrooke fully chronicles its achievements and problems, noting slow advance in Churches as pre-1960s Christian thinking on other religions was dominated by Karl Barth and Hendrik Kraemer theology of 'discontinuity' between the Gospel and world religions. In 1960s Britain began becoming the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society it is now, and attitudes changed. (I recall holding Christian-Muslim dialogues in an academic context, and study of world faiths being a university discipline.) Dean Edward Carpenter of Westminster and George Appleton, Archbishop of Jerusalem, became high-profile WCF activists for inter-faith understanding, with wide and lasting influence.

9/11 and terrorist attacks in UK gave fresh urgency to inter-faith endeavour with new emphasis on promoting toleration, Christian-Muslim cooperation and opposing Islamophobia. In recent decades WCF conferences have explored religion and peace, faith and morals, science and spirituality, and much more; WCF's multi-dimensional approach – lectures, study events, visits to worship venues, sharing faith understandings, inter-faith worship, pilgrimages – has inspired many local bodies to follow. Inter-Faith Network now undertakes much of this; eight Parliaments of World Religions from Chicago 1993 to Toronto 2018 are another fount of inspiration. A mine of event ideas, this book details significant new bodies promoting inter-faith.



My only caveat is that I wish it included new ideas for the *future* of inter-faith work in a globalised yet fractured world – but perhaps that will be Braybrooke's next book !

In my experience only good – from spiritual enrichment to community harmony – comes from inter-faith encounter, sharing and cooperation. Inter-faith has attained civic and national recognition – but needs more support from devotees of all faiths to sustain momentum. At a time when dark populist forces incite division and intolerance, its role and its vision of "inter-faith harmony in the service of humanity" (p.250) are more urgent than ever.

*It is the duty of the religions to struggle for the brotherhood of man, for the unity of mankind and for the dignity of all human beings as children of God ... it will not come about by intellectual or doctrinal agreement, but out of real spiritual experience of brotherhood and charity.* Nicholas Berdyaev WCF 1936

The author quotes (p.249) Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism: The gold from which this diverse coinage (which mystics use) is made is always the same precious metal: always the same Beatific Vision of Goodness, Truth and Beauty, which is one*, adding: *This vision carries with it a sense of the oneness of all beings and a deep love for them.*

*Rev Brian Cooper, Churches & Inter-Faith Secretary, Uniting for Peace*

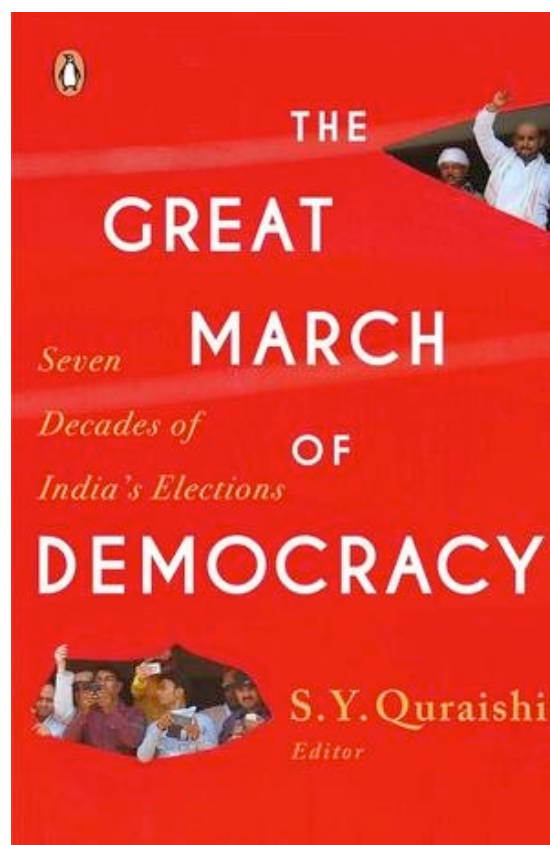
**The Great March of Democracy: Seven Decades of India's Elections**  
Ed by S Y Quraishi, Vintage 2019, ISBN 9780670092284, e-book available.

This long awaited book offers a unique insight into India's electoral system, through the eyes of those involved in the process as well as politicians, academics, journalists, social activists, industrialists, television and film personalities. The diversity of the approach, reflects the diversity of India itself. Edited by S Y Quraishi who joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1971 before becoming the 17<sup>th</sup> chief election commissioner of India, each essay gives a glimpse of the huge challenges involved in organising elections in the largest democracy in the world with more voters than the 54 countries in Europe combined and the entire Commonwealth. The Election Commission of India was set up on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1950, the day before India became a republic but the history of demand for universal franchise in India is rooted in the Constitution of India Bill (1895) in which it was declared that every citizen living within India had the right 'to take part in the affairs of the country and to be admitted to public office'. The Nehru Report of 1928

reaffirmed this position. The challenges posed post-Partition when it was estimated 84% of the population was illiterate with a similar percentage in poverty, were huge. The essays address many of these, including the question of corruption, non-registration of voters, not to mention the immense challenges of holding elections in remote areas to enable even minuscule numbers of voters to cast their ballot, as well as the questions surrounding the newly adopted electronic counting system. But the efforts of the Election Commission in aiming to register 100% of the population as well as ensuring transparency and accuracy are matched by the importance and value placed upon this universal franchise by ordinary people which lay at the heart of the fight for independence. Voting numbers far exceed proportionately those in Western countries.

While by no means perfect a system, the introduction recalls how it took until 1928 in the UK before women were granted the vote on the same basis as men, while women in France and Italy had to wait until 1944 and 1945 respectively. India had already held many elections before Switzerland gave women the vote in 1971 and the aboriginal population of Australia in 1967. In terms of size and magnitude, maybe the rest of the world has a good deal to learn from the Indian example. The authors include Bhikhu Parekh and Mark Tully, well known to GF.

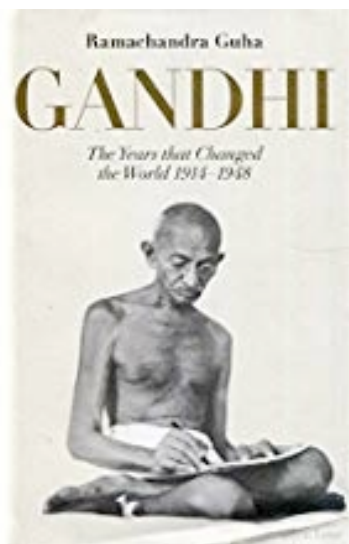
*Jane Sill*



**Gandhi: The Years that Changed the World 1914-1948**, Ramachandra Guha, Allen Lane 2018, pp1129

This is the second volume of Guha's impressive biography of Gandhi, the first and shorter volume (only 673 pages ! ) having been published 5 years earlier covered Gandhi's life up till his return to his home country after about 20 years in South Africa.

But why another Gandhi biography when so many exist already ? A reason given is that Guha (a well known writer on modern India) has used letters and other documents especially from the Nehru Memorial Museum



and Library in New Delhi and the Sabarmati Ashram Archives in Ahmedabad which have not been used by earlier biographers. While these do not change significantly the story of Gandhi's life and his times they do add 'colour' for the readers who will in all probability have read at least one previous biography.

With a book of this length the author has plenty of space to deal with the major issues that Gandhi was concerned about – wealth and poverty, caste discrimination especially untouchability, colonialism, violence and nonviolence, the effects of economic development, forms of governance, religion in a multicultural context, the position of women

in society; and brahmacharya (celibacy) which was of particular concern to Gandhi even if not to most of his admirers.

A major theme of the book is of course Gandhi's role in the Indian independence movement but I shall select some sub-themes for this review.

## **Struggles with caste**

The issue of caste is still a live one in today's India. On one aspect, that of untouchability, Gandhi's position was clear from the beginning – he was totally opposed to it. Even as a child he did not like the idea that some people were regarded as unclean and not fit to be treated in the same way as those of higher caste. Throughout the last quarter century of his life he campaigned tirelessly against it, travelling the length and breadth of the country with some success in weakening its hold. In spite of this he confused the issue by initially accepting caste in principle as a stabilising factor in society and advocated a purified version of it, one in which people of different castes (Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya, Sudra) were to be regarded as of equal worth. It was this that led to a long dispute with B R Ambedkar who was born an untouchable but who managed to receive higher education in the UK and USA. Ambedkar believed that caste was inextricably embedded in Hinduism and those treated as untouchable, preferably called Dalits, had to break this connection. Gandhi however believed that the higher caste Hindus needed to change their long-held beliefs and embrace the Dalits (he called them Harijans or Children of God) as equals.

Ambedkar and Gandhi clashed particularly over separate electorates for Dalits in the new constitution for assemblies – Gandhi was opposed as it would perpetuate the division. The matter came to a head in 1932 when Gandhi went on a fast over the issue. The outcome was that separate electorates for Dalits were dropped, however the long-standing separate electorates for Muslims continued. The constitution of independent India, to

which Ambedkar as a lawyer contributed substantially, outlawed untouchability but even today persistent prejudice against Dalits continues to perpetuate discrimination.

Gandhi's position on caste changed over the years – by the early 1930s he considered inter-caste marriage acceptable – until he came to the view that caste had to go completely.

## **Women and Gandhi**

Gandhi had many women friends and colleagues and some of these always feature in biographies such as Sarojini Naidu, the poet and political activist, who became Governor of United Provinces in independent India, and Mirabehn or Madeleine Slade who was drawn to Gandhi by reading Romain Rolland's early biography of him and became a very close colleague. But there were many others and Guha features quite a few.

Muriel Lester is one. Rather than choosing to go to university she established along with her sister Doris a community centre in the East End of London in 1915. Guha here is mistaken in two matters – what became Kingsley Hall was not a Quaker establishment and Muriel never became a Quaker. Her family were Baptists but perhaps it is best to think of her as a non-denominational Christian. The sisters' brother Kingsley died in 1914, not in the Great War but of appendicitis. Kingsley Hall is named in memory of their brother. The present building dates from 1928. Some years earlier Muriel had become aware of Gandhi and finding a great affinity she visited his ashram in 1926 and thereafter kept in close touch. Kingsley Hall was therefore the place that Gandhi chose to stay when he came to London in 1931. In addition to her work at the Hall Muriel became a travelling ambassador for peace for the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.

One woman who only started to feature in Gandhi biographies relatively recently is unique in her relationship with Gandhi, namely Saraladevi Chaudhurani. Rajmohan Gandhi described his grandfather's relationship with Saraladevi in his 2007 book *Gandhi: The Man, His people and The Empire* although, to my knowledge, Martin Green's 1993 *Gandhi: Voice of a New Age Revolution* was the first to do so. Saraladevi was a member of the famous Bengali family of Tagores. Her mother was a sister of Rabindranath Tagore. She herself inherited some of the talents of the Tagores and sang beautifully and composed, as well as being a writer of talent and a fine public speaker and an active reformer. Slightly younger than Gandhi she was already married, to a political activist, when Gandhi began to get to know her in 1919. He was strongly attracted to her and she often travelled with him on his campaigning. The attraction was mutual and Gandhi contemplated a 'spiritual marriage' with Sarala, but opposition came from some colleagues and family including his principal secretary Mahadev Desai and Devadas his youngest son. Gandhi decided also that there were dangers to continuing the special relationship and by the end of 1920 it had come to an end. Saraladevi



is not mentioned in Gandhi's autobiography, nor did she mention their relationship in her autobiography.

Gandhi played a significant role in liberating women in India – he opposed child marriage, advocated equal education, opposed purdah (women not allowed to be seen by non-family men) and recommended that widows should be able to remarry. His salt satyagraha of 1930 also drew many women into the public sphere. However he was opposed to birth control other than abstinence, a reflection of his entirely negative view of sexual relationships.

## **Muslim-Hindu relations**

Gandhi knew many Muslims throughout his life and his initial employers in South Africa were Muslim. When he returned to India he considered it essential that good Hindu-Muslim relations be fostered. He saw an opportunity at the end of the Great War when Muslims were enraged by the treatment by the Allied governments of the Turkish Sultan, who was Caliph of Islam. A campaign in India was established and Gandhi considered this worth actively supporting. A Khilafat Committee was set up in 1919 led by the brothers Mohammad and Shaukat Ali but the Government clamped down and they were imprisoned in 1921. Three years later the new Turkish Government of Ataturk abolished the Caliphate so the Muslim-Hindu alliance in the Khilafat campaign had little long-term effect.

The Indian National Congress from its foundation was an inclusive organisation but in 1906 a Muslim League was also established. Mohammed Ali Jinnah was a member of the INC and did not join the Muslim League until 1913. However over the years many in the Muslim community came to believe that they as a minority would always be second to the Hindus in influence in an independent India. Thus a drifting apart of the two communities grew until by the Second World War the idea of a separate country for Muslims had considerable support. According to Guha, the poet Muhammad Iqbal, whom Jinnah greatly admired, was a significant influence on the politician in persuading him that a separate country should be the aim. The momentum eventually became unstoppable with the tragic outcome of communal violence. Gandhi viewed the partition of India as a personal failure, nor did he attend the independence celebrations. Nevertheless it was at this terrible time that Gandhi rose to his greatest height. First in Calcutta and then in Delhi he fasted to risk of his life and this brought the madness to a halt. His assassination by Hindus was because he was perceived by extremists as favouring the Muslim community.

## **Gandhi's influence**

In the Epilogue the author considers Gandhi's longer term influence on India and the wider world. India today would not have pleased Gandhi. A

trend away from his ideas began early with the new Government headed by Nehru putting economic emphasis on development of the towns rather than the villages where most people lived. Since then there has been a growing middle class who have benefitted from economic development while huge numbers still live in extreme poverty. In recent years there has been a growth in religious intolerance accompanying the BJP as the most popular political party while the Congress Party has lost support in part through widespread corruption. There is still much gender discrimination, Dalit discrimination and Adivasi (rural tribes) exploitation. At the same time India has very advanced science and technology and – not to be welcomed – growing numbers of super-rich individuals.

But Guha also describes the many positive features of Indian life today to which Gandhi made significant contributions. He refers too to his influence on the independence movements of African countries and that of the African-Americans (as they are at present called) which long pre-date Martin Luther King. The concept of satyagraha has permeated most countries in the West and inspired reform movements in Europe and beyond. The greatest scientist of the 20th century, Albert Einstein, regarded Gandhi as the person we have most to learn from. Guha ends by drawing attention to one of the greatest problems facing 21st century humanity – the need for an economic system that is sustainable – Gandhi's was intuitively so.

One disappointment of this very informative book is the absence of a critique of national defence, of the Indian state and of the great majority of the world's states. Gandhi's belief in the power of nonviolence did not stop at the level of national defence. Guha does not mention the fact that India is a nuclear armed state and is one of the world's leading importers of lethal weapons – surely a major failure in Gandhian terms. Of course it is not surprising because most of the leaders of Congress believed in a conventional polity with defence equated with armed forces. Apart from the morality of possessing weapons of mass destruction this is an enormous waste of resources in a country with millions of poor people.

Gandhi's way was different, even in the face of Nazism or Japanese aggression. Guha quotes Gandhi: "if ever there could be a justifiable war in the name of and for humanity, a war against Germany, to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race, would be completely justified". He omits the next sentence: "But I do not believe in any war." (*Harijan* 26/11/1938)

It is perhaps significant that Abdul Ghaffar Khan receives relatively little space in this large biography compared with Gandhi's other leading colleagues as the Pathan was the staunchest believer in nonviolence. Gandhi knew that he had not won over the politicians who formed the first Indian government to nonviolence and it seems that today's politicians have moved even further away from what should be his most important legacy.

*George Paxton*

## Annual Gandhi Foundation Lecture 2019



To mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mohandas K Gandhi, his grandson, Gopal Gandhi, will deliver the Gandhi Foundation's 2019 Annual Lecture entitled 'Atonement in Politics: Perspectives from Mahatma Gandhi'.

**Gopalkrishna Devdas Gandhi** is a retired IAS officer and diplomat, who was the 22nd Governor of West Bengal serving from 2004 to 2009. As a former IAS officer he served as Secretary to the President of India and as High Commissioner to South Africa and Sri Lanka, among other administrative and diplomatic posts. He is also an author of books of fiction and nonfiction.

The lecture will be introduced and chaired by the Gandhi Foundation's President, Lord Bhikhu Parekh.

Gopal Gandhi has supplied the following introduction to his lecture:

The Emperor Ashoka ruled almost all of the Indian subcontinent from c. 268 to 232 BCE. He would have been forgotten in the realms of history and the scrolls of monarchs but for an act of atonement – public and widely disseminated through 'edicts' carved on stone. This self-chastisement was over a war of conquest he had waged on a kingdom – Kalinga – that neighboured his own, resulting in the death, by his own estimation, of 100,000 and the dislocation of 150,000. Ashoka's remorse – *anusochana* as he called it in the language he used – was influenced by the teachings of Gautama, the Buddha, specifically, that which related to the concept of dukkha (sorrow) and of ahimsa (nonviolence).

War has continued to dominate human affairs, conflict to mark political relations between countries and within societies. But every now and then, an Ashokan moment arises when leaders, strong enough morally to do so, speak in terms of their error. Gandhi and the self-owning of guilt are inextricably mixed together, with his term 'Himalayan blunder' having acquired the status of an aphorism.

This lecture will deal with the arcs of owning and acknowledging such mistakes, in other words, of atonement through history and with the scope of honest self-appraisal, self-criticism and self-correction in our fraught and fractious times.

Please register for the lecture here if possible:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/atonement-in-politics-perspectives-from-mahatma-gandhi-tickets-57940800494?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

Guests are requested to make a donation at <https://gandhifoundation.org> to offset expenses.

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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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