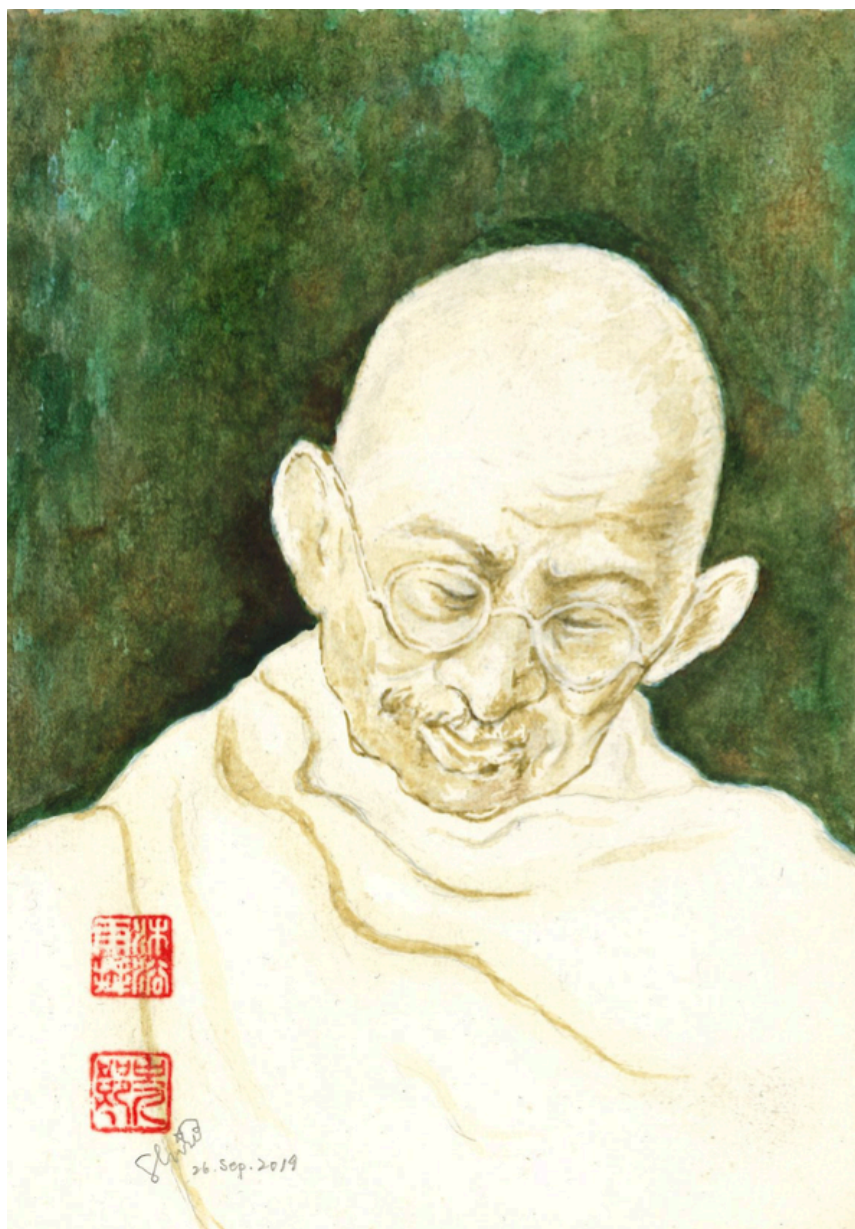


# The Gandhi Way



Gandhi by Bhikkhu Nagase

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## **Gandhi Foundation International Peace Award 2019**

will be given to ***Think Equal***  
on Wednesday 4 December 2019  
6pm for 6.30pm start  
House of Lords, Committee Room 4  
*Please allow 30 minutes to proceed through security*  
You can notify Omar Hayat [ohayat@ceamd.co.uk](mailto:ohayat@ceamd.co.uk) or just turn up  
*More on the Award recipient is on page 23*

## **Gandhi Foundation Multifaith Celebration 2020**

Saturday 8 February 2020 at 6.30pm  
Golders Green Unitarian Church  
31 1/2 Hoop Lane, London NW11 8BS  
*For further details nearer the event contact [markhoda@hotmail.com](mailto:markhoda@hotmail.com)*

## **Gandhi Foundation Ashram Experience 2020**

Sat 25 July - Sat 1 August 2020  
at St Christopher School, Letchworth  
Theme:  
***Finding Principles to Live By***  
*Further details from [markhoda@hotmail.com](mailto:markhoda@hotmail.com)*

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The editor wishes to thank Bhikhu Nagase for his sensitive portrait of Gandhi which appears on the front cover. This was painted at the request of the editor.

# Atonement in Politics Perspectives from Gandhi

*Gopalkrishna Gandhi*

This is the second part of the GF Annual Lecture given in the Nehru Centre on 31 May 2019.

## **Atonement and weapons of mass destruction**

This age of ours which links the world's great powers – the USA, Great Britain, France, Russia, China – and two countries that emerged in a great but painful birth on the same day, India and Pakistan, as also North Korea and, very likely, Israel, in one great capability that I need not name, can well be said to have begun on July 14, 1945. That was the date on which at what is now famous as the Trinity test site in New Mexico, the world's first atomic bomb was detonated.

Present in the control bunker with the head of the bomb's laboratory at Los Alamos, the 'father of the atomic bomb', J Robert Oppenheimer, was Brigadier General Thomas Farrell of the US Army. He summarised Oppenheimer's reaction as follows: "Dr Oppenheimer, on whom had rested a very heavy burden, grew tenser as the last few seconds ticked off. He scarcely breathed. He held on to a post to steady himself. For the last few seconds, he stared directly ahead and then when the announcer shouted 'Now!' and there came this tremendous burst of light followed shortly thereafter the deep growling roar of the explosion, his face relaxed into an expression of tremendous relief".

I have to thank Great God Google for telling me that immediately after the Trinity test, Oppenheimer took to the stage and clasped his hands together, it is said, "like a prize winning boxer" while the crowd cheered. His scientific genius had triumphed. But wisdom, atonement, were to come. He later said that at the same time he saw the great explosion he thought of two verses from the Bhagavadgita – one that spoke of *divi surya sahasrasya* – 'the radiance of a thousand suns bursting at once in the sky', and *kalo'smi loka ksaya krt pravrddho* – 'I am become death, the destroyer of the worlds'. This was in the nature of what may be called realisation of what he had made inevitable.

Hiroshima happened on August 6 that year, Nagasaki three days later. Gandhi was stunned into silence. His mind was clearly in a churn. Replying to questions from an Associated Press of America journalist Preston Grover, he said he preferred silence to speech at that moment and "I must act if I can". Later he said on learning of Hiroshima (in his words) "I said to myself 'unless now the world adopts nonviolence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind'". When asked if it exploded his faith in nonviolence, he said that such a faith was the only thing that the atom bomb could not destroy.

About ten days later, on August 17, a deeply troubled Oppenheimer went to Washington and hand-delivered to the Secretary of State for War

Henry L Stimson a letter expressing his revulsion and his wish to see nuclear weapons banned. In October 1945 he managed to get an appointment with President Harry S Truman. There are varying versions of how the meeting went. But what is common in all is that during the meeting Oppenheimer said he felt he had (in his own words) “blood on my hands”. One version says Truman was contemptuous, replying “Never mind. It’ll all come out in the wash.” Apparently Truman ended the meeting summarily and later told his Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson he did not want to see Oppenheimer in his office ever again. One version says Truman described Oppenheimer to Acheson as ‘a cry baby scientist’ and another that he called him ‘that son-of-a- ---.’ Expletives and the White House go back a long time.

This lecture is about atonement, not expletives. So, begging pardon on Truman’s behalf to political correctness in speech, I shall go on. Oppenheimer was to go on to oppose the nuclear arms race and, in particular the development of the hydrogen bomb. He had been deeply suspected by the US establishment, even earlier, for lurking Communist sympathies and remained under the scanner of surveillance and suspicion until the Kennedy era when a different political ethos rehabilitated and decorated him.

Less known are the role and reaction of Kenneth Bainbridge, Director of the Trinity nuclear test. Immediately after the explosion Bainbridge described it as a “foul and awesome display” and in a comment notable for its spontaneity said to Oppenheimer “Now we are all sons of --- ”. Explosives and expletives have more in common than their first four letters. This lecture, as I said, being about atonement and not expletives I will once again go on undistracted by linguistics to what followed. Bainbridge became an outspoken proponent of civilian control of nuclear power and the abandonment of nuclear testing. In 1950 he was one of twelve prominent scientists who petitioned President Truman to declare that the United States would never be the first to use the hydrogen bomb.

The genie, however, was out and we know where we stand today. Cynics could ask – and one part of me is that ‘cynic’ – “Where was Oppenheimer’s feeling for human love and Bainbridge’s conscience when they were working in the Los Alamos lab ?” The truthful answer is that those faculties were asleep in Los Alamos. Something else was awake. In any case the Los Alamos team comprised scientists, not Quakers. That something within them trembled at all even if after the test as with Bainbridge and after Hiroshima-Nagasaki as with Oppenheimer, is in itself remarkable. And if their research-driven work in Los Alamos was scientific, their remorse-driven work afterwards was political in every sense and in the highest sense of the term. Political in spirit, political in form, political in its impact.

Barak Obama is not Willy Brandt and yet his visit, as President of the United States of America to Hiroshima in 2016 matches Brandt’s as German Chancellor to Warsaw in 1970. There was no kniefall but he spoke of a ‘fall’. “Seventy-one years ago”, Obama started, invoking Lincoln’s ‘Four score and ...’ and then said something that made Oppenheimer’s Gita-esque

imagery come alive: "... on a bright cloudless morning, death fell from the sky and the world was changed. A flash of light and a wall of fire destroyed a city and demonstrated that mankind possessed the means to destroy itself". We could say Obama has read and interiorised his Oppenheimer. The White House has had, can have, reading men.

I doubt, though, if the Emperor Asoka's edicts have been Obama's favourite reading. Consider Asoka's words in his Major Rock Edict 13 – he speaks of himself in the third person: "When he had been consecrated eight years the Beloved of the Gods, the King Piyadassi conquered Kalinga. A hundred and fifty thousand people were deported, a hundred thousand were killed and many more times that numbered perished ... On conquering Kalinga the Beloved of the Gods felt remorse, for when an independent country is conquered the slaughtered, death and deportation of the people is extremely grievous to the Beloved of the Gods and weighs heavily on his mind. What is even more deplorable to the Beloved of the Gods, is that those who dwell there, whether brahmanas, shamanas, or those of other sects, or householders who show obedience to their teachers and behave well and devotedly towards their friends, acquaintances, colleagues, relatives, slaves, and servants, all suffer violence, murder and separation from their loved ones ...."

And now consider Obama's words at Hiroshima: "We come to mourn the dead, including over 100,000 Japanese men, women and children, thousands of Koreans, a dozen Americans held prisoner .... Their souls speak to us. They ask us to look inward, to take stock of who we are and what we might become ... On every continent, the history of civilisation is filled with war, whether driven by scarcity of grain or hunger for gold, compelled by nationalist fervour or religious zeal. Empires have risen and fallen. Peoples have been subjugated and liberated. At each juncture innocents have suffered, a countless toll, their names forgotten by time."

The similarity is stunning. Asoka Piyadassi is speaking again, 2000 year later, through Barak Obama and expressing remorse for violence on the powerless by the powerful, wanting the soul-cleansing of atonement, for the same violence, the same killing the same pillage, the same suffering on a different soil, with different enmities, different technologies. Asoka was the victimiser, Obama is a successor of the victimiser, in Roosevelt's and Truman's direct line. Like Asoka, Obama is seeking atonement. And curiously Gandhi with his big ears is hearing somewhere in all this, the word 'atonement'.

Four countries have done something that in politics seem to be unimaginable: surrendered their nuclear weapons. Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine had inherited nuclear arsenals from the defunct Soviet Union. The uncharitable thing to say is they lacked the means to maintain them. But, had they, somehow kept them, they would have become one of the largest nuclear weapon states today. Under very different circumstances South Africa, in transition, dismantled nuclear weapons that it had constructed. Apartheid

South Africa's last leader F W de Klerk, it is said, did not want to pass on that power to Nelson Mandela. That was, very *chatur*, very clever of him. But in an interview to Uri Friedman in 2017, de Klerk spoke of the real situation: "When I became President, we had six completed nuclear weapons, and the seventh was halfway done. They were Hiroshima type weapons. I felt that it is meaningless to use such a bomb in what was essentially a bush war .... that it was ... that it was unspeakable to think that we could destroy a city in one of our neighbouring countries in any way whatsoever." And then there was the larger, existential change that was happening, about apartheid, about racism.

De Klerk then says to Friedman something Mandela had seen and recognised in his opposite number: "We accepted the moral unacceptability of apartheid and continual racial discrimination, where we admitted that it was wrong. I made a profound apology about the harm and the pain and the suffering that apartheid had caused. Inner conviction weighs heavier on the scale than international pressure."

### **Atonement in other situations**

There are counter-Asoka theories that suggest he was a brutal king, that having subjugated Kalinga he had no more territories to conquer, that his remorse was tactical, self-fulfilling. There are several critiques of Barak Obama's presidency. His policy in Syria, in particular remains controversial. We may not object, in objectivity's name. The bare fact is that he spoke of the need for change, moral change and did so from the crest of power and placed himself at the heart of the change he wanted to see.

In some matters the world has changed, changed radically. The majority of the world's countries have, for instance, done away with the death penalty though with India, China and the United States among those that have not given it up, the majority of the world's population is still under the penalty's sway. Torture as an instrument of the state has seen change. Meeting on 10 December 1984, the United Nations General Assembly stirred the world's conscience. It adopted, the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Better known as the United Nations Convention Against Torture, it sought to prevent torture around the world. More specifically, it required states to take effective measures to prevent torture and forbade them to transport people to any country where there is reason to believe they will be tortured (*refoulement*). Most significantly, the Convention made state parties to undertake that "No exceptional circumstances" will be invoked to justify torture, including war, threat of war, internal political instability, public emergency, terrorist acts, violent crime, or any form of armed conflict. In other words, it foresaw every possible subterfuge and subversion by states. There is something very healing, very atoning about that convention.

India, it may be said here, took thirteen years to sign the Convention, but sign it did, on 14 October 1997, during the eleventh month old Prime

Ministership of I K Gujral, hats off to him. But signing a Convention is only the first step. Unless a Convention is ratified and followed or preceded by domestic legislation that commits the ratifying party to compliance, the original signing carries no meaning. The power over a captive's body and mind is not easily given up, even by Emperor Asoka's legatees, Gandhi's inheritors. Custodial torture can be abolished by conventions but to stop it requires governments and societies to understand that it is a hideous practice, the legacy of barbaric times. One lives in eternal hope. But one dies, not once but a hundred times, the death of fear within that eternity.

### **Atonement and terror**

The world's progress towards a humanitarian order has, meanwhile, been rudely overtaken by another barbaric legacy – the scourge of terror. Every conceivable technology can be taken hostage by terrorists and then added, as hardware to the software they alone have and states do not: suicidal passion. The whole of humanity, the world, every member state of the United Nations, is a potential victim of death-daring death-dealing terror. The world with its civil and civilising conscience says that torture is out, even against terror but what about terror itself ? Does it care ? It does not. Ready to do the greatest, ultimate violence to himself, the terrorist does not flinch and in fact revels in the prospect of killing those he perceives to be his enemy. He would have as much time for atonement in politics as a crocodile would for a bowl of coleslaw.

“We are all gob-smacked” said Marie Fitzgerald, grandmother of the murderer in Christchurch, New Zealand. “We don't know what to think.” Gob-smacked. I had not heard that phrase before, my English is archaic. To what department of English does that phrase belong ? To slang, parallel English, expletives ? Again, this lecture is not about expletives. The phrase belongs. in my mind, to the vocabulary of true shock, a grandmother's shock, language-less, comprehension-less, guileless. She then went on to say she was “... shattered ... that's the word...”

The loner's brutal act in the mosque in Christchurch may well have provoked the suicide bombings against Christians in Sri Lanka. I cannot – who can ? – forget the image of the bereaved woman, Anusha Kumari, wife, mother, who lost her husband, daughter and son in the St Sebastian's Church bombing in Negombo on Easter Sunday last. “You won't believe it, she said “but I had the perfect family. In 24 years of marriage, my husband and I never argued ...” What is she to make of faith, of belief in God, in Creation ? What is she to make of the value or good in being good ? Will it help her to see Christ nailed on a cross, bleeding ? That pain is in plaster, hers is made of flesh and now, blood – that of her husband and children.

Retaliatory violence has not spared Sri Lanka's Muslims. This is of course exactly what the agency of terror wants. And this is exactly what New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern did not oblige with. Her reaction to the terror attack in Christchurch healed, atoned. When Ardern said of the

slain “They are us” – not “they are one of us”, or “they are like us”, but simple, “They are us” – and of the slayer that he was “not us”, she received in my mind, at that instant, my mind’s equivalent of the Nobel Peace Prize. All of Chief Albert Luthuli, the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa fluxed then into those words of Jacinda Ardern.

Let us be sure that there is no angel’s road to ending terrorism. No Kniefell is going to impress IS or Al Qaeda. Only force can. But there is a whole Muslim world that must be rescued from the poisonous propaganda of extremism and the false allure of martyrdom. Farid Ahmad, a 59 year old Bangladesh immigrant in New Zealand, lost his wife Husna, 44, in the Christchurch massacre. When the shooting started in the women and children section of the Al Noor mosque she helped several escape to a safe garden. Then she came back to the zone of fire to check on her husband, Farid, who was wheelchair bound having been hit by a drunk driver in 1998. She helped him leave as well. But within moments of that, one of the terrorist’s bullets felled her. A shaken but calm Farid said, after what must have been the deepest darkest and yet illuminated reflection, about the white supremacist “... The best thing is forgiveness ... I ... tell him he has great potential to be a generous person, to be a kind person, to be a person who ... would be a great civilian one day ...” And I want to think of Khalid Mahmud of the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama who said his Islamic organisation “vehemently condemns” the bombings as an “inhuman, heinous and shameful” act and “At such times we must stand with our Christian brothers and sisters”.

I believe Prime Minister Ardern has shown the way, tentatively, but with total honesty, earnestness and, let it be noted with considerable risk to herself politically and personally. Farid and Fitzgerald and Jacinda Ardern form in my mind a trinity, a very different one from the Trinity of Los Alamos. They are, on behalf of the wrong, the one wronging, the one wronged in an at-one-ment, atonement.

Farid Ahmad, Marie Fitzgerald, Jacinda Ardern, Anusha Kumari, Khalid Mahmud had pain on their mind, sorrow in their souls. They had no time and no need to think of an old man called Gandhi, now long since dead, and his perspectives on atonement. And yet Gandhi, atoning Gandhi, the Gandhi who without doubt, was momentarily angered, even incensed, at the rude elbowing of his grandnieces by a man who suddenly stood in front of them, but the very next moment forgiving the same man as he sent bullets, one, two, three, into him, that Gandhi, imbued every fibre of their pain, every atom of their redemptive vision, in Christchurch and in Negombo.

There will be, I fear, such scenes happening in the future as well. I do not know when if ever, the cycle will end. On how states will have to act with toughness and with compassion, New Zealand’s Prime Minister has shown a way. But we, humans, not confusing the man with gun or the bomb with any group or kind, will have to be Farid and Khalid. At-one with them.

## **Atonement and the environment crisis**

Friends there is something we are at-one with and do not see that hardest of hard facts. We are at-one with our physical environment and at-one with its destruction at our hands.

I started this lecture with Gandhi's letter to his father, hand-delivered, about something he thought was an act of thievery. I will end with a letter that has not been written but should be and handed to our common mother, the earth. And it has to come, with a Kniefell from the corporate honchos, the gougers, often illegally, of the earth's mineral resources, the electric sawyers of its forests' trees, the pummelers of its natural hills, the raisers of its cement anthills, the spewers of toxins into the air our children and grandchildren breathe, the water, so-called, that they will drink. It has to come from all those who have infused noxious plastic into our soil, in our rivers and into our ocean, it has to come from those who applaud missiles being launched as marvels and applaud even more when those missiles hit other missiles to show, like school-boys show their glass marbles to other school-children, that they are stronger, and will applaud the loudest when a station is set up by earthlings on the moon – poor clean, pure, moon. It has to come from those who do not protest, do not rage, at the still stubborn stockpile of weapons of mass destruction, biological, chemical and nuclear, and now of unknown digital essences – to say “We are thieves. We have stolen. From the mouths of children and of children yet to be born, we have stolen, from the lungs of the poor and the old, from the pockets of farmers and the overalls of factory-hands, we have stolen, from the brain-cells of our finest minds, we have stolen, and from you, Mother Earth, from the charity of your heart and the grace of your soul, we have stolen what you were giving us in any case, we have grabbed, seized, torn from your hands what you were giving to us so that we use it well, with happiness but not with greed, to share, not to hoard the wealth that your gifts became. We are thieves.”

And then like an ailing father did in Rajkot some one hundred and thirty five years ago, mother earth might let tears of forgiveness, healing and blessing flow onto that letter. But then ladies and gentlemen – who knows ? – she may not be able to. All aquifers of life may have, by then, hit rock.

I cannot end a standing in his name, forget Gandhi's choice: the advantages of a cheerful disposition. I cannot end in un-hope. And I have reason not to. HRH the Prince Charles' global lead in matters like ocean plastic, climate change and global environmental protection have been recognised. But not anywhere as urgently as they should be. His description at the Paris Summit to our 'collective inertia' and to the need for 'humane collaboration' to stop our freefall into the abyss of climate collapse belongs to the scroll of testamentary appeals to the human conscience. Prince Charles is, by Britain's practice, precedent and pattern a future king. But the future is the future – a possibility. The present is the present, a reality. He is today the world's greatest environmental philosopher but more – he is the environment's hope-sustaining, faith-salvaging tribune.

Prince Charles must be glad to have seen the British Parliament, just the other day, taking a great step in political atonement. Passing a motion that declares an environment and climate emergency, it became the world's first legislature to do so. Speaking on it, Jeremy Corbyn asked: "Are we content to hand down a broken planet to our children ? That is the question members must ask themselves today. We have the chance to act before it is too late. It's a chance that won't be available to succeeding generations. It is our historic duty to take it."

### **End-word**

Is the Homo Sapiens, as part of Nature which is 'red in tooth and claw' inherently and progressively brutal or, as an evolving being, inherently and progressively humane ? We will never know. The evidence will stay mixed, confused, puzzling.

But this much one can and must acknowledge: for every step taken in sheer self-interest, utter callousness as to its impact on other beings, something else comes forward as well, in a hushed footstep, and makes a difference, that does something unimaginable: it tells the time to the clock.

On Gandhi's visit to London in 1931 for the Second Round Table Conference, two Scotland Yard detectives kept watch over him, day and night. Gandhi got to know Sergeants Evans and Rogers well and on reaching India's shores, sent to his watchers an inscribed watch each as a gift to remember him with. They were 'made in England' watches, of a quality the two detectives would appreciate. No suspicion, he was telling them, should mar our ties, not to mention hatred. No bitterness.

Colonialism had manacled India. Here, India was tying its own wrist watches on colonialism. And ones that said Time takes its toll but can also heal in one moment, at-one-ment. Δ



**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. He is a grandson of MK Gandhi.

# Gandhian Voice in Our World Today

*Jane Sill*

This year, to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Gandhi Ji, a very special conference was jointly organised by Gandhi Foundation and Brahma Kumaris. A rich and diverse grouping of speakers, all committed activists and pioneers in their own fields, presented and discussed how positive change can be practically enacted in the world in line with Gandhi's philosophy and ideals.

Attendees were warmly greeted by members of the Brahma Kumari community whose generous hospitality and meticulous organisation created a peaceful and conducive atmosphere for the smooth running of the day. Refreshments and delicious vegan fare were offered throughout the event which took place in the light and spacious Global Co-operation House, home of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (UK) in North London. The venue was home to a previous Gandhi Foundation event 25 years ago, when HH Dalai Lama was awarded the Gandhi Foundation Peace Award, but it has greatly expanded since.

The day began with a welcome by Rachel Priestman who introduced Sister Jayanti, European Director of Brahma Kumaris, and Lord Bhikhu Parekh, President of the Gandhi Foundation. Rachel recalled how Sister Dadi Janki, Spiritual Head of the Order who is still active at the age of 105, used to attend Gandhi's prayer meetings in India. Lord Parekh set the tone of the day by explaining how the aim of the conference was to offer a fresh, contemporary look at the twin ideals of Gandhi: Ahimsa, nonviolence, and Satya, truth. From a Gandhian perspective, how would the world look through the eyes of the young activist, Greta Thunberg, for instance? Lord Parekh suggested that a more accurate translation of ahimsa in Gandhi's eyes, was to show love and compassion rather than merely 'Do no harm'. He went on to show the complexity and challenges of enacting other key concepts of Gandhi such as brahmacharya and satyagraha in today's world.

The first session, facilitated by Lord Parekh, considered the question of non-violent resolution of conflict, the key speaker being Bruce Kent, well known as a committed peace activist, particularly for his work with CND and the Movement for the Abolition of War. But, as he explained, his life began in a very different way. Having been evacuated to Canada during the war, he was a bugler in a cadet corps at school and went on to join the army before becoming a priest. His wake-up call occurred when he came in contact with the CND march from Aldermaston to London which passed close to his parish church in Kensington, causing several of the brides he was due to marry, being late! This was the start of his life-long questioning of the validity and practicality of war and his involvement with groups such as Pax Christi. Like several of the panelists, and Gandhi himself, Bruce Kent read law, but at no point in his studies which began in 1949, was reference made to the Charter of the

United Nations which had been drawn up in 1945 and which not only committed to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war', but also to affirm fundamental human rights, and international law, promoting peace and security. Whenever and wherever possible, Bruce said that he pinned the Charter on notice boards to make sure that it receives a wide audience. Such direct action, seemingly small, can be very helpful. Great activists who showed the Gandhian spirit such as Mother Theresa and Ghaffar Khan had a strong commitment to social change, to change things which they found intolerable. While not everyone can commit to that level, change does happen in little ways, especially when people group together. Women achieved the vote, slavery was abolished, and working conditions have been reformed. We should never sit on our laurels, but continue to look at society and see what ways change can be effected in a world which is still deeply divided in terms of rich and poor.



Bhikhu Parekh, Paul Gutteridge, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Bruce Kent

Next to speak was Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, who later jointly was awarded the Gandhi Peace Award, along with the Mines & Communities organisation. Victoria was born in the Philippines and began her campaigning work in the early 1970s, defending thousands of local people

who were being forcibly displaced by a dam project near Manila. It was then that she first heard of the UN Charter and wrote a strongly worded letter to Robert McNamara asking ‘How dare you destroy our community?’ Victoria went on to espouse the cause of indigenous peoples throughout the world, many of whom were falling victim to mining corporations, set on obtaining their mineral rich land. This, she said, was even a greater risk to many people than climate change. In the course of her work, she understood how indigenous people often felt forced to resort to violence, and how they had to fight ‘fake news’ which accused them of idly sitting on land which could be put to more profitable use or of aggravated trespass on lands which they had inhabited since time immemorial. ‘Our job is to tell the truth for people in situations of oppression’, Victoria stated. This stance has been at no small cost to herself, having been taken to court and receiving threats on account of her work. The receipt of the Peace Award would, she hoped, give her added protection in the recognition that would result. ‘Peace will only happen if we get together to protect people in that situation’, she said, ‘with the strong voice of non-violence, truth and reconciliation’.

Paul Gutteridge, Director of Initiatives of Change UK, described his work as ‘building trust across the world’s divide’ and how peace can be built in the world through personal change. Paul spoke of his background and of his transformation following an attack on his mother which he witnessed as a young child. As he said, ‘big doors swing on small hinges of personal decisions’. From feeling anger and disempowerment, Paul was able to look deeply within and to change his simple internal narrative to one which encompassed the complexity and nuances which better reflected reality. Moving from a narrow, inward looking stance, he was able to look outwards and appreciate how deeply interconnected we all are. ‘We are not atomised’. While intellectually simple, this is emotionally very hard to assimilate.

There followed a short question and answer session discussing the role of young people in enacting change, how even small acts as writing to the local paper can have an effect and how there are ‘natural values’ common to all people. Lord Parekh ended the session with a question which Gandhi himself found hard to resolve. In relation to the question of non-violence in the face of oppression and injustice, ‘Why should the victim carry the burden of suffering?’

The second session, facilitated by women’s advocate and author, Gina Lazenby, considered modern economic models. Andrew Simms, political economist and co-director of the New Weather Institute, reflected on Gandhi Ji’s views and how he stated that ‘he didn’t want [his] house to be walled in on all sides’, but equally needed some protection so as not to be blown off his feet. Andrew explained how our use of resources already far outstrips their sustainability. He devised ‘Earth Overshoot Day’ to mark the point at which we start living beyond our ecological means. This year it was reached by 29<sup>th</sup> July. Paul suggested that it was easier to imagine the end of the world than an end to the current economic system. He said

how shocked he had been at college to discover in the Wall Street Journal, reference to a 'Guide to investing in the apocalypse'. He explained how far reaching changes must start now to help to rein in the effects of our over consumption within the window of the next 10 years. But there is some hope. A few years ago when all planes had been grounded overnight due to a volcanic eruption, alternative solutions had been found to cope with the situation. In recent years, a number of new companies addressing the issue, from repair cafes, to divesting the use of fossil fuels, have mushroomed. After Greta Thunberg took the train to London recently, there was a decrease in the number of flights booked from Sweden and a proportionate increase in train bookings. Paul spoke of 'dynamic social contagion' which helped to drive such changes.

Graeme Nuttall, again with a legal background, spoke of his work as an independent adviser to the government. As a result of the Nuttall Review, an employee-ownership trust was introduced in 2014 which has resulted in a large increase in the number of employee owned businesses such as the innovative Riverford Organics which is strongly committed to environmentally friendly standards. Businesses with an egalitarian and equality basis, are not new. John Lewis partnership with 100% employee ownership was founded in 1929, but the new model will make it easier to form such companies and also to help support them to scale up as they increase in size. The effect on staff health and wellbeing as well as the wider benefits, are tangible. While not all businesses which follow this model necessarily proscribe to ethical standards, this kind of business model promotes the ability of employees to have a much greater say, offer greater employee protection and be harnessed for greater public good.

After a delicious vegan lunch which allowed speakers and attendees to mingle and further the discussions, there followed a short AGM of the Gandhi Foundation before the award of the Gandhi Peace prize to Victoria Tauli-Corpuz along with Roger Moody and Andy Whitmore from the Mines & Communities, a London based resource centre campaigning about mining/metal projects which are often at the root of conflict in indigenous communities worldwide. The recipients were introduced by Felix Padel, an environmental activist and great, great grandson of Charles Darwin. Victoria said she was very happy to receive the award on behalf of all indigenous peoples and committed to carry on her fight for peace in nonviolent ways.

The third session on climate change was facilitated by Mark Hoda. Lindsey Fielder Cook, representative for climate change, Quaker UN office in Geneva, described her work behind the scenes, connecting with grassroots communities worldwide and taking part in the intergovernmental panel on climate change and the Human Rights Council. Sister Jayanti who has represented the Brahma Kumaris at the United Nations since 1982, started by saying that nature being sacred is a spiritual



Presentation of Peace Award to Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and Andy Whitmore,  
with Felix Padel between Bhikhu Parekh and Ms Taulo Corpuz

concept – not only in the East but worldwide. The word sacred is defined as ‘that which is not created by humans’ and we should view ourselves as being trustees of nature, responsible for its care. We need to get in touch with our inner being and work to create a future which all can enjoy in harmony and justice. The biggest challenge is how we can live sustainably and justly together. The rapid rise in temperature over such a short time with its predicted results will result in untold suffering if not held in check. A wide-ranging approach is needed in terms of solutions, from changing our diets to ones having less impact on the environment and also our lifestyles. There were massive global challenges but, tapping into our inner human values, there are ‘huge things we can do’. The question and answer session which followed included the suggestion of introducing meat free days each month, as happens in Ghent.

After a short discussion period in which the audience was invited to reflect on what had been learned from the day and, in particular what we had been inspired to do differently as a result of the day, Lord Parekh rounded up the discussions with a reflection on ‘Gandhian Voice’. How can the individual as well as the collectivity lead a nonviolent life? Nonviolence, for Gandhi, had a deeper meaning than ‘turning the other cheek’. It included the concept of *caritas* or love, which was the most important ingredient. *Ahimsa* is an expression of that love. But the application of

ahimsa in everyday life is not always straightforward. The example of a terminally ill calf at Gandhi's ashram was given. Expert advice was taken but nothing could save the calf and it was destined to die within the week. To save it from tremendous pain, Gandhi allowed a lethal injection to be given. This decision was strongly criticised by some. Gandhi responded by saying that this was not a violent act but an act to relieve pain. For Gandhi, ahimsa extended beyond the physical to thoughts and feelings, reducing harm through gossip and harmful speech.



Mark Hoda on right, Prof. Ursula King, Sister Jayanti, Bruce Kent and other attenders

Another question posed by ahimsa: can the human condition allow complete nonviolence? Each life takes the life of another in one way or another; even the act of eating can destroy micro-organisms. A principled compromise needs to be worked out. In what situation is violence permissible? There were a number of changes in Gandhi's position. He grew from truth to truth. You can't freeze him at a point in history in the period from 1930 to 1947. His position was changing until the end of his life. If we want to continue Gandhi's journey after 1948, we need to carry on in the Gandhian spirit. What would Gandhi's response have been to nuclear weapons? What would have been Gandhi's attitude to the Jews suffering the horrors of the extermination camps? Difficult, painful choices often need to be made. Gandhi said

‘My life is my text. After I am gone, you can burn my writings, but learn from my life’.

In terms of economic models, Gandhi was neither a capitalist nor a communist. He was against the concept of ownership and said he was a trustee. He would have commended the joint role of owners with workers in businesses guided by the public good.

Gandhi suffered so much in his life. He questioned how inequality can be reduced. If people behave like worms, they should not be surprised if they are trodden upon. Ultimately, victims need to stand up and refuse to co-operate. If you want to end a system, you need courage to refuse to participate in that system. For Gandhi, violence was an act of cowardice, nonviolence an act of bravery.

Sister Jayanti ended the day with a period of guided reflection. She appreciated the way Gandhi had not been deified but seen as a real person, with all that entails. Although we would appear to be in Kali Yug or a dark age, there is a vision of hope and light for the future.



# Well-being Through Ethical Practice in Textile

*Asha Buch*

In recent times our economic development is linked with happiness index and our industrial production is weighed against environmental factors. Textile and fashion industries are also one of the major concerning industries in context of wellbeing of the producers as well as customers and its policies in keeping our ethical values. Have wellbeing and ethics always been considered exclusive to textile industries from its early days ? Our ideals and concepts of life should be integrated in a mutually compatible way, instead they are in conflict with each other violently such as freedom is incompatible with justice, progress with equality and growth with ecological sustainability. We need to understand how ethical practice ensures wellbeing in the textile industry.

Wellbeing in the textile industry has three main dimensions: fair pay for all involved in the production, labourers' working conditions and equal distribution of the profit, which are the main pillars of Khadi (hand spun hand woven fabric) re-introduced by Gandhi.

We can perceive the textile industry in the light of pre and post industrial revolution in the context of its ethical practice and its impact on the well-being of all who are involved in its production and trade. Before the industrial revolution, the industry was traditionally cottage based, with spinning and weaving often taking place in the same dwelling. Many of the workers operated from smallholdings, supplementing their income with the manufacturing of wool and cotton textiles. The finished cloth they produced was then sold through merchants who regularly attended the town's Cloth Hall.

A commercial element came into the textile industry on a massive scale when the trade on the Silk Road involved many eastern and western countries. It was a significant factor in the development of the great civilisations of China, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, and the Indian subcontinent. That was the time when mass production could not ensure the safety and fair pay for the labourers or equal distribution of profits.

Mechanisation of the textiles industry led to troubled times as large-scale mill production took over and, due to the scale of industrialisation, virtually all the skilled labourers working in textile industries were left with little option but to take their skills into the mills. Britain was the leading country in turning the wheels of Industrial revolution. Due to Britain's colonial rule countries like India which had a proud history of producing the finest materials for kings as well as paupers suffered a great blow.

Those who are familiar with the colonial history and its connection with the cotton trade would certainly remember that by the middle of the 19th century, Britain was producing half the world's cotton cloth, yet not a scrap of cotton was grown in Britain. How then did Britain come to dominate global production of a cloth made entirely from raw material imported from the southern United States, India and Egypt? In the 1790s, the first newly planted cotton came from American plantations manned by slaves. From that point in time the textile industry lost its credibility in obtaining raw material, processing and manufacturing cotton by ethical means. That was the time we should have stopped and thought about more

sustainable and ethical means to produce textile. By the time of the inventor of the Spinning Jenny Hargreaves' death, more than 20,000 Spinning Jennies were in use. It spun yarn from between 20 and 30 spindles at one time, thus doing the work of several spinners. That meant that spinners and weavers in the UK lost their jobs to machine operated mills. Development does not have to occur at the cost of skilled labourers' livelihood.

Using natural materials and fibres like animal skins, tree bark, wool, hemp, flax and cotton was keeping the textile industry under the parameter of ethical industry in terms of the source of its raw material. With the invention of man-made fibres, the industry has lost its credibility to claim their ethical stand. We know that cotton is by far the most commonly used plant fibre and the cultivation of cotton is enormously resource-intensive, with high inputs of water, pesticides, insecticides and fertilisers leaving a large toxic footprint where grown, if not cultivated organically or under specific sustainable conditions, and besides that there is another problem associated with the cotton industry and that is forced labour.



According to the US Department of Labour, cotton is one of the goods most commonly produced using forced labour. Forced labour exists in nine countries producing 65% of the world's cotton; and they are – Benin, Burkina Faso, China, India, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The working conditions and the standard of earnings of the farmers and people involved in other processes puts them under the class of modern slaves. Child labour was and still is often used at various stages in producing cotton, which includes harvesting of plants. The conditions under which workers refine and process the raw cotton can

amount to bonded labour. So, a piece of cloth we are wearing may have stains of sweat of a bonded labourer on it.

### **Environmental factors**

Like any other production industry the textile industry is responsible to protect our environment. The use of natural resources and types of labour used in the production of cotton is discussed above. So, what is the alternative to cotton? Man-made fibres such as viscose (rayon) or lyocell are based on cellulosic raw material obtained normally from wood pulp which has resulted in the loss of many old-growth forests. During the process that transforms it into fabric, the pulp is treated with dangerous chemicals that eventually find their way into the environment. Those materials are heavily treated with chemicals before the new fibre is spun. The whole process of producing fibres from wood pulp is very resource-intensive, involving the use of several hazardous substances.

Now consider synthetic fabrics, or man-made fibres like nylon and polyester. These fibres are made from petrochemicals and fossil fuels, and manufacturing them requires lots of water and energy. Nylon manufacturing also creates greenhouse gasses that harm the air we breathe. Additionally, synthetic fabrics are not biodegradable, which means that something made of nylon can take decades to decompose. Making textiles also involves activities like bleaching, dyeing, and washing that use lots of water, and other surface-active agents, like detergent, that don't decompose, so they end up in our water. Dyeing and printing also sometimes involve dangerous chemicals and substances like arsenic, lead, and mercury.

We all love a warm blanket or a favourite sweater. But do we know that the ways in which textiles are made and printed sometimes negatively impact the environment ?

### **Factory Conditions & Emissions**

Like any other corporate business and big or small industry, textile production is under scrutiny for providing good working conditions and the amount of emissions produced in the processing of textiles of all kinds because they affect the health of labourers and our environment. It's estimated that more than 60 million people work in the textile industry worldwide, many for long hours at low wages. Working conditions in textile factories can be very poor and include overcrowded spaces, lack of safety considerations, continuous loud noise, and constant exposure to pollutants. In places around the globe, many of these factories are major contributors to air pollution, belching out harmful gases like carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide. Even finishing processes for fabrics allow substances like formaldehyde into our atmosphere. One can hardly believe that in order to fulfil one of the most basic necessities – clothing can be so harmful to its workforce as well as to the surrounding environment.

It is clear that the present day model of the textile industry cannot claim that its ethical values are upheld and wellbeing of farm to fashion industry is assured. India has a rich history of hand spinning and weaving. During the independence movement Khadi – the hand spun and hand woven cloth became a political and economic emblem of the movement. Since independence a lot of effort has been put in bringing Khadi into mainstream production and consumer market by investing

resources in research to improve the quality of Khadi. Growing organic cotton is gathering momentum in the state of Gujarat and other states.

Before the age of mechanised industries, all the goods were produced to fulfil our necessities. With the advent of machines, we are encouraged to increase our demands in order to use the mass produced goods. Natural fibres use up an enormous amount of natural resources and man-made fibres pollute the environment. So the choice is ours. From farming to fashion the entire textile industry seems to be drifting away from ethical practice as forced or bonded labour is involved, negative impact on our environment has reached an alarming level and factory conditions and emission levels are not compatible with protection of human rights.

Does it mean that we are left with only two options; go back to producing only hand spun and hand woven cloth or accept the modern method of mass and centralised production? We have other options. We can start changing our shopping habits. Shop because you Need a garment, not because you Want it. Find out where the garment you are buying comes from, how it is made, who made it and is it produced through a fair trade agreement? Yes, cotton is expensive, but it is the only available material nearest to our ethical values. We will have to change our ideas of fashion. Buy only what you require, mend it if it rips and use it until it cannot be worn or used anymore. You may appear simple and not glamorous, but you will support the lives and wellbeing of millions working in the textile industry and protecting the environment.

**Asha Buch** gave this talk at an event organised by Craft Central London as part of their celebrations for London Crafts Week. Photo of Asha at the Asham Experience week.

## News

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### **Liverpool Artist to re-enact Gandhi's Salt March**

A Liverpool based artist is planning to re-enact Gandhi's famous Salt March to commemorate its 90th Anniversary in 2020. Clare Brumby is linking the 240 mile walk with a live art project in Knowsley, based upon Gandhi's philosophies of grassroots democracy, dialogue, self-reliance and a nonviolent way of life, to research how this can create social change within small communities.

The Salt March, also known as the Dandi March or Salt Satyagraha, was led by Gandhi, as an act of nonviolent civil disobedience in colonial India against the Salt Act of 1882, which prohibited Indians from collecting or selling salt, a staple in their diet, instead having to buy it from the government who enforced a monopoly on its manufacture and sale - also charging a heavy salt tax.

On March 12th 1930, Gandhi set out from Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad, in resistance to this, and was quickly joined en-route by around 80 other marchers, stopping to hold dialogues with villagers along the way. Gandhi completed the march on April 5th, when he broke the salt laws,

producing his own salt upon arrival at the coastal town of Dandi in the state of Gujarat and Clare is planning to follow the route on the exact dates in 2020 that it was undertaken back in 1930.

“The march was such a simple yet incredibly symbolic act which has inspired so many leaders within civilian resistance movements, even today, and I’m interested in why this type of nonviolent mass mobilisation of individuals is such an effective form of direct action” says Clare.

“Gandhi and the other marchers were inspirational in their defiance of the Salt Act, and the eventual outcome of Gandhi’s bold efforts in changing attitudes towards India’s independence is undeniable proof of the power of just one person in creating positive change through peaceful means. This is what I want to convey through this project and re-tracing Gandhi’s steps along this route and having dialogues in the villages where Gandhi stopped, will give me a much deeper, experiential understanding of Gandhi’s mindset and determination in creating that change than just reading about it ever would. I want to bring this home to people in the UK through Gandhi’s philosophies and inspire them to create change in their lives and communities.”

Clare is currently looking to raise funds or procure sponsorship to make this first re-enactment phase of the project possible.

For more information about the project, or if you can help with sponsorship, please contact Clare at:

Email: [clarebrumby@hotmail.com](mailto:clarebrumby@hotmail.com)

Telephone: +447875 822 852

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/artistclarebrumby](https://www.facebook.com/artistclarebrumby)

Twitter: [@clarebrumby](https://twitter.com/clarebrumby)

Instagram: [artistclarebrumby](https://www.instagram.com/artistclarebrumby)

### ***Islamaphobia, Antisemitism and how to combat them***

This 10th Rueff lecture will be given by Baroness Deech on 28 November at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Bloomsbury, London WC1B 5DR at 6pm. Tickets are £20. You can order from [www.oasisofpeace.org.uk](http://www.oasisofpeace.org.uk)

### **Multifaith in an Indian school**

In Aligarh city the Chacha (‘uncle’) Nehru School was founded 19 years ago to educate Muslim and Hindu children in the fundamentals of both faiths. This year a prayer room was set up where the students can pray in common. However Hindu politicians and Muslim clerics have complained about this latest development in the school which has attracted criticism from the beginning. The founder, Salma Ansari is a Muslim and wife of the recently retired Vice President of India. Her vision, she said, is for a secular education that will preserve the India where Hindus welcome Muslims and vice versa. “Inclusion of all doesn’t go against the tenets of Islam” said Ansari. “It’s

important to preserve the secular ethos of India to prevent communal flare-ups.” [www.religionnews.com](http://www.religionnews.com)

### **Parliament of the World's Religions bid**

A bid to hold this large international gathering in Scotland in 2021 is in process. It has the support of the Scottish Government, the City Councils of Edinburgh and Glasgow, the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, as well as religious bodies such as the Church of Scotland, the Muslim Council of Scotland and many others in process of confirmation. The most recent Parliament took place in 2018 in Toronto with thousands attending.

**The Gandhi Way.** Although no letters have appeared in the newsletter for some time this is not because the editor does not want them. It would be great to have submissions for consideration on any relevant topic. Editor's contact details are on the back cover.

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## **Gandhi Foundation International Peace Award 2019**

**Think Equal** has been chosen for the 2019 Award. This is a global education initiative that calls for a system change in education to end the discriminatory mindset and cycle of violence across our world. It asks: “How can it be deemed compulsory for a child to learn mathematics in an age in which we have calculators, and yet it is optional for a child to learn how to value another human being and lead healthy relationships ?” *Think Equal* calls on governments and education ministers to adopt its tangible, free programme mediating all aspects of value-based, experiential social and emotional learning for children aged 3-6 (including empathy, emotional literacy, resilience self-regulation, critical thinking, gender equality, peaceful conflict resolution, self-esteem).

Founded by filmmaker Leslee Udwin the initiative grew from her experience of making the documentary, *India's Daughter*, which describes the brutal gang rape of a medical student on a bus in Delhi. Her interviews with the perpetrators revealed their deep prejudice against women and girls. She believes that gender and other discriminatory attitudes can only be changed through appropriate education in the early years.

The programme is currently being piloted in 8 countries (Argentina, Botswana, Canada, Kenya, India, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Mexico) which are being evaluated by their partners at the Yale University Center for Emotional Intelligence. The results for the pilots evidence strong impact. 100% of countries which have completed the pilot programme are in various stages of commitment to rolling out an extended *Think Equal* programme.

# 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.



Founder President: Richard Attenborough

President: Bhikhu Parekh

Patrons: Godric Bader, Navnit Dholakia, Denis Halliday, Eirwen Harbottle, Martin Polden, Diana Schumacher, Mark Tully

Members of Executive Committee: Twisha Chandra, Shaheen Choudhury-Westcombe, Graham Davey, Omar Hayat, Mark Hoda (Chair), Trevor Lewis, George Paxton, Prem Prakash, William Rhind, John Rowley, Jane Sill

You can become a Friend of the Gandhi Foundation for a minimum subscription of £20, or a concession rate of £10, or be a Life Friend for a donation of £200. As a Friend you will receive the quarterly newsletter The Gandhi Way and notices of events organised by the Foundation. Subscriptions to the Editor (address at bottom).

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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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