

The Gandhi Way



Gandhi in South Africa c.1900
(Wikimedia Commons)

Newsletter of the Gandhi Foundation

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Gandhi Foundation News

Due to the exceptional circumstances of a worldwide viral pandemic in spring 2020 most of the Gandhi Foundation's planned events have had to be postponed. This includes the International Peace Award 2019 which had already been postponed from late 2019 due to the General Election. The Gandhi Asham Experience which has always been held in the summer has also been cancelled.

However, it is intended that the **Annual Lecture** will take place online. It is planned to be part of the build up to **Employee Ownership Day 2020** (which is currently planned for 26 June 2020). The precise date of the lecture is not fixed yet but will be in the week commencing 22 June. As previously announced the lecture will be given by **Graeme Nuttall OBE**, who presented a report on employee ownership to a previous British Government, and it will include a consideration of the value of Gandhi's concept of Trusteeship.

You will be notified of the details if you have given the GF your email address.

The **website** is undergoing a redesign and will be announced when ready.

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Notice

The organisation **At Ease** offers an independent, free, confidential advice, information or counselling service to members of the Armed Forces. It is in need of volunteers in different parts of the country. As well as sympathetic ears, volunteers are needed for administrative tasks. For more information email info@atease.org.uk
Their website is www.atease.org.uk

Pandemic – A new opportunity ?

Omar Hayat

Recently, it seems, the new mantra for our age is “we are in it together”. In theory, the SARS-CoV-2 virus places everyone in the same petri dish but, of course we know, it does not do so in practice. In that way, the virus is a reflection of ourselves – what we say and what we actually do in practice are different. However, unlike the virus we choose and not protect everyone in the same way and we do not even treat everyone infected in the same way. There is a huge gap between the type and speed of treatment one receives if one is a celebrity, a royal or the PM or a member of the public even if one is a health care worker.

This of course is not surprising – it’s just the norms and structure of our society. The only difference the last few months have made is with regards to fear of the virus and in that “we are all in it together”. Even though more of the poor and vulnerable will die, everyone will be frightened.

Can we not use this pandemic to challenge the normality that went before the Corona virus era? That ‘normality’ was an un-natural state which was not sustainable for humans or for the planet. We can make some changes immediately by reducing the incessant travel to and from work when much more can be done on-line, reduce business and pleasure flights which often are not needed, eliminate disposable fast fashion which creates a throw away culture and we can individually do much more besides. However, can we gain much more from this crisis and develop a new model of cooperation, interconnectivity and some semblance of equality? Turmoil, extremism and violence will surely flourish if we don’t do so, especially in poorer countries and societies which already are incapable of providing basic living standards for their people.

So how do we start to build a model that will be much more sustainable than the one we are seeing creaking and possibly breaking in front of our eyes? I think we need to start from a position of common interest. That common interest is, in the short term and into the foreseeable future, the eradication of this pandemic and the prevention of further pandemics. The frequency of potential pandemics has increased and in the past 20 years the world has come close on several occasions to a pandemic (Ebola, Avian flu, Swine flu, SARS, MERS) but because of mainly biological reasons and some global cooperation through the WHO, the world was spared the spread of these deadly diseases.

The causes of pandemics

A number of general factors help to create the conditions that either give rise to virus mutations and/or human infections that can then spread due to global travel. These need to be addressed at an international level:

1. Sanitation and hygiene – poor sanitation creates breeding grounds for germs and weakens the immune response of people, making them more vulnerable to infection.
2. Clean water supply – it hardly needs pointing out how easily water borne diseases can enter the human body with devastating consequences to the individual and to those in close proximity. This weakens the immune system making the individual more susceptible to other more contagious diseases.
3. Food hygiene and animal welfare – minimum global standards are needed but successfully implementing these standards will require a degree of cultural sensitivity and adaptation including a ban on the consumption of certain animals. The EU has done much in improving its internal standards but as this pandemic has proven, internal standards are not sufficient to protect oneself but global standards are required.
4. Industrial farming – leaving aside the ethics of industrial farming and husbandry practices, these highly concentrated operations are ideal for close human/animal interaction and virus mutation.
5. De-forestation and loss of habitat – as forests are cleared for farming or industrial use, the wild species' habitats shrink and their proximity to humans increase. This was one of the reasons behind the Ebola outbreak.
6. Food security – undernourishment lowers a person's immune system enabling infection, further transmission and possible mutations.
7. Health care – basic health care is a pre-requisite to preventing the spread of an infection.
8. Climate change – this is probably the most pressing of our global concerns. As the planet changes to a new normal, we cannot predict what viral infections will travel from one region to another and mutate.

These are all interlinked and, of course, exacerbated by conflict.

If rich countries choose to develop their public health systems and economies in isolation from the poorest, then pandemics will inevitably become a way of life as viruses do not respect borders.

A global solution

The eradication of smallpox and polio required the entire world to come to an agreement – all countries were offered the vaccines and rich countries paid for groups of health professionals to go into the remotest parts of every region to inoculate all the people. We will again need such a global effort. However, in this case it cannot just be a vaccine that is given but an entire healthcare system needs to be created. Of course, it cannot just be rich countries giving charity but the recipient countries too will need to prioritise health in their budgets; which may be a cultural challenge for many governments. A global health taxation system is needed, no less, to address these issues rather than just charity; for charity is a failure of just taxation. A possible immediate start could be reallocating the debt paid by the poorest countries towards a health fund for those countries.

Some may oppose and resist any change from the previous status quo as it undoubtedly requires a cultural change. To return quickly to normal some may even want to excuse the response of many democratic government ministers who failed to act on scientific advice and in a few cases actually contradicted such advice. These ministers will not face the forms of punishment that company directors face for negligent corporate manslaughter. Others still, will balk at the idea and say that the cost is too high. The current pandemic has already cost several trillion dollars and changed our way of life and we are still at its beginning. If nations were offered just a couple of months back, relief from all of this, what would they have paid? Of course, the heartless alternative is to accept that millions will die yearly and we accept that as the price of doing our normal business but live in fear that we might also get infected!

We already have several international institutions, created following previous adversities, which are capable of addressing these issues and delivering basic human needs but they lack the political will of their government sponsors and ultimately, within democracies at least, the will of the populace. These institutions need strengthening and empowering, but sponsors and their population will also need political endurance to meet these challenges. In addition to the measures stated above, a global medical bank will also be required to enable supplies to be sent immediately to an affected zone before a virus spreads, something akin to the UN disaster relief. Another aspect of this global medical bank must be the close collaboration of medical research without a profit motive. This should include diagnostic, vaccine development, testing and manufacturing and distribution. Of course, this will require unprecedented cooperation between governments and most importantly corporations. Only then can a speedy response be achieved in developing the

kinds of novel drugs needed to curtail the spread of new diseases and allow the public to have confidence to return to the dynamic innovative work processes so characteristic of free economies.

The welfare of all

I believe that now there must be enough political will and urgency to create the systems needed and to spend money on things which actually improve the well-being of people and protect the population. I wonder how many generals can fire their very expensive missiles to stop this virus from spreading and if that was possible then the hundreds of billion spent yearly on bombs and missiles may be money well spent.

Such a will of purpose can only occur if we truly understand the global nature of our relationships and lives, our interdependence and that equality of human beings is not just a phrase for a charter. This purpose will, I believe, also help to challenge the inequality that we are so opposed to within our own countries and help to nurture a new mentality as to how we treat people within our society. The current pandemic shows that for the relatively rich the pandemic is a slight nuisance and tedious, unless you catch it. However, if you are poor the lockdown has very severe consequences and even 'social distancing' is difficult. Of course, social distancing, not in the arithmetic sense, is one of the reasons why we are in this predicament. It has been practised for far too long and has given rise to inequalities and a sense of otherness which can be seen both here and abroad. It has reached such grotesque levels in India that even in the midst of a pandemic that will, like the 1918 pandemic, affect India most acutely (up to 5% of India's population died in the 1918 pandemic) the main focus of many media outlets and politicians is to continue to create hatred and blame towards minorities. This of course is an old technique, ultimately doomed to failure but after causing death and damage, ironically also to the majority population themselves. This was practiced with ultimately devastating effect by Nazi Germany, prior to the Holocaust, where Jews were blamed, amongst other things, for spreading typhoid. India may be on a steep trajectory but, of course, is not alone in this type of short-sighted radical ultra-majoritarian ideology for we have seen glimpses of it in the Middle East, USA and in Europe too. If we are to develop international structures of cooperation then such ideologies must be fully confronted and eradicated like a virus.

A civilized society is judged by how it treats its most vulnerable people and we seem to be failing certainly at a global level but also at a national level, but with the right will we can succeed. As Gandhi said:

"I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man [woman] whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him [her]. Will he [she] gain anything by it? Will it restore him [her] to a control over his [her] own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj [freedom] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melt away."

Achieving the full extent of Gandhi's talisman, of course, needs a new economic model, an understanding of the structural inequalities that exist and a higher level of "enlightened self-interest", as so elegantly phrased by Bertrand Russell. That, unfortunately, may be several pandemics away but we can at least make a start now.

Omar Hayat, Trustee, The Gandhi Foundation

With the lockdown you may have the opportunity to discover all kinds of online resources to further your knowledge of Gandhi, his ideas and influence. There are a multitude of different websites that have resources and below are a few I have found useful during my time at the GF (Gandhi Foundation). *William Rhind*

www.gandhiserve.org This is a huge resource of material on Gandhi the person collected by Peter Ruhe in Berlin. He has worked with the GF on occasions over the years and responds to queries

<https://www.mkgandhi.org/> Another giant resource of material on Gandhi and writings on Gandhi, well structured by theme. Arguably one could get deluged from the amount of information available

<https://mettacenter.org/> An American institute focusing on nonviolence and Gandhi's inspiration for practitioners of it. Large amount of resources available and particularly geared towards the teaching of nonviolence. Of particular note is their self-study programme <https://mettacenter.org/research-education/self-study/>

www.c-r.org Conciliation Resources are a London based organisation committed to disseminating research into practical examples of peacebuilding and how they can be applied

<https://www.schumachercollege.org.uk/> Schumacher college is based in Devon and provides information about the relationship between ecology and social change. As the name suggests focus on teaching. There is a kindred organisation in the USA <https://centerforneweconomics.org/>

<https://academy.amnesty.org/> As the web address alludes to this provides a lot of teaching materials on Human Rights provided by Amnesty International with a view of empowering those defenders of Human Rights

Gandhi Foundation Multifaith Celebration 2020

Jane Sill

This year's annual commemoration of Gandhi Ji's assassination once again took place in the beautiful surrounds of Golders Green Unitarian Church on Saturday, 8th February. Organised and presented by Saara Hasan, leading member of the local Sacred Sounds Ensemble, a rich tapestry of music, readings and reflections from many traditions and cultures was deftly woven together during the course of the evening.

The programme commenced with the chanting of Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo by Reverend Nagase of the London Peace Pagoda, accompanied by Sister Marutasan from Milton Keynes Peace Pagoda. There followed selected readings by Rev Fergus O'Connor, Minister of Golders Green Unitarian Church who welcomed the large audience gathered from all parts of London, including many members of the Gandhi Foundation who had travelled from as far away as Bristol to attend.

Dennis Evans, FRSA, offered one of his poems, 'Joy' remarkably appropriate for the current times:

Joy

A missionary, turned healer,
You care for women and us all,
Creating tapestries of love and blessings.

A Quaker,
You want them all to sing and
Dance circles of universal peace.

Then, to put the kettle on
When they've had enough
Sitting in silence.

A missionary, turned healer
Creating tapestries of love and blessings.

Then ensued a most beautiful selection of melodies and songs from the Christian, Jewish, Quranic, Sufi and Turkish traditions, including a Turkish love song set to a well-known Jewish Sefardic tune, a Turkish setting of a Rumi poem and a Spanish Muslim song from Andalusia.



L: Ricky Choudhuri on Bansuri

R: Julia Katarina & Suruh Al-Fatihah

C: Bhikkhu Nagase & Sister Marutasan

After a short interval with refreshments generously offered by the Church, the second half began with a film of the inauguration of the 9 foot high bronze statue of Gandhi Ji which took place outside Manchester Cathedral in November to mark his 150th birth anniversary. This had been attended by many local dignitaries and faith leaders, including a large number of youngsters from the local community. The theme of unity in diversity and the

need for engaged action was emphasised. This was echoed during the evening with readings from Thich Nhat Hanh and Gandhi Ji. ‘In a gentle way, you can shake the world’. Or, as Thay asked, ‘Are we planting the seeds of joy and peace?’ to which his reply was, ‘I try to do that with every step. Peace is every step’.

Music from the Sacred Sounds ensemble flowed on, along with poems by Rumi, a 13th Century Iranian poet, Saadi, and excerpts from the Song of Solomon in the Old Testament. Finally, the hauntingly beautiful strains of the Bansuri or Indian flute played Raga Durga, one of Gandhi Ji’s favourite bhajans.

The evening ended with the words of an Iranian poet:

“If you are not troubled by the pain of another, you may not be worthy of being called a human being”.

Surely, a fitting epithet for the current situation.

The event was free but donations were collected for Red Cross Humanitarian Aid to Yemen and Syria.



Sacred Sounds Ensemble

The Need of Gandhi in a Changing World

Peter Rühle

Why do we live in a changing world ? What has definitely not changed is the nature of humankind: we were always led by hate, attachment, compassion, love and lust. Men always wanted to rule over others, had therefore fought numerous battles and wars. The weapons used in earlier days were comparatively simple: axes, fists, knives, spears and later on guns, rifles and bombs. What is different today is the power of our nuclear, biological and chemical weapons which have a destructive potential above imagination. What has also not changed over the centuries is man's desire to kill animals, to fell trees as well as the tendency to make mistakes. What is different today is that the mistakes we are making are not correctable anymore:

- Several animal species are extinguished from mother earth forever;
- Widespread deforestation in the Himalaya region, in the Amazon rainforests and elsewhere lead to global climate change;
- Pollution of the environment in general, especially nuclear pollution as well as air and water pollution become health hazards of unknown dimension all over.

More pressure on resources

What else makes the present different to earlier decades ? For many years, 20% of the world's population consumed 80% of the world's energy resources. This situation has changed now due to two main factors: the awareness programs in the Western world for consuming less energy, plus drastic price hikes, have led to a lesser growth of consumption in private households as well as in industries. Many people turn to a simpler way of life, i.e. they use bicycles instead of cars, share households or do organic farming. This further leads to an active care for the protection of environment, human rights, resistance of war service (conscientious objection) and informal education programs, like free schools for example. In these days, knowingly or unknowingly, a good number of people turn Gandhians in the Western world. Over thirty institutions outside India carry Gandhi's name and propagate his life and work as well as his ethics of nonviolence. Altogether, a few hundred institutions outside India work in Gandhi's spirit for a more humane, livable and peaceful world. At the same time the above mentioned 80% of the world population which belong to developing countries such as India and Indonesia or emerging superpowers such as China, with its rapid economic progress, have adopted very fast the same craze for consumerism which is predominant in the industrialized countries.

A few figures underline this tendency:

- India has the second largest active military in the world and ranks high in military expenditure;

- China became the world's largest energy consumer in 2010;
- China used more cement between 2011 and 2013 than the U.S. used in the entire 20th century;
- China's global market shares are 50% in steel, 50% in aluminum and 30% in automobile manufacturing.

Renewable energies are on the increase and so are e-mobility and global energy conservation measures, but they will not be able to meet the tremendously increasing energy demand worldwide.

A necessary reassessment of our lifestyles

The situation in general can be described by the words of the great black American social reformer and fighter for human rights and social justice, the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who himself found much inspiration and encouragement by the study of Gandhi's life and work. He said: "There is no choice between violence or nonviolence. The only choice we have is between nonviolence and perish." A turn towards a nonviolent, peaceful life in harmony with humankind, nature and God is the need of the hour. An increasing number of individuals and institutions all over the world are implementing Gandhi's spirit, his constructive program for human rights, protection of environment, decentralized industries and a more meaningful life by serving the poor in their respective countries. Though the destructive powers, such as centralized industries and the multinationals, are still mightier, a considerable and growing counter movement against consumerism and destruction of mother earth – led by Gandhian ideals – can be observed.

In India as well as elsewhere, there are a growing number of civil rights movements and social action groups which support minority rights and the rights of the poor on the basis of Gandhi's ideas. While Gandhi's symbol for economic independence had been the simple spinning wheel, in present-day India it is cars, mobile phones and computers which symbolize freedom and progress. However, these luxury and consumer goods are still obtainable only for a minority. At the same time, the majority of people, especially in the countryside, feel the ever-increasing pressure of commercialization and growing competition and are driven further into poverty. In the struggle against the neo-liberal trend of the economy, the return to Gandhi's ideas is required.

A reappraisal of our lifestyles is required everywhere according to the basic principles of simplicity, contentment, sustainability and justice, as preached and practiced by Mahatma Gandhi. A look at the influence Gandhi has had on human rights movements worldwide shows that his ideas are highly relevant up to the present day and have been applied very successfully in the respective contexts.

The centrality of Gandhi

When one becomes aware of how many leading personalities of the 20th century call themselves students of Gandhi, it seems clear that his humanistic concept of nonviolence and xenophilic philosophy — not the opponent who is being fought, but his convictions — has left its mark on humanity like hardly any other: Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, HH the Dalai Lama, Albert Schweitzer, Mother Teresa, Michael Gorbachev, Lech Walesa, and many others have studied Gandhi and drawn on his ideas in their efforts towards a better world. It is not only for this that his spiritual heritage is still alive.

The international art and media scene impressively confirm Gandhi's actuality. There are excellent exhibitions about Gandhi's life and work: an opera, several theatre plays and musicals, numerous movies and documentaries for cinema and television. Of course, new publications are launched constantly — by now, there are well over 10,000 books on Gandhi available in all languages. The internet has contributed much to keep Gandhi in the minds of people; unfortunately, not always in a realistic and just way.

For Gandhi the political freedom of India was a result of the personal freedom (swaraj) of the individual, which is embedded in the continual striving towards truth. The world needs to become better by the practice of brotherly love and the search for truth by every person everywhere. Everyone must begin seriously practicing with oneself, carrying out one's own experiment with the truth, here and today, everywhere and with no end:

“The world of tomorrow will be, must be, a society based on non-violence. That is the first law; out of it all other blessings will flow. It may seem a distant goal, an impractical Utopia. But it is not in the least unobtainable, since it can be worked for here and now. An individual can adopt the way of life of the future — the non-violent way — without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can do it, cannot whole groups of individuals ? Whole nations ? Men often hesitate to make a beginning because they feel that the objective cannot be achieved in its entirety. This attitude of mind is precisely our greatest obstacle to progress — an obstacle that each man, if he only will it, can clear away.”

M K Gandhi, *Harijan*, 10 February 1946

Therefore, Gandhi's thoughts are highly relevant in the changing world and a thorough study of his life and work — according to his saying ‘My life is my message’ — is more important than ever before.

Those people who adopt the ideals Gandhi stood for — intelligently and adequately — are not survivors of the ‘good old days’ but they are the avantgarde of the future society.

Peter Rühle is the founder of the [GandhiServe network](#), a Berlin-based multinational which consists of various institutions furthering the promotion of Gandhian values.

The following two items are from the Multifaith Celebration 8 February 2020.

Unity in Diversity – Gandhi Poem

by Kishan Shah

You are not the same height as me
You are not the same type as me
You are not the same age as me
You don't read from the same page as me
Don't have the same face as me
Live in the same place as me
Say the same words as me
You are not from the same herd as me
You are not me
That's for sure
Who you are to me
Is quite obscure

From the outside, we are different from each other
Different colours, different brothers
Different fathers
Different mothers
Differences are obvious to see
As they are only as deep as the eye
What do we mean by diversity ?
And why is it hard for us to Unify ?

The brain doesn't speak the same language as the lungs
The lungs operate a difference function to the liver
The liver cannot do the job of the tongue
The tongue cannot purify like the bladder
The heart and the stomach do not compete
Our major organs know without each other they will all seize
Individually they are all diverse in the way they are perceived
Yet together they are all unified and work as a complete team
As each organ respects the differences they all bring
But they know when they are combined they become the most precious thing

When they unite
They become life

If we want to unify in our diversity and make this society fair
First, we must see past the differences to see what we share
We must see the value in others seeing the world in innumerable ways
As a thousand eyes can see clearer than just one stuck in a haze

If our commonality is our foundation it will be easy to unite
As diversity will be seen as another colour of the rainbow, even though we
are all light

You laugh like me
When a funny joke comes you fold in half like me
You cry like me
When sad news comes tears fall from your eyes like me
You get mad like me
You get glad like me
You seek peace and want ease like me
You breathe the out-breath of trees like me
You want love like me
Find wonder in the what's above like me
You are like me
That's for sure
Who we are to we
Is a path to the pure.

If our commonality is our foundation it will be easy to unite
As diversity will be seen as another colour of the rainbow, even though we
are all light .

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NAMUMYOHORENGEKYO

Thank you very much for inviting us to offer a prayer at the Gandhi Foundation Multifaith Celebration 2020 – centred on the theme of *Unity in Diversity* – at Golders Green Unitarian Church.

I would like to share with you a short passage from *The Life of Tolstoy*, by Romain Rolland, from his updated edition of 1928:

“When the first editions of this book appeared, we still could not measure the full impact of Tolstoy’s thought upon the world. The seed was in the ground. We had to wait for summer.

Today, the harvest has ripened. From Tolstoy has arisen a tree of Jesse. His word has turned into action. From St John the precursor of Yasnaya–Polyana has succeeded the Messiah of India which he had consecrated: Mahatma Gandhi.

Let us admire the magnificent economy of human history: despite the apparent disappearance of great efforts of the mind, in fact nothing essential is lost. The ebb and flow of inter-reactions form a continuous current which constantly enriches while nourishing the earth.

At the age of 19 in 1847, the young Tolstoy, ill in hospital in Kazan, found himself in bed next to a Buddhist lama who had been seriously injured in the face by a thief. He received from him the first lesson in the law of Non-Resistance which he would spend the next 30 years of his life exploring.

62 years later, in 1909, the young Indian, Gandhi, received from Tolstoy's dying hands this holy light which the old Russian apostle had nurtured within him, warmed by his love and nourished by his pain. Gandhi would turn it into a flame which illuminated the whole of India: the reverberation has touched every part of the world."

A prayer for Peace: NAMUMYOHORENGEKYO
With palms together in prayer,
Nipponzan Myohoji, London Dojo
Bhikkhu G. Nagase

Fukushima Day 11 March 2020

NAMUMYOHORENGEKYO

In 1946, just ten months after the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the United States started a series of nuclear tests in the Pacific Ocean. Between 1946 and 1962, the US would carry out a total of 104 nuclear tests in all, in the Pacific.



On 1 March 1954, the United States carried out a hydrogen bomb test in the Pacific Ocean. As a result of this, the Japanese tuna-fishing vessel The 5th Fukuryū Maru – with 23 crew members – was exposed to radiation. A further 550 or so vessels were at that time within a radius of possible exposure to radiation. A quarter of them were the same type of tuna fishing vessel from Kochi Prefecture in Japan. For the following 10 consecutive months, contaminated tuna fish was dumped into the sea, while some of it was buried in the grounds of the Tsukiji Fish Market in Tokyo.

In 1955, Japan received 2 million US dollars as compensation from the US, agreeing in return not to pursue any legal responsibility on the part of the US. That same year, Japan decided to build its own nuclear power plant. In 1964, ten years after the hydrogen bomb incident, Japan would host the Olympics in Tokyo.

This summer, nine years after the yet-unresolved Fukushima nuclear accident, Japan will once again host the Olympics in Tokyo. For the duration of this year's Olympics, The 5th Fukuryū Maru exhibition hall will be closed due to security reasons. It is not wise to fish for a loach again under the same willow tree.

John Ruskin wrote:

“The desire of the heart is also the light of the eyes. No scene is continually and untiringly loved, but one rich by joyful human labour; smooth in field; fair in garden; full in orchard; trim, sweet, and frequent in homestead; ringing with voices of vivid existence. No air is sweet that is silent; it is only sweet when full of low currents of under sound – triplets of birds, and murmur and chirp of insects, and deep-toned words of men, and wayward trebles of childhood. As the art of life is learned, it will be found at last that all lovely things are also necessary: – the wild flower by the wayside, as well as the tended corn; and the wild birds and creatures of the forest, as well as the tended cattle; because man doth not live by bread alone, but also by the desert manna; by every wondrous word and unknowable work of God. Happy, in that he knew them not, nor did his fathers know; and that round about him reaches yet into the infinite, the amazement of his existence.

Note, finally, that all effectual advancement towards this true felicity of the human race must be by individual, not public effort.”

In Buddhism, the most important thing is the desire of the heart. The desire of the heart should be pure towards the highest vision; then this helpless world will turn to the Pure Land.

A prayer for Peace: NAMUMYOHORENGEKYO
With palms together in prayer,
Nipponzan Myohoji, London Dojo
Bhikkhu G. Nagase

Gandhi: The Yiddish Connection

Harriet Feinberg

This is the little-known story of Mohandas Gandhi's unusual relationship with the Yiddish language ...

What did Gandhi think about Yiddish? That's a question probably few have contemplated. Yet the answer casts light on the complex relations between Jews and other groups in pre-World War I South Africa.

Gandhi did think about Yiddish quite often during that period because South African Jews were campaigning vigorously to categorize Yiddish as a European language at the time. Why? They wanted to differentiate Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrants from Indian and Chinese immigrants.

This campaign arose because in the early 1900s, the white population of South Africa was looking for a bureaucratic way that was not obviously racist to restrict Indian and Chinese immigration. Since Cape Town was at that time the main port of entry for immigrants, in 1902 the Cape Parliament devised and passed Act 47, an immigration law stating that immigrants arriving there had to be able to fill out an application in a European language.

Some in the Jewish community were concerned that Yiddish, although structurally a European language, appeared suspect because it is written in the Hebrew alphabet and is read from right to left, and hence might be classified as non-European. That classification could then be used by those who disliked Jews to restrict Jewish immigration. A campaign was promptly launched to have Yiddish officially designated as a European language, an effort that ended in success: a proviso to Section 26 in the Immigration Act of 1906 stated that "for the purpose of this subsection, Yiddish shall be accepted as a European language." As a consequence, Jewish immigrants, most of whom were Yiddish speakers from Lithuania, were exempt from possible exclusion.

Attorney Morris Alexander was one of the major campaigners. He and his wife Ruth Schechter Alexander were both staunch Gandhi supporters; Gandhi even stayed at their Cape Town home on his very last night in South Africa before embarking for India in 1914. Yet Morris Alexander fought with all his lawyer's skills to get Yiddish specifically included in the bill that stated that immigrants had to write an application in a European language. As a white European, he could support Gandhi in advocating *for* the rights of Indians but resist any law that *classified* Jews with Indians and Chinese.

During this period Gandhi was a young British-trained lawyer working to help his many struggling clients, mainly Indian immigrants to South Africa, while

often facing discrimination himself. He was gradually developing the theory and practice of massive nonviolent protest, *satyagraha*, which he would take back to India and which would eventually bring him worldwide fame, but all that still lay ahead.

Gandhi was not happy about the campaign to declare Yiddish European. He first called attention to the question in June 1903 in his weekly newspaper *Indian Opinion* in a short piece interestingly entitled ‘Is Yiddish an Eastern Language?’ His comments in June 1906 on the Jewish success in designating Yiddish a European language were bittersweet: “We are very glad that the Jewish community should have been freed from a galling restriction. But ... by its non-recognition of the great Indian languages ... the Cape has ruled out subjects ... who had, by the Queen’s Proclamation, been promised equal liberties with their white fellow subjects.” Gandhi was pointing out that both India and South Africa were part of the worldwide British Empire and hoping — in vain, as it turned out — that promised liberties would extend to Indian subjects who had immigrated to another part of the Empire. Nine issues of *Indian Opinion* in 1906-07 mention the maneuvering about Yiddish in some way, indicating his ongoing concern with the issue.

In June 1909, still musing about these matters, Gandhi invoked his ace in the hole: the Sassoons. They were a very large and wealthy Jewish family, originally from Baghdad, who had risen to prominence in India, China, and even England. About Sir Edward Sassoon, who at that time sat in the House of Commons, he wrote in *Indian Opinion* “... his grandparents lived in Bagdad and Bombay, wore Asiatic costumes, and were never regarded in any other light than as Asiatics”. Yiddish might indeed be linguistically a European language, but Gandhi *knew*, not from reading it in a book but from his life, that not all Jews were white Europeans. Indeed, he knew about the Sassoons long before he met the Litvaks of South Africa.

Gandhi thought of the Jews as bridging East and West. From his writings one can gather that he felt some combination of disappointment, exasperation, and resentment that the Jewish communal leaders of that era, rather than join with the Indians and Chinese to oppose what was obviously discriminatory legislation, instead worked vigorously to exempt Jewish immigrants from it.

By contrast, individual Jews were among Gandhi’s closest friends and most devoted supporters. These Jewish allies included the lawyer Henry Polak, the architect Hermann Kallenbach, and Gandhi’s gifted young administrative assistant Sonja Schlesin. These important relationships helped to counteract the distancing he experienced from the Jewish establishment.

This article was adapted from the article “With Gandhi in South Africa: Sonja Schlesin”, by Harriet Feinberg, which appeared in the Passover 2017 issue of

Jewish Affairs. This article with addition of photographs can be viewed on the National Library of Israel site:

https://blog.nli.org.il/en/gandhi_yiddish/

Harriet Feinberg taught English at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. She edited the English translation of Dutch Jewish feminist Aletta Jacobs's memoir *Memories*. She was on the staff of the two-volume encyclopedia *Jewish Women in America*. Her research interests include activist Jewish women and peacebuilding projects. She holds an Ed.D from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

What Now for Green Politics ?

William Rhind

On Friday 24th April 2020 the think tank Green House (www.greenhousethinktank.org) a Lancaster based organisation, hosted a discussion entitled 'What now for Green Politics ?' between Rupert Read and their co-chair John Foster. Rupert Read is author of *This Civilisation is Finished* and Political Liaison Co-ordinator for Extinction Rebellion. The event involved Read making opening comments followed by a response from Foster. This author attended in a private capacity and I did not mention the Gandhi Foundation at any time, similarly Read was speaking in a private capacity. The event was originally planned to be a fringe meeting at the Green Party annual conference. *(It should be added that there was also a discussion with the audience afterwards which this author could not attend)*

Read was a very erudite speaker but also seems very pessimistic starting with a clarion call that civilisation is finished in this country. To him since the election the chances that the demands of the Green Party and Extinction Rebellion being met by the current political situation are miniscule. It seemed that the implication was that the country had made a great error in returning a Conservative government. Sadly, it did not seem to acknowledge that the Labour Party did not have policies that aligned with him or that the Green Party is still viewed in terms of wasting one's vote.

On a more optimistic note he seemed to suggest that the situation with COVID presented the last chance to rebuild the economy along radical lines. The method he suggested were Transformative and Deep Transformation, with seemingly no explanation of what these were. This author undertook a google search of these terms but was unable to find definitions that could be said to correlate to what Read meant. Sadly, he continued to criticise most politicians response to the COVID without explaining why. He also criticised

the Green Party for remaining silent except for making comments about food shortages. There seemed little acknowledgment that politicians across the spectrum are having to deal a situation they have not encountered before. Nor was it acknowledged that the Conservatives were returned with a majority of 80 and 43.6% and thus could justifiably claim to have a mandate to govern alone.

He continued to talk about how this can be achieved through nonviolence and a localisation agenda though with no reference to Gandhi or how a localisation way forward can be reconciled with centralised policies addressing climate change at a global level. A consideration of nationalism also seemed to be totally overlooked, despite it seemingly playing an important role in both the 2019 election and Brexit referendum.

It seems there were few practical policies to take away from his half hour.

John Foster's response was unfortunately short on practical ideas. Sage comments about the Green Party needing to look at its modus operandi given that it has only had 1 MP for 10 years were followed by comments about the need to use non-electoral methods to achieve political ends seemingly without thought about the possible consequences of subverting democracy. Comments about creating a shadow eco-state to take over seemed to overlook any practical consideration of the need for popular consent. (This author's thoughts at this time moved towards Orwell's Animal Farm with some being more equal than others.)

Foster also seemed to be a strong advocate for centralisation without recognition of the friction this has with calls for supporting inherently local initiatives such as Transition Towns. Likewise, it appeared that he was in favour of sabotage of the fossil fuel economy without addressing issues like respecting private property.

Overall, the discussion was disappointing as it seemed to be just two thinkers listing what they would like to happen with little of practical use. There also appeared too much casual discarding of important points like the role of public opinion, consent, democracy or the fact that all mainstream parties at least talk about being concerned and committed to acting in response to climate change. The speakers commitment to nonviolence should be applauded but other Gandhian concepts such as trusteeship, Sarvodaya or personal transformation were not addressed. Gandhi may have died over 70 years ago but his deployment of nonviolence worked and his ideas provided the germ for a lot of the ideas behind the green movement. There also seemed little consideration that people who disagreed with the speakers would have their concerns addressed. Δ

The Gandhi Foundation
Income and Expenditure Accounts for the Year 2019

INCOME	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
Subs and donations	2306.85	2769.03
Grants received		
Negeen Zinovieff	750.00	950.00
Scott Bader	250.00	250.00
Literature sales	25.00	-
Collections (at MFC)	-	250.00
Bank interest	0.14	0.02
GF Ashram Exp.	1452.41	2590.95
Bequests	2200.00	-
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Total income	6984.40	6810.00
Deficit	113.13	
	7097.53	
 EXPENDITURE	 <u>2019</u>	 <u>2018</u>
Gandhi Way print and postage	704.70	686.09
Gandhi Way expenses	88.43	137.40
Printing	27.93	12.23
Kingsley Hall rent for office	1560.00	1560.00
Multi-Faith Celebration	210.04	805.00
Annual Lecture	1200.00	-
Peace Award	1069.88	-
GF Ashram Exp.	2181.77	2172.95
Network for Peace	40.00	40.00
Website	11.00	19.32
Phone Co-Op	3.78	7.45
Donation	-	50.00
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Total expenditure	7097.53	5490.44
 BANK BALANCES	 <u>1-1-2019</u>	 <u>31-12-2019</u>
Coop Bank current account	13156.65	12690.53
" " deposit account	33.29	33.43
PayPal account	4151.77	4504.62
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Total cash assets	17341.71	17228.58

Help Needed – a Message from the Treasurer

In 2018 there was a surplus of £1319 because, exceptionally, the Annual Lecture and presentation of the Peace Award did not take place. Last year we paid £1200 towards the cost of bringing Gandhi's grandson, Gopal Gandhi, to the UK to give our Annual Lecture and the cost of enabling Victoria Tauli-Corpuz to deliver her lecture and receive the Peace Award was £1070. These costs would have caused a large deficit but for the fact that during the year we received two bequests from the will of Mrs B H Jeffrey and Mrs Anne Finch totalling £2200 so the loss was restricted to £113.

Usually if a treasurer issues an appeal for help it is to ask for financial contributions. This appeal is different. Two more friends of the Gandhi Foundation have died and this year we have received more bequests. David Stevens left us £10,000 and we received £20,000 from the estate of Negeen Zinovieff who had been a very generous contributor to our funds for several years.

The Executive Committee of the Gandhi Foundation is united in wanting all our supporters to remain alive and active but these bequests do provide us with a special opportunity. You will see from the accounts for 2019 that we had cash assets of £17,000 before receiving the bequests totalling £30,000. We have an additional reserve of the Cecil Evans bequest which is a long-term ethical investment currently valued at £11,500.

We could therefore spend some £40,000 on a project which would honour the names of those who have given so generously and promote the Gandhi Foundation. As a registered charity we are subject to the wishes of the Charity Commission and to charity law. The Charity Commission disapproves of charities that hold on to unnecessarily large reserves saying that surplus money should be put to use. Charity law requires us to spend the money in accordance with the aims of the Foundation:

The Gandhi Foundation exists to spread knowledge and understanding of the life and work of Mohandas K Gandhi (1869-1948). Our most important aim is to explain and demonstrate the continuing relevance of Gandhi's insights and actions today.

The Committee would welcome suggestions from friends of the Foundation on ways in which this money might be put to use. There is no great urgency to choose one or more projects but please give it some thought and if you have any imaginative ideas, please send them to me at graham.davey29@gmail.com or post to 29 Norton Road, Bristol BS4 2EZ by the end of July. All suggestions will be seriously considered.

Graham Davey, Treasurer

The Gandhi Foundation

The Foundation exists to spread knowledge and understanding of the life and work 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).

General inquiries to
contact@gandhifoundation.org
www.gandhifoundation.org

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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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