

# The Gandhi Way



Gandhi in 1909 (Wikimedia Commons)

Newsletter of the Gandhi Foundation

No.145 Autumn 2020

ISSN 1462-9674 £2

## An appeal to readers

The COVID-19 pandemic has led many of us to resort to new means of communication and decision making and this includes The Gandhi Foundation. Not everyone cares to use computers with email and Zoom, however, if you do but have not supplied the GF with your current email address could you consider doing so. If you have not been receiving email notices from the GF in recent months this will be because we do not have your email address. This year's Annual Lecture was delivered by Zoom.

IF you wish to receive notices from us by email in the future please send your email address to the editor at [gpaxton@phonecoop.coop](mailto:gpaxton@phonecoop.coop)



Painting by Bhikhu Nagase of John Ruskin, a major influence on Gandhi

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**The Gandhi Foundation Annual Lecture 2020**  
**EO v3.0 - Employee ownership with added**  
**Gandhian purpose**

*Graeme Nuttall OBE*

**Introduction**

I am honoured to give the 2020 Gandhi Foundation annual lecture. I spoke at a conference to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of M K Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi. I heard how Gandhi believed community is the most effective basis for our development. In response, I mentioned, how employee owned companies often make explicit commitments to benefit their local communities. The trustees of the Gandhi Foundation suggested I look further at this synergy between Gandhi's ideas and employee ownership. Since accepting this kind invitation, the topic I agreed to explore has become centre stage.



The COVID-19 pandemic has put corporate purpose firmly in the spotlight. This unprecedented interruption to normal business has shown how companies are much more than vehicles for making profit. Even businesses under financial stress have found ways to support their employees. They have also shown they are pillars of our communities: providing vital goods and services and enabling employees to help their communities in numerous ways. Fast-learned new working methods may have shown us ways to tackle environmental problems.

How can we take the best of this behaviour and ensure companies operate like this at all times?

I will explain how the employee ownership business model, and, in particular, how an employee ownership trust (or EOT) owned company could be the ideal model to promote good corporate citizenship in the long term and by doing so help address concerns that have long vexed policymakers before COVID-19.

I will explore how Gandhi's thought and life and, in particular, his theory of trusteeship encourages us to change how we define employee ownership, so it better meets the needs of society and the environment – *employee ownership with added Gandhian purpose*.

## **Racism and contagion**

Mahatma Gandhi died over 70 years ago. It's remarkable how experiences in his life remain relevant today. He launched a campaign to improve the lives of Indians in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, after personal experience of racial discrimination. On a return voyage to South Africa he was kept in quarantine because there was plague in Bombay when he set sail. Gandhi had other experiences of plague. When pneumonic plague broke out near Johannesburg, he and his clerks nursed terminally ill Indian mine workers in a vacant property they had commandeered. He was involved in moving an Indian township's tenants to a camp site, so the township could be set on fire to rid it of the plague. Gandhi convinced his bank manager to accept the savings of these people, savings usually kept as cash. The unearthed savings had to be disinfected before the bank clerks handled the money.

Racism and contagion, how topical these experiences are. One thing we learn from these experiences is how practical Gandhi could be in solving problems.

## **Truth**

Another aspect to what Gandhi called his experiments with the truth is also topical. Truth was the sovereign principle for Gandhi. He was heavily influenced by a Hindu scripture, the Gita. Also his training as a barrister had its part to play. When trying to make a particular decision he observed that:

“Snell's discussion of the maxims of English law came to my memory. I understood more clearly in the light of the Gita teaching the implication of the word “trustee””

It's indicative of how important truth was to him that his first public speech was on “observing truthfulness in business”. This is something which is part of his theory of trusteeship. Gandhi's insights on trusteeship can provide us with encouragement, dare I say, enlightenment, as we consider the future of the corporation, and in particular the employee owned corporation, in these difficult economic times, times in which pre-existing fragilities have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Gandhi was critical of capitalism, as he was of communism. He isn't the obvious starting point for providing a better way to run an ordinary trading company. However those familiar with employee ownership and especially the employee ownership trust will I hope share my interest in what we can learn from Mahatma Gandhi and his theory of trusteeship.

## **The theory of Trusteeship**

I've mentioned how practical Gandhi could be. It is, however, accepted that his theory of trusteeship was never fully formed and, in particular, he hadn't formulated ideas about its practical application. So trusteeship is very much a theory. As Lord Parekh explains in his study of Gandhi's political philosophy, Gandhi's:

“theory of trusteeship is an economic extension of his philosophical concept of man as a trustee of all he had... as [Gandhi] imagined it, every industrialist was to look upon his industry not as his property but as a social trust”.

Gandhi wrote that:

“the capitalist [is] to regard himself as a trustee for those on whom he depends for the making, the retention and the increase of his capital”.

And as to the wealthy, each wealthy person:

“must know that all that wealth does not belong to me; what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community”.

Although it was primarily for entrepreneurs to uphold trusteeship, workers too had responsibilities. Gandhi said to workers;

“Each of you should consider himself to be a trustee for the welfare of the rest of his fellow labourers ...”

And that

”you should treat the business of your employers as if it were your own business and give to it your honest and undivided attention”.

Let's pull these ideas together. George Goyder CBE writing in 1979 summed up the theory of trusteeship in a way that would hold its own at any contemporary conference on corporate purpose:

“the Gandhian concept of trusteeship expresses the inherent responsibility of business enterprise to its consumers, workers, shareholders and the community and the mutual responsibilities of each to the other”.

Gandhi's later iterations of his trusteeship theory are radical. One is set out in a document prepared in draft by Professor Dantwala and others, to which Gandhi made amendments. It envisages a possibly state regulated trusteeship, with limited private ownership of property and limits on how much the higher paid earn, under which an “individual will not be free to hold or use wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interests of society”.

## **Practical expression**

There have been periodic attempts to give practical expression to Gandhi's theory of trusteeship, mostly involving scaling back from its most radical form, to focus on businesses and how they might adopt trusteeship. These attempts all resonate with debates today around corporations needing a broader purpose beyond profit making.

A 1965 conference in Delhi resulted in a declaration that

“There should be increasing association of workers with the management. One way of doing this is by the sharing of profits and its reinvestment in the company through purchase of the company's shares to be held in trust or by other means which serve to identify the worker with his work and give him an interest in the company...”

Again it was emphasized that workers have obligations:

“Likewise, workers should recognise their obligation to do a good day's work for a good day's wage, to co-operate in increasing productivity, to come forward with suggestions and to participate responsibly in the life of the plant community”.

These statements would not be out of place at an annual conference of the American National Center for Employee Ownership or the UK's Employee Ownership Association.

Draft trusteeship laws were promoted in India periodically from 1967 but never enacted. These Bills proposed the concept of a “Trust corporation” being a company the owners of which have declared themselves to be its trustees in the manner prescribed in the Bill.

A 1979 conference to review Trusteeship concluded that little of significance had happened since the 1965 declaration. Interestingly the English law concept of an employee trust received little attention. Speakers explained the UK's “common ownership” movement. The John Lewis Partnership was mentioned but the potential for its trust ownership structure to provide a way to make Gandhi's trusteeship work in practice seemed to be missed. There was instead a general acceptance that no model of a responsible enterprise can serve for all. The John Lewis Partnership and the charity owned Scott Bader Group were called “pioneer experiments”. There were disparate approaches to employee ownership in the UK at this pioneering time. It is understandable how no particular model emerged as a way of putting Gandhi's theory of trusteeship into practice.

## **Gandhi's aim**

Why did Gandhi wish to see these changes in how businesses were owned and operated? Reading again from Lord Parekh's leading work:



“Gandhi believed capitalism had dehumanised both workers and capitalists and lowered the level of human existence”

His theory of trusteeship was:

“intended to avoid the evils and combine the advantages of capitalism and communism”.

There are some companies in India that practice trusteeship management but most commentators would say Gandhi’s theory of trusteeship remains, by and large, a theory. Nevertheless, we can still learn from it.

## **Employee ownership**

If I turn to the employee ownership business model, we have what is demonstrably a tried and tested successful business model. The accounts of the UK’s fifty largest employee-owned companies in May 2020 showed combined sales of £20.1bn. Sales were up 4.3% on a like for like basis compared to their previous year’s results. They had 178,000 employees and operating profits up 5%. Admittedly these statistics include a very large business, the John Lewis Partnership. But what’s significant is how employee ownership has taken off among smaller to medium sized enterprises. EO Day 2020 celebrated the best year yet in growing the UK’s employee ownership sector. There were over 100 new employee owned companies in the 12 months to June 2020. Companies of all sizes, in numerous sectors and across the UK are now employee owned. Employee ownership clearly works. We have moved beyond the era of pioneering experiments.

## **EOTs**

What’s made such a difference? It’s primarily the EOT. The UK employee ownership sector has grown by over 300% since 2014, when the UK introduced the employee ownership trust. Well over 90% of that growth has come from companies adopting the EOT ownership model.

The 2020 EO Day theme was #EOIsThe Answer. Increasingly employee ownership is the answer. Founders looking for a neat exit, that doesn’t involve selling to a competitor and avoids jeopardising a company’s ethos can sell to the trustee of an employee ownership trust. The EOT will hold shares permanently on behalf of all the company’s employees. The money to buy the company comes from company profits. Once the founders have been paid, profits that would previously have been paid out as dividends can be paid out as all-employee bonuses. The trustee of the EOT can protect the employees’ long term interests. Increasingly EO is the answer.

## **Flexibility of EOTs**

It’s worth emphasizing the flexibility of the EOT ownership model. I appreciate that anyone familiar with employee ownership will already know

much of what follows but for supporters of the Gandhi Foundation I believe it's worthwhile summarising how adaptable the EOT is.

EOT ownership can apply to companies whatever the size of the workforce. Most companies converting to this model have between 10 and 49 employees but much larger and smaller companies have also adopted this model successfully. There are no complexities from buying and selling individual employee shareholdings with an EOT. The collective holding of shares by a trustee company works whatever the size and type of the employed workforce. EOT ownership also works, pretty much, whatever the type of business undertaken.

### **Ease of operation of EOTs**

A properly established trustee company has few running costs or administrative burdens. The process of moving to EOT ownership needs skilful experienced advice but these one off costs are soon forgotten. The main reason why the structure is elegant is that it is dependent for success on a readily available resource: a company's employees. Best practice is to have a paritarian board: one comprising representatives of senior management and the same number representing other employees. In this way there is parity between the interests of the two main stakeholder groups. Each group can appoint and remove "its" trustee directors. Also there is usually an independent chair. Day to day management remains with the trading company's board of directors, who may include directors specifically selected or elected to represent employees. There is also likely to be an employees' council that interacts regularly with the trading company board. In this way the trustee board is freed up to act as custodian or guardian of the company's employee ownership ethos, in accordance with its fiduciary duties under the EOT's trust deed. Overall, there are checks and balances to try to prevent mismanagement and to promote the success of the business for the benefit of its employees.

The remainder of the Annual Lecture will appear in the next issue of *The Gandhi Way*. The full script and a downloadable audio recording will be available on our website.

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**For the first time**, we hosted our annual lecture virtually using modern technology. I think Gandhi Ji would have approved as it enabled many more people to join in from all over the world including from India, Australia, South Africa, US, Canada and Europe. In total, over 80 viewers logged in to the live event and many more have subsequently accessed the lecture on line with a number expressing their intention to share the lecture with friends and colleagues. Graeme Nuttall was introduced by Lord Bhikhu Parekh and hosted by Mark Hoda, with time for a short Q&A session at the end. The afternoon virtual Summer Gathering welcomed a smaller number but included friends from India and Holland, and an elderly lady who heard Gandhi Ji speak live. Her daughter carried on spinning in the background. So, every cloud does have that welcome silver lining! *Jane Sill*



## Statues and Reputations

*The Black Lives Matter movement sprung into life again following the death of an African-American man while being arrested and rapidly spread to many countries. It also spread out to include other issues than police and ethnic minorities and many of the issues rapidly became embodied in statues erected in cities to honour those men – almost always men – thought worthy in their own day. Sadly some of these statues that were threatened were of Gandhi. Here are two perspectives on the issue of Gandhi and racism.*

### **A Conspiracy to Defame Gandhi** by Nitin Mehta

A concerted international effort has been made to defame and downgrade Gandhi for quite a few years now. It seems that individuals and organisations involved in this campaign dislike very much the fact that Gandhi very proudly proclaimed his Hindu faith and culture. From wearing the traditional Dhoti to singing Hindu Hymns and having complete faith in the Hindu holy book, the Bhagvad Gita, Gandhi was proud of his Hindu heritage. Gandhi was also deeply influenced by Jain leader Srimad Rajchandra whom he considered his spiritual guide.

The anti-Gandhi lobby wants to defame Gandhi so that they can achieve their real target of belittling the world's oldest and most vibrant faith. These people have a strong aversion towards the Hindu faith. The last Gandhi statue taken down was at a University in Ghana. The vast majority of Ghanaians had no problem with the statue. However the hate lobby persuaded a few academics at the University that Gandhi was racist. All it then took was to organise a petition based on half truths and in no time thousands of people signed up. The hate lobby achieves its objective !

Those who are signing a similar petition here in the UK are unaware that during the Zulu protests against unfair taxes in 1906 they were flogged by the British as part of the punishment. They had festering wounds no one wanted to attend to. It was the Indian Ambulance Corps formed by Gandhi who nursed the Zulus suffering from horrific wounds. The Ambulance Corps sometimes had to walk 40 miles a day with stretchers on their shoulders. They would carry the wounded Zulus back to the camp and nurse them. For the wounded Zulus Gandhi's team of volunteers were God sent.

It is in South Africa that Gandhi started a struggle against injustice and his experiences there were of immense importance in his strategy to confront the British Raj in India. Gandhi's nascent movement for justice in South Africa inspired and galvanized a whole generation of South African freedom fighters like Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, Desmond Tutu and many others.

After Gandhi departed for India he left his son Manilal back in South Africa to continue the struggle. Manilal was present at a crucial meeting of the ANC in 1949, where he pressed the party to unconditionally adopt

nonviolence but with little success. The attitude of the party toward the Gandhian ideal of nonviolence was in subsequent years best summarized by Desmond Tutu. He said: "Gandhi was to greatly influence Martin Luther King Jr., the leading light in the American Civil Rights Movement, as well as the South African National Congress of Nelson Mandela. So many, many people expected our country to go up in flames, enveloped by a catastrophe, a racial bloodbath. It never happened. It never happened because in the struggle against an evil of injustice, ultimately it did not take recourse to violence, and because you and so many others in the international community supported the struggle."

Nelson Mandela wrote a wonderful article for the 3rd January 2000 issue of TIME magazine. The issue celebrated People of the Century. Mandela wrote about one of his teachers: Gandhi. His story was called The Sacred Warrior and shows some of the ways Gandhi influenced him. This is what he wrote: "Gandhi dared to exhort nonviolence in a time when the violence of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had exploded on us; he exhorted morality when science, technology and the capitalist order had made it redundant; he replaced self-interest with group interest without minimizing the importance of self. India is Gandhi's country of birth; South Africa his country of adoption. He was both an Indian and a South African citizen. Both countries contributed to his intellectual and moral genius, and he shaped the liberation movements in both colonial theatres. He was the archetypal anti-colonial revolutionary. His strategy of noncooperation, his assertion that we can be dominated only if we cooperate with our dominators and his nonviolent resistance inspired anticolonial and antiracist movements internationally and in our century. Both Gandhi and I suffered colonial oppression and both of us mobilized our respective peoples against governments that violated our freedoms. The Gandhian influence dominated freedom struggles on the African continent right up to the 1960s because of the power it generated and the unity it forged amongst the apparently powerless. Nonviolence was the official stance of all major African coalitions, and the South African ANC remained implacably opposed to violence for most of its existence. Gandhi remained committed to nonviolence; I followed the Gandhian strategy for as long as I could but then there came a point in our struggle when the brute force of the oppressor could no longer be countered through passive resistance alone. We founded the Unkhonto we Sizwe and added a military dimension to our struggle. Even then we chose sabotage because it did not involve the loss of life and it offered the best hope for future race relations. Militant action became part of the African agenda officially supported by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) following my address to the Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa (PAFMECA) in 1962, in which I stated, 'Force is the only language the imperialists can hear, and no country became free without some sort of violence.' Gandhi himself never ruled out violence absolutely and unreservedly. He conceded the necessity of arms in certain situations. He

said, "Where choice is set between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence ... I prefer to use arms in defense of honour rather than remain the vile witness of dishonour ..." Violence and nonviolence are not mutually exclusive; it is the predominance of the one or the other that labels a struggle.

It is a matter of great pride for Indians that Mahatma Gandhi has had such an enormous impact on so many people all over the world. Mahatma Gandhi was able to articulate the glorious heritage of India which had been stifled by invading armies for around a thousand years. Newly independent India also played an active role in bringing freedom to other colonised countries.

Those who are today asking for Gandhi's statues to be removed for his alleged racism please first study the subject in depth and do not fall for fake news.

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## **Gandhi's Contribution to Racial Equality** by George Paxton

When Gandhi arrived in South Africa in 1893, aged 23, he was immediately confronted with racial discrimination – mainly by those of European origin against the various 'coloured' groups. Gandhi had been fortunate to have been treated as an equal during his student days in Britain. It is however unfortunate that Gandhi himself initially was affected by the local race prejudice and adopted the belief that Africans – or Kaffirs as they were generally known – were inferior in culture to other races. Such a view was of course very general at that time, and held well beyond South Africa. It does raise the difficult issue of historical comparison. What is acceptable in one age may not be in another; attitudes change over time, and very often in a more humane direction.

Gandhi changed too, but in an erratic fashion and it is possible to pick quotations out of the wider context and say he was a racist. (Incidentally, the Indians in South Africa were called 'coolies' and Gandhi was a 'coolie lawyer'.) His initial position was to try to persuade the white governments that Indians were from an ancient advanced culture like themselves and so deserved at least something nearer to equality with them. For a long time he also believed that the British Empire could be reformed rather than destroyed.

But Gandhi also did not do himself justice in that, for example, he said very little about Africans in his autobiography, yet he did have friendly relations with the Zulus of Natal where he first settled. Near to Gandhi's Phoenix settlement was the Ohlange Institute which had been established by John Dube who was later to become the first President of the African National Congress. There, Zulus were taught literacy and various crafts and a weekly newspaper *Ilanga Lase Natal* (The Rising Sun) was edited in English and Zulu. Before the Institute had its own press it was printed on Gandhi's *Indian Opinion* press.

Not far from Durban was a community of German monks which Gandhi sought out, drawn at first to their vegetarianism, he was impressed by their relationship to the African children whom they taught. There were 1,200 Africans living there and he was pleased to observe no distinction of race; residents ate the same food as the monks and they were well dressed.

In 1905 there was a move in the Transvaal to restrict or deprive African rights in land and Gandhi protested strongly to the Governor about this. John Dube made a powerful speech for land rights and was praised by Gandhi for his stance. Gandhi also supported the efforts of John Tengo Jabavu to establish an Inter-State Native College which developed into the famous institution at Fort Hare (now a university). Jabavu edited the first Bantu political newspaper. Gandhi personally knew several of the Africans who founded the ANC in 1912.

In 1908 Gandhi delivered a speech to the YMCA in Johannesburg which included: "If we look into the future, is it not a heritage we have to leave to posterity, that all the different races commingle and produce a civilisation that perhaps the world has not yet seen?"

Early the next year Gandhi recommended the avoidance of tea, coffee and cocoa because of the very poor working conditions that the Africans had to endure, especially in cocoa production in the Congo. In 1910 he started traveling third class on the railway to experience the conditions that Africans had to endure. This was the beginning of Gandhi's third class travel which he continued when he returned to India.

Gandhi's influence on African-Americans goes back long before Martin Luther King. Before the Second World War a number of prominent black Americans (known then and later as Negroes) visited Gandhi, among them were Dr Howard Thurman, a theologian, Prof Benjamin E Mays President of Morehouse College, Dr Channing H Tobias of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. All were especially interested in the use of nonviolent action to further the removal of segregation in USA. Two of Gandhi's close colleagues also went the USA bringing Gandhi's ideas: Charles Freer Andrews in 1929 and Madeleine Slade (Mirabehn) in 1934, the latter speaking to black students and staff at Howard University.

W E B DuBois, one of the most prominent African-Americans presided over The Pan-African Congress (the 5th) held in Manchester in 1945 which recommended, following India's example, nonviolent non-cooperation for African countries seeking independence.

It is clear that Gandhi, although concerned primarily with Indian emancipation in Africa and India, was far from indifferent, even less antagonistic, to the aspirations of black Africans and their descendants in America.

A couple of useful sources on the subject are *The African Element in Gandhi* by Anil Nauriya ((National Gandhi Museum) and *The African-American Encounter with Gandhi* by Sudarshan Kapur (Beacon Press).

# **Khadi During the Independence Movement**

## **Embodying the Spirit of Freedom, Simplicity and Peace as a Symbol of a Future Society**

*Asha Buch*

(This article is based on the speech given by the author at the conference on 'Globalisation of Khadi' on 30/31 January 2020 at Jaipur, India)

Khadi or Khuddar as we know today became an emblem of the independence movement, and rightfully so. Today's youth can ask, 'What does a type of cloth and its production have to do with the independence of a country?' Gandhiji said, "I will bring independence by the thread of a hand spun yarn". If that was a slogan used in modern times, people would laugh. Unlike today's false promises which are hardly kept, this one was religiously kept. The idea of making hand spun and hand woven cloth bound the whole country by one single thread; and that was to gain independence by boycotting foreign goods and becoming self-sufficient.

### **Khadi – One of eighteen constructive programmes**

The movement to free India of foreign rule was going on for years before Gandhiji stepped into the political arena in 1915. But he could envisage that mere political freedom will not sustain this vast country which was gripped in economic, social, religious and cultural decline for centuries, and therefore he devised a plan of eighteen programmes – Rachnatmak Karya (constructive work), Khadi being one of them.

### **A solution for massive unemployment**

While touring the length and breadth of India for a year before expressing his opinions in public, Gandhiji could notice that in the first half of this century, and in many parts even now, farmers have not enough work to earn a living all throughout the year. For about four months they may be laid idle due to dry season. Gandhiji was inspired to find a simple solution to eradicate unemployment. It occurred to him that spinning yarn would thereby provide an occupation to those toiling the land and it can easily be learnt. It requires practically no outlay or capital, even an improved spinning wheel can be easily and cheaply made.

### **Charkha on the centre stage of the Swaraj movement**

It is hard to understand why Khadi was given such a high profile during the freedom movement. We need to cast our eyes back in history. Before the invention of machines, every village used to plant and harvest its own raw-materials for yarn, women and men were engaged in spinning yarn and village artisans used to weave and produce cloth for the entire population even in Western countries. This type of production and consumer model in

the textile industry lasted until the industrial revolution. The spinners and weavers in the countries where the industrial revolution first took place such as the United Kingdom also suffered loss of livelihood, but it had greater impact on its colonies, for instance the Indian sub continent. India had to pay export duties for the cotton she produced and import duties for the final product made in the cotton mills in the UK. This double whammy broke the back bone of Indian economy and its textile expertise. That is the reason why Khadi became a tool to turn the wheel of self-sufficiency by rejecting the monopoly of the British Raj and at the same time re-inventing our ancient skills of textile industry. We have to bear this in mind that Gandhiji wanted political freedom like any other leader of the time, but he also wanted the people to become economically independent without deploying violent means, so he planned to withdraw our support to the enrichment of the British Raj by boycotting their products. Thus came the spinning wheel, the Charkha, on the centre stage of the Swaraj movement.

The sale of all British goods and running of institutions depended on the services provided by the Indians, so, in order to weaken the foundation of British Raj, non-cooperation and boycotting all foreign products was the only effective method. With the propagation of Khadi, farming to fashion industries revived.

### **Is Khadi as a symbol of freedom still relevant ?**

Seven decades have passed since we achieved Swaraj, so we may pause to think, what is the relevance of Khadi in context of a symbol of freedom ? Remember, it was not just political freedom we were seeking. In 21st century India, we need to think about ethical and moral aspect of our textile industry. We ought to free ourselves from the injustice and exploitation inflicted by the mill owners, the demon of poverty caused by unemployment and environmental hazards created by textile mills. The spirit of freedom still lives on, only the elements to fight against and its methods will have to change.

### **The end of Britain's exploitative policies**

While negotiations for self rule were continuing at the highest level, vigorous attempts were being made to make the Indian population stronger in every aspect of life. This understated masterstroke of replacing foreign cloth by Khadi took the freedom movement beyond the rarefied circles of the educated social elite and out to the masses. This was also Gandhi's way of highlighting Britain's exploitative policies and making a huge symbolic dent on the legitimacy of the British colonial rule in India.

### **Khadi as a symbol of simplicity**

Please allow me to quote Gandhiji. "If we have the 'Khadi spirit' in us, we would surround ourselves with simplicity in every walk of life. The 'Khadi spirit' means infinite patience. For those who know anything about the production of Khadi know how patiently the spinners and the weavers have to



toil at their trade, and even so much we have patience while we are spinning the thread of Swaraj.”

I would like to share some of the comments I received while demonstrating spinning yarn on Charkha and running Charkha workshop in London. “There is nothing happening.” “You look very calm.” “It feels very spiritual and calming.” “I find it very difficult to believe that spinning like this can produce clothes that we wear.” It is almost impossible to convince a new generation that *our hands* can produce goods which we can use.

### **Khadi – Ethics and Environment**

Khadi has another dimension and that it is an ethical and environmentally friendly fabric. Those who have seen the images of the freedom movement will have noticed that men and women were dressed in pure white clothes whether it was made of Khadi or not. In the first half of the 20th century, India needed to clothe almost half of its population, so simple and everyday use fabric was required. Producing fashionable clothes came later in its production. As the spread of Khadi increased and more sales became necessary to sustain the industry, dyed, printed and embroidered Khadi materials took its place next to the simple white materials.

### **Fashion verses simplicity**

What is fashion ? To look younger than your previous generation, to look attractive and smarter than your friends, right ? That does not mean that we should use cheap and artificial materials which use a lot of natural resources and may not be biodegradable. Fashion needs to go hand-in-hand with sustainability. Khadi has always been associated with the old generation, old technique and a symbol of backwardness. We need to change this mindset. Good quality of hand spun, hand woven material, if styled well (be it cotton or silk) could work for any occasion.

### **Khadi – Eco-friendly fabric**

Simplicity does not necessarily equate with poor quality fabric. Organisations under the umbrella of Khadi and Village Industries have been working tirelessly to improve Khadi production techniques and providing employment to India’s impoverished weavers. Production of simple but long lasting Khadi material is the solution to many of our socio-economic problems.

I am fortunate to have been associated with the UK based organisation Khadi London for last three years. I have noticed that a new breed of young designers from India and abroad are interested in experimenting with this versatile fabric. They find Khadi not only attractive as strong texture, comfortable and suitable for cold and warm weather but also as an eco-friendly fabric.

### **Khadi as a symbol of peace for future society**

Khadi promotes and sustains de-centralised production and trade methods which prevent unjust wealth distribution. Gandhi also felt that in a country where manual labor was looked down upon, it was an occupation to bring high and low, rich and poor together, to show them the dignity of hand-labour. He hoped for a certain bond of unity between the classes and masses by bridging the gap with a common occupation, and he saw great social value in hand-spinning. It was for economic, cultural and social reasons and not merely political that Gandhi established the Khadi Movement. Thus Khadi is not merely a piece of cloth but a way of life.

### **Khadi – bonding humanity**

Gandhiji firmly believed that those who wish to live in free India ought to wear *Khadi*. Despite laying emphasis on the economic dimension of *Khadi*, Gandhi's economics had a different connotation and basis. For him it was not based on competition in which patriotism, sentiments, and humanity play little or no part. For him, *Khadi* wholly concerned itself with humanity.

### **Khadi promotes ethical practice and wellbeing**

In recent years Khadi is being seen as an ethical entity especially some textile and fashion designers in Western countries have become more pro-active in looking at the potential of Khadi as a replacement for synthetic fibres. Our ideals and concepts of life should be integrated in a mutually compatible way, instead they are in conflict with each other 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.

### **Socio-economic equality and Khadi**

The 21st century world is seeking more socio-economic equality. We know that Britain was the leading country in turning the wheels of the 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 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 modern era, we need to ask ourselves, is it beneficial to use synthetic fibres and mass-produced textile made in cotton mills? In the 1790s, the first newly planted cotton came from American plantations manned by slaves. Khadi industry is committed to preventing all kinds of modern slavery and ensure fair trade rules are implemented.

## **Environmentally friendly fabric – Khadi**

Khadi industry is obliged to use organic cotton, prevent the use of toxic pesticides and a high water footprint and a complete ban on using forced labour if it is to claim its ethical stance. Another major issue is protecting our environment. Working conditions in factories and emissions produced by textile mills have damaged our environment. Using solar power for spinning and weaving, reducing air and noise pollution by providing protective gears to the artisans in the Khadi industry seems to be the only viable option for future society.

## **Charkha and non-violence**

I would like to conclude with a quote I saw during my recent visit to Keerti Mandir in Porbandar (the birth place of Gandhiji). Here is the translation of the inscription below:

*I look for a nonviolent method which millions of people can implement and I find it in the Charkha.*

*There is ethics, economics and nonviolence embedded in Charkha.*

*Whenever I try to visualise nonviolence, I can see a Charkha. My Lord Rama dances on the thread of cotton.*

*Charkha is a symbol of nonviolence and in the end only nonviolence wins.*

*All my energy is derived from a Charkha. Just like the rule of the animal kingdom is violence; the rule of humankind is nonviolence.*

*The basic condition of nonviolence is love and pure selfless love is not possible without purity of body and mind.*

Let us all strive to have such faith in Khadi and village industries to make our future safe and secure. Jay Jagat

Asha Buch: email: [71abuch@gmail.com](mailto:71abuch@gmail.com)

## **Book Reviews**

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### **Hiroshima – Memory, Menace and Challenge**

***The Age of Hiroshima*** – Ed. Michael D. Gordin & G. John Ikenberry. Princeton University Press. 448 pages. Paperback £28. ISBN 9780691-193441.

Visiting Hiroshima and Nagasaki (in 1977 & 1987), I experienced bustling modern Japanese cities with few evident scars of their 1945 horrors, but the latter accorded remembrance by poignant statues in beautiful gardens and historical reference in dedicated museums. Their 'lest we forget' message becomes especially powerful on visiting Hiroshima's A-Bomb hospitals – specialist centres for both elderly survivors (hibakusha) of the August 6

atomic catastrophe and younger ones born post-1945 with genetic problems. (There have been as many victims since 1945 as at the time).

Like the fall of Rome and 'discovery' of America, the atomic destruction of the two cities and at least a quarter-million of their citizens in August 1945, was a transformative event in world history – ending World War Two and ushering the new era of humanity under the potentially terminal nuclear menace. (Especially intense during the 1945-1989 Cold War, it persists as long as nuclear weapons persist).

Military technology's manifest ability to destroy *all human life on this planet, in religious terms the blasphemous power to end Divinely-given Creation on our world* – evident as the Cold War unfolded, is central to faith reflection on Hiroshima. The latter was there at the start: the first A-Bomb explosion saw its prime creator Robert Oppenheimer quote the Bhagavad Gita: "I am become Death, Destroyer of Worlds". Reflecting on Hiroshima, a US columnist famously wrote: "We have stormed the very throne of God." The horrific perversion of Nature's fundamental forces for mass death on the Feast of Christ's Transfiguration, was not lost on Christian leaders like Rev. George MacLeod, founder of the Iona Community, who spoke of divinely-given Light-Energy transfigured by human wickedness into ultimate evil. Some US Christians engaged in reconciliation actions with Japan, but many Protestant fundamentalists came to see Hiroshima signifying Biblical 'End Times', even portending Christ's imminent Second Coming. Hal Lindsey's best-selling *Late Great Planet Earth* (1970 & 1976 film), blending Biblical prophecy with apocalyptic fundamentalism, alarmed President Reagan – "I don't want to be the one who initiates Armageddon" – into 1980s nuclear disarmament talks with Gorbachev. Liberal theologians reflected on "Hiroshima and the Darkness of God."

Lack of discussion of this faith dimension is serious omission in *The Age of Hiroshima*, essays of global scholarship edited by Princeton historians Michael D. Gordin and G. John Ikenberry, for the 75th anniversary. With this caveat, this work embracing international relations, history, politics, cultural studies, science and technology, is a notable inter-disciplinary study of the 'Hiroshima phenomenon'. Sections on 'Decisions and Choices', 'Movements and Resistances', 'Revolutions and Transformations' - examine the political-military context of 1945; Japanese, other Asian and European perspectives; China, and the ongoing nuclear shadow. US decision-making around the Bomb reveals Roosevelt's previous decisions constrained Truman, making its use almost inevitable [yet he could have agreed a non-lethal demonstration of its awesome power as some scientists urged]. Roosevelt's exclusion of USSR from decision-making on the Bomb is shown as *the true origin of the Cold War*: all post-1945 West-East divisions and lack of trust flowed from that decision, which manifested Roosevelt's determination USA emerge from the war as the world's dominant military and economic power. Notions the

nuclear attack on Japan had some racial motivation are untrue: the Bomb project was first conceived to defeat Nazi Germany. The US-Soviet nuclear race – "Mutually Assured Destruction" promising 1000 million global deaths – paralleled realisation nuclear war was unwinnable, and arms reduction essential to avoid catastrophe. Fuelled by Hiroshima, Japan stood by its unique Peace Constitution; its Peace Movement sustained anti-Bomb witness globally; but Soviet peace proposals at UN are not discussed.

Hiroshima's shadow fell across Western Europe as US/NATO established atomic bases in several countries, and UK and France acquired nuclear forces. All this created mass anti-nuclear sentiment and new political forces: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament from mid-1950s in UK, World Disarmament Campaign UK later, and similar campaigns in West Germany in 1980s notably against deployment of Pershing. (Oddly, this volume omits UK campaigns, solely focusing on Germany). These movements and US counterparts eg. Nuclear Freeze, constantly voiced public pressure for East-West Strategic Arms Limitation and Reduction Treaties, as steps towards total nuclear abolition. Globally, key Third World states rejected a binary East-West world order, creating a neutralist Non-Aligned Movement. Japan's Atoms for Peace Aid Programme for Asian Countries sought to rebuild relations with neighbours afflicted by its 1930s-1940s imperialism, Hiroshima symbolising its post-1945 commitment to world peace.

The final section highlights Hiroshima's continuing influence on notions of deterrence, proliferation, coercive diplomacy and nuclear-related strategy, including in relation to China. The threats to global stability from its nuclear acquisition and that by North Korea, Israel, India and Pakistan need further analysis - especially the dangerous confrontation of the latter two. The non-use of nuclear weapons in conflict since 1945, and emergence of the global 'nuclear taboo' is an ongoing sign of hope – but without progress on nuclear abolition is not secured. Cross-currents of debate about nuclear power, conflicted by the Chernobyl and Fukushima accidents and climate change concerns, remain unresolved.

This erudite work is not a text for peace campaigners, yet is very relevant to them. Its essays reveal Hiroshima as memory and menace, a narrative with many aspects and layers of meaning, an ongoing challenge and call to action for peace. As the Hiroshima Peace Park memorial prayerfully states: "Rest in Peace. May it Never Happen Again". *Rev Brian Cooper, Inter-Faith Secretary, Uniting for Peace.*

**The Decadent Society** by Ross Douthat, pub: Simon & Schuster, Hardback 272pp. £20 ISBN: 978-14767-85240.

1960s Britain saw transformative change: vibrant youth culture, the Church in 'Honest to God' ferment, rise of New Age spirituality, long-overdue social reforms, and Harold Wilson's upbeat vision of a New Britain forged in "the

white heat of technology". I personally recall that decade as a very exciting one – I was a Humanities lecturer at Coventry's shining new Polytechnic – albeit its promise was but partially realised.

The USA experienced turmoil: mass protests against the bitter Vietnam war, Martin Luther King's murder and race riots, Hippies and drug culture. Yet its relentless focus on techno-scientific progress climaxed with the July 1969 Moon landing – a moment of global wonder at human achievement and seemingly endless possibilities. Such is the starting-point of *New York Times* columnist Ross Douthat's wide-ranging analysis of Western (primarily USA but also European) society post-1969, which he deems an era of unfulfilled promise and failed hopes. The greatest exploration leap since 1492 proved the last: 1969-2020 has seen no Moon bases, no manned Mars missions, but rather a 'technological plateau'. In a quintessentially American view, Douthat says the 'frontier' – the driver of human advance – became closed. Decadence – defined as "economic stagnation, institutional decay, and cultural and intellectual exhaustion at a high level of material prosperity and technological development" – has prevailed.

This thesis, challengeable from various angles, yet holds important truths. In the Church, the promise of 1960s ecumenism ran into sand; globally, divisions between traditionalist-conservatives and liberal-progressives persist, as does numerical decline. Yet elsewhere, Russian Orthodoxy, South Korean Protestantism, Latin American Pentecostalism, and African churches, evidence resurgence. Furthermore, late 20th-century saw both world Islamism and the Inter-Faith Movement emerge. On surer ground, Douthat laments the lack of fresh intellectual and cultural movements; neo-liberalism and globalism proved hollow; the 'philosophy of progress' is dead. Yet mass computerisation, internet, AI, and rise of renewable energy, all give the lie to technological stagnation.

Historically, decadent societies neglect family life: across the rich world now, below-replacement fertility triggers population decline. Ultra-individualism causing singledom and social atomisation, consumerism, feminist and gay agendas undermining age-old male-female marriage, widespread disinterest in reproductive sex (even sex itself) by gadget-obsessed youth (notably in Japan), ready availability of divorce and abortion – all fuel Western decline, contrasting with fertile developing nations. Evangelical and Orthodox observers join this Catholic author in evidencing this as moral decadence.

Writing before Coronavirus, Douthat saw Western society enfeebled by stagnation – "both political utopianism and religious idealism have lost their grip on the contemporary imagination" – with reformist and populist movements alike too weak to effect significant change. Probing possible 'Renaissance' scenarios from 'radical life extension', Euro-Africa cultural partnership and Mars colonies to locally-energised political renewal and China-led techno-revolution, the author sees religious renewal (inspired by



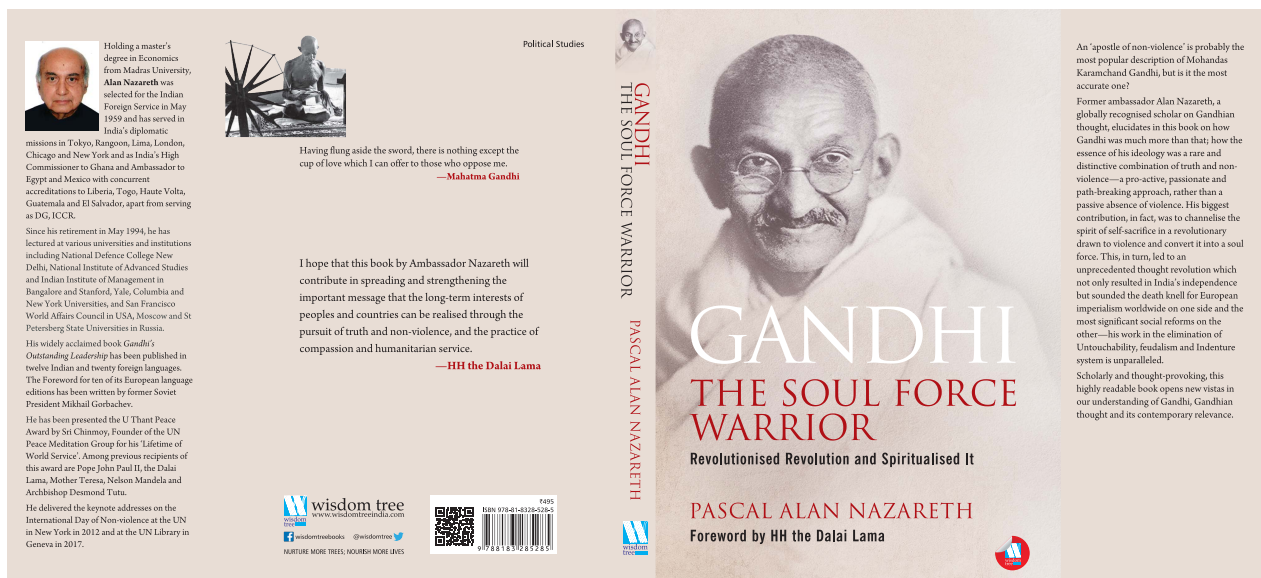
African and Chinese Christianity) allied with techno-change offering the best hope.

Pandemic and recession also give opportunity for reflection towards transformation. Priorities have already emerged: building a green, socially responsible capitalism to avert climate catastrophe, re-balancing globalisation by 're-homing' much manufacturing and food production, devaluing hedonistic individualism and affirming caring communities and respect for nature, and re-energising morally-driven global cooperation. Aside from Douthat's flights of fantasy, his insight-packed and stimulating analysis can certainly inform the post-Corona debate, with his emphasis on renewal of faith especially welcome.

*Brian Cooper*

**Gandhi: The Soul Force Warrior** by P A Nazareth, Wisdom Tree 2019, 125pp, Hardback.

In 2006 Pascal Alan Nazareth, former Indian Ambassador and founder of Sarvodaya International Trust, published a book aimed at a wide audience – *Gandhi's Outstanding Leadership*. It examined Gandhi's leadership qualities with the second half describing his impact on other individuals and movements in the decades following his death. The book was revised in 2010 and has been translated into more than 30 languages.



Now the author has written another book, this time considering the impact of Gandhi as a nonviolent revolutionary. The author begins with a succinct survey of some of the theorists and practitioners of political revolution, especially in the 20th century, who probably without exception advocated achieving their goal through the use of violence. In contrast, Gandhi wrote in 1925: "However much I may sympathise with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even

to serve the noblest of causes. Acts of violence create bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyer”.

Gandhi did believe in radical change but through following the path of Truth and Nonviolence. Settling in South Africa he found discrimination against the Indian population by the Europeans who, he discovered, were impervious to appeals to reason or justice. Thus he devised a new method of action which he called Satyagraha – the ‘Soul Force’ of the title. Much of the rest of his life consisted of experiments in satyagraha. Other important concepts in Gandhi’s thought – Swaraj, Sarvodaya, Swadeshi and Trusteeship are elucidated by Nazareth; and he touches on influences on Gandhi in addition to Hinduism such as Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, Jesus and Socrates.

Gandhi lived in the time of imperialism and there was no greater colonial territory than India so that his influence in his homeland would have repercussions elsewhere. But early in the 20th century there was considerable support for violent revolution especially in Bengal and Maharashtra and several British officials were assassinated. Later, in the 1930s Subhash Chandra Bose, a leading figure in the Indian National Congress, tried unsuccessfully to persuade Nazi Germany to collaborate but did succeed in raising an Indian National Army to fight with the Japanese against Britain.

However, by 1920 Gandhi had won over the majority of Congress, the reformers and the more radical, to the use of satyagraha in their campaign for independence. He also turned Congress from an elite body into a mass membership organisation. Independence was only one of Gandhi’s concerns and certain others were just as important – abolition of untouchability, the equality of women and men, abolition of poverty, the development of handicrafts, respect for nonhuman animals, respect for other religious and philosophical beliefs within a secular state, the creation of a nonviolent society – an immense task which was inevitably only partially successful.

What about Gandhi’s legacy in the wider world ? Nazareth selects some cases where nonviolent direct action in the spirit of Gandhi have been successful: M L King and Civil Rights in the USA in the 1950s and 60s; Benigno and Corazon Aquino removing undemocratic government in the Philippines in the 1980s; Lech Walesa and Solidarity in Communist Poland in 1980s; in Chile after the Pinochet coup of 1973 nonviolent resistance continued through the 1980s including a Movement Against Torture led by a Jesuit Priest, Jose Aldunate, and all this led to the electoral defeat of Pinochet in 1990. In Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi showed great courage in leading the call for democracy. Sadly since entering government she has decided to give support to the military’s action against the Rohingya minority leading in 2017 to migration of more than half a million people to Bangladesh who are now living in a vast refugee camp.

A successful example of nonviolent action, not however inspired by Gandhi, is described by the author. During the Nazi era about 2000 German Jews living in Berlin were rounded up with the intention of sending them to an extermination camp. However these men were married to German non-

Jewish women who decided to protest outside the building, which was close to the Gestapo headquarters. For a week their chanting continued in spite of threats of shooting. On the eighth day Goebbels ordered the release of their husbands. This reviewer has made a study of nonviolent resistance within Nazi Germany and in the occupied territories and there are many more examples than is generally realised. Sometimes the resisters were inspired by Gandhi, more often by their own conscience.

Looking to Gandhi's contribution to India itself, Nazareth points not just to the creation of the largest democracy in the world but to the manner of Britain leaving which was without rancour. Internally, Gandhi's efforts, along with others, weakened the scourge of untouchability; the participation of women in the independence movement led to their heightened status; rural industries began a revival; the indentured labour system which supplied British colonies with Indian workers was abolished in 1919.

Gandhi always had his political opponents and his detractors and Nazareth mentions some – Churchill the imperialist of course, B R Ambedkar the great Dalit leader in spite of their aims of abolishing untouchability being the same, Chandra Bose and Savarkar the extreme nationalists, but he could have included the leading Muslim, M A Jinnah. However his admirers would be a much longer list – Albert Einstein, Pope Francis, the Dalai Lama and many more. The author uses quotations from such individuals as well as academics to build a portrait of one of the most remarkable individuals to have lived – a revolutionary indeed.

*George Paxton*

### **“Flowers for Mohandas”**

I rarely if ever manage to sleep away from home  
But had actually drifted off when  
Through my hotel window came  
The sound of loud cheering and singing.  
I did not need to look at my watch – 11pm 31st January.  
I knew that back home people  
Would be gathering in cities and  
Towns for candlelit vigils, the light  
From which would guide us back  
To our friends.  
I do not usually feel lonely in London but I did then.  
The next morning as I walk to Friends House I take a few minutes  
To stand at the Gandhi statue in Tavistock Square.  
Someone has placed four bunches of flowers.  
My mood lifts as I see that in the midst of the cheering and chanting,  
Someone has brought flowers for Mohandas.  
Later in Meeting someone quotes from Jo Cox ... “There is more that unites  
us than divides us”.  
I hope so. I hope so.

Robert Thompson, Arbroath, Scotland

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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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**The deadline for the next issue is the end of October 2020**

Printed on recycled paper using vegetable based inks and 100% renewable energy  
by [www.hillingdongreenprint.co.uk](http://www.hillingdongreenprint.co.uk)  
Tel: 020 8868 7852