

## **Gandhi Foundation Annual Gathering and Workshop**

**Saturday 30 May 2009**

Kingsley Hall, Powis, Road, Bromley-by-Bow, London E3 3HJ

Further details in next newsletter or on website

## **Summer Gathering**

**25 July – 1 August 2009**

Venue has still to be arranged

Check the website or contact

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# GANDHI AND SECULARISM

*Matthew Bain*

Secularism is a term which is easily misunderstood, and perhaps nowhere does this have worse consequences than in India. The comparison is often made between India, described as a secular state, and Pakistan, founded as a homeland for the subcontinent's Muslims. India's secularism is ascribed in part to Gandhi, and it is certainly true that Gandhi wanted the Indian state to be the homeland for Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians alike. But Mark Tully has pointed out that, far from wanting a state in which religion is stripped from public life – most peoples' concept of secularism – Gandhi's hope was for a state in which truly religious values permeate all aspects of life, including the political sphere.

After his success in South Africa, Gandhi's first public speech in India, at the opening of the Hindu University in Benares, demonstrates how his political discourse was saturated with religious vocabulary:

"Truth is the end; love a means thereto . . . The Golden Rule is to dare to do the right at any cost. No amount of speeches will make us fit for self-government, it is only our conduct that will fit us for it . . . If we trust and fear God, we shall have to fear no-one, not maharajahs, not viceroys, not the detectives, not even King George."

Gandhi's concept of religion was, of course, a pluralistic one. As the Gandhi Foundation website eloquently quotes: "I believe in the fundamental Truth of all great religions of the world. I believe they are all God-given and I believe they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that if only we could all of us read the scriptures of the different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of these faiths, we should find that they were at the bottom all one and were all helpful to one another."

Gandhi's vision of the secular state is a place where religious values and discourse are cherished and respected in all spheres of life, the public as well as the private, but in which no single religion is allowed to dominate the others. This latter clause prevented Gandhi from supporting the Hindu nationalist (Hindutva) movement which is now so prominent on the Indian political scene. The Hindutva groups see secularism as an enemy because it is a barrier to Hindu hegemony.

Opponents of secularism also include Islamic revivalist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan. According to their ideology: "Secularism was equated with godlessness, an absence or denial of religious values, rather than a separation of church and state in order to guarantee religious freedom in

pluralistic societies." (John Esposito, *Islam – The Straight Path* OUP 1998)

Unfortunately modern atheists too have misunderstood secularism, believing it means that no one should be allowed to employ religious language in their political discourse, which would have prevented Gandhi from speaking ! Admittedly there is much to dislike about certain forms of religious discourse in politics, speaking as I do from the standpoint of a European observing the US presidential elections. It shows me the merit of Alistair Campbell's famous caveat to Tony Blair: "We don't do God".

Gandhi's religious discourse was accepted by his audience, and was effective in motivating them politically, because they were, by-and-large, religious people. The use of religious language in modern British political life would be doomed to failure, because it would alienate the atheists, it wouldn't satisfy the fundamentalists, and it would fail to motivate the remainder. Perhaps all we are left with is our own private faith to motivate our actions in the political sphere, and a recognition of Wittgenstein's deep spiritual truth:

"Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent". Δ

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## Letter

*My name is Garvin and I was born in New Zealand on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 1928. My aims are similar to yours with regards to spreading knowledge and understanding of Gandhi's message. My way is to do walks.*

*In March 2005 I was a participant in the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Salt March and since then I have walked in the name of Mahatma Gandhi on several occasions both in Australia and in Assam and Gujarat.*

*In March 2009 I am returning to Assam where my friends and I will be spending six weeks travelling and walking around Assam and the other seven states of the North East raising awareness of Gandhi's message and working on education for the underprivileged children.*

*It is my belief that I must carry out the advice Gandhi gave to an English missionary who asked "What can I do to help the starving millions?" and Gandhi reply, "We must get down from our pedestals and go and live with the people who are suffering and experience their hardships and their sorrows". I KNOW that the world will never have peace until we take care of the suffering millions.*

Garvin Brown <[garvin@onthenet.com.au](mailto:garvin@onthenet.com.au)>

# Te Whiti o Rongomai : A Forerunner of Gandhi

*Helena Nielson*

Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King and Gandhi are all well known as advocates of peace, but not many people, even in New Zealand, have heard of Te Whiti, a Maori leader who practised nonviolent resistance against the British Empire two generations before Gandhi. It is unclear whether Gandhi was inspired by Te Whiti's philosophy and actions but there is evidence that he heard about him from two Irish visitors who had visited Parihaka, Te Whiti's model community in New Zealand. This article is an attempt to acknowledge and honour Te Whiti's life and achievements.



Te Whiti o Rongomai was born in the early nineteenth century in Taranaki on the west coast of the North Island of New Zealand. As the son of a minor Maori chief, he was educated in Maori traditions and learnt to read and write at a Catholic missionary school. His favourite book in the Bible was Revelations and, in adult life, he often used quotations from the Bible.

The mid nineteenth century saw a period of relatively peaceful co-existence between the Maori and what were small numbers of European settlers. In 1840 the Treaty of Waitangi was signed between the British government and many Maori chiefs giving Britain sovereignty over New Zealand in return for the protection of Maori rights and resources. The meaning of the Act was however, interpreted differently by both sides and is still being contested in New Zealand courts a hundred and sixty years later.

Maori resistance to selling land, however, provoked twelve months of fighting in Taranaki in 1860 and 1861. Neither side was able to force a victory and an uneasy truce existed when, in 1862, the ship *Lord Worsley* was shipwrecked off the Taranaki coast. A crowd of Maori were waiting for the survivors as they reached the shore. Despite a peaceful reception, one of the white passengers called out to those remaining on

the *Lord Worsley* to throw all the ammunition on board into the sea to prevent its falling into the hands of the Maori. The situation began to turn ugly until two Maori chiefs arrived and took control. One of these was Te Whiti, who killed a bullock to feed the passengers and then sent word to New Plymouth, the nearest town, to say that the passengers were safe. Te Whiti then organised for his men to escort the passengers safely to New Plymouth. The other Maori chief was Te Ua, whose cult followers, in 1864 at the battle of Sentry Hill, went to fight against the white settlers with their right hand raised believing that the Christian God would protect them. Many were consequently killed.

George Grey had become Governor of New Zealand for a second term in 1861. In his earlier period of office he had learnt Maori and organised for their traditions and myths to be written down, thus earning the respect of many Maori. The situation, however, was different in 1861 as New Zealand now had its own elected parliament. In the three years after 1861 the white population doubled. White settlers in the North Island were eager to take over Maori land and in 1863 The Suppression of Rebellion Act was passed stating that any Maori fighting to retain their land was a rebel and therefore could be detained indefinitely without trial. This Act was quickly followed by The New Zealand Settlements Act, which allowed the Government to take over any land claimed by so-called rebels.

### **Seizure of Maori land**

Three million acres were seized mainly in Taranaki leading to renewed fighting. Te Whiti took no part in the ensuing wars and when his village was burnt in 1865 he took his people inland and set up the town of Parihaka. Parihaka was run as a model community. Te Whiti and his fellow leader Tohu Kakahi argued that the Maori should refuse to sell land to the white settlers but should live in peaceful coexistence and reject the use of violence. Te Whiti was a very charismatic leader who was very knowledgeable and loved to talk in metaphors. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of every month a meeting was held in Parihaka attended by many Maoris from outside the town and even some white individuals. Te Whiti's followers used the white feather of the albatross as a symbol of their peaceful intentions.

Although Te Whiti welcomed other Maoris into Parihaka, he refused to become involved in any plans for armed resistance to the seizure of their lands. There is a story that when Titokowaru, the great Maori warrior came to Parihaka with his armed followers, Te Whiti stopped him and said "Titokowaru the man is welcome, but when Waru the man comes to Parihaka, Waru the warrior must stay at home." Titokowaru pointed to the armed warriors behind him and asked Te Whiti arrogantly "Who is behind you?" "God" replied Te Whiti. At this

Titokowaru told his men to lay down their arms and was welcomed into the town.

By the end of the 1870s Parihaka was a thriving community with a population of approximately 1500. Self sufficient in food, they also grew cash crops and used the latest agricultural equipment. Many European visitors praised the village for its orderliness and industry.

Although Maori land had been confiscated in the 60s, few European settlers had bought land there. So in 1878 the colonial government came up with a plan to survey the land prior to selling it off to some of the many settlers who were arriving on assisted passages from the United Kingdom. The surveyors cut through Maori fences and trampled cash crops, so Te Whiti organised for his followers to plough up grasslands belonging to existing European farmers. This enraged the white population and some members of the colonial government were determined to teach the Maori a lesson. An MP Major Harry Atkinson wrote in the local paper that, "he hoped if war did come, the natives would be exterminated."

Te Whiti commanded that the ploughers should resist arrest and violence passively, saying "Go, put your hands to the plough. Look not back. If any come with guns, be not afraid. If they smite you, smite not in return. If they rend you, be not discouraged. Another will take up the good work."

As the ploughers were arrested, others immediately took their place. A commission was set up to try to resolve the issue but although they reported that it was a puzzle why the land had been confiscated when Te Whiti had never been a rebel, it still recommended that the surveying and sale of land should continue. The interim report from the commissioners stated that, "the story (of how the Maori had been treated) ought to fill us with shame".

In 1880 Native Minister Bryce, known to the Maori as Bryce-kohuru or Bryce of the murders, insisted that a road was built north towards Parihaka. At first Te Whiti offered the labourers food as a sign of hospitality and was offered beer in return. But when Bryce ordered the road to be built through cultivated fields, refusing to fence it off so that livestock would not eat growing crops, Te Whiti ordered that fences should be erected and the road blocked. The road builders destroyed these fences and Parihaka fencers remorselessly kept rebuilding them. In total 420 ploughers were arrested and 216 fencers. Several later died in prison on the South Island.

Taking advantage of the absence of the British governor in 1881, parliament passed a proclamation giving Te Whiti 14 days to expel all non residents and to accept the reserves set aside for him, which would be sold by the government with Parihaka receiving rents for them. Te Whiti refused to sign.

## **Nonviolent resistance continues**

On 5<sup>th</sup> November Bryce, the native Minister, along with a group of 2674 armed men, made up of volunteers as well as armed constabulary, rode to Parihaka. Croumbie-Brown, a newspaper reporter from the Christchurch *Lyttleton Times*, hid in one of the Parihaka houses and filed a full report of what happened, much to the annoyance of the government who had refused to allow any media to be present.

The militia were met by a group of 200 young boys, who sang and performed a haka or action routine. Then came a group of young girls skipping. Around 2,500 adults had been sitting in silence since midnight and 500 loaves had been baked to feed the militia. “If war comes, what can we do but look on and laugh” said Te Whiti.

The Riot Act was read but met by silence, which continued for an hour. After this Te Whiti and Tohu were arrested and taken away. The Maori remained silently where they were until nightfall. Next day the militia returned and began destroying the town and dispersing the Maori. Te Whiti and Tohu were never brought to trial as the politicians feared they would not be found guilty. Instead they were removed to Christchurch prison in the South Island. Christchurch had been founded in 1839 as a model community of Anglicans based on the city of Oxford. Here the two Maori leaders were admired by many of the city elders. They were given tweed suits and a meal of tinned lobster and taken on outings to show off the advanced technology and 'civilisation' of the European settlers. Te Whiti when asked if he had been impressed said he had liked the river. He claimed, “...indeed the Pakeha (white settlers) did have some useful technology but not the kindness of heart to see that Maori also possessed much great technology, which if Pakeha were prepared to adopt, would lead to stability and peace and the building of a great new society”.

## **Parihaka restored**

In 1883 after the British governor in New Zealand had pleaded the Maoris' case in the House of Commons in London, Te Whiti and Tohu were released and taken back to Parihaka. Here they helped rebuild the village in a modern mixed European and Maori style. Both leaders continued to live there until their deaths in the early 1900s.

The political and social context for Te Whiti's passive resistance differed in significant ways from Gandhi's, three generations later. The Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 had given Great Britain sovereignty over New Zealand and the Maori rights as British citizens. In 1854 a New Zealand Parliament met for the first time and the British crown showed little interest in this small colony 12,000 miles away. Te Whiti was fighting for the right of Maori to live independent lives on their own lands but in peaceful coexistence with European settlers who were arriving in

boatloads on assisted passages. His fight was with these settlers and their leaders rather than with the full might of the British Empire.

Given the difficulties and limitations of international communication at the time, Te Whiti's passive resistance received less media attention in Britain and the wider world than Gandhi's. His actions did not fit the white settler view of the colonisation of New Zealand and so were largely ignored by white historians until recently.

However as with Gandhi, powerful opinion in both the colony and London was divided as to the rights and wrongs of the Maori case. Several Maori challenged the government's land claims in the courts and by personal entreaty to Queen Victoria. Unlike Gandhi, Te Whiti refused to take part in these actions.

Te Whiti and his followers in Parihaka lived simply but were not averse to using modern, European technology. They willingly offered hospitality to any European settlers even opponents. Large crowds came to hear Te Whiti speak, as he was a gifted and charismatic orator.

Te Whiti believed not only in total nonviolence, or ahimsa, but also in satyagraha, or civil disobedience, by resisting the surveying of Maori land through the actions of the ploughers and the fencers. He argued that Maoris should never sell their land but his vision was that Maoris would continue to live according to their traditional customs and beliefs in peaceful coexistence with European settlers. His traditional Maori spirituality was combined with a sound knowledge and belief in the Christian bible.

For these beliefs Te Whiti was willing to spend time in prison and to put his own and his followers lives at risk. As Gandhi said "I am willing to die for many causes but not to kill".

Gandhi is officially recognised in India as "The father of the nation". Te Whiti certainly does not receive such recognition in his homeland except perhaps amongst the Maoris. The European settlers continued taking over Maori land, and in the twentieth century many Maoris were forced to move to the cities, thereby often losing touch with their tribe and traditional customs. Discrimination often also led to unemployment, poverty and other social problems.

However, almost one hundred years after Te Whiti's civil disobedience campaign against land seizures, New Zealand was forced to acknowledge the injustices that had been committed in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Treaty of Waitangi Act in 1975 led to formal apologies and the setting up of a Tribunal to settle Maori land claims. Significant places regained their Maori place names. Aoraki – Mount Cook, the highest mountain in New Zealand returned to the Ngai Tahu tribe, who the same day gave it back to the nation, their mana restored. Mana, an important concept in Maori culture, refers to authority or reputation and it is keeping this alive within the Maori communities that



is perhaps Te Whiti's greatest legacy. Δ

### **Further Reading**

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Riseborough, Hazel. *Days of Darkness: Taranaki 1878-1884*. Revised ed. Auckland: Penguin 2002.

Walker, Peter. *The Fox Boy* London: Bloomsbury. 2001.

King, Michael. *The Penguin History of New Zealand* Auckland: Penguin 2003.

*The Lyttelton Times* November 7<sup>th</sup> 1881.

Helena Nielsen, a former social work tutor and present peace activist came across the story of Te Whiti during a two month stay in New Zealand. She can be contacted on [helena@nielsen17.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:helena@nielsen17.fsnet.co.uk)

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### **The Symbolism of the White Feather in History**

The white feather in history has been both a symbol of peace and paradoxically a symbol of cowardice.

As a symbol of cowardice, the Oxford University Dictionary dates the first appearance of the term "showing the white feather" as 1795. The term comes from cock fighting, when a white feather indicated cross breeding and therefore inferior fighting ability.

In 1902 A E W Mason wrote a story about a British officer whose resignation, being seen as a sign of cowardice, led to his receiving four white feathers, three from fellow officers and one from a lady. Ashamed the officer goes to fight in the British Sudanese war of 1882 and then returning to England gives back the feathers.

Following this story, a month after the outbreak of the First World War, a retired Admiral, Penrose Fitzgerald, formed a band of 30 women to give educated men who were not in uniform a white feather to encourage them to enlist and set an example to the working class. The custom soon caught on throughout the country but became unpopular when disabled men or those in essential industries were mistakenly given feathers. The government responded by casting a badge with King and Country on it for those legitimately entitled not to enlist.

Allegedly the first recorded use of the white feather as a symbol of peace was in Easton, New York State. In 1775, Quakers there, when faced with a crowd of Indian warriors, decided to sit in silence to show that they were peaceful. After searching the meeting-house for weapons, the Indian Chief attached a white feather above the door of the meeting-house to show others that the Quakers were not to be harmed.

The white feather is still displayed as a symbol of peace by the community of Parihaka which holds an international peace conference every year in memory of Te Whiti and Tohu's passive resistance. Δ

# Memories of the Troubles

*John Bradley*

When I jumped into the Learners' Pool for the first time, not knowing to hold my nose, the bubbles filled my nose and mouth. Almost 40 years later, I remember it still. However, it is what happened outside the Baths that I remember more vividly, brought to mind quite often by photographs or a chance moment of television footage. Memories that children should not really have.

I came across a photo recently of a young man wounded – shot in the back, to be precise – by the British Army on Bloody Sunday, January 1972, in my home town. The entry wound was small and dribbled just a bit of blood. It fascinated me. “You’re obsessed,” said my wife, “obsessed with any aspect of that period.” Perhaps I am. However, for me, these are more than just photos. They bring back very real memories. The vague white smoke in the pictures ? That’s the CS gas that clawed at my throat, made me choke as an 11 year old, got through closed windows and tore at my brothers’ eyes. The gas that I walked through many afternoons on leaving “The Wee Nuns” Primary School.

Those rifles ? I can tell you the sound of each one. The report of a British Army Self Loading Rifle in the streets behind our house. It doesn't sound like in a movie, it's a shockingly loud, sharp report that bounces off the walls of the street – and it left the gable end of the house at the top of Beechwood Avenue pock-marked, just like in 'real' wars. The M16 Armalite sounds more lethal than its toy-like appearance suggests and left bullet hole after bullet-hole in the breeze-block wall beside the Baths.

It's Eugene Dunne, called out of our French class at 16 years old to be told his father had been blown up 'accidentally'. Or my other classmate, Bernie McGuigan, whose Dad is the man in the photograph with the huge puddle of blood around his head on Bloody Sunday. Or seeing the Paratroopers who did that, earlier in the day, on my way to church, ready for action, their faces blackened, heads covered with the cropped helmet of their regiment. Or my Primary Teacher, Mr Carr, who taught us to sing songs, making little circles with his tuning fork in his right hand, coached us to recite poetry for the annual Feis: he was blown into a tree in his school grounds by a booby trap. Or the petrol tanker which was blown up in front of Strand Road RUC station. Do you know that there is a short gap between the sound of a bomb going off and the red glow of the explosion ? Or watching virtually all the shops in Foyle Street being blown up in front of my eyes, bursting into flame. Or, on a beautiful summer's day being told that my A Level schoolmate was being charged with a double murder. Or that our next door neighbour was

blown on fire into the street while his pal, also making bombs, was blown to pieces. Or seeing our gym's huge windows cave in all around the 12 year old boys herded there for safety. Or seeing our Irish language teacher blown across the room as the IRA launched a bomb against an Army 'sangan' in the school grounds, just yards away, destroying the look-out post and probably the people in it. Or watching the corner of our little cul-de-sac every afternoon, to make sure that my brother Paul returned safely each day. Or witnessing, as a 10 year old, our policemen baton charge a Civil Rights march in Shipquay Street. Or my aunt's neighbour, a policeman and family friend, shot 9 times in the back in Donegal. Or taking cover in Stanley's Walk as the bullets zinged down the street at the Army patrol in front of us.

Of course, that's one aspect of my childhood. A hint of new-mown grass takes me immediately to week-ends and summers spent with my parents' families, learning to milk cows, perching on top of a trailer loaded unsteadily with bales of hay, driving a tractor at – well, almost – break-neck speed, watching the sun set, counting the stars on a dark, silent night. Doing what little boys like to do – playing by the river, fishing, making model aeroplanes, climbing trees. Listening to stories about everyday adventures, woven by Brendan Brolly, pulling slowly on his pipe, his eyes scrunched into a constant smile, sharing with us yarns of every sort that had us laughing into the early hours.

One August, that changed. With no television in our mother's home, my brothers and I listened to the RTE news on the old radio up on the shelf in the kitchen, the windows open to cool things down. We heard how our city was alight, how thousands of CS gas canisters had been fired and knew that our father was in the middle of it all, besieged by crash-helmeted policemen in his workplace. We never had to worry about our parents' safety. Until then. Jack Lynch, the Irish Prime Minister was to add more concern with his announcement that he was ordering Army Field Hospitals to the border with Northern Ireland. Was an invasion the next step ?

Our schoolmates, when we returned in September, had all manner of tales of adventure, mostly involving throwing stones at the police and seeing petrol bombs hurled from the top of high-rise flats. They helped to build barricades made up of planks, old oil drums, paving stones and barbed wire. What fun ! To encourage their Dad's petrol bombing prowess in hitting their black-coated targets, they found new rhymes to sing: "Throw well, throw Shell". In the school playground we played 'Rioters and Police' with all of us wanting to be the goodies – the rioters, of course and chanting a favourite slogan: "SS RUC." Our lives were never quite the same, as stones and petrol bombs gave way to shooting and violent death. We did not know we were going through the process of losing our childhood, of losing our innocence, of being thrust into

history and a welter of violence which we neither requested nor enjoyed. That's why I'm obsessed.

The seeds of peace took a long time to germinate. My father survived working in the midst of violence and remained the gentlest of men, both in word and deed. The lad with the bullet wound in the back? He, too, survived. My school, you would be forgiven for thinking, must have become a nest of violent upbringing? Quite the contrary. It now boasts of two Nobel Laureates, one of them for Peace. My own family now hears of bombs and bullets only through my stories that seem almost ancient history for them.

In the darkest days of my young memory, I listened to my mother praying for peace every day. She prayed, not just for the dead or injured, but for the mother of every person killed, because she could feel their sorrow. She never doubted that peace would come. Sadly, it came 10 years too late for her. Her hope of peace never wavered. Perhaps she could sense that the future would bring the most unlikely of partnerships formed between previously bitter enemies. Her hope that her children, grown used to the sound of explosions and gunfire, would bring up their children to know the sound of peace, has come true. She would be pleased that disputes would be resolved by discourse, not force. That people would not lose their lives because of the church they attended or the job they chose to do. That old misunderstandings would begin to be resolved.

I am proud of where I come from and of the city's history since its founding in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, to its stout walls and ancient buildings. I am proud of its location, of the fabulous views across Lough Foyle and out to the Atlantic Ocean in the distance. Proud, too, of the different communities, going back centuries, whose traditions and shared history make my hometown what it is. Its people have not been broken by violence and mayhem. We have a way to go, but we are getting there.

At a time when violence seems to grow more common every day, whether in the streets of Gandhi's Mumbai or in the seemingly unending tragedies unfolding daily in Palestine and Israel and elsewhere in the Middle East, I can only offer one thought: "Hope." When needless death clouds a country, its cities, its people, Hope must never be allowed to be extinguished. In the darkest of hours, the seed of peace may be sown. It was so in Ireland, where the most dreadful of deeds resulted in the beginnings of a dialogue between enemies. Good can be harvested from the evil that is violence.

Not an advocate of violence in any way, nor of violent men, my father knew what Presidents may not have: that, through discourse between enemies and the uncovering of common ground, old hatreds can begin to be overcome, barriers brought down and the basis for a lasting Peace can be established. Always hope. Δ

# Film Review

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## Jinnah

This film was released in 1998 but due to contractual and political difficulties, was only released on DVD in Britain in 2004.



According to BBC reports, the Pakistan Government was to have funded the film, but withdrew when it learned that Christopher Lee was to take the lead role. Apparently his fame for portraying Dracula caused the insult, though nervousness over public reaction to the film has also been suggested as a reason. Even now it is difficult to obtain a copy.

The film begins with the death of Mohammed Ali Jinnah; through a computer error, the details of Jinnah's life have been lost, and he and his recording angel must travel back through his life to reassess it. This rather charming device allows the writers, Jamil Dehlavi and Akbar Ahmed, to show us the story of Jinnah's life, both the world-changing decisions he was involved with, and the smaller personal events which influenced them.

To their immense credit, the writers avoid descending into hagiography. The film merely presents evidence and leaves us to make up our own minds. Quaid-e-Azam (father of the nation) himself chose not to follow Bapu's approach of rousing righteous indignation, lest that same indignation be turned less righteously on Muslims. So the film's unemotional view of the man is particularly apt.

I sense the film suffered from a lack of funding; some of the acting is variable and some scenes seem a bit disjointed to me. Nevertheless, that the film was made at all is remarkable, given the protests. Christopher Lee (Jinnah) and James Fox (Mountbatten) give the performances you would expect, and both they and the film received positive reviews from the critics. This film is ideal for Gandhians looking for an introduction to the alternative side of partition.

The PAL All regions DVD was available through [www.hmv.com](http://www.hmv.com), and also through [www.christopherleeweb.com](http://www.christopherleeweb.com). Mostly in English, with English subtitles when necessary.

*Chris Clarke*

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# Book Review

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## **Ghaffar Khan: Nonviolent Badshah of the Pukhtuns**

Rajmohan Gandhi Penguin/Viking 2004 pp300 €23.40

Eknath Easwaran writes in his biography of Khan: “The definitive history of Khan's life and movement remains to be written”. The current situation in the Pathan or Pakhtun area of Pakistan and Afghanistan makes a study of his life and culture particularly relevant.

There are a number of studies of Khan in existence:

D G Tendulkar's *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is a Battle* has been considered as the ninth volume of his biography of Gandhi in eight volumes. (1967)

Pyarelal's *Pilgrimage for Peace: Gandhi and Frontier Gandhi among North West Frontier Pathans*; by Gandhi's former secretary and biographer.

Eknath Easwaran's *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam: Badshah Khan, A Man to Match his Mountains* (1984)

Khan's own *My Life and Struggle*, narrated to K B Narang (1969)

Mukulika Banarjee's *The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition and Memory in the North West Frontier* is not a biography as such but an account of the rank and file members of the Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) founded by Khan.

According to Rajmohan Gandhi, Khan's thinking can be summed up in the following six points:

1. The struggle he mobilised was nonviolent.
2. Forgiveness was part of Islam; a passion to find an answer to the code of revenge to which Pathans appeared to be sworn.
3. Non-Muslims were as important as Muslims.
4. He wanted Pashtun women to study, work and lead; an example of this is sending his daughter to study in Britain.
5. Although being a devout and loyal Muslim, he was also enthusiastic about his region's older Buddhist history.
6. Against the politics of 'me first' and double standards he asked his Khudai Khidmatgar to serve society and practice the values they espoused.

Although often called the Frontier Gandhi, Khan has always linked his nonviolence to Islam. At a meeting in Bardoli he said:

“There is nothing surprising in a Musalman or a Pathan like me subscribing to nonviolence. It is not a new creed. It was followed fourteen hundred years ago by the Prophet, all the time he was in Mecca ... But we had so far forgotten it that when Mahatma Gandhi placed it

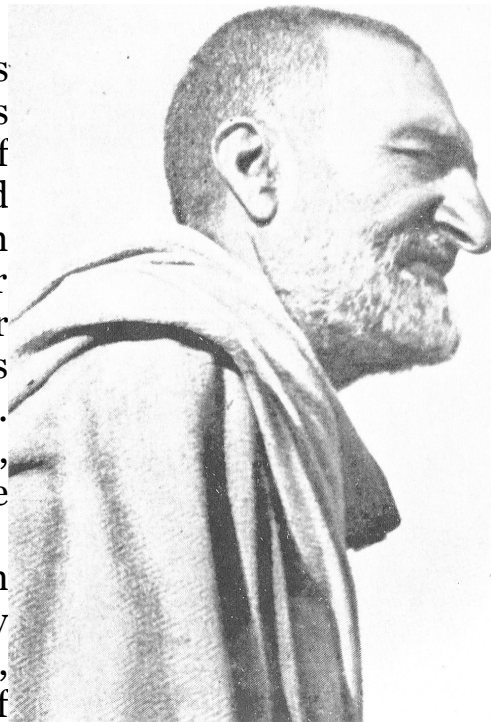
before us we thought he was sponsoring a new creed or a novel weapon ..”

Khan was certainly not a mere appendix to Gandhi. His nonviolence depended on his own thinking and he grounded his ideas of nonviolence on both Islam and the traditional thinking of his own people, what he called Pukhtunwali. Banerjee says that Khan's nonviolence was based on this traditional code and Islam. Another author, Barbara Metcalf, refers to two ideas in Islam – “the lesser Jihad” which is related to the legitimate armed struggle against injustice, and to “the greater Jihad”, denoting the inner struggle of an individual to develop a true commitment to Islam and cultivating the necessary qualities which the Quran cherishes. The Khudai Khidmatgar therefore was neither Gandhian in inspiration nor a mere tactical manoeuvre but rather a creative ideological position. Pukhtunwali had its key-terms – shame, honour, refuge, and hospitality.

Another author, J P S Uberoi, has said; “In order to be martyrs human beings have to possess the qualities of truthfulness, fearlessness, poverty and chastity.” Badshah Khan must have been converted to nonviolence in 1919-20. After 1920 he started telling Pukhtuns that their condition would never improve as long as they believed in “blood for blood”. “Violence creates hatred and fear, nonviolence generates love, makes one bold.”

Looking to the present, Rajmohan Gandhi writes: “Placing contemporary Pakhtuns, whether resident in Pakistan, Afghanistan or elsewhere, in the setting of the real or imagined clash between Islam and the West-dominated modern world, they may ask whether Badshah Khan has anything to offer to an understanding of this presumed clash. Related to this clash is the discussion in which adherents and scholars of Islam are currently engaged: Does Badshah Khan contribute anything of value to the modern debate within the world of Islam?”

The Western world does not even consider this question. Yet Khan's territory is again an area of intense fighting and many Western countries are involved. Rajmohan Gandhi concludes : “Let us attempt to appraise him as a Pakhtun, as a subcontinental figure, as a Muslim and finally as a voice in today's world”.



*Piet Dijkstra*



## Cecil Evans 1925-2009

One of the principal founders of the Gandhi Foundation, Cecil Evans, died after some months of declining health on 1 January 2009.

Cecil was born in 1925 in Liverpool of Welsh parentage. At the outbreak of war in 1939 Cecil was at the Liverpool Institute High School and was evacuated to Bangor and then after a return to Liverpool was evacuated again when the docks were bombed. He joined the Royal Navy and served on minesweepers in the Channel. The experience turned him into a pacifist.



At Oxford University Cecil studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics and there he met Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics who interpreted the West to the East and the East to the West and wrote *Recovery of Faith: The Way to a Religion of the Spirit*. Radhakrishnan later became the President of India (1962-

67).

Meeting a Quaker in the audience of a lecture he attended, Professor Sutton introduced Cecil to the Society of Friends. Leaving Oxford in 1949 he got a temporary job teaching Latin in a Quaker school at Wigton and was accepted into membership of Birkenhead Meeting in 1953.

A little later he left for Canada and became General Secretary of the Canadian Friends Service Committee with a staff of two and attended Toronto Meeting. He got to know a number of American Friends and was deputed to attend the UN General Assembly for a month. He then spent three years from 1960 in New York as staff member of the Quaker United Nations Office.

Returning to Britain after ten years he obtained a teaching post at Leighton Park, the Quaker School in Reading, where for four years he taught the history and principles of Quakerism.

Cecil was then appointed the International Secretary and then General Secretary of the Friends Peace and International Relations Committee of London Yearly Meeting (1974-8). With restructuring he became Assistant General Secretary of Quaker Peace and Service until his retirement (circa 1990).

He was also secretary of the Quaker group for diplomats in London and managed the One Percent Fund to encourage (by practical example



and advocacy) the Quaker concern that 1% of the national budget should go to overseas aid.

Cecil represented British Quakers for years on an annual consultation into Quaker work at the UN set up in the 1970s. He participated actively in the NGO Human Rights network in London, acting as its secretary for a time. He strongly supported the Quaker witness in Europe at Brussels, and the setting up of Quaker House in Brussels.

From 1980 Cecil was a Trustee, Chairman and, latterly, Patron of the Prisoners of Conscience Appeal Fund. Originally established in 1962 as the relief arm of Amnesty International, the Fund is now a separate charity and the only agency in the UK making grants specifically to prisoners of conscience. The Fund aims to raise and distribute money to help prisoners of conscience and/or their families rehabilitate themselves during and after their ordeal. In 1992 Cecil was instrumental in linking with the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, based in Geneva, and through this thousands of individual and families have benefited from this wonderful legacy.

In 1982 Cecil married Isabel Copeland-Watts at Uxbridge Meeting House and they both became members of Jordans Monthly Meeting in 1983. They are remembered for their guided walks in the area to trace out the early history of Jordans Meeting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Cecil is also remembered for his ministry on the life and teaching of William Penn, who is buried at Jordans. One of his favourite ministries was on a saying of William Penn: "True Godliness don't turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavours to mend it."

In addition to writing many articles for *The Friend*, the British Quaker weekly, Cecil wrote a booklet, *The Claims of Conscience*, dealing with Quakers and conscientious objection to taxation for military purposes. He became the clerk of a Meetings for Suffering group on Conscientious Objection – the withholding of taxes for military purposes – during which time the clerks of Meeting for Suffering were in danger of going to prison. However Friends lost energy for the project and it was abandoned.

The quality of Cecil's service and the recognition that he had much to offer adult education in the field of international relations led to an invitation in 1994 to become a Friend in Residence, along with Isabel, in Woodbrooke, the Quaker Adult Education Centre in Birmingham. Out of his experience he led sessions on the United Nations and rose to the challenge of engaging with diverse views on the role and effectiveness of the UN. He and Isabel were exemplary members of the Woodbrooke community in which people from several continents lived together under one roof.

## ***The Gandhi Foundation***

Cecil had met Surur Hoda in his role as UK Secretary of the International Transport Workers Federation. They discovered that they both had a deep admiration for the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi.

In December 1982, Richard Attenborough's film won eight Oscars. The astounding success of *Gandhi* in the UK months later prompted Surur to invite Cecil to go with Lord Ennals, Diana Schumacher, Martin Polden, Rex Ambler and himself to Sir Richard's house with a view to setting up The Gandhi Foundation. The Foundation was launched on 10 October 1983 (UN Day of Peace) at Friends House with over 200 people present. Richard became President (and has remained so to this day) and David Ennals became Chairman. Cecil contributed enormous energies to an already dynamic Committee which, from 1985, organised with increasing success three annual events and a quarterly newsletter. The Gandhi Foundation Annual Lecture is on Gandhi's birthday (2 October – now UN Day of Nonviolence) and has had four Nobel Peace Prize Laureates deliver the Lecture to date. The Gandhi Multifaith Service has been held every year since 1987 to mark Gandhi's death on 30 January, and a week long Summer School is held to elucidate a Gandhian response to contemporary issues. The newsletter (since 1990 called *The Gandhi Way*) reaches its 100<sup>th</sup> issue this Summer. The Foundation has funded many other projects over the last quarter century, both here and in India, most benefiting from the tens of thousands of pounds that Cecil raised for The Foundation.

Cecil always offered wise counsel on the way forward. He led discussions in Committee, in the Summer School, in conferences and gave lectures about Gandhi whenever he was asked. Many will happily recall how his diplomatic skills were used so gently but authoritatively, most publicly when he 'refereed' speakers at the Multifaith events held in Kingsley Hall and St James's, Piccadilly: some let their enthusiasm take them beyond their allotted time and so were shown first a yellow card and then a red card!

Cecil took over as Chairman of the Foundation when David Ennals died in 1995. He then presided over the Annual Lectures given by the Revd the Lord Soper, Mairead Maguire, Bruce Kent, John Hume MP and Simon Hughes MP. He continued to come to the Lecture even though poorly until October 2008 when Rev Harold Good and Father Alex Reid, who jointly witnessed the decommissioning of IRA weapons, gave the Lecture and received the Peace Award in the House of Lords.

In 1999, Cecil and Surur conceived planned and presented the first International Peace Award. This was received posthumously by Lady Eirwen Harbottle, the widow of Brigadier Sir Michael Harbottle who had founded Generals for Peace. In subsequent years, Cecil saw the Peace Award being given to his friends Nicholas Gillett, Peter Dent and Bill

Peters, the latter two being the founders of Jubilee 2000. The Peace Award will continue to be presented in memory of Cecil and Surur Hoda for as long as it is given.

In sum, Cecil and his co-Founders created and led the most vigorous and pro-active Gandhi inspired group outside of India. They attracted and kept a solid community of supporters upon which the Foundation still relies to this day.

The lasting memory of any encounter with Cecil was his gentle humour, the grace of his manner, and the thoughtfulness of his words. All of us who knew him throughout his unstinting support for the Gandhi Foundation, or who heard or read his erudite and articulate advocacy of nonviolence in all human activity, or who benefited from his vast practical experience in resolving conflicts will remember this man with love and a smile.



Cecil Evans with Richard Attenborough

Stuart Morton, staff member of Quaker Peace and Social Witness writes: “Cecil combined moral and intellectual clarity with a great respect for whoever it was that he was engaging with. He was dedicated to the work of peace and in my experience worked very hard to be fully ready for any dialogue that would promote peace and justice. His tone of voice was always one of positive encouragement to those staff and committee members who worked alongside him. His generosity of spirit, outward calm, and sensitive veracity marked him out as a Quaker and a diplomat.”

Another Friend writes: “I thought that his graciousness was going

too far once when he said “thank you” to a ticket machine on the London Underground. I said so, but he explained that he was indeed grateful because the last time it had failed to work!!”

In his garden Cecil was passionate about growing roses, and to the end of his life was the President of the Seer Green Horticultural Society.

In the last months of his life Cecil moved into a nursing home where he was cared for whilst suffering the early symptoms of dementia, and limited mobility. He was cheerful and positive to the end of his life. Asked how he was he replied, “All the better for seeing you!” He was a benign and kindly Friend who always left his friends feeling better for having met him and known him.

Compiled by Douglas Butterfield and John Rowley with help from Isabel Evans.

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## **Other GF News**

### **A new Chairperson**

Susan Denton-Brown has been chosen by the Executive Committee to be Chairperson for 2009. Susan's particular expertise is in education and she will be continuing to develop educational resources for the GF as well as chairing meetings and having a general coordinating role.

### **Shaheen Westcombe**

Shaheen Choudhury Westcombe has recently joined the EC. She grew up in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and qualified as an architect – one of the first women in the country to do so. After further studies in Japan she settled in Britain and worked as an architect before turning to community work. She then entered local government in London where she held a variety of senior posts. She was awarded an MBE in 2002 for her contribution to community relations.

Shaheen has a special interest in a Bangladeshi woman of the Victorian period called Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein who was a prolific writer, social reformer, educationist and campaigner for gender equality. She has done presentations in London and Washington DC promoting Rokeya's work and philosophy.

### **Administrator appointed**

The GF has appointed Matthew Bain, a GF Friend, to a part-time post of Administrator and Development Officer. Matthew is an IT professional with an interest in Buddhism and also has skills in management and teaching. He lives in Buxton, Derbyshire.

Matthew has substantially improved and expanded the website which is very much worth visiting regularly. The latest news is posted there. It is still [www.gandhifoundation.org](http://www.gandhifoundation.org) A speakers' network is being set up which it is hoped will offer talks on Gandhi in different parts of the country. A set of slides which can be downloaded from the website can be used along with the talk.

Contact can be made with Matthew through the email address and phone number on the back cover.

### **email addresses**

If you would like to receive occasional emails about GF events but are not on our list please send an email to Matthew at [<contact@gandhifoundation.org>](mailto:contact@gandhifoundation.org)

### **Gandhi Exhibition**

The British Library exhibition which has been shown in a number of places is now on loan to the GF. If you know of a potentially suitable venue for this temporary display please contact Matthew at the above.

### **Special issue of *The Gandhi Way***

The GF newsletter will reach its 100<sup>th</sup> issue with the next issue. This will be substantially larger than usual and more will be printed so that it can be used to introduce potential subscribers to the Gandhi Foundation.

### **Douglas Holdstock 1933-2008**

Dr Douglas Holdstock, a long time Friend of the GF, died in November 2008 age of 75. He qualified in medicine in 1959 at University College Hospital, London, and became a consultant physician at Ashford Hospital in Middlesex in 1971, retiring in 1993.

He became very active in peace organisations and was a founder member of the Medical Campaign against Nuclear Weapons which later joined up with the Medical Association for the Prevention of War to become MEDACT. He authored two books on nuclear weapons with Frank Barnaby. He was also a Vice-President of the World Disarmament Campaign.

### **Multifaith Celebration 2009**

The Multifaith Celebration had a new venue this year, the London Interfaith Centre, and a new organiser in Sabera Chowdhury, replacing David Maxwell who has been the principal organiser for the last few years. The room is attractive with natural light on three sides and there is much light coloured wood. The celebration was opened with lighting of a candle by Ajit Singh, who has engaged in interfaith dialogue for over 40 years and this was followed by a Buddhist Prayer for Peace by Marta



San and Rev G Nagahama of the Milton Keynes Peace Pagoda and Rev G Nagase of the London Peace Pagoda.

Douglas Butterfield of Jordans Quaker Meeting then paid a tribute to his friend Cecil Evans, one of the founders of the Gandhi Foundation who had died at the very beginning of the year. He talked of the ways in which Cecil had been inspired by Gandhi. We were privileged to have Cecil's widow, Isabel, present.

After music on the Indian flute played by Clive Bell, a talk was given by Donald Lambie. He has spent time in South Africa and visited Phoenix Farm in Natal, the first ashram set up by Gandhi. Using the Phoenix as a symbol throughout he indicated how the human spirit can rise up from adversity. The example of Gandhi, he believed, has influenced three continents – Africa, India and America.

Further music followed, this time a favourite bhajan of Gandhi played once more on the flute, and then a period of silent meditation introduced by Elizabeth West before concluding words by Susan Denton-Brown and then refreshments and socialising.



Some of the participants at the MFC including Isabel Evans, on left, Elizabeth West, Agit Singh, Sabera Chowdhury, Susan Denton-Brown, Sabequa Chowdhury, Charanjit Singh (Photo by Jane Sill)

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