

The Gandhi Way No. 100

The newsletter of the Gandhi Foundation has appeared four times per year since the establishment of the Gandhi Foundation in 1983. With the 25th issue it became *The Gandhi Way* and the newsletter has now reached its 100th issue, hence this enlarged edition.

Gandhi's life and ideas continue to appeal to large numbers of people around the globe. His thought and practice was wide ranging – although this did not encompass the arts or natural sciences to a significant extent – and this issue covers aspects of economics and the environment, war and nonviolence, relations between religious faiths, attitudes to animals, direct action, his influence on the position of women, the application of his approach to upbringing of children. This does not, however, exhaust his concerns. The first and last of the essays here are by leading Gandhi scholars. The first demonstrates that at least some of Gandhi's ideas are highly relevant to our society, while his life continues to inspire. The last essay points out that our own cultural outlook influences how we interpret Gandhi and ultimately, inspiring as he is, we need to pursue our own path.

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Gandhi's Continuing Relevance

Bhikhu Parekh

For some people in India and abroad, Gandhi is a dated historical figure, great for his age but with little to say to us today. He idealised self-sufficient villages which make no sense in our globalising world. He was against industrialisation and modernity and does not connect with current aspirations. He took a highly ascetic view of life and ignored its aesthetic and other dimensions. His ideas on sexuality were antiquated and make little sense. He had a naïve belief in the absolute efficacy of non-violence, and did not realise that it would not have worked against Stalin and Hitler. Gandhi's critics also argue that he had an uncritical faith in human goodness, and was unable to cope with evil. Since he believed that human beings were inherently good, he was surprised when they behaved otherwise, and did not have the resources to deal with it.

There is a measure of truth in some of these criticisms, which is only to be expected. All human beings, however great, are children of their time, and sometimes have quirky and eccentric ideas in some spheres of life. Gandhi was no exception. There are nevertheless five major areas where his contribution is remarkable and original.

First, in a globalising and fast changing world, identity becomes a matter of central concern. 'Who am I?' 'What do I stand for?' 'What are my moral anchors?' are some of the questions that human beings ask. Some think that identity is primordial and fixed, a matter of discovery, while others think that it is infinitely pliable and that we can become whatever we choose. Gandhi's response was much more sensible. Human beings are rooted into particular cultural and political communities, by which they are deeply influenced. They are also however reflective beings who can criticise their inheritance, learn from their experiences and from others, and constantly refashion themselves. Identity for Gandhi is both inherited and recreated. It is not a substance but an ongoing process of self-creation, an endless series of experiments each building on its predecessors. No wonder, he called his autobiography *My Experiments with Truth*. As Gandhi said, we 'grow from truth to truth', and that journey never ends.

Second, globalisation brings different cultures together. This raises the question of how we should deal with cultural differences. Some see them as challenges or threats, and turn inward. Others embrace them with abundant enthusiasm as if cultures were consumer goods. Gandhi's response was more measured and mature. Every civilisation, culture or religion is unique, and represents a distinctive and partial vision of human possibilities. Cultures therefore benefit from a dialogue with each other. They borrow what is valuable and digestible in others and grow in the process. Others are not 'others' but conversational partners. Differences not only add variety to life

but are the very condition of our intellectual and moral growth. An intercultural dialogue tells us not only what is unique to us, but also heightens our awareness of our limitations and gives us the opportunity to borrow from others. This is what Gandhi himself did without the slightest inhibition. He freely borrowed from Christianity, and both Christianised Hinduism and Hinduised Christianity. He also borrowed from Buddhism and Jainism and to a lesser extent from Islam. His thought is a unique and creative blend of these influences, and does not belong to a single tradition. In this respect he was the patron saint of multiculturalism, and shows us how to respond to both the multicultural society and the multicultural world.

Third, Gandhi believed that we have a duty to fight injustices, but should do so in such a way that we do not create further injustices in the process. This idea lies at the heart of *satyagraha*, which is not passive resistance but active and militant but nonviolent resistance to injustices. For Gandhi, perpetrators of injustices and domination are opponents to be fought, not enemies to be killed or humiliated. It is hardly surprising that this idea was taken up by Martin Luther King and others, and has had a remarkable success. I sometimes wonder if the Palestinians would not have served their cause better by resorting to nonviolent resistance against Israeli domination. The best way to fight a heavily armed enemy is not to play by his rules, but to render his weaponry useless by changing the rules of the game.

Fourth, like Tagore, Gandhi was deeply troubled by the European ideas of nationalism and patriotism, and provided an alternative way of thinking about one's community. Nationalism glorifies an abstract entity called India or Britain. It values territory more than people, and thinks little of sacrificing millions to defend a piece of land even when it is uninhabitable. It values the glory and power of the nation far more than the well-being of his people. Patriotism is better but not much. It centres on the state rather than its people, is militaristic, and exclusive.

Gandhi placed people at the centre of politics. Rather than talk about nationalism and patriotism, he talked about *prajaprem*, love of one's people. This is very similar to Tagore's idea of *swadeshchinta*, an anxious and loving concern for the well-being of one's community. A country is nothing more than its people. And its people are made up of concrete living individuals. These individuals should be at the centre of one's concern. Gandhi never lost sight of this. It is striking that when he was invited to unfurl the flag of independent India, he declined the honour and preferred instead to spend his time injecting a measure of sanity in violence affected areas. True 'patriotism' lay in healing wounds, in wiping away every tear from every eye, not in flag waving, military parades and war mongering. Since one loves one's people, one wants them to be the best they are capable of. One is therefore critical of their failings of character and conduct. It is striking that no one was more critical of Indians than Gandhi, for him the sign of true love.

Finally, more than anything else, Gandhi's life had a rare grandeur. He was determined to lead a life devoted to truth and nonviolence, and wanted to

make sure that these ideals informed his every thought and action. He carefully examined everything he did, and sought to eliminate all traces of violence and untruth within himself. He conquered one desire after another including his famous love of food and sexuality. He even eliminated fear of death, and walked unarmed against angry men full of revenge and hatred. When Madanlal dropped a bomb at one of his prayer meetings, Gandhi carried on regardless, and chided the audience for being frightened of ‘a mere bomb’. He walked unarmed in Noakhali and other areas affected by communal violence, and dared his enemies to do their worst. It is almost as if he had transformed the normal fear of death into love of death in the hope that his death would achieve what his life had not.

His courage was not only physical but also moral and political. When he engaged in his experiments in celibacy, many people criticised him and put pressure on him to abandon them. He replied that his life was his to live as he pleased, and that he was not going to be judged by others’ standards. In a very important sense the supreme courage that he showed at the end of his life was there at the very beginning. When he was in South Africa, he was struck by the cowardice and sense of inferiority of the Indian community. He repeatedly urged them to ‘rebel against themselves’, and told them that ‘those who behaved like worms should not blame others for trampling on them’.

Gandhi’s life is a story of immense courage, moral transparency, and experimental vitality. ‘My life is my message’, he remarked on many occasions. As long as human beings take delight in being the authors of their lives, they are bound to find his life illuminating. The story of how a timid, diffident and moderately talented Mohandas Gandhi transformed himself by sheer will power into Mahatma Gandhi has a perennial interest, and is a source of inexhaustible wisdom and inspiration. Δ



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Principles of Nonviolence

Helen Steven

For most of our working lives, that is for the past thirty years, Ellen and I have been involved in training individuals and groups in active nonviolence; initially through the Iona Community, then for twelve years at Peace House, a residential peace centre in central Scotland, and latterly at the Scottish Centre for Nonviolence. In all of this our work was based on Gandhian principles of nonviolence.

My first introduction to these principles was on a week at Iona Abbey, run by Marion McNaughton. She outlined eight Gandhian Principles of Nonviolence. I don't know their exact origin, but they have been the basis of my understanding of nonviolence ever since.

In the first place, before starting on the 8 principles, my understanding of nonviolence is that it demands active resistance to situations of injustice. There is nothing of the doormat, nothing particularly passive. It is active, courageous and confrontational, but only in the context of these eight points.

1 Refrain from violence or hostility. In a way this almost goes without saying in a nonviolent campaign, and yet, hidden within that simple injunction are some really thorny issues. Where does violence begin and end? Refraining from personal, physical violence may be possible, but what is the place of righteous anger? If one is facing gross injustice, then how can one refrain from, at least, hostility? And what about damage to property? Many nonviolent campaigners would consider responsibly directed property damage, as, for example, in Ploughshares actions, to be a legitimate and often necessary form of nonviolent action. But where are the limits? These questions are often considered in great detail at nonviolence trainings.

2. Consider the opponents as people. This bald little statement probably goes to the very heart of the principle of nonviolence. Through nonviolent action one is always attempting to reach out to the humanity of the other; to see beyond the uniform or the ideology to the living, breathing one who shares the same humanity. Religious talk might call it 'reaching out to that of God in the other', and Gandhi spoke of 'pouring love into the institutions'.

3. Make contact with opponents. So often confrontations take place behind fixed barriers of suspicion and prejudice. The nonviolent activist has to have the confidence to connect with people, to 'speak truth to power' and to attempt to find the common ground. Time and again in speaking with so-called 'opponents' I have found sympathy, understanding and humour.

4. Attempt to gain trust. It has been quite remarkable over the years of anti-Trident protest at Faslane how a degree of trust has been built up between

protestors and Strathclyde police. Much of this, I am sure, has been due to the amount of effort put into good communication and reliability. Many have considered us stupid to remain after an action to be arrested, but we have always considered truth and accountability to be a fundamental principle.

5. Never humiliate or accept humiliation. This follows on naturally from the previous points about violence and one's opponents, but it is an important point to remember on a demonstration where it is all too easy to be carried away by shouting slogans and ridiculing one's opponent. Satire and humour has its place, but one must remain sensitive to the effect it is having on others. On the larger scene, this is to do with allowing one's adversary a way out of a situation with dignity and without loss of face. How good it would be if international powers acted in such a way, without being so quick to condemn.

Never accepting humiliation leads to a whole range of creative ways of retaining one's dignity and freedom of action while being to outward appearances powerless – not accepting the restrictions and degrading influences of the structures of power.

6. Make visible sacrifice. It is this willingness to suffer for a cause that often attracts and persuades people, however, it is nothing to do with a masochistic martyr complex, but rather to do with being realistic about the world as it is, and being prepared to count the cost of one's actions. These may be costs in time, family life, emotional stress, or even physical injury, but they are part of one's commitment to nonviolence.

7. Do constructive work. In Gandhi's India this took the form of the encouragement of spinning, of local village education and many other ways of building an independent community. Perhaps for us, it is more appropriate to see it as envisaging and living out the alternative society we want. It is so easy to be constantly in opposition, that it is vitally important to work towards positive change.

8. Expect change. This is my favourite. This is the revolution! Always believing that change is not only possible, but that through one's actions it is already happening. This change may not be obvious and may seem a long time coming, but somewhere in the deep places of the heart it is undoubtedly happening. It is this hope that makes our nonviolent action sustainable over the long haul, that makes it all worthwhile, and allows for celebration and joy.

Helen Steven and Ellen Moxley were awarded the Gandhi Foundation's Gandhi International Peace Award in 2004 for their peace work especially nonviolent direct action against Britain's nuclear weapons. Δ



Humour and Determination
Assynt Peace Group at Faslane 365 Blockade

Gandhi and the Political Role of Women: Equal Partners in the Indian Freedom Struggle *Anupma Kaushik*

During the pre-Gandhian era Indian women faced contradictory values from society. On the one hand woman was regarded as an originator, a mark of divinity and a marvel of creation. On the other hand she was the victim of ignorance, superstition, and evil and degrading practices such as female infanticide, child marriage, dowry, polygamy, *purdah* (veil), *sati* (widow burning), prostitution, molestation, permanent and pathetic widowhood. She was regarded as inferior to man and the root cause of the downfall of man. However to Gandhi, woman was the embodiment of soul force and suffering and self sacrifice personified. He tried to transmit her self sacrificing suffering into *shakti* (power).¹ He regarded women as equal to men and argued that the same soul dwells in the body of man as well as the

body of woman and since the soul is sexless, both men and women are equal in the eyes of God and should be equal in the eyes of society too.² In fact in some ways he regarded women as superior to men. For him bravery lay in dying and not killing³ and since in courage of self sacrifice women are superior to men in nonviolent struggle women could make a greater contribution than men.⁴ He declared that to call women a weaker sex is a libel and a gross injustice.⁵ He believed that when women do a thing in the right spirit, they can move mountains. He said that if nonviolence is the law of our being, the future is with women for they can make the most effective appeal to the heart.⁶ Hence he wanted women to occupy their proud position by the side of men and teach the art of peace to the warring world.

Regeneration of Women

Gandhi realised that many movements stop halfway because of the bad condition of Indian women and the lot of women needs regeneration.⁷ He was ready to ignore the religious teachings and customs that perpetuated subordination of women and imposed restriction on women. He clearly stated that all that is printed in the name of scriptures need not be taken as the word of God or the inspired word.⁸ He did not accept the ancient lawgiver Manu's word that for women there can be no freedom. He accepted that women have been suppressed under custom and law made by men and asked his countrymen to help women play their part as equals.⁹ He advocated education,¹⁰ property rights, equal remuneration and voting rights for women. He believed that women should labour under no legal disability not suffered by men.¹¹ To enable Indian women to better their condition he wanted customs like female infanticide, child marriage, dowry, *pardah*,¹² *sati*, domestic violence, pathetic and permanent widowhood to be removed and advocated equality between husband and wife as well as son and daughter. His reconstituted family was a place where both father and mother assume shared duties. He extended the obligations of fathers into new realms and insisted that women must move beyond domesticity.¹³ He believed that unless women are healthy, happy and unless homes and families are illuminated by enlightened and free womanhood there will never be peace, happiness and prosperity in the country.

Women in the freedom movement

Gandhi gave a lot of importance to the role of the mother and held that the future of India lies on the knees of mothers as they nurture the future generation. But he did not limit women to motherhood and opined that if half of the population of India would remain paralysed, the dream of India's independence would remain unattainable. He maintained that the women of India had strength, ability, character and determination to stand on their own and work shoulder to shoulder with men in every walk of life. He called upon women to join the freedom struggle and the constructive programme. There

was a breathtaking abruptness about the entry of women into political life due to his influence. One moment they were not there, the next they were in the forefront of the scene.¹⁴ Women participated in political meetings, protest marches, bore *lathi* (thick stick) charges, courted arrest, went to prison and even got shot.¹⁵ They could do so because Gandhi chose a particular form of struggle which suited women. They did not feel limited or unequal to men. He mobilised women through his speeches, writings and personal example. Vijaya Laxmi Pandit, the first woman minister in India, accepts that her life changed when she first heard Gandhi speak. Gandhi was soliciting funds and she donated her gold bangle. She says that Gandhi's oratory bordered on sheer magic.¹⁶ Due to Gandhi women participated in the freedom movement and their presence in the public sphere gained acceptability. It was made possible because men knew that the honour of their women is safe in a nonviolent struggle guided by Gandhi.¹⁷ Women participated in large numbers in every political movement launched by Gandhi including the non-cooperation movement of 1920; civil disobedience movement of 1930-32; and quit India movement of 1942. Women from every part of India (north, south, east, west) and every section (royal, common, rich, poor, urban, rural, educated, illiterate, Hindu, Christian, Sikh, Parsi) were drawn not just as



Sarojini Naidu and Vijaya Laxmi Pandit

followers but also as leaders. Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu became the presidents of the Congress party. A resolution of remembrance was passed at a public meeting in 1931 which recorded deep admiration for the womanhood of India who with unfailing courage and endurance stood shoulder to shoulder with the men-folk in the front line to offer sacrifices for India's freedom.¹⁸

Women were also at the forefront of the constructive programme. They organised themselves; manufactured contraband salt; sold it from home to home; picketed wine, ganja, opium, toddy and foreign goods shops; spun and wore *khadi* (hand spun and woven cloth); participated in *prabhat pheries* (morning rounds); demonstrations, prayer meetings, marches; worked for Hindu-Muslim unity; and removal of untouchability. Gandhi motivated women by touching their hearts. He explained to them that there was a place for them in the national movement and expressed his faith in their courage and ability. He explained that the country needed them and that they can help without leaving home or neglecting their family. He asked them to do what they can and assured that every act counted.¹⁹ He successfully mobilised the wives and daughters of congressmen. He gave them a cause and admired them when they got arrested or jailed or wounded by *lathi* blows or wore *khadi*. He would personally sit with a woman and chalk out a line of action and encourage her to put her heart and soul into it.²⁰ In his own ashram he practised in every way that which he had preached in public. Women there had equal rights in every respect with men. They voted on all important matters along with the men.²¹

Gandhi worked for the removal of hardships faced by Indian women and advocated equality for women. He gave them opportunities and encouraged them to be partners in the constructive programme as well as in the freedom struggle. This instilled courage and confidence among women and opened new arenas before them. It also shaped the movement for women's rights. Most important, it legitimised their claim to equal place in the political system of free India and social benefits also followed. Men learned to work side by side with women as colleagues and followers. The legal structure for family law was revised and modified later.²² The unique aspect was that earlier women were patronised by men even when certain facilities were given to them or some of their hindrances were removed. The Gandhian method empowered women to become activists, to think and act for themselves as well as for their motherland. Thus Gandhi successfully ushered and enabled Indian women to travel the road of empowerment from *purdah* to activism.

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Gandhi and Animals

Geoffrey Thomas

Much has been written about Gandhi's political work and the creation of passive resistance as an engine of reform. However, the moral philosophy which underpinned all Gandhi's actions extended beyond human concerns and embraced the suffering of animals. Within contemporary philosophy, the place of animals within the moral realm is being widely debated. Ought the animal welfare protections under the law be further improved by the development of animal rights? Where does exploitation of the non-human become cruelty and therefore require legal constraint? The present attempts to offer answers to such questions challenge our best thinkers. For Gandhi, the moral clarity he found later in life about man's relationship with animals had roots in his upbringing in Gujarat.

As a boy he was surrounded by a culture where it was normal to be vegetarian. The Jain and Hindu Vaishnavite beliefs emphasised the concept of ahimsa. In the Laws of Manu (one of the sacred texts of Hinduism) it states, "Without the killing of living beings, meat cannot be made available, and since killing is contrary to the principles of ahimsa, one must give up eating meat." This required the individual to avoid violence of any kind which applied to all life, not just human beings. Gandhi's Hindu parents lived by this creed each day.

A childhood friend, whom Gandhi admired for his physical strength and sporting achievements, convinced him to eat meat. This brought him to a period of conflict within himself. The friend insisted that this would not only be good for Gandhi's own constitution but, if adopted by all Indians, would help them to subdue the British and win Independence. "I asked my friend the reason and he explained it thus: 'We are a weak people because we do not eat meat. The English are able to rule over us, because they are meat-eaters'."

For almost a whole year Gandhi occasionally ate meat when his friend was able to provide this expensive luxury. During this rebellious time Gandhi felt ashamed at having to deceive his parents and began to question his attitude to the truth. It became much more important to him to be honest, both to himself as well as others, which led him to give up meat rather than be dishonest. However, at this time he still felt that meat was acceptable and he decided that, once his parents had died, he could then introduce meat into his diet with a clear conscience.

Becoming a convinced vegetarian

When Gandhi had the opportunity to study law in Britain, his mother insisted that he make formal vows of abstinence with the Swami from alcohol, meat and women before leaving India. Having made these vows to meet his mother's approval, Gandhi found his early months in London extremely

difficult as being vegetarian was little known and a good diet was almost impossible to find.

Whilst on a walk to stem the pangs of hunger he found by chance in Farringdon Road, one of the first vegetarian restaurants in London. This was a lifeline and offered more than food. For the first time Gandhi read the work of Henry Salt. The book *A Plea For Vegetarianism* outlined a moral case for the avoidance of meat eating. Further reading consolidated Gandhi's view that it was morally unacceptable to take the life of another for food.

"To my mind the life of a lamb is no less precious than that of a human being. I should be unwilling to take the life of a lamb for the sake of the human body. I hold that, the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to the protection by man from the cruelty of man."



Once the connection between the suffering caused to the animal killed for food and the personal moral choice to avoid contributing to such suffering had been established in Gandhi's behaviour, he never ate meat again. This ability to integrate moral concerns into one's personal behaviour was to become the core of all of Gandhi's morality. "Always aim at complete harmony of thought and word and deed". The simplicity of changing one's own practises as a first step to wider socio-political

reform underpins Gandhi's moral philosophy. Such strength of character would prove personally difficult for him but would influence all those engaged in nonviolent reform movements to this day. "We must be the change we wish to see".

Gandhi set himself the highest moral standards and tried his best to fully realise them in his daily life. This meant that his own vegetarianism was more akin to modern veganism, where all animal products are avoided. This included not drinking milk which gave rise to a particular difficulty where his health needs conflicted with his spiritual goals. "It is my firm conviction that man need take no milk at all, beyond the mother's milk that he takes as a baby. His diet should consist of nothing but sunbaked fruits and nuts. He can secure enough nourishment both for the tissues and the nerves from fruits like grapes and nuts like almonds." After a period of illness he seemed unable to regain his usual constitution and after great experimentation with non-animal substitutes for milk reluctantly drank goats' milk.

"I might not take cow's or buffalo's milk, as I was bound by a vow. The vow of course meant the giving up of all milks, but as I had mother cow's and mother buffalo's only in mind when I took the vow, and as I wanted to live, I somehow beguiled myself into emphasising the letter of the vow and decided to take goat's milk. I was fully conscious, when I started taking mother goat's

milk, that the spirit of my vow was destroyed.” Such a personal compromise deeply wounded him and he always regretted it. "This has been the tragedy of my life."

Gandhi was somewhat perplexed by the attitudes of some of the early vegetarians he met when attending meetings in London. Rather than becoming vegetarian for moral reasons for the prevention of animal suffering, there was a group which avoided meat on personal health grounds alone. He felt strongly that such selfish motives were morally questionable and, in an address to the London Vegetarian Society in 1931, explained:

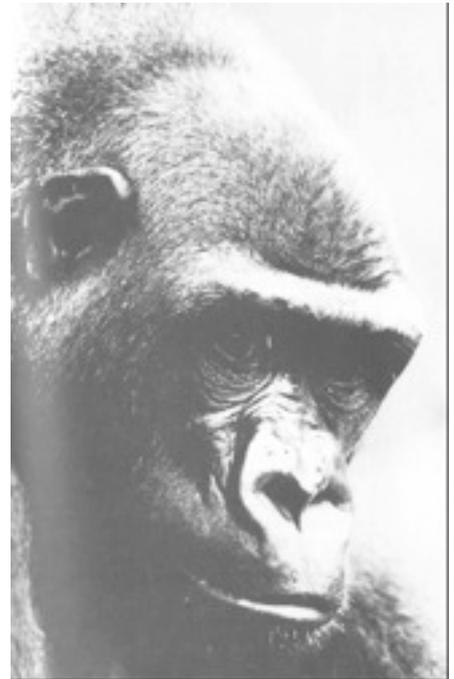
"If a vegetarian became ill and took a Doctor's prescription for beef tea, then I would not call him a vegetarian. A vegetarian is made of sterner stuff. Why? Because it is the building of the spirit and not of the body. Man is more than meat. It is the spirit in man for which we are concerned. Therefore vegetarians should have that moral basis, that a man was not born a carnivorous animal but born to live on the fruits and herbs that the earth grows."

Gandhi's desire to live a morally, harmonious, life was tested when his young son became ill and was advised by a doctor to take chicken broth to aid his recovery. Gandhi refused to give meat to his son who recovered with rest and a vegetarian diet.

Whilst living in Britain, Gandhi became aware of the mistreatment of animals in the West. Whether being raised for the table on farms, exploited for entertainment or sport, hunted by packs of dogs or experimented upon in the laboratory, animals suffered as the consequence of man's indifference or convenience. "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

The scientific use of animals in vivisection laboratories was becoming a growing trend in the first quarter of the 20th century. Gandhi found such deliberate acts of cruelty deeply troubling and expressed his opposition to such practises. "I abhor vivisection with my whole soul ... Vivisection is the blackest of all black crimes that a man is at present committing against God and his fair creation". For him, a benefit achieved by an immoral action became an unacceptable advantage to be avoided.

Gandhi's relationship with animals was not a theoretical one arrived at in isolation. After leaving Britain for South Africa, and then his return to India, he established experimental communities. These ashrams were rural and involved growing crops and caring for animals. Self sufficiency through communal work and fellowship enabled him to serve his comrades and all



were equally responsible for the daily tasks. Caring for the animals and milking the goats and cows allowed Gandhi to experience the welfare of the livestock at first hand. His Hindu reverence for the cow became generalised to all living creatures.

“Cow protection for me is one of the most wonderful phenomena in human evolution. It takes the human being beyond his species. The cow to me means the whole sub-human world. Man through the cow is enjoined to realise his identity with all that lives . . . Protection of the cow means protection of the whole dumb creation of God.”

Compassionate killing

A moral dilemma arose when one heifer became gravely ill and in severe pain. "A calf, having been maimed, lay in agony in the ashram and despite all possible treatment and nursing, the surgeon declared the case to be past help and hope. The animal's suffering was very acute. In the circumstances, I felt that humanity demanded that the agony should be ended by ending life itself. The matter was placed before the whole ashram. Finally, in all humility but with the cleanest of convictions I got in my presence a doctor to administer the calf a quietus by means of a poison injection, and the whole thing was over in less than two minutes."

This compassionate action to end the suffering of the animal whilst being fully respectful of the creature's right to life demonstrates the way Gandhi always wanted to act lovingly and after proper consideration. Interestingly, he also believed that the decision to end life could also be applied to human beings.

"Would I apply to human beings the principle that I have enunciated in connection with the calf? Would I like it to be applied in my own case? My reply is yes. Just as a surgeon does not commit himsa when he wields his knife on his patient's body for the latter's benefit, similarly one may find it necessary under certain imperative circumstances to go a step further and sever life from the body in the interest of the sufferer."

As a vegetarian, Gandhi did not wish to use the by-products of the slaughterhouse. This included leather for the making of footwear. He developed a means of tanning and using the hides of animals which had died naturally. In Anu Bandopadhyaya's book, *Bahuroopee Gandhi*, it states that Gandhi decided to use the hide of only those animals that die a natural death. Shoes and sandals made from such leather became known as ahimsak chappals (non-violence chappals). It was easier to treat the hides of slaughtered animals than the hides of carcasses and tanneries did not supply ahimsak leather. Gandhi had to learn the art of tanning.

In Sir Richard Attenborough's film, 'Gandhi', there is a scene towards the end which highlights how Gandhi lived his principles in regard to animals. During a political discussion of some importance on his Ashram, a child interrupts to tell him that one of the goats has an injured leg. To the irritation of the others, Gandhi tells the child that he will come soon to make a mud

poultice to ease the goat's discomfort. He then excuses himself from the discussion and attends to the animal. This episode reveals that for Gandhi the suffering of the animal is as important as the discussion. The need to relieve suffering, whether of an animal or of a People, both demand action.

The way in which Gandhi worked so hard to integrate his personal moral philosophy with his behaviour is an example to us today. Changing oneself as the first step empowers us all to initiate change by example. Even if we are uncertain that our own actions may really make any difference it is important to behave morally. "Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it."

With so much animal suffering still evident in our modern world we can learn a great deal from Gandhi's attitude to our fellow creatures. His approach remains highly relevant in our efforts to prevent suffering. "Complete non-violence is complete absence of ill-will against all that lives... Non-violence is therefore in its active form good-will towards all life".

Sources (in addition to those given within the text):

The Story of My Experiments with Truth M K Gandhi

The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism M K Gandhi

Gandhi a Life Krishna Kripalani

Geoffrey Thomas has worked in the field of animal protection for over 20 years and is an Executive Committee member of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, and is also a vegan. He recently received an MA in the Ethics of Health Care from Swansea University.



A Gandhian Childhood

Mildred Mashedor

As parents we need to be models for our children and who could be a better model for ourselves than Gandhi. Many of today's children are being deprived of a fulfilled and happy childhood: a heritage which would prepare them for their adult life and which will certainly present more challenges than any previous generation has had to face. But there is also light at the end of the tunnel as parents are becoming more aware of young children's needs and their absolute basic need to be loved.

Gandhi's love was for all people and especially those who were downtrodden. He radiated warmth and his caring was reciprocated by all who followed him. Children responded to his radiance just as our children will always respond to our love. Our difficulty is to find the time to express this love by spending enough time with our children; talking, playing and listening to them. All too often our time is taken up by other demands and we can be caught up in a whirlwind of frenzied haste.

Gandhi's message was one of extreme simplicity and this is particularly appropriate in the present state of our society. A simple life would provide time to experience the essentials of life – like caring for our children.

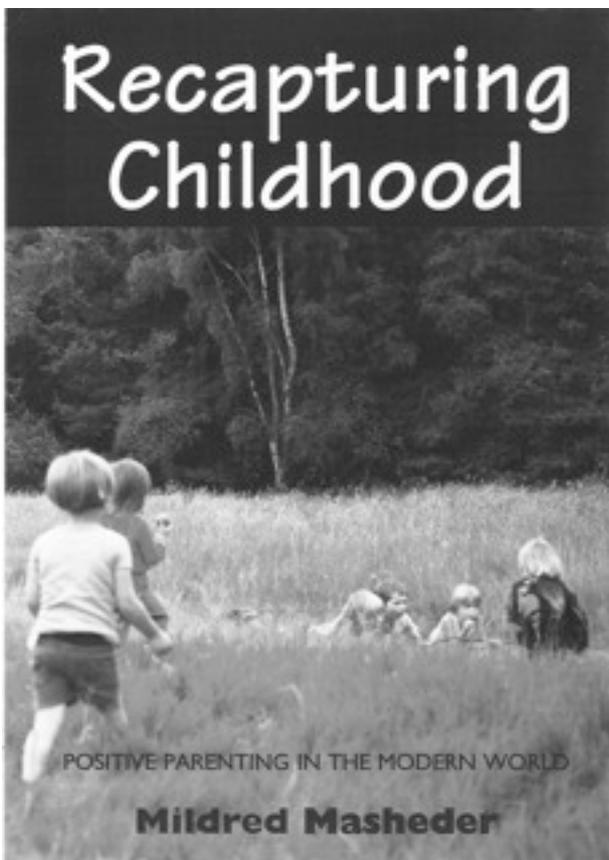
Work takes up time and that means money. So can we simplify our material needs and buy less? We will have to economise in the present financial climate in any case. In fact we may be in the position of having no work, but plenty of time on our hands which could be considered a bonus from our children's point of view. In any case we probably will not be able to buy all the latest technological innovations: DVDs, gadgets, fashion toys, computer games, etc., which are all great time-consumers. There is often such a plethora of material goods that it is difficult to concentrate on any one of them. At least we will be able to say truthfully that we can't afford it, when pestered by our children to buy the very latest fad.

A simple life is a natural life; it entails much more than controlling the impetus to accumulate consumer goods. Such a life allows the time not only to play but to engage in craftwork, which engages the body and mind and teaches patience and the satisfaction of something made from beginning to end. Simplicity may be sought in the depths of the countryside. For children to grow up in the throes of the natural world would be a great gift to bestow upon them. In cases where a move to rural areas might be feasible, there is an added bonus of cheaper housing. A childhood spent on running wild in the countryside is an ideal way of being in true touch with nature. Our children will be the custodians of the endangered planet, so it is imperative for them to be in harmony with the wonders of the natural world. It is their birthright.

But not all children can enjoy what has now become a luxury. Many are confined to the home with not even a garden to enjoy. Also parents can

have exaggerated fears, not only of the dangers of traffic but also of strangers, and this can be a major restriction in our children's lives both in urban and in rural areas. These fears are enflamed by the media, however much the crime statistics show that child kidnapping and murder have not increased since the beginning of the last century (and at that time there was endless unsupervised play in the fields, woods and in the streets). In built-up areas there has to be greater effort on the part of the parents or carers to form a rota to escort young children to nearby parks and city farms and then keeping a watchful eye on them from a discreet distance as they enjoy some spontaneous play in more natural surroundings. Family expeditions and picnics can be popular alternatives to being cooped up indoors playing computer games.

There are other ways of simplifying our children's lives; the provision of natural foods cultivated in gardens or allotments (which now often have a



waiting list). Otherwise one can grow vegetables, salads and even fruit trees in containers. Children love growing their own vegetables and will eat them with gusto - even 'greens'! Junk food can be amazingly addictive for young children so it is always best to give them natural food right from the start. Gandhi was a vegetarian and many children will follow his example when they realize the killing involved when eating otherwise. Also the more information we get about the toxicity of many adulterated foods, the more attractive the vegetarian diet becomes.

Gandhi was a champion of nonviolence and here again he is a model for our children. Television and computer games are both dominated by violence. It is claimed that these programmes specially designed for children, have no effect

on them. This argument is not valid: all commercials are specially designed to influence and this must be true of all programmes. Young children are like blotting paper; when we realize that children spend an average of over three hours daily viewing programmes that often contain violence, this obviously becomes an accepted part of their lives. Moreover the great majority of children and young people have a television and computer in their bedrooms so adult programmes are watched as a matter of course. Some parents are becoming more aware of the dangers of so many frightening and violent programmes and are monitoring viewing times or joining them to watch together and discuss them afterwards. But it is much easier to control if

young children never had the experience of a television or computer in their bedroom and the message is the same for all areas of parenting, ‘start as you want to keep on’.

Children’s experience of violence can be through bullying and here parents have a role, helping them to resolve their conflicts themselves in a nonviolent manner, giving them a sense of perspective, and also providing back up and support in cooperation with the school.

Gandhi was a human rights activist and it is not too soon to explain to our children what we are doing to protect our rights. It might be by opposing the building of a motorway through a nature area or the proposals to sell off a playing field. It is vital that our children realize the power of democracy and human rights. They need to understand that people have rights and can demand and even fight for them. They now have their own charter. Gandhi led the people to stand up for their freedom and for their basic necessities such as salt; our children’s future may well be the protection of the planet from the selfishness of the consumer society. He said that the earth had enough for everyone’s need but not enough for everyone’s greed.

We have greater access to news of the rest of the world than ever before and the gap between ‘the haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ is ever widening. We need some of the Gandhian spirit to inspire us to counter this vast inequality and hope that our children will respond in the same way when they are adults.

Mildred Mashedor is a former primary teacher and lecturer in child development. Her latest book is *Recapturing Childhood: Positive Parenting in the Modern World* (Green Print). It is available for £10 + £2 p&p from sales@positivechildhood.net



Gandhi and the Present Economic Crisis

Mark Tully

During a recent interview with His Holiness the Dalai Lama I spent a lot of the time laughing. It’s impossible not to laugh with the Tibetan leader because he laughs so much himself. Coming back from the interview I said to my producer, “There is one man who is genuinely happy, and you have to feel happy when you are with him.” The Dalai Lama is also of course a profound believer in nonviolence and has courageously resisted all the pressures hot-headed Tibetans have put on him to sanction the use of violence in the campaign against the Chinese government’s rule over their country. I believe that the Dalai Lama’s happiness and his nonviolence are linked. Not only are the Dalai Lama’s politics nonviolent, he himself is

remarkably free of anger, greed, and jealousy. These violent emotions make a person unhappy. We all know that from our personal experience.

But the market capitalism which dominates economics today incites greed, jealousy and anger and so creates violence and unhappiness within us. The current economic crisis is being blamed on greed, an emotion which is violent because it leads to the aggressive pursuit of gain. The bankers and financiers who mismanaged the businesses they ran, and took risks they didn't understand to boost their profits and their bonuses, have become the main targets for the public's anger. But we are also to blame. After all the bankers were only doing what consumerism teaches us to do, feeding the greed which is latent in all of us, or perhaps I should say fueling the fire of our desire. In the Bhagavad Gita the God Krishna speaks of "this insatiable fire of desire which is the constant foe of the wise." Greed is at the heart of consumerism because if we are not greedy we will not consume beyond our needs. Gandhi of course believed in non-possession which is the very opposite of consumerism. He said "I do not draw any distinction between economics and ethics. Economies that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral, and therefore sinful." I am sure he would have regarded the consumerism of our times as sinful because it depends on the violent emotion of greed.

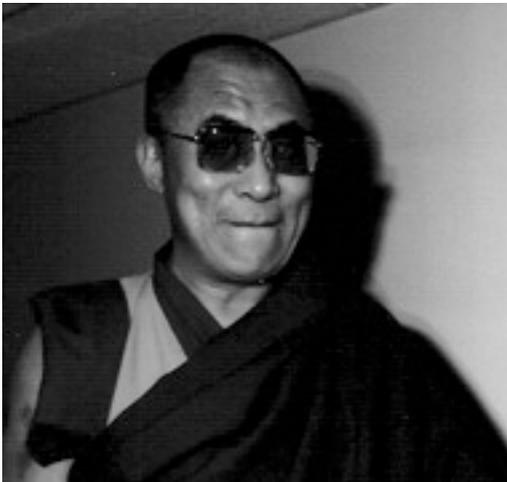
Competition is also at the heart of market economics as we know them today, and competition provokes jealousy. In the rat race modern employees have to run the losers become jealous of the winners. Like greed there is no end to this jealousy because no matter how successfully you compete in the rat race there is always someone more successful and richer than you are.

Companies compete with each other because they believe that sorts the sheep from the goats, eliminates the inefficient, and cuts out waste. Now all those are laudable. Inefficiency is wasteful and therefore immoral. But then efficiency has to be defined. Competition defines it very narrowly. There is no room left for wider social purposes to be factored in as costs. Supermarkets are highly efficient but they do have their social downside, as we all know. The damaging effect of the downside is not counted as a cost when a super-market chain strives for efficiency. Competition between staff does not take account of the rat race's effect on their welfare, their morale, and their loyalty to the company.

Market capitalism is not directly concerned with inequality and that is why it provokes anger. Maybe it's true that the hidden hand of the market will eventually make everyone so prosperous that inequality will become irrelevant, but that has not come about yet even in the world's richest country America. In the meantime blatant inequalities continue to provoke anger. That anger can easily explode in violent social unrest. In India today there is a dangerous mixture of rising expectations and a widening gap between the new comparatively prosperous middle class and the poor. Realising the dangers of this the government which was in power over the last five years took inequality into consideration when planning for economic growth. The

distinguished economist Dr Manmohan Singh became prime minister in 2004, and two years later he urged the Annual Conference of the Federation of Indian Industries to “give more attention to questions of social and economic discrimination.” Speaking of Gandhi’s economics Dr Manmohan Singh described him as, “in many ways the most modern Indian we have”. Considering the way India would need to develop after Independence Gandhi said, “Economic equality is the master key to non-violent independence.... A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility as long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists.”

So modern society and the economic doctrine we follow inclines us all to violence. But what about Gandhi’s dream that nonviolence should characterize society? He said, “Somehow or other the wrong belief has taken possession of us that ahimsa is pre-eminently a weapon for individuals and its use should therefore be limited to that sphere. In fact this is not the case.



Ahimsa is definitely an attribute of society.” If society were to be aware of the inherent violence within it and in particular cultivate nonviolent economics, then surely there would be more happiness around. People would also realise how relevant Ahimsa is to them individually too. They would understand that it is inner violence, those three violent emotions in particular, which stand between them and happiness.

To end where we started with the Dalai Lama, a man who has lived his life by the tenets of nonviolence. He knows the limits of the progress our economics, with their underlying violence, have made in relieving suffering and unhappiness. In his Ethics for the New Millennium the Dalai Lama says, “Although I never imagined that material wealth alone could overcome suffering, still, looking towards the developed world I must admit I thought it must go further towards doing so than is the case..... Certainly there has been a reduction in some types of suffering, including certain illnesses. But there has been no overall reduction”. So maybe the present economic crisis is an opportunity for us to think the previously unthinkable and consider whether Ahimsa should be factored into our economics in order to speed up the relief of suffering and spread happiness more widely. Δ

Sir Mark Tully was for many years the BBC’s principal commentator on Indian affairs. He has written books as well as broadcasting on Indian culture and politics and on Christianity. He delivered the Gandhi Foundation’s Annual Lecture in 2005.

Green Economics

Matthew Bain

The story of Adam and Eve teaches us about the nature of work: before the Fall, humanity existed in harmony with nature, and our work was to tend the Garden; afterwards our work became a burden and source of suffering, as we found ourselves struggling against nature. The Jewish psychoanalyst Erich Fromm uses the concept of alienation to describe this process. Alienation means being out of touch with our own nature, with others, and with our surroundings and environment. The current economic system is both alienated and alienating, and even its so-called 'winners' are in fact losers. A psychological study from before the current financial crisis showed that hedge-fund managers “had high levels of depersonalisation and a staggering two-thirds were depressed. There were similarly high levels of anxiety and sleeplessness. The more they earned, the more likely they were to have these problems. Twice daily, they consumed both alcohol and an illegal substance (mostly cocaine). For relaxation, they chose solitary pursuits: jogging, masturbation and fishing were common.” (Oliver James, writing in *The Guardian*)

Fallen from paradise indeed. Continuing his analysis, Erich Fromm uses the concept of idolatry. He contrasts worship of the true God – manifesting in the living creativity of productive work – with the worship of the completed, rigid product of work – money. He quotes Goethe: “the Divine is effective in that which is alive, but not in that which is dead. It is in that which is becoming and evolving, but not in that which is completed and rigid.” The current economic system is essentially idolatrous, positioning humanity as the servant of money, not the other way round. The purpose of Green Economics is to reverse this injustice, and return money to its proper place as the servant of humanity.

The cause of the current economic crisis is the huge agglomerations of private capital which have developed Frankenstein-like lives of their own and are neither understood nor controlled by their human 'masters'. This private capital sloshes around the world, engaged in fruitless transactions such as currency speculation, credit default swaps, arbitrage etc, while billions of people remain unemployed or underemployed because of lack of access to even a few dollars worth of equipment. The role of Green Economics is to 'unfreeze' this capital, and let its moisture stimulate a grass-roots recovery. Measures such as a Tobin Tax on currency transactions would be welcome sources of funds, especially if channelled correctly.

A good example of Green Economics in action is microcredit, as pioneered by Nobel Peace Prize-winning economist Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. Microcredit shows that the lives of families can be substantially improved and the untapped potential of women in

particular developed by small loans based on a system of trust and cooperation. It is so refreshing to see economic intelligence focus on the needs of people who were formerly excluded. Does anyone really think that we can revive the global economy by endlessly targetting products at the same wealthy 20% ? The answer surely is to include the remaining 80%, by devising products and pricing which are in genuine sympathy with the needs of the developing world. Even if it means a short-term reduction in profits, it can only produce good results in the long-term. A bigger cake would benefit everyone – instead of the economics of envy where we are content as long as our own slice is bigger than our neighbour's.

Microcredit is an example of 'small is beautiful' as articulated in the work of the green economist Fritz Schumacher. In Schumacher's vision, the distance between people and money must be removed, and money brought into close proximity with people who need it, in practical forms they can use (appropriate technology). Access is more important than ownership, which happily avoids many tedious ideological arguments between Left and Right. Anathema to Schumacher's vision of access and proximity are current corporate structures with their long chains of command, separation between shareholders, managers and workers, and myopic focus on short term profit. Amongst other ills, these lead to environmentally disastrous and unjustifiable distribution chains like supermarkets which send prawns from Scotland to Thailand for packing before being returned to the UK for sale, or endlessly transport sheep around the country in search of the cheapest abattoire.

Environmentalism Vandana Shiva points out that it is not enough to stimulate the small and beautiful, we must also fight the big and ugly ! The much-trumpeted economic growth in India benefits only a small section of the population, and in fact harms many more. Why should there be a burgeoning steel industry in Orissa when the people there use none in their houses ? 100% of the steel is in fact for export, and Dr. Shiva argues that Orissa is being used simply because it is convenient for wealthy countries to 'outsource' their pollution and exploit the poor conditions and pay of Indian workers. Global trade frameworks such as the WTO seek to increase the opportunities for such exploitation and should be resisted. Instead, the green vision of globalisation requires humane minimum standards for labour throughout the world. In place of the industrial and capital-intensive development agenda foisted on poor countries by organisations like the World Bank and IMF, a people-centred approach is required, as implemented by NGO's such as Practical Action and the Jeevika Trust.

The life and work of Mahatma Gandhi show how economic activity is a key part of our struggle for genuine freedom, including its spiritual and political dimensions. Many of Gandhi's most successful campaigns such as the Salt March and the Khadi movement demonstrate the liberating character of work which emphasises self-reliance and the strengthening of community. Perhaps demonstrating his origins in the Modh Bania merchant caste, Gandhi was always delighted to sell Khadi (homespun cotton) to the people who came

to see him as he travelled around India by train, contributing funds for the independence struggle. It is important to remember that business and trading are vital expressions of life: but they must be harnessed to serve life, not oppress it.

Genuine entrepreneurship is to be encouraged and nurtured, but our governments must not allow any more of our public services to be cannibalised by big business. Under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), £68bn of public infrastructure has been built in the UK, for which the public is committed to payments of £215bn to private consortia, even though these projects could have been delivered and run 30% more cheaply by the public sector. There is no genuine initiative or entrepreneurship in this ability to divert public money into private coffers, and we can no longer allow our politicians to maintain their supine posture towards big business. The time for strict regulation of big business in the public interest is now – and this same regulation should give our small businesses a space to breathe. Our now publicly-owned banks should be prevented from speculating on derivatives and forced to make credit available to small businesses.

The prospects for Green Economics depend on our ability to protect existing communities in the developing world, and build new types of extended community in the developed world. Community strength is the real solution to consumerism and the creeping commoditisation of our lives. Community bonds built on shared interests and mutual respect enable us to pool scarce resources and use our collective imaginations instead of always relying on cash. The Landshare scheme in the UK is in its infancy, but already boasts 3,600 registered land owners, including the National Trust, who are willing to share some of their land as allotments for 28,000 would-be growers. New cooperatives are forming to buy village post offices and pubs threatened with closure, and revitalise them as centres of community life.

The epic Western “Once Upon A Time in the West” offers a microcosm of modern economic development accompanied by banditry – showing how the railroad pushed across North America, costing many lives. In one scene we are shown that the only thing that can stop a gun is a wad of cash, but the question in my mind is, “how can we stop a wad of cash?” The answer offered by alienated economics is “more cash” – therefore carbon trading schemes are invented to ‘incentivise’ governments and industries not to kill us in their crazy pursuit of money. The actual answer is “love” – only love can stop money. Motivated by love, Green Economics seeks to skilfully and creatively combine our great religious and cultural traditions, which transmit our collective wisdom, with well-selected and appropriate modern technologies. As Greens we should not spend all our effort devising technical solutions, because we should recognise, like Gandhi, that the main change required is of the heart.

Matthew Bain provides administrative services to the Gandhi Foundation, especially setting up and maintaining the website, with his partner Diane Gregory. Δ

THE KETTLING

A Masque for Our Times

John Rowley

Director: Sir Paul Stephenson
Script: Sir Ian Blair
Producers: The Metropolitan Police
Troupe: "The Darth Vader Clones"
Extras: Thousands of Unwitting Citizenry

The Revolutionary Committee re-named 1st April this year as "Financial Fools Day". By chance, your own newly-appointed Theatre Critic chose to review the Premiere of "The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse", a play billed as the highlight of the day's Carnival and Serious Intent. Humour and satire would mock The Capital Village Idiots for their greed, arrogance and self-preening stupidity. At 2 o'clock, the four huge masks of Pestilence, War, Famine and Death, each attended by dancers, singers, jugglers and clowns, would converge from the four Quarters of the Land in Capital Village square.

My daughter had a University project to complete on "Street Theatre as Protest" so made sure we got there early. We knew exactly where to go because the Committee had agreed assembly points with The Police. Thousands were expected for the free show despite the Powers stressing, perhaps a tad salaciously, the prospect of a 'bit of violence'.

What we didn't know, as we hopped on the bus, was that we were about to experience an attempt at a most astonishing cultural 'coup d'état'. Nor did we expect to play two bit parts on TV, screened to prove, many hoped, the futility of amateurish nonviolence in the face of well-orchestrated State violence. My daughter and I gave them the footage they wanted and, as a result, I was on the evening TV News for 4 seconds and in *The Guardian* for half an inch the next day.

When the G20 Meeting was fixed for London, the forlorn Sir Ian Blair must have seen a wonderful opportunity to boost morale in The Met and catch the attention of politicians. If his lads excelled themselves, especially in his 'piece de resistance', he could grab prime-time News around the globe. Simply obey the media maxim, "If it bleeds, it leads" and ensure he could utter the refrain, "They hit us first, Your Honour".

Kettling offered the perfect solution: an ultra-modern crowd control technique demanding just a bit of discipline. Imagine the stills in "The Daily Wind-Up": perfectly aligned Clones, slick weaponry, unruly Mob subdued. TV sequences showing our calm and inexorable advance, the first blow by a corralled protester, the efficient, effective response. Bingo! A display of controlled violence commanding the respect and admiration of all. Consultancy contracts would flow again.

Police culture frames protesters as “The Enemy”. TV sight-bites demand a clash, “Us vs Them”, and simple codes – weaponry, discipline and colour – to identify the goodies: Us. Black is best because, like the night, it threatens violence and heightens weakness. Police Forces love it – always forgetting that it also signals Evil, the dark side, The Shadow. When did they ever wear blue?

So what do we see at the G20 protest ? Black helmets with dark face-hiding visor, black stab-proof jackets, luminescent yellow waistcoats, black trousers and boots; each equipped with the latest hand-held pain-inflicting weaponry and electronics, again all coloured black. Rehearsals held at Heathrow, Kingsnorth, etc.

Can I guess the Summary of the Police’s internal project memo?

US:

Aim: To re-assert our world-wide reputation for efficient and effective policing.

Target Audience: Leaders, Ministers of Homeland Security, Chiefs of Police, Generals.

Methods: Demonstrate mastery of latest crowd control techniques, especially “Kettling”, and surveillance products.

Priorities: Protect 1. The G20 Leaders. 2. Property. 3. Us. 4. Them.

THEM:

Types: Research indicates all ages, classes, sectors and interest groups. Probably liberals.

Reasons for Assembly: The Financial Crisis.

Targets: The Financial Elite – Banks, Politicians and other collaborators including Us.

Qualities: Anger, frustration, resentment ie violent. Amateurs.

Purpose: Carnival a cover for violence.

THE IDEAL VENUE:

An enclosable arena with vantage points for VIPs, gear and Control room. Consider Bartholomew Lane where the all-glass Royal Bank of Scotland sits right opposite the all-stone Bank of England. At one end, Threadneedle will be throttled by crowds leaving Lothbury as choke point; at the other, our boys in black. [Note to Director: Clones must be able to understand that Kettling means bringing the right amount of water to the boil, simmering for hours, extracting the juiciest morsels and storing them in the deep-freeze.]

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Perhaps this conceit is too flaky for you, Reader ? How come, then, that the RBS, the most hated of Banks, has its plate-glass wall left entirely unprotected when every other window in The Village had been boarded up ? How come there were no Clones within 60 yards and that none moved until it

was attacked ? How come that, on the roof of The Bank of England [the most despised], stood 60 Servants of the State with their HD watching gear ? [You don't get to get up there without The Governor's permission !] How come that, high up behind the glass, RBS employees taunted protestors with £50 notes ? And how come the Clones and their Beasts were kept secret from The Committee and so well hidden ?

Now see The Gaffer watching his 100 Monitors. When enough 'water' had assembled and just before "The Four Horsemen" could converge, he gives the signal: "Let the Wild Rumpus Begin!" So, as seen from The Gods ... Lights! Cameras! Action!

"THE KETTLING"

SCENE 1

Stage Left: Flank to flank Mounted Horsemen appear from nowhere and line up behind shoulder to shoulder black Darth Vader Clones, 'bats' at the ready, still and awesomely silent. Slowly, those in the Pit realise they are there. Tension mounts.

SCENE 2.

Centre Stage: On cue, a hooded Provocateur smashes a massive iron girder against the plate-glass window. A "Well done" here for the Prop Dept.

[This is when your critic and his daughter unwittingly act into the script by attempting to stop his blows, shouting "We must be Nonviolent !". This proves predictably futile as his every blow raises a huge cheer of support. He is a Stekhanovite titan remorseless, unstoppable and immune to pleas and pathetic tugs at his arm. We are on the stage created by his back-swing and in full view of a thousand lenses. As we leave in despair, I curse all loudly and roundly for not coming to our aid. A few paces on, a very tall white guy, my age, shaven-headed, long, nicely cut beige coat, leans down and in a well-spoken whisper says: "Ex-Army! Soldier! Front-line! I like what you did there, Sir, but if I were you I'd get out. Quick. You just upset a lot of people, you know, and it only takes one blow and you're down. That way, over there. OK? Gottit?"]. Who in hell was he ?

Now trapped and crushed and no EXIT signs in sight [who forgot them ?], the crowd becomes a Mob. A psychic entity has been born with self-awareness and a goal. It knows what it wants: Revenge! our species' most violent emotion. Dissent is pointless; only a Satyagrahi could have stopped it.

SCENE 3.

The breaking glass triggers the main move. Beasts and Clones advance slowly squeezing people ever tighter together, pumping up the adrenaline of Fear and Panic. 200 people escape through jagged glass into RBS, conveniently emptied of computers and well sealed from the bankers above.

Many were arrested for Trespass or new crimes under the Terrorism Act. “There’s our quota and maybe a bonus. Just the ticket.”

[It is at this point that your Critic and his daughter make their escape, as directed by my soldier, through a scaffolded narrow way. So the rest of this Review is mere anecdote, rumour and double-checked facts.]

SCENE 4.

The Power Lines halt, the Mob squeals but is now contained, subdued by overwhelming physical force and the mega-phoned sound-wall. Notice how this Scene is a theatrical breakthrough: the playwright casts the rules of Narrative Thrust aside and insists that it last six or more hours. He clearly hoped for some tele-visual theatrics as the absence of water, food, lavatories or escape routes ratchet up the tension. Men can piss against walls but the women ? The Clones ignore all pleas for help: “Keep them penned, get the Alsatians a-growling and a-snapping, wave your truncheons about, show who’s Boss. Controlling the scared is easy. Lovely job.”

SCENE 5.

9pm. After the prime-time News deadline has passed, begin to let the prisoners out. Take Name, Age, Address, Telephone Number, Email, Referee, DNA, Money and Iris Scan. I jest but wait till the next time. “Let them out slowly, belittled, demeaned, tired and weak. That’ll show ’em. Nice one.”

SCENE 6.

During the Night. Feed juicy morsels extracted and pictures recorded on to the informal National Database, delete planted provocateurs, store forever and star those with a bit of Previous. “Handy info for ‘a bit of Pressure’ in the future.”

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Unfortunately for The Met, “Kettling” has been universally panned by Critics of every persuasion. Its Producers, Directors, Actors, Techniques, PR, the lot have been lambasted. Rather than enhancing a reputation for playing by The Rule of Law, some of their leading front-line actors have been caught cheating, lying, slapping, pushing, beating with shields and ‘bats’ without provocation and, now possibly, killing an innocent citizen. Some hid their numbers and others had Medic inscribed on their jackets whilst wielding a truncheon. More of our millions spent on gizmos and overtime and they catch no one but themselves. It beggars belief !

And the security priorities ? 1. Put VIPs on a virtual island. 2. Tell Village elders to board up. 3. Dress Clones for war. No problem. 4. As for those violent, malevolent hooligans, Kettle, corral and treat as data. Did you

know that The Queen's imperative on all Police Medals reads "Guard my people" ? Now we know how they read it.

So why did they 'kettle' the G20 demo ? It was unwarranted but necessary if you accept a wider view. How many Leaders flew home that week to a Police Force *less* violent than ours ? OK then, who? Three? Now recognise that *our* IPCC will almost certainly investigate and prosecute according to *our* rather elegant Rule of Law. Justice could well be done. And how many Leaders would love to import all that ? Lots – even China wants to open up. "So Rejoice in that, thee Nay-Sayers and Cynicks ! Thy cup of Rights is more than half full !"

Now step up a rung on this ladder and look even wider. See how the percentages of the uneducated, the unhealthy and the impoverished continue to grow inexorably, despite ye do-gooders ? See how the democratic, liberal population is dwindling and how an ever-burgeoning majority are oppressed by autocratic regimes, each prepared to use the full force of their armed services to retain power ? [Haim Harari in *What is Your Dangerous Idea?*, 2006].

Go yet higher and suffer real shock and awe. Can you see the 'coup du monde finale' proceed apace ? There, stampeding towards you are The Four Unstoppable Horsemen of Our Apocalypse whipping their vast steeds to a frenzy. The seas rise, the atmosphere deteriorates, the sun burns, our leaders without even a peasant's remedy for Gaia's Fever. Pestilence, Famine, War and Death gallop across business-first fields, culling billions: the ignorant, the weak, the poor and those trying to escape. This is our mythic reality.

What then of your despised crowd control techniques ? Think who might pay us to train their own. Won't you be grateful as you hide with your family and loved ones if your authorities have rehearsed well ? What then of our so civilised principles of Social Justice and Nonviolence ? Who gets in the boat and who has to swim ? Guess who owns the boat. Can anybody even sketch a happy-ending ? Maybe a few, but do we listen ? Elites dream only of the safety of the past; only the young relish the radical, but do we trust them ?

Finally, how does Nonviolence stack up in the real world ? You will be aware of the following position but I rehearse it before you to invite your demolition of it:

"There is no pro-active word to describe Nonviolence because all religious, political, military and cultural elites know they would be unnecessary if its principles were fully followed: inequality is violence. Just as pure Religion seeks paths to Nonviolence so practical Politics seeks ways of applying power: power is violence and depends upon it. All Religions teach Nonviolence until they are controlled by the State: they then abandon its teachings. Whenever a people arm for defence, they will eventually use them for attack. Violence breeds violence; its absence creates a need. The media supply the people with a full daily menu of violence to satisfy this demand:

thereby also reinforcing the culture of fear. Fear incapacitates people: thereby facilitating the implementation of power. This is why all successful practitioners of Nonviolence are regarded as enemies of the State.”

[Adapted from Mark Kurlansky, *Non-violence: the History of a Dangerous Idea*, 2007.]

.....

On the 3rd April, we listened to Hazel Blears defend the Police on Question Time. Referring to the demonstrators, she asked us all: “And what would *you* do if you were confronted by black-hooded hoodlums wielding sticks ?” My daughter turned to me and said: “What a creep !” We had a good laugh at Blears’ willful ignorance and insufferable Brown-nosing. I had no idea I would end up weeks later so very, very gloomy. Δ

John Rowley is a Trustee of the Gandhi Foundation and has organised many events for the Gandhi Foundation including the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Gandhi’s death which was held in St Martins in the Field, London.



John Rowley and his daughter Poppy in Mumbai

Gandhi, Christ and Christianity

Alan Nazareth

Gandhi's fundamental contribution in the field of religion was to give primacy to Truth rather than conformity to traditional practices. In fact he made Truth the basis of all morality by declaring: "I reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality ... God did not create men with the badge of superiority or inferiority; no scripture which labels a human being an inferior or untouchable because of his or her birth can command our allegiance. It is denial of God and Truth which is God."

Though a deeply devout Hindu, his approach was 'sarvadharmasambhava' (equal respect for all religions) and a 'spiritualised humanism'. All religions had an equal status and were different paths to the same goal of achieving union with the Divine. His religion was that "which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, binds one indissolubly to the truth within and ever purifies. It is the permanent element in Human nature which leaves the soul restless until it has found itself". He affirmed "For me different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden or branches of the same majestic tree". He often said he was as much a Moslem, Christian, Buddhist, Jain, and Parsee as he was Hindu and added "The hands that serve are holier than the lips that pray". At his prayer meetings there were readings from all the holy books. His favourite hymn began with the line "He alone is a true devotee of God who understands the pains and sufferings of others".

He affirmed "Independent India as conceived by me will have all Indians belonging to different religions, living in perfect friendship". In 1931 he wrote in *Young India*: "It has been said that Swaraj will be the rule of the majority community ie the Hindus If this were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it Swaraj and would fight it with all the strength at my command, for to me Hind Swaraj is the rule of all the people and the rule of justice". On January 23, 1948, just a week before his assassination he declared: "It would spell the ruin of both the Hindu religion and the majority community if the latter, in the intoxication of power, entertains the belief that it can crush the minority community and establish a purely Hindu Rashtra".

Lauding this enlightened approach Fischer wrote: "Mahatma Gandhi, a supremely devout Hindu, was incapable of discriminating against anyone on account of religion, race, caste, colour, or anything. His contribution to the equality of untouchables and to the education of a new generation which was Indian instead of Hindu or Moslem or Parsee or Christian has world significance".

What Gandhi learned from Jesus

Gandhi's great respect for Christ is revealed in his following statements:

“What does Jesus mean to me ? To me, he was one of the greatest teachers humanity has ever had.”

“Jesus was the most active resister known perhaps to history. His was non-violence par excellence.”

“Jesus expressed as no other could, the spirit and will of God. It is in this sense that I see him and recognise as the Son of God. And because the life of Jesus has the significance and the transcendency to which I have alluded, I believe that he belongs not solely to Christianity but to the entire world, to all races and people. It matters little under what flag, name or doctrine they may work, profess a faith or worship a God inherited from their ancestors”.

On seeing a painting of the crucified Christ in Rome, Gandhiji remarked: “What would not I have given to be able to bow my head before the living image of Christ crucified. I saw there at once that nations like individuals could only be made through the agony of the cross and in no other way. Joy comes not out of infliction of pain on others but out of pain voluntarily borne by oneself”.

“The New Testament gave me comfort and boundless joy, as it came after the revulsion that parts of the Old Testament had given me. Today, supposing I was deprived of the Gita and forgot all its contents but had a copy of the Sermon on the Mount, I should derive the same joy from it as I do from the Gita.” *Young India* 22/12/27

Gandhi's knowledge of and respect for Christ however came after he went to England and South Africa. In his youth he had in fact a strong aversion to Christianity. In his autobiography he writes that whereas from his parents, who had many Jain and Moslem friends, he had learnt to respect religions other than his own, “Christianity at that time was an exception. I developed a sort of dislike for it and for a reason. In those days Christian missionaries used to stand in a corner near the high school and hold forth, pouring abuse on Hindus and their Gods. I could not endure this. I must have stood there only once but that was enough to dissuade me from repeating the experiment. About the same time, I heard of a well known Hindu having been converted to Christianity. It was the talk of the town that when he was baptised he had to eat beef and drink liquor, change his clothes and thenceforth go about in English costume including a hat. I also heard that the new convert had begun abusing the religion of his ancestors, their customs and their country. All these things created in me a dislike for Christianity.”

In London, towards the end of his second year there he was first introduced to Theosophy, and then to the Gita and Buddhist teachings. Soon thereafter he met a devout Christian in a vegetarian boarding house, who spoke to him about Christianity. Gandhi revealed to him his aversion to it from his school days in Rajkot. The Christian replied: “I am a vegetarian. I do not drink. Many Christians are meat eaters and drink; but neither meat eating nor drinking is enjoined by scripture. Do please read the Bible”. Gandhi accepted his advice and began reading the Bible. The Old Testament bored him and parts of it repelled him, but the New Testament, particularly

the Sermon on the Mount “went straight to my heart” and “I tried to unify the teaching of the Gita, the *Light of Asia* and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly”, he wrote.

When his concept of Trusteeship was criticised as too idealistic and impractical Gandhi wrote: “The question we are asking ourselves today was addressed to Jesus two thousand years ago. St Mark has vividly described the scene. Jesus is in a solemn mood. He talks of eternity but is the greatest economist of his time. He has succeeded in economising time and space; he has transcended them. To him comes a young man, kneels down and asks: 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may have Eternal Life ?' Jesus replies: 'Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, honour thy father and mother'. The youth answers: 'Master, all these I have observed from my youth'. Then Jesus says to him: 'Then go, sell whatever thou hast, give to the poor and thou shall have treasure in heaven'. At this the youth goes away grieved for he had great possessions, and Jesus says to his disciples : 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God'. Here you have an eternal rule of life stated in the noblest words in the English language ... I will not insult you by quoting in support of what Jesus said, writings and sayings of our own sages which are even stronger. The strongest testimony in support of it however are the lives of the greatest teachers of the world, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Shankera, Dayananda and Ramakrishna. They all deliberately embraced poverty as their lot.”

In Volume I of his ten volume *The Story of Civilisation* eminent historian Will Durant lauds Gandhi thus “He did not mouth the name of Christ, but acted as if he accepted every word of the Sermon on the Mount. Not since St Francis of Assisi has any life known to history been so marked by gentleness, disinterestedness, simplicity and forgiveness of enemies”.

For Martin Luther King: “Mahatma Gandhi was the first person in human history to lift the ethic of love of Jesus Christ above mere interaction between individuals and make it into a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. We may ignore him at our own peril”. When an American churchman upbraided him for this he replied: “It is ironic yet inescapably true that the greatest Christian of the modern world was a man who never embraced Christianity”.

Alan Nazareth is a retired Indian Ambassador and Managing Trustee of Sarvodaya International Trust. The essay was prompted by recent attacks on Christians and churches in India. He is the author of *Gandhi's Outstanding Leadership* which is available through the Editor (£10). Δ

Gandhi's Philosophy and Sufi Doctrine

Negeen Zinovieff

The mysticism of love and self-sacrifice is ancient in both India and Iran and may well have stemmed from the same source in Central Asia, the ancient heartland of both cultures. The teaching of Mahatma Gandhi, which grows out of the Bhakti love-devotional practice of India has much in common with the doctrines of Sufism, which, though in the context of Islam, is in many ways a continuation of the pre-Islamic gnosis of Iranian Mazdaism. He had a profound love and respect for the Koran, with its own unitarian and ecumenical view of faith and believed it was no less divinely inspired than the Bhagavad Gita.

“God has a thousand names,” he said, “or rather, he is nameless. We may worship or pray to Him by whichever name that pleases us. Some call Him 'Rama', some 'Krishna'; others call Him 'Rahim' and still others call Him 'God'. All worship the same spirit.” He stressed one tenet of Hindu philosophy, viz, “God alone is, and nothing else exists, and the same truth you will find emphasised and exemplified in the Kalam [doctrine] of Islam”.

His basic teaching that God is truth echoes the view of the Sufi saints, who actually call God *Haqq* (the Truth). Like the Sufis, he taught and practised nonviolence, called *ahimsa* in Sanskrit. As with the Sufis, this nonviolence is not merely a passive approach to encounters, but it is a dynamic concept, activated by the energy of love.

“Complete non-violence,” he said, “is complete absence of ill-will towards all that lives. Non-violence is, therefore, in its active form goodwill towards all life. It is pure love. I read it in the Hindu scriptures, in the Bible, in the Koran.” “In its positive form,” he reiterated elsewhere, “Ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I'm a follower of Ahimsa, I must love my enemy”. To achieve *ahimsa*, Gandhi believed, one must humble oneself as the dust of the earth on which all beings tread and see oneself as no more than a speck in God's universe, a completely Sufi point of view.

His protest against oppression was fundamentally nonviolent, but it did not exclude armed struggle as an alternative to cowardly resignation, despite his lifelong disapproval of war. “Ahimsa in the midst of a world full of strife, turmoil and passions,” he writes “is a task whose difficulty I realise more and more day by day. And yet the conviction, too, that without it life is not worth living is growing daily deeper.”

Gandhi believed that religion, that is, the realisation of moral perfection and virtue and love of God, could not be relevant without service to humanity which included, for him, active participation in the political life of society.

Religion and politics in Sufism and 'Gandhism'

“To see the universal spirit of Truth face to face, one must be able to love the meanest of creation” – and see oneself as no more than that.

According to Gandhi, one “who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means” .

This comment could be controversial both from the point of view of political liberalism and from the Sufi point of view, until one understands that this is a matter of conscience for Gandhi himself. For the Sufis the word *din*, classically translated 'religion', is rooted in the ancient Persian word *daena*, the word which the Iranian prophet of Mazdaism, Zoroaster, used to mean 'truth-guided conscience'. The word entered the Semitic languages of the Middle East – first Akkadian, then Hebrew and Aramaic – without losing this personal implication.

The word which Gandhi uses is *satyagraha*, Truth-force, indicating that whatever actions he takes on the social and/or political stage are driven by a conscience – and consciousness – which is connected to the Truth or God and therefore sometimes transcends reason or intellect. In this line, although Sufism in principle opposes political involvement, there are many individual Sufis who have taken action on the political scene out of conscience-motivation, such as those Qadiri, Suhrawardi and Naqshbandi Sufis in India who felt compelled to advise kings, some of whom were actually their disciples, while the Chishti masters resolutely opposed this policy, often establishing their centres as far from the capital as possible, so that they would remain difficult to contact.

A time-honoured practice has been for people of conscience to participate in the political arena in full vigour at a certain stage in their lives, then to retire to meditate. Hinduism provides for this institutionally with its *grihastha*, or 'householder', stage for the person in the prime of life, and its *sannyasin*, or 'celibate ascetic', stage for later years.

The question is often stated this way: Is it not better for a devotee to devote the time one spends on spiritual practice in service of others ? Gandhi was aware that India's 'speechless millions' could not ponder on God while they were starving.

Gandhi writes, “God Himself seeks for His seat the heart of him who serves his fellow men. Gandhi believed, as do Sufi masters, that presence of heart in devotional practice – service being a part of spiritual practice – is vital and that all purification done with remembrance of God is aimed at cleansing the heart. “My appeal to you,” he writes, “is to cleanse your hearts and to have charity. Make your hearts as broad as the ocean”.

When he stated that the true service of others is worship, he meant that effective service could be realised only through the self-purification which comes from meditation, so that there is a dynamic interaction between the two states. No service is worthy of the name unless it is guided by the cognition that comes from devotional practice.

Devotional practice cultivates *ahimsa*, the freedom from ill-will towards all living beings, fired by self-abnegation and constant striving to be in accord with God's will through the pulse of ceaseless remembrance of God in the heart – what the Hindus call *mantra* and the Sufis call *dhikr*. The *mahabbat* (loving kindness) of the Sufis is a closely kindred concept, where one does not simply turn the other cheek when being slapped but actively returns the blow with the warmth of loving-kindness.

As for harmlessness itself, the Sufi poet Hafiz says:

How can I offer thanks
for this blessing;
That I do not have the power
to hurt others ?

This consciousness of God comes through the abnegation of self. Returning to Gandhi's metaphor of being humble as the dust, one comes to his statement in a letter to a western woman whom he had named Mira Behn (Sister Mira) and who, like so many of his devotees, called him Bapu (an affectionate term for 'father').

“I feel nearer to God by feeling Him through the earth. In bowing to the earth, I at once realise my indebtedness to Him; and if I am a worthy child of that Mother, I shall at once reduce myself to dust and rejoice in establishing kinship with not only the lowliest of human beings but also with the lowest forms of creation whose fate is reduction to dust. I have to share with them.”

Negation of Self

Gandhi believed that the negation of self through selfless service is vital for one's coming close to God. This is consistent with the Sufi view of God-guided service, focusing the devotee's consciousness away from self and towards God and what God wills, to the point where the self is annihilated and there is nothing but God's will at work.

Gandhi writes, “Not until we have reduced ourselves to nothingness can we conquer the evil in us. God demands nothing less than complete self-surrender as the price of the only real freedom that is worth having.”

Gandhi believed that the quest and aim of all his writings and activities was self-realisation and being united with God. To accomplish this, Gandhi believed that he must serve humanity. Indeed, he said that all of us are bound to place our resources at the disposal of humanity. And if such is the law, as it evidently is, indulgence ceases to hold a place in life and gives way to renunciation.

When, according to the Sufis, the self has become completely renounced and no longer plays a role in controlling our affairs, then God becomes completely realised in our consciousness. Maghribi (died circa 1406), an eminent Sufi master and poet, speaks, as does Gandhi, of the existence of God in every membrane of His creation. According to one of his verses (given in prose paraphrase): “In this lovely melody [creation] behold nothing but the Minstrel, for every sweet strain you hear is played by Him”. To see a particle

of God in oneself is the quintessence of the Hindu scripture, whereby God “sees Himself in the hearts of all beings,” and the devotee, in turn, “sees all beings in his heart.” This is the vision of the yogi of harmony, a vision which is ever one. (Book 6, verse 29)

Gandhi was a paradigm of this teaching, humble on earth, transfigured in the realm of the Divine. “I have no desire for prestige anywhere,” he said. “It is the furniture required in the courts of Kings. I am a servant of Moslems, Christians, Parsees and Jews, as I am of Hindus.”

In this society of conspicuous consumption where possessions are accumulated for prestige and property stands for personality, Gandhi writes, “Civilisation in the real sense of the term consists not in multiplication but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants”.

He stated elsewhere, “I want – if I don't give you a shock – to realise identity with even the crawling things upon the earth, because we claim descent from the same God, and that being so, all life in whatever form it appears must be essentially one.”

His belief in the sacredness of all life and his modesty about his own saintliness recurs over and over again in his numerous writings, permeating his prolific discourse.

Seek perfection

“I do believe that it is possible for every human being to become perfect even as God is perfect,” he stated. “It is necessary for us all to aspire after perfection, but when that blessed state is attained, it becomes indescribable, indefinable. And I, therefore, admit, in all humility, that even the Vedas, the Koran and the Bible are imperfect as the word of God and that, imperfect beings that we are, swayed to and fro by a multitude of passions, it is impossible for us even to understand this word of God in its fulness.”

His method of fighting evil with good and fasting often to the point of starvation to death brought about the most massive unarmed uprising in history, as the 'speechless millions' of India rose up in march after march, strike after strike, protest after protest, in opposition to British colonial rule. Yet he blamed his fellow Indians as much as the British for the abuse and exploitation of their country, declaring in a general statement which covered the foibles of all humanity of whatever race, creed or nationality: “The hardest heart and the grossest ignorance must disappear before the rising sun of suffering without anger and without malice.”

His asceticism was such that he was the strictest vegetarian until his doctors compelled him to add milk to his diet. He accepted this as a practical measure, since it was seen as necessary for him to maintain a healthy and productive life, for he did not believe in mortification of the flesh as a devotional policy.

“My austerities, fasting and prayer,” he said, “are, I know, of no value if I rely on them for reforming myself. But they have an inestimable value if

they represent, as I hope they do, the yearnings of a soul striving to lay his weary head in the lap of his Maker”.

In the end, although he had been warned of possible assassination attempts in 1947, he went about in the crowds oblivious to the danger. “I know the art of living and dying non-violently,” he declared.

Mahatma Gandhi has left a remarkable legacy to the world. Though he claimed no originality in thought and practice, he has left an ineffable impact in his outstanding example for each and every individual.

“There is no such thing as 'Gandhism' ,” he has written, “I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems.”

No more fitting words could be found to constitute a leading statement epitomising the relationship between his political activism and his meditation than these: “Having flung aside the sword, there is nothing except the cup of love which I can offer to those who oppose me”.

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The above article is an edited version of one that appeared in the journal *Sufi*, issue No.50. Negeen Zinovieff is a long time Friend of The Gandhi Foundation who has written many articles for *The Gandhi Way*.



If only footprints could talk Omar Hayat

*If only footprints could talk
What stories they would tell
Of Saints,
And Getaways,
And People heading unknowingly to Hell*

If only footprints could talk

*Of Great men who have strode these roads
Or who here felled his supposed foe
What wounds were made
The blood that fell
When hands turned upon themselves
If only footprints would tell*

*So take each step with a gentle stride
If only footprints were our ears and eyes.*

(After visiting Kingsley Hall celebrating Gandhi 24 May 2001)

Stranger on the Side Walk Omar Hayat

*Do you remember the last outstretched hands you passed
And did you make contact with his eyes
Did you stop to think that which divides
Is thinner than that which unites.*

*Have you felt the pangs of hunger, lately
And heard your children cry
Or felt the frustrations of helplessness
As life simply passes you by.*

*Do you remember those stories you heard as a child
And do you remember your fire inside
You, the gallant knight striving for justice
The people there by your side.*

*What is it in your life that guides you, lately
And is it that in which you rejoice
Can it be that the moments that passed the Pharaohs
Are also simply passing you by.*

Dr Omar Hayat organises the Gandhi Foundation's Peace Award event.

Realities of War

Geoffrey Carnall

I don't know how many readers remember the Armistice Day parades of the late 1930s and the early years of World War II, but those who did witness them will, I suspect, recall how after the current uniformed members of the armed forces there would be a group of older men in civilian clothes – the survivors of the first World War, the Great War as we used to call it. In my experience these men always elicited warm and enthusiastic applause. They were the people who knew what it was really like. They had endured the realities of war. They had our unreserved admiration, and they reminded us of the many young men who had not come back.

Realities of War is the title of a remarkable book by Philip Gibbs, a novelist and journalist who was a war correspondent on the western front for the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Chronicle*. His reports were sanitised by the wartime censorship, but after the armistice he sat down at his typewriter and all the things he had not been allowed to say just poured out uncontrollably. He presents an appalling picture of what trench warfare was like: the stench, the mud, the sense of futility created by the constant attacks that achieved little except the death of comrades. He notes the good feeling that could develop between the men in the British trenches and the German trenches: 'they talked', says Gibbs, 'out of their common misery.' There were lighter moments: a plank was raised from a German trench with a message scrawled on it – 'The English are fools.' This was not to be tolerated, so it was shot to pieces. Then another plank appeared: 'The French are fools.' Again the message was emphatically deleted. A third plank was raised up: 'We're all fools. Let's all go home.' This was greeted with sympathetic laughter, even though honour demanded that this plank too should be destroyed. It touched a nerve: 'Let the old men who made this war come and fight it out among themselves. The fighting men have no real quarrel with each other.' But, says Gibbs, 'neither side was prepared to "go home" first. Each side was in a trap', a trap secured by military discipline, love of country, fear of cowardice and a thousand complexities of thought and sentiment which 'prevented men, on both sides, from breaking the net of fate in which they were entangled, and revolting against that mutual, unceasing massacre, by a rising from the trenches with a shout of "We're all fools! Let's all go home!"' (*Realities of War* p172-3)

The pitiable ordeal endured by armies on the western front darkened the Armistice Day commemorations before 1939. (After that we had other things to think about.) I remember the headmistress of the prep school I attended in the mid-1930s used to give the assembly on November 11th a suitable address. I cannot remember anything of what she said, but I do know that she reduced us all to tears – all, that is, except a precociously tough-minded lad who called us 'cry-babies'. I have known three men who

took part in the trench-warfare. Articulate as all of them were (one was Professor Renwick of Edinburgh University's English Department) not one of them would speak about their experiences, not one. Gibbs had the advantage of being an observer who could withdraw from the situation at any time: he did not feel trapped. Some few reminiscences – those of Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, Max Plowman – did appear, but only after the lapse of several years. Wilfred Owen's poetry is pretty well unique in the way it conveys the feelings reported by Gibbs, and his message is the same. In the final paragraph of his book he pleads for a return to kindness – 'the only way to heal the heart of the world and our own state. ... By blood and passion there will be no healing. We have seen too much blood.' (Ibid p455)

Internationalism

Well, the Treaty of Versailles was not exactly a monument to kindness, but it did establish the League of Nations, which drew upon aspirations that had begun to manifest themselves in the years before the outbreak of war in 1914. With hindsight the various international crises in the early years of the twentieth century were preludes to the war that broke out in 1914. But there was also a growing awareness of the importance of international institutions and international co-operation. In 1905 the precursor of the FAO was established in Rome: the International Institute of Agriculture. It provided reliable information about harvest yields worldwide, thus undermining the power of speculators. A Brussels periodical, *La vie internationale*, published lists of international conferences month by month: for example, in July 1910 a Universal Races conference in London, with representatives from all over the world, including an invitation to one Mohandas Gandhi from South Africa. (He couldn't have attended as he didn't come to London that year. Ed). A similar conference was held a month earlier on nationalities and subject races – addressed by Gilbert Murray in which he mocked attitudes of racial superiority:

"If ever it were my fate to administer a Press Law, and put men in prison for the books they write and the opinions they stir up among their countrymen, I should not like it, but I should know where to begin. I should first of all lock up my old friend Rudyard Kipling, because in several stories he has used his great powers to stir up in the minds of hundreds and thousands of Englishmen a blind and savage contempt for the Bengali And in case Mr Kipling should feel lonely in his cell, I would send him a delightful companion, Mr Anstey of *Punch*" – in which periodical Indians are caricatured as cowardly, vain, untruthful and bombastic. Murray concludes that Indians are libelled in this way, not because they are unfit for power but because they are too obviously fit for it, a dismaying thought for the current authorities. (Nationalities and Subject Races: Report of Conference held in Caxton hall, Westminster, June 28-30, 1910, pp9-10.)

Racism of this kind could hardly survive in the post-colonial world, although communities in conflict still have a disturbing capacity for

demonising The Other. But global realities compel even hardened patriots to acknowledge that each continent must have its turn of providing a Secretary-General of the United Nations – top citizen of the world community – a convention that would have seemed utopian in 1910.

But other assumptions remain stuck in their early twentieth-century state – not altogether, but still influentially enough to prevent establishing a convention comparable to that governing the choice of UN Secretary-General. Philip Gibbs might say ‘We have seen too much blood’, but Tony Blair and George W. Bush clearly had not, and while their belief in the military mode has been discredited by the Iraq experience, no clear alternative has emerged. There has, indeed, been an encouraging tendency to concede that ‘there is no *purely* military solution’, that ‘hearts and minds’ have to be won over. But billions are spent on military hardware, and alternatives to the military mode hardly register on the collective consciousness of the world’s decision-makers.

Kosovo peace mission

A particularly striking example of the elimination of alternatives to the military mode is provided by the conflict in Kosovo at the end of the 1990s. The NATO intervention, bombing Serbia into submission, has often been cited as a successful example of the use of military force in support of human rights, in this case ending Serb attempts to drive Kosovars out of Kosovo. The bombing in fact intensified ‘ethnic cleansing’ of the province, though of course after the Serb surrender the position was reversed, and it was the Serb minority who were at risk. Tensions between the two communities remain unresolved. What has virtually disappeared from the record is the earlier and relatively successful effort to prevent Serb violations of human rights undertaken by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (the OSCE).

Before the break-up of Yugoslavia, Kosovo had enjoyed a measure of autonomy. When Slovenia, Bosnia and other former Yugoslav provinces went their own way, the Serbian government strengthened its hold on Kosovo and brought its special status to an end. This led to resistance by the Kosovars. At first this was nonviolent, but eventually an armed resistance movement emerged, the Kosovo Liberation Army, the KLA. The Serbian authorities attempted to repress its actions, regarding this as simply a matter of enforcing law and order. One effect of the repression, however, was to drive people away from their homes, and this ‘ethnic cleansing’ was widely condemned outside Serbia. International pressure on the Serbian government led to an agreement, signed on 16th October 1998, to declare a cease-fire to be monitored by observers from the OSCE – the Kosovo Verification Mission, the KVM. There were to be two thousand of them, and they were to have complete freedom of access throughout Kosovo.

It only proved possible to recruit 1,350 observers, but in spite of this they were remarkably effective. They were on the alert for any violation of the cease-fire, and a team would immediately rush to where fighting had been

reported, establish the cause of the incident so as to make negotiating an agreement possible, and if necessary remain in order to give the local inhabitants confidence to remain in their homes.

The worst breach of the cease-fire occurred in the village of Racak, when the Serbs killed 45 people. The KVM set about investigating the incident, and established a permanent presence there to prevent any panic flight of the population. It was this incident that was cited to justify the air strikes at the end of March. The KVM investigation was broken off and the whole mission had to leave, exposing the Kosovars to the full fury of Serb hostility. Something that worked was abandoned for a policy that produced the very effect it was supposed to prevent.

What is really puzzling is that the work of the KVM has attracted practically no interest, although it has much to teach us about the way an outside body can deal effectively with an intractable conflict situation. So far as I can make out, the only account of the operation is to be found in the *Canadian Military Journal* for spring 2000, where General Michel Maisonneuve describes how the Canadian contingent seconded to the KVM tackled the situation in one area of Kosovo. One might have thought that the KVM would have provided a wealth of material for the study of conflict resolution and humanitarian intervention by outsiders. But there is still little willingness to question the received wisdom of militaristic 'realists'. The realities of war have still to find their way into the consciousness of most people on the planet. Those who take Gandhi seriously need a lot of patience.

Geoffrey Carnall worked for the Friends' Service Unit in India and Pakistan from 1948 to 1950, when he encountered many of Gandhiji's disciples. He later taught English Literature at the Queen's University of Belfast and Edinburgh University. He is an active Quaker, and has served on several Quaker central committees, as well as the Northern Friends Peace Board.

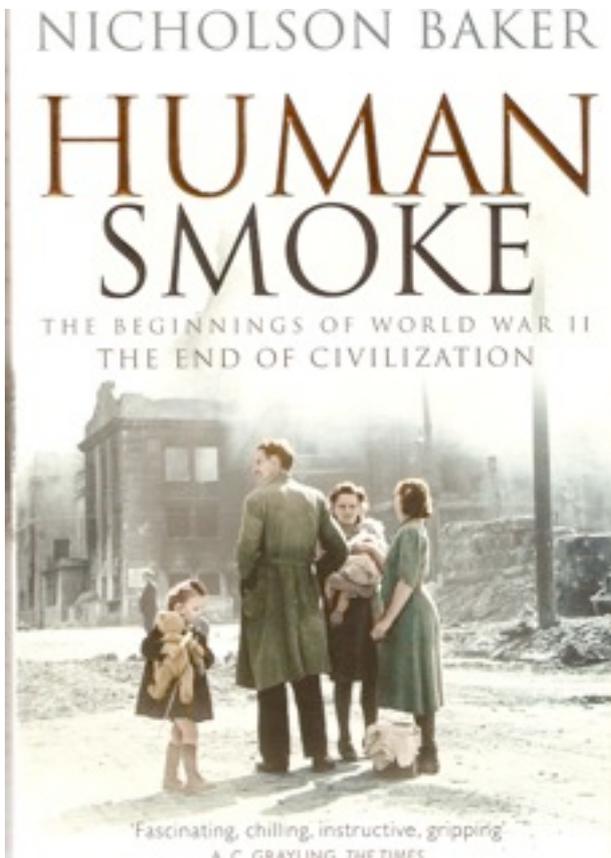
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From *The Last Mazurka* by Andrew Tarnowski:

"The war on the eastern front was more mobile than the trench-bound attrition in the West, where the British and French fought the Germans to a bloody standstill. But the Polish lands were laid waste amid terrible carnage as the Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian armies fought back and forth over the entire country. Millions of men died in battle on the eastern front, and millions of civilians died too. Tragically, each of the three armies conscripted Poles from the Polish territories they controlled. Nearly two million Poles ended up fighting, although the war had little to do with them, and they suffered more than 1.35 million casualties. Polish soldiers often heard Polish songs coming from the enemy trenches, and many of the 450,000 Poles who died were killed by other Poles."

# Book Review

**Human Smoke: The Beginnings of World War II – The End of Civilization** Nicholson Baker Simon and Schuster UK 2008 pp566  
ISBN 978 1 8473 9318 0



Nicholson Baker gives us in this book a revisionist view of the years leading up to the most devastating war experienced so far by humankind. Using what must be around 1000 brief factual reports arranged chronologically – mainly from the 1930s and finishing at the end of 1941 – the author presents a much less black and white picture of the participating nations and their political leaders than is often the case.

The orthodox position on how to keep the peace is to be more powerfully armed than your potential enemies. Churchill, who looms large in this book, represents this position. Most of the populace and their political leaders in the inter-war period were however more ambiguous. World War I left a deep desire for peace and a horror of another war. For a minority

this led them to a profoundly pacifist stance in which armed force was rejected; but most developed a confused position – wanting peace but preparing for war. General disarmament was not sufficiently believed in to succeed and the attempt was abandoned in 1933. The unwise 1919 peace settlement at Versailles followed by an economic collapse brought the Nazi party to power and the new German Government's expansionist plans made war almost inevitable. For the Nazis and for some in the west, such as Churchill, this terrible conflict was anticipated as an invigorating experience.

Baker shows that anti-Semitism was a widespread prejudice in Europe and the USA, even if not everywhere of the insane variety displayed by the Nazis. But the Nazis' plans were to clear the Reich of Jews primarily by means of emigration to somewhere distant like Africa or South America. While they had no qualms about killing Jews, and others, the extermination plan itself did not materialise until 1942 in the middle of the war; indeed the war itself made it easier to consider and carry out the Final Solution. What makes Britain and the USA complicit in this was their reluctance to accept

Jews, and other refugees, except in relatively small numbers. Their response was woefully inadequate for the need.

Another striking fact to emerge from the reports is the emphasis that Britain placed on bombing, especially the bombing of urban centres, to win the war. The RAF was dropping bombs on German towns before the Luftwaffe did the same to British towns, even if they were rather ineffective night raids which usually missed their targets. Churchill was especially enthusiastic about trying to terrorise the population by this means and in the later stages of the war the raids by British and American bombers were indeed devastating. Also in keeping with this approach was the sea blockade initiated by Britain whose aim was to starve the civilian population. As Gandhi remarked at the time, taking up arms to defeat the Nazis would mean having to outdo them in violence.

A remarkable feature of the book is the number of news items concerning those who opposed the war. Included are Vera Brittain, Muriel Lester, George Lansbury, Bishop George Bell, American Quakers Clarence Pickett and Rufus Jones, Unitarian minister John Haynes Holmes, Japanese Christian Toyohiko Kagawa, and more than 50 items on Gandhi. There was also the remarkable Jeannette Rankin who was the first US Congresswoman. She was elected in 1916 and voted, with a very few others, against entry to the First World War, and in 1941 was the only person in Congress to vote against declaration of war.

One of the important things about *Human Smoke* is that it is written by a successful professional writer, just as fellow American writer Mark Kurlansky wrote *Nonviolence: the History of a Dangerous Idea* (2006). Such books are more likely to be read by those who are not already committed believers in nonviolence because they are stocked by the big bookchain shops.

I can do no better than conclude with Baker's last paragraph:

"I dedicate this book to the memory of Clarence Pickett and other American and British pacifists. They've never really gotten their due. They tried to save Jewish refugees, feed Europe, reconcile the United States and Japan, and stop the war from happening. They failed, but they were right."

Perhaps one should add that even although the pacifists failed to stop the outbreak of war, Gandhi had offered an alternative method of resisting foreign occupation, one which was in fact used by more people than generally realised, although the resisters themselves did not usually grasp the moral significance of their actions, having adopted it as a pragmatic response.

*George Paxton*

.....

"If there ever could be a justifiable war in the name of and for humanity, a war against Germany, to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race, would be completely justified. But I do not believe in any war."

M K Gandhi in *Harijan* 26 November 1938

# Charles Freer Andrews: “Deenabandhu” *Chris Clarke*

I am certainly not the first to have uncovered the importance of Andrews work. The sixteen or so books written about him suggest that a great many people have fallen unsuspecting on his work and been amazed at what they have found. My discovery of him fits the normal pattern: one chances upon him through his connection with Gandhiji, soon realising that he did not play a mere passing role in the Indian independence struggle, eventually coming to the conclusion that were it not for the greatness of the Mahatma himself, Andrews would certainly have been remembered as one of the greatest humanitarians of the twentieth century.

Consider his achievements for a moment: simultaneously a very close friend both of Gandhi and at least one Viceroy, trusted and loved by both sides in the conflict – despite being monitored by the British secret police. There was almost no country in the British Empire which Andrews did not visit in his work to publicise the plight of indentured Indian labourers. Wherever he went there were difficult encounters with British officials, plantation owners and other interests who did not take kindly to his exposure of their sins. There were people to help, sometimes it was said, literally pulling people from flooding rivers and nursing the sick. And on top of that, finding time to correspond almost weekly with British newspapers, and author 24 books. Here is what the contemporary Sikh writer T. Sher Singh says of him:

“You and I have been taught about William Wilberforce who helped abolish the idea of slavery. Well, I believe that the history books should also similarly sing about Charles Freer Andrews because he helped abolish the idea of Indentured Labour, which was then as much of a plague as slavery had been (and to a large extent continued to be in some parts of the world).”

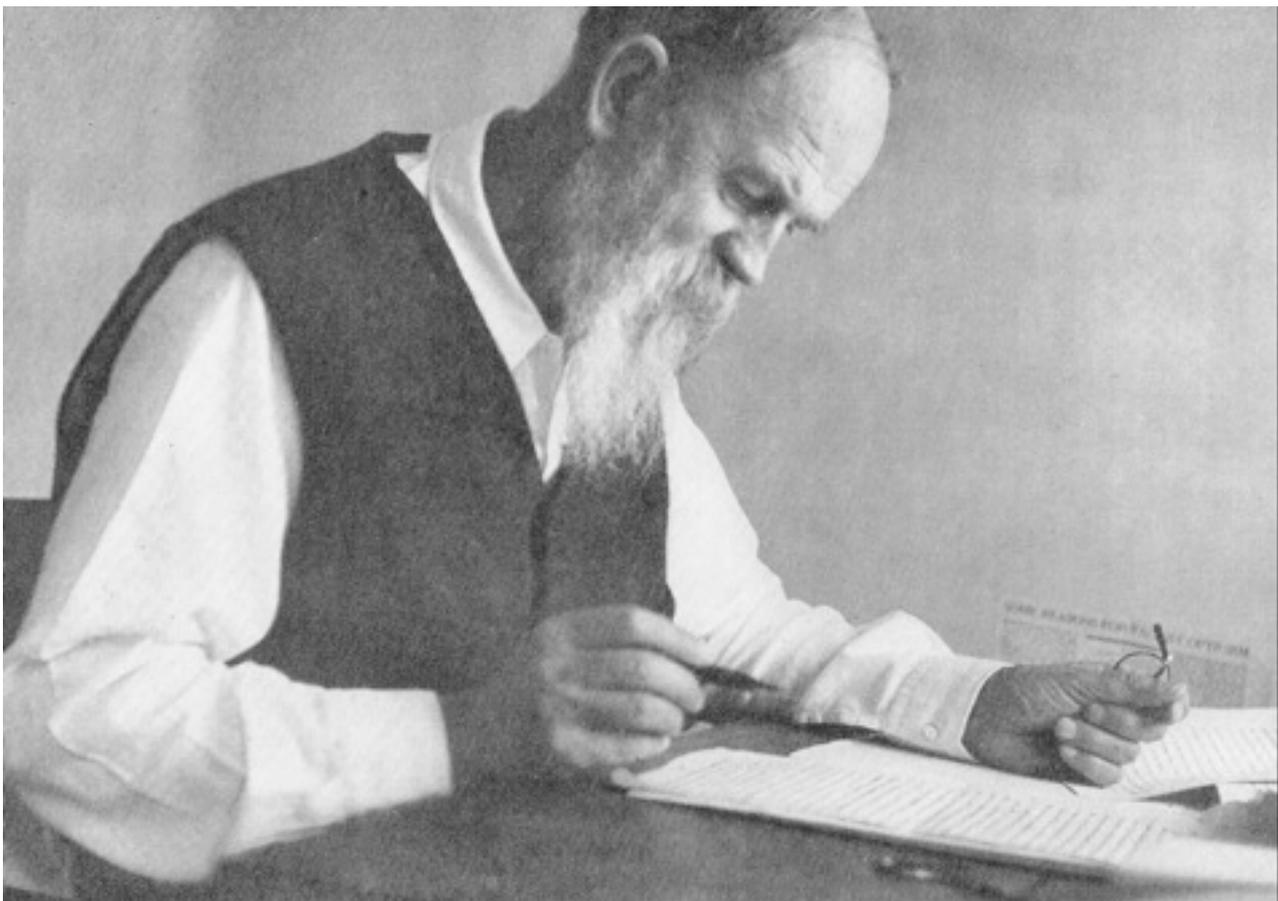
Not surprisingly, Andrews is remembered by many in India, for his work in the Indian Trades Union Congress which took him to all parts of the Indian subcontinent and indeed throughout the British Empire. There are many places in India named after him: schools colleges, villages, and the area of Delhi known as Andrewsganj, and the centenary of his birth was commemorated on a stamp.

Though Andrews was born in Elswick in Newcastle he is not remembered here, a remarkable fact considering the people of Newcastle are normally so keen to celebrate their heroes. So I have put together a few boards outlining the importance of “Deenabandhu” (the name means friend of the poor), in the hope that interest in his life might grow.

This exhibition will become part of the City of Peace initiative, which celebrates the cultural, religious and racial diversity of Newcastle. The

initiative was the idea of Dr. Hari Shukla, a prominent member of the Hindu Temple and the Newcastle Council of Faiths.

I understand that attempts have been made to interest people in the idea of a film of Andrews life. I would imagine this is a very hard idea to sell to people. Andrews was a deeply likeable person – the Viceroy said of him that “I have always liked him. I always feel about him that however much I might have to put him in prison I should still respect his character.” And though Andrews’ deeds might have been, as Gandhi thought, “heroic”, they do not readily lend themselves to cinema scripts. However Lord Attenborough says that before his film, many thought the same of Gandhi.



And therefore I propose not to give up publicising dear Charlie and his work.

A quick search on Amazon will reveal many of the books written on Charlie, though a very readable short introduction might be found in T. Sher Singh's lecture *C.F.Andrews: Eye-Witness To Sikh History*, which is available in several places on the internet. I would be pleased to make contact with anyone who is interested in publicising Charlie's life.

Chris Clarke  
[cc2india@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cc2india@yahoo.co.uk).

# Misunderstanding Gandhi

*Antony Copley*

All the evidence suggests that Mohandas Gandhi today is more keenly followed outside of India than within. He has been appropriated by western concerns. Within India he has become more of a figurehead, so much so that even right wing and communal political movements such as the BJP see fit to claim him as one of their own. Within this configuration a very real question is raised, just where does the real Gandhi come from ? Are we right to claim him as a sympathiser of western liberal and progressive causes ? Or should we not rather search for an explanation of Gandhi in terms of his Indian and above all Hindu background ? Of course at the outset we can recognise that Gandhi belongs to both west and east but it remains important to raise the question, where should the emphasis lie ? The approach of this essay is historical and it will address just a few of the extensive recent publications on Gandhi.

Just how impressionable was the young Gandhi who arrived in London in 1888 at the age of 18 to the cultural life of the imperial capital ?

He was clearly exposed to what we can now see as the beginnings of a lively alternative culture. In all kinds of ways English intellectuals were reacting against a dominant Victorian culture. Doubt was corroding old values and into the vacuum all kinds of new beliefs were flooding. Historians by describing Gandhi's encounter with these new beliefs suggest that Gandhi became a part of this western counter-culture and could be claimed as one of its own. Indisputably Gandhi was attracted to the new vegetarian movement, fell on the vegetarian restaurant, the Central, he discovered, in St Bride's street with delight and relief, read Henry Salt's pamphlets, though at this point Henry Salt did not become a significant friend, but did befriend Josiah Oldfield and became an active member of the London Vegetarian Society.

But the degree of exposure to Theosophy is more contentious. We know that two Theosophists, Bertram and Archibald Keightley, uncle and nephew, asked him to help them in their study of Hindu texts and this was Gandhi's first encounter with the Bhagavad Gita as a text (it had been read out to him as a child), that he read Madame Blavatsky's *A Key to Theosophy* and that he was won over by the oratorical power of Annie Besant when he heard her lecture on 'Why I became a Theosophist' at the Queens Hall and of her commitment to pursuing the truth. He met both Blavatsky and Besant at their home in 17 Lansdowne Road, Notting Hill. Fascinatingly, Annie Besant had only just converted to Theosophy and was embarking on yet another of her incarnations, though this was to be a lasting one, in her varied life and the young Gandhi was equally at the outset. There was much that Gandhi might have learnt about Besant at the time. Her commitment to Indian self-rule had already been expressed in articles on England, India and Afghanistan she wrote for the *National Reformer* in 1878 and her love affair with Hindu India

was already of long standing. Quite what he made of her rather notorious reputation, her being divorced, her support for birth control, her earlier atheism, we do not know, though intriguingly he was sufficiently in love with English liberalism to support the right of one vegetarian to at least publish an essay supporting birth control. But one wonders if this attempt to connect Gandhi with these expressions of an alternative culture is not the root of the misunderstanding between Gandhi and the English left.

### **Influence of the West**

This is part of a larger story which has been thoroughly explored by Nicholas Owen in his *The British Left and India: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism 1885-1947* (OUP 2007). Within this relationship lies a key question, raised above all by Edward Said, to what degree was this British protest shaped by an Indian input, in Said's cultural terms, was an expression of hybridity? Owen's study reveals the extent to which British critics of imperial rule tended to project onto the Indian situation the kinds of concerns that shaped their own struggles and expectations of reform with the British context. They constantly came up against the limits, 'buffers' is Owen's word for it, of their grasp of the Indian situation. In the early days of Congress, set up in 1885, Indian liberals accepted the need for a pressure group to be set up in London to influence metropolitan attitudes, and subsidised the British Committee. However tactful British liberals might be there was always a tendency for British liberal sympathisers of Indian reform to impose their own values on India, and if not quite a neo-con type agenda, there was always a tendency to talk down and tell Indians that the liberal constitutionalism path was the one for them. This was a paternalism that was to become increasingly resented.

This was a projection even more evident in the Labour party and amongst the Fabians. Owen shows how the labour left were bemused by the kind of new Indian politics emerging during the Swadeshi protest aroused by the partition of Bengal in 1905. To quote Owen: "they were quite unlike the forms with which British politicians were familiar, relying as they did on pre-modern methods of mobilisation and on the authority of caste and class". (p 84) Ramsay Macdonald, for example, could not cope with an India seen as 'the other', dragged down by its culture and climate. (Here he anticipated Naipaul's *Area of Darkness*.) He would have nothing to do with Aurobindo Ghose and the Extremists. The Webbs were readier to reach out to aspects of the Indian renaissance, warmed to Dayanand Saraswati and the Arya Samaj with its reformist attitudes to caste, and also to Gokhale's *The Servants of India*. But they could not discover within India those reforming local institutions – though Keir Hardie had expectations of the panchayat – that had furthered the left within Britain and fell increasingly back on a state bureaucracy as the necessary agency for change. Owen sums this up well: "What each most admired in the mirror of Indian nationalism was the reflection they saw of their own ideals. At the heart of the problem, however,

was confusion over the marks of authenticity”. (pp104-5) But were you to Indianise the nationalist movement, would it become even less familiar ?

And here of course was the further beginnings of the misunderstanding of Gandhi. He failed to fit into western expectations of Indian socio-economic and political development. But to explain why we have to explore the way Gandhi’s outlook evolved, and initially on his attitudes to religion before we tackle the nature of his political leadership.

## **Gandhi the Hindu**

Gandhi came out of a Hindu culture. As a child he was immersed in reading from the Ramayana, morally impelled by the texts on Shravana’s devotion to his parents. Admittedly he was no worshipper in the *haveli*, the Vaishnavite temple, and through his essentially reforming outlook eschewed much of the ritual of Hinduism. Much has been made of the way Theosophy brought him to a kind of religious pluralism but this can be exaggerated. He acquired a sense of different faiths by sitting in on his father’s conversations with those of other beliefs. I am more and more convinced that the best interpreters of Gandhi are those like Bhikhu Parekh who can locate Gandhi in this Hindu context and explore its Sanskritic vocabulary. Margaret Chatterjee, in another of those highly intelligent collections of her essays *Inter-Religious Communication: A Gandhian Perspective* (Promilla and Co: 2009, New Delhi and Chicago), suggests a multi-faith approach far more rooted in the give and take of religious encounter than through any more theological approach. Gandhi set out to discover what mattered to those of other faiths, his “uncanny awareness of the barriers to inter-religious understanding”. Gandhi, she writes, “was too much of a realist to set much store by either an original Alpha ground or an Omega point of ultimate convergence.” The validity of other faiths would be found in working alongside, in the constructive programme, for example. (See pp51-4). Christians in South Africa tried to convert him but he could not accept a Christ as an exceptional incarnation of God and was resistant to the idea of atonement; man, Gandhi felt, must redeem himself from sin. Conversion was unacceptable; we have to pursue our religious path in the faith into which we were born. Anthony Parel has radically reorientated our understanding of Gandhi by demonstrating how his real quest was to live out the Hindu values of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. (See his *Gandhi’s Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony*, CUP 2006, in *The Gandhi Way* No 95 Spring 2008 and I will not repeat its arguments here.) Parel’s originality lies in the claim that Gandhi privileged *artha* and sought in politics the means of salvation. Clearly Gandhi was heading in an entirely different direction to western politicians.

Only by situating him in the context of the Hindu Renaissance and the Religious Reform movements (not wholly interchangeable concepts) will Gandhi make sense. He was horrified to discover that protagonists of violence were trying to hijack that ideology. This was why his encounter in London with Savarkar, exponent of a violent form of Hindu nationalism, was

so disturbing to him and prompted his longest text after the autobiography, *Hind Swaraj* (1909). He had to demonstrate that adopting the culture of violence was simply to ape the culture of the west and that the only truly Indian path to independence lay through *ahimsa* or non-violence. All through the years in South Africa he was aware of the Hindu Renaissance working its way out in India. He was to contact some of the religious reform movements. In 1901 in Calcutta he contacted the Brahmo and Sadharan Samaj's, the liberal and radical wings of the Hindu reform movement inspired by Ram Mohan Roy. He tried to visit Vivekananda, leader of the Ramakrishna Mission, but he was too ill at the time and indeed died in 1902. Here was a figure who must have provided Gandhi with a role model as social reformer and political patriot. But the figure who must have loomed the larger was Aurobindo. You need luck to become a political leader and Gandhi was to be spared the rivalry of Gokhale and Tilak by their deaths in 1915 and 1920 respectively. Annie Besant, never a serious threat, had peaked by 1917. But Aurobindo was always there and, had he not chosen to go into internal exile in Pondicherry in 1910 and divert his extraordinary powers of leadership into an internalised yogic quest, it's hard to see how Gandhi could have outmatched him as leader. The religious reform movements had been reluctant to engage in politics, largely out of fear of the reprisals from an overbearing colonial state. But Mrs Besant believed she was released from Colonel Olcott's agreement to keep the Theosophical Society out of politics by his death in 1909 and did become actively involved. For Gandhi it took the massacre at Amritsar in April 1919 to release him from his curious sense of loyalty to the Empire – he still acted as a recruiting sergeant for the Indian army throughout the war - to take up the leadership of Congress and to embark on his campaign of non-cooperation. This is where the originality of Parel's interpretation comes into play. Gandhi was the one Indian religious reform leader to see politics as the way to salvation or *moksha*. How did British politicians respond to this new style Indian leader ?

### **Misunderstanding**

For now we can see the scale of misunderstanding. The Labour party in their bid for power were increasingly taking on the trappings of an establishment movement. As Nicholas Owen puts it: "thus as Congress made its way from respectability to agitation the Labour party was moving in the opposite direction." (p128) One Labour MP, Josiah Wedgwood, was shocked by Gandhi's tactic of non-cooperation, it was 'a stupid blunder' which robbed Congress of governmental experience: he saw Gandhi's movement as "more a movement against western civilisation than against western rule". (p122) Ramsay Macdonald was even more repelled. Writing to a supporter of Gandhi in 1930 he asked: "Is it your idea of democratic government that whoever is responsible for it is to allow social fabrics of order and civic relationships to go to wreck and ruin because somebody comes along claiming to be inspired by God?" (quoted Owen p179) The Trade Union

movement was equally alienated, strongly committed to politicised and class based trade unions, and quite unable to grasp Gandhi's attempts to reconcile labour and capital in the Ahmedabad 1917 textile dispute. Gandhi later told some students, July 1934: "Have we not our own distinctive Eastern traditions? Are we not capable of finding our own solutions to the question of labour and capital?" (quoted Owen p185). Gandhi was impatient with all advice coming from the metropolis and in 1920 abolished the British Committee. He asserted: "as in the political so in the labour movement I rely upon internal reform i.e., self-purification". (quoted Owen p184) Later he was to be morally repelled by the coalition politics of the National Government. One writer, George Catlin, summed all this up, what Owen himself sees as an "irreducible clash of moralities": "His religiosity offended their Fabian commonsense, their Marxist prejudices and indeed their Bloomsbury good taste. A God in a drawing room is always liable to say things in bad taste. There is a collision of two worlds". (quoted Owen pp192-3) Despite a sympathy for Indian independence the dialogue between the British left and Gandhi had broken down.

Not that Gandhi lacked for true non-Indian Gandhian friends. There were his Jewish friends in South Africa, Hermann Kallenbach and Henry Polak. Amongst committed followers in India there were Charlie Andrews, Madeleine Slade and Verrier Elwin. I sense Gandhi was less happy with British followers such as Fenner Brockway, just because this entailed some form of dependence on those from outside. Yet Gandhi's friendship was always conditional. Both Andrews and Slade felt that Gandhi did not return their love. Though they had grasped his ideas maybe there always was a misunderstanding as to the extent of Gandhi's affection. One explanation for Gandhi's drawing back is contained in the autobiography. It lies in the account of his friendship with the young Muslim, Sheikh Mehtab. It was a friendship that led him in ruinous directions, meat-eating, visiting brothels: "My zeal for reforming him had proved disastrous for me", Gandhi reflected, "and all the time I was completely unconscious of the fact" (M K Gandhi *An Autobiography* p14 Ahmedabad:1963) Oddly, Gandhi invited him to be a steward of his house in Durban in 1896 only for Mehtab to be caught in flagrante with a prostitute. Admittedly Mehtab joined in the 1908 satyagraha in Johannesburg but a lesson had been learnt. You should not fully trust a friend. I think Gandhi always held something back, friends should not become too dependent, they had to work through to their own salvation. There was an inner austerity, almost cold in its character.

This story of misunderstandings has, of course, an obvious moral for our times. Can we be sure that we do not project onto Gandhi our own Gandhian perspectives? Are we sure Gandhi would have endorsed our own ideals? Would he, for example, be supportive of our variants of a multi-faith world where we are tolerant of conversions from one faith to another? I think we have to live with a Gandhi who was clearly intolerant of all forms of sexual permissiveness and of alternative sexualities. Maybe, whether or not

our ideals can be shown to be truly Gandhian, the point Gandhi would make is the need for us to be absolutely sure that we have internalised these and they have become part of our own pursuit of the truth. Gandhi cannot become a crutch and ours has always to be a personal struggle.

Antony Copley is Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the School of History at the University of Kent. His most recent publication *A Spiritual Bloomsbury* (Lexington Books: 2006) has been republished by Yoda press, New Delhi under the revised title of *Gay Writers in Search of the Divine*. Currently he is working on a book on art, music and spirituality in the 20th century. Δ



From the memoir *Mr Gandhi: the Man* by Millie Graham Polak (1931):

This question of “to be or not to be” a parent was one frequently discussed. Mr Gandhi was reaching the point where he began to think that it would be better for the world, and probably for God, if mankind ceased to reproduce itself. There came a time when I felt that if one were going to have a child, it would seem as though it were “conceived in sin and carried wickedness.” I remember, when one of the members of the colony at Phoenix was going to have a baby, I did not for some weeks mention the lady’s name in connection with babies. In due time the child was born and two days later my husband and I went to Phoenix to see Mr Gandhi. We talked in the usual way for a little while. Then Mr Gandhi almost plaintively said: “You have not asked about the new baby. Don’t you want to know about it?” “Yes, very much,” I replied, “but I was not sure what you thought about it.” “Well come along, we will all go and see it.”

And we three went off to visit the mother and child. Mr Gandhi seemed quite pleased about it, talking in the most happy and satisfied manner about the baby’s progress.

When we entered the mother’s bedroom his eyes were alight with affectionate interest. I felt somewhat puzzled, but realised that even Mr Gandhi distinguished between abstract truth and human love, and mother-love was always of great beauty and joy to him. I think he often endowed a mother with many attributes she did not necessarily possess. “Being a mother,” I once said to him, “does not make a woman wise.” “No,” he replied, “not simply being a mother; but being a loving mother does, for all real love teaches us wisdom, and one of the finest aspects of love in human life is mother-love. It contains within itself the seeds of great sacrifice.” “Yet a mother may love her children dearly and have no wisdom in training them,” I objected. “Love will teach her even that,” he replied. “But it does not even teach her how to feed them properly. She can kill them by loving over-feeding.” “That applies to the mothers who have lost touch with their true instincts. Your civilisation and living in big cities have destroyed the knowledge that motherhood should give. Don’t you think you know how to deal with your baby?” “I am learning by experience. I am not sure about my instinctive knowledge of the subject.” “Trust your love and it will not lead you wrong,” he concluded. “Don’t try to reason with your brain too much about it.”

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Charity number 292629

The Foundation exists to spread knowledge and understanding of the life and work of Mohandas K Gandhi (1869-1948). Our most important aim is to demonstrate the continuing relevance of his insights and actions for all of us.

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## The Gandhi Way

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