

Gandhi Foundation Annual Lecture 2009 and Peace Award

The Annual Lecture will be delivered by
Hon Mr Justice Aftab Alam
of the Supreme Court of India
Upholding Secularism – Role of the Supreme Court
at the Inner Temple, Temple Church, London EC4Y 7BB
Wednesday 14 October 2009, 6.00 - 7.30pm

The Gandhi International Peace Award will be presented to
The Children's Legal Centre by Clive Stafford Smith

Tickets for this event can be obtained free of charge from
Omarhayat@chemecol.net Please arrive by 5.45pm.
If postal tickets are required then please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to
Omar Hayat, 2 Morecambe Terrace, London N18 1LA

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Gandhi on equality

Due to various banking crises the British media have been more than usually interested in recent months in directors' and CEOs' bonuses and salaries. These outrageously high incomes are not confined of course to bankers but are normal among large companies. The majority of employees of these businesses might receive around £20,000 per year while at the top of the pyramid there will be incomes of around £1 million – a ratio of 50:1.

Gandhi had some things to say on the issue of income differentials:

That economics is untrue which ignores or disregards moral values. The extension of the law of nonviolence in the domain of economics means nothing less than the introduction of moral values as a factor to be considered in regulating international commerce.

My ideal is equal distribution, but so far as I can see, it is not to be realised. I therefore work for equitable distribution.

I suggest that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use, and keep it, I thieve it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day to day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world.

It is open to the world ... to laugh at my dispossessing myself of all property. For me the dispossessing has been a positive gain. I would like people to compete with me in my contentment. It is the richest treasure that I own. Hence it is perhaps right to say that though I preach poverty, I am a rich man !

No one has ever suggested that grinding pauperism can lead to anything else than moral degradation. Every human being has a right to live and therefore to find the wherewithal to feed himself and where necessary to clothe and house himself. But for this very simple performance we need no assistance from economists or their laws.

The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society. If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of nonviolence ...

Quotations from *All Men are Brothers*, Navajivan Publishing House.

Applications of Gandhi's Thought to Religious Studies Today

Alex Damm

In modern universities, the discipline of religious studies seeks to understand religion and religions in all of their richness. Much as geographers analyze elements of physical and cultural landscapes, or historians investigate the relationships among past events, students of religion analyze phenomena that we call “religious,” phenomena that Robert Bellah defines as “a set of symbolic forms and actions that relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence” or to an *ultimate reality*. In our study of religion, we ask questions that can help us appreciate the structures, histories, origins, goals and logic of religion in general and of the numerous world religions. And to answer such questions, we employ methods drawn from across the intellectual spectrum, including psychological, literary-critical, sociological and linguistic methods. Ultimately, religious studies in the university aims to appreciate the complexity of religion as a human activity, to foster critical thinking skills, and to build a stronger appreciation and toleration of the world's religions and ultimately of other people. It is worth noting, too, that the fundamental approach to religious studies is academic or critical: religious studies has no desire to accept (or to deny) truth claims of religions, but rather to describe and assess them as human endeavours, without appeal to faith or religious authority.

To a point, this critical approach to the study of religion is satisfying. But only to a point. As I reflect on my stance as both a student of religion and a participant *in* religion, in particular as an admirer of the religious principles of Gandhi, I wonder whether there is more room in religious studies to accommodate and acknowledge the value of religion to our lives. In the university, I wear an “observer's hat” and teach about religion without investment in my own or others' religious well being. As a human who thinks about how we can align ourselves to ultimate reality, though, I wear a “participant's hat”: I strongly believe, as many of us do, in principles espoused by Gandhi, including a commitment to nonviolence and to the fundamental unity of life. While I hope that I would remain objective and never teach students that one religious stance is normative or “better” than another, I also believe that many of Gandhi's principles are noble, are practically universal, and are worth sharing. And there are precedents for this stance: certain of my own professors have taught me, explicitly and through their personal example, that we can do more to embrace and respect others, and to raise consciousness of Gandhian principles. Are there, then, ways in which Gandhi's thought can find a place *within* the academic teaching of religion?

I submit that Gandhi's thought can inform today's teaching about religion. My insight is not novel: work by Glyn Richards among others has

demonstrated the timeliness of Gandhian thought to religious studies. I believe that we can further apply Gandhian thought in ways that will enrich our study of religion yet also maintain its academic objectivity. In what follows, I shall outline some Gandhian principles and then suggest that certain of these principles are consonant with and so can enhance, the teaching of religion in universities.

Gandhi on Post-Secondary Education:

Perhaps the most direct means to discover Gandhi's value for teaching religion is to examine his thinking on education. From at least the 1920s, Gandhi wrote and lectured on the kind of education that India required to function well as a sovereign state.

For Gandhi, the basic purposes of all education are social and religious. On the one hand, education has a social purpose: to equip people to "serve their country." Put more precisely, the purpose of education is to inculcate in students the virtues of *swaraj* and *sarvodaya*. The term *swaraj* or "self-rule" denotes intellectual and manual skills that foster autonomy and build in their turn a just and equitable society for all. Critically for Gandhi, education must impart such *swaraj*. Education must train individuals and families in skills to help them support themselves and their families (for instance, trade skills that produce good income, as well as skills in maintaining one's own clothing, healthy accommodation and food). Similarly, education must train citizens about their nation's history and culture, using national languages, so that citizens will appreciate and in turn keep the interests and well being of the nation, the people of the nation, front and centre.

Sarvodaya is a second virtue that Gandhi believed needed the support of education. Often translated as the "uplift of all," *sarvodaya* denotes the amelioration of the lives of as many people as possible. Significantly, Gandhi held that education had to equip citizens for *sarvodaya*; education needed both to teach moral values of service and compassion, and to emphasize practical skills that can express such compassion, whether in natural science, medicine, engineering, or philosophy. For Gandhi, the centre of gravity in post-secondary education is to foster social well-being; it places no premium on individual achievement in the form of income or professional status.

Underlying and infusing these social purposes, on the other hand, Gandhian education has at its core a religious purpose: to teach students to value *truth*, the essence of which is ultimate reality (or God) as well as one's real self (or *Atman*). Manifestations of truth in our world include the moral principles of nonviolence and of love that recognizes others as fundamentally linked to oneself; indeed, truth manifests itself in the social values of *swaraj* and *sarvodaya*. Education should inculcate precisely these values.

Thus far, we have described Gandhi's views on the purposes of education. What role did teaching specifically about religion play in achieving these purposes? Gandhi believed that in schools and universities, students ought to become aware of the world's religions and study them in a manner

that was, as Richards puts it, *empathetic*. By learning about other religions, and also by taking one's learning back to nurture a better appreciation of one's own religious tradition, the student could gain a better and fuller grasp of truth.

Gandhi's Relevance to Religious Studies:

I believe that Gandhian philosophy can “fit” within and indeed support the contemporary teaching about religion in publicly funded, secular universities. Already Richards has observed that Gandhi anticipates modern teaching about religion, for instance in his concern for examining world religions and for a tolerant and equitable method of study. Richards is entirely correct; I would add only that Gandhi can further inform the study of religion in ways that do not compromise the discipline—indeed, in ways that are *consonant* with the aims of a university as a whole. To their credit, certain university departments of religious studies already teach in ways that reflect, consciously or unconsciously, the influence of Gandhi. Be that as it may, I propose that four tenets of Gandhian thought can fit comfortably into any religious studies program: *sarvodaya*, nonviolence, inter-religious dialogue and the importance of seeking after truth.

First, the teaching of religion can comfortably afford to encourage *sarvodaya*. For instance, in a department's required religious studies course, such as a course in method and theory, students could write about ways in which their study might help them pursue meaningful social service after graduation. Reflection on the social value of one's discipline certainly does not compromise its academic integrity; it simply extends our studies beyond academic training into contributions to others' welfare. And no university would deny (I hope!) that we apply our academic training to the welfare of society; indeed, universities aim to promote such welfare through disciplines as diverse as medicine, music and physics.

Some universities offer courses that concern religion and violence, but there does not exist to my knowledge a course specifically about religion and *nonviolence*. Such a course would be highly valuable in raising awareness of Gandhi and others' teachings on the benefits of nonviolence. This kind of course needs not compel students to take a stance on the appropriateness of violence and nonviolence (even though it would seem hard to argue against nonviolence as a universal value). Teaching about nonviolence in world religions would encourage students to reflect on the values of nonviolence for themselves.

A third application of Gandhi's thought to the teaching of religion is in inter-religious dialogue. Gandhi believed in what scholars call a *dialogical* method of study, whereby students could reflect on similarities between one's own traditions and other traditions, and so come to better appreciate truth. University courses in inter-religious dialogue could serve this very aim. In Canada, some universities already offer courses in dialogue among religions.

Established though these courses may be, we can afford to offer more such courses.

Finally, the teaching of religion can and should accommodate Gandhi's cardinal principle that it is our obligation to pursue understanding of truth — to “experiment” and adapt our lives accordingly with truth. Gandhi described truth in terms that could appeal to adherents of any religion. I believe that it is important in teaching about religion to encourage students to use their knowledge in their own quest for truth. Often, the practice of religious studies — and here I include my own practice — deconstructs religious phenomena in ways that are necessary but which forget to remind us that, outside the classroom, religion and its quest for truth is highly noble and necessary. And once again, this quest for truth need not be phrased in a “religious” manner; after all, universities have for centuries prided themselves on the effort to discover truth, however one might conceive it; the motto of the university that I attended as an undergraduate is that “truth conquers all.”

In these ways, and others too, I believe that Gandhi's thought is consonant with the values of the university, and that as such it can infuse the teaching of religion with a fresh relevance that respects objective study *and* can help us apply our knowledge in commendable ways. I hope that in a small way, this submission can contribute to our appreciation of Gandhi's importance to our world.

See Robert N. Bellah, “Religious Evolution,” in *The Robert Bellah Reader*, eds. Robert N. Bellah and Robert M. Tipton (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 24; for the term *ultimate reality*, see Bellah, “The New Religious Consciousness and the Crisis of Modernity,” in *The Robert Bellah Reader*, 283.

For an introduction to religious studies, see Robert A. Segal, “Introduction,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. Robert A. Segal (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), xiii-xix.

For overviews of Gandhi's religious thinking, see Mark Juergensmeyer, “Gandhi, Mohandas,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Detroit, MI: Thomson Gale, 2005 [1987]), 3271-3273; Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 35-48.

Glyn Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 59-61, for example.

The edition of collected writings about education on which I draw is M. K. Gandhi, *Towards New Education*, ed. Bharatan Kumarappa (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1953). Many of the writings were originally published in Gandhi's journal *Harijan*. On education necessary for India, see Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 46-47; cp. Gandhi, *Towards New Education*, 85, 87, 88-89, 91-92.

We paraphrase Gandhi. “The aim of university education should be to turn out true servants of the people” (*Towards New Education*, 90, cp. p. 98); cp. J. V. Vil'anilam, *The Challenges Before Higher Education in The 21st Century* (New Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 2007), 185.

For the importance of these virtues, see Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 23-25, 47-48. See Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 47-48; Vil'anilam, *Challenges Before Higher Education*, 203; Gandhi, *Towards New Education*, 88, 95-96, 97, 98.

Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 98-99; Gandhi, *Towards New Education*, 84, 85, 87, 88, 95-96.

Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 99; Gandhi, *Towards New Education*, 83-84, 86-87, 91-92.

Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 16-19.

Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 19, 20, 23; Gandhi, *Towards New Education*, 87-88, 90, 94; cp. similarly Vil'anilam, *Challenges Before Higher Education*, 181, 189, 206.

Gandhi, *Towards New Education*, 95-96, 98.

Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 2, 3, 4-5, 12-13, 50.

For such connections see for instance Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 10, 23-24; cp. similarly, Juergesmeyer, "Gandhi," 3272.

Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 57-59.

Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 57-58, 63, esp. 60; cp. Gandhi, *Towards New Education*, 84.

Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 59-60 (59-64).

Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 60, 61, 62.

See Richards, *Gandhi's Philosophy of Education*, 60-61.

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**Kingsley Hall Open House London
Saturday 19th September 2009
11am - 5pm**

Come and find out about the history of Kingsley Hall

- Activities for children
- Launch of Cultural Trail
- Tours of the building at half past every hour
- Display of Muriel Lester Archive Project
 - Refreshments
 - Displays and activities

Fellowship of Reconciliation Conference

A conference is planned for Saturday 5 December in central London with the theme: *Reconciliation: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*

Update from, Chris Cole, FoR, 19 Paradise Street, Oxford OX1 1LD

Tel: 01865 250 781

WRI Conference in Ahmedabad, India 22-25 January 2010

The War Resisters International is holding a conference to discuss the links between local nonviolent struggles and global militarism, including war profiteering.

Details from WRI, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX wri-irg.org

Masanobu Fukuoka and Natural Farming

M R Rajagopalan

Fukuoka, the Japanese author of *One Straw Revolution* which inspired many a person all over the world to convert to Natural Farming, is no more. He passed away at the age of 95 on the 16th August, 2008. I read this famous book, a third time, after a gap of 10-15 years, for writing this article. Often I got the feeling I am reading Mahatma Gandhi ! The common point between Gandhiji and Fukuoka is that they practiced first and preached later. One of the remarkable statements of Gandhi was “My life is my message”. Though Fukuoka made no such statement, his life is his message in relation to Natural farming. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind Gandhiji’s life and message have universal application for truth, nonviolence and village-based

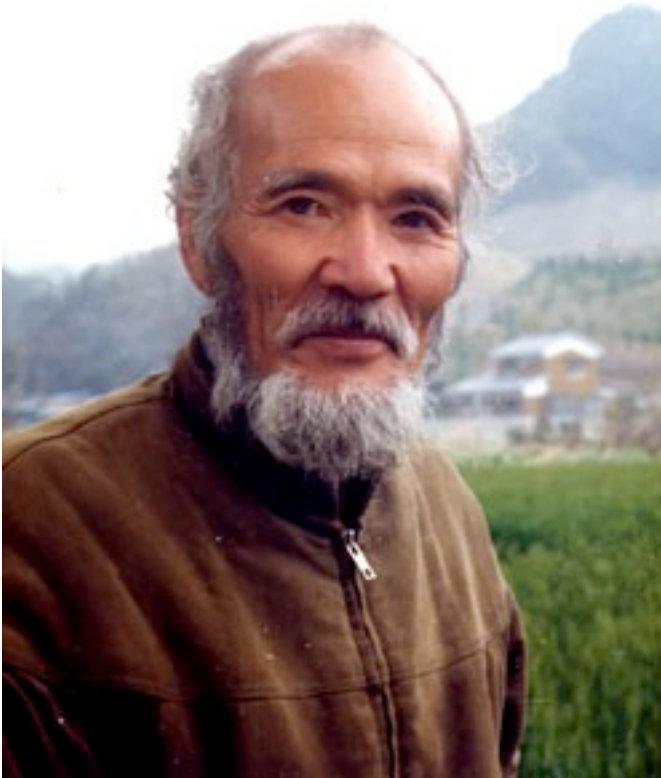
economy, whereas Fukuoka’s message is restricted to Natural Farming.

Fukuoka was inspired by Buddha and Gandhi. In Fukuoka’s words “I believe that Gandhi’s way, a methodless method, acting with a non-winning, non-opposing state of mind, is akin to natural farming. When it is understood that one loses joy and happiness in the attempt to possess them, the essence of natural farming will be realized. The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings.”

Again Fukuoka says in some other place in this book “Fast rather than slow, more rather than less – this flashy ‘development’ is linked directly to society’s impending collapse. It has only served to separate man from nature. Humanity must stop indulging

the desire for material possessions and personal gain and move instead toward spiritual awareness”. Does this not sound like Gandhi ?

As a young man, Fukuoka left his rural home and traveled to Yokohama to pursue a career as a microbiologist. He became a specialist in plant diseases and worked for some years in a laboratory as an agricultural customs inspector. It was at that time, while still a young man of twenty-five, that Fukuoka experienced the realization which was to form the basis of his life’s



work and which was to be the theme of this book, *The One-Straw Revolution*. He left his job and returned to his native village to test the soundness of his ideas by applying them in his own fields.

How the Revolution started

The basic idea came to him one day as he happened to pass an old field which had been left unused and unplowed for many years. There he saw healthy rice seedlings sprouting through a tangle of grasses and weeds. From that time on, he stopped flooding his field in order to grow rice. He stopped sowing rice seed in the spring and, instead, put the seed out in the autumn, sowing it directly onto the surface of the field when it would naturally have fallen to the ground. Instead of plowing the soil to get rid of weeds, he learned to control them by a more or less permanent ground cover of white clover and a mulch of rice and barley straw. Once he had seen to it that conditions had been tilted in favor of his crops, Fukuoka interfered as little as possible with the plant and animal communities in his fields.

All three methods (natural, traditional and chemical) yield comparable harvests, but differ markedly in their effect on the soil. The soil in Fukuoka's fields improves with each season. Over the past twenty-five years, since he stopped plowing, his fields have improved in fertility, structure, and in their ability to retain water. By the traditional method the condition of the soil over the years remains about the same. The farmer takes yields in direct proportion to the amount of compost and manure he puts in. The soil in the fields of the chemical farmer becomes lifeless and depleted of its native fertility in a short time.

In the area of Shikoku where Fukuoka carried on his experiments, rice is grown on the coastal plains and citrus (orange/lime varieties) on the surrounding hill sides. His farm consisted of one and a quarter acres of rice fields and twelve and a half acres of citrus plants.

He adopted four principles for farming this land, which are as follows:

Four principles:

The first is NO CULTIVATION – that is no plowing or turning of the soil.

The second is NO CHEMICAL FERTILIZER OR PREPARED COMPOST. People interfere with nature, and try, as they may, they cannot heal the resulting wounds.

The third is NO WEEDING BY TILLAGE OR HERBICIDES. Weeds play a part in building soil fertility and in balancing the biological community.

The fourth is NO DEPENDENCE ON CHEMICALS. From the time that weak plants developed as a result of such unnatural practices as plowing and fertilizing, disease and insect imbalance became a great problem in agriculture.

These four principles of natural farming comply with the natural order and lead to the replenishment of nature's richness.

Ultimately, it is not the growing technique which is the most important factor, but rather the state of mind of the farmer.

A Self-supporting Farm

Apart from agriculture, Fukuoka also practiced animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries and bee keeping – these factors ensured that life in the farm was self-supporting – the attainment of Gandhian ideal village where the entire requirements were locally produced.

Fukuoka had become a legend in his own life time. Naturally there was a stream of visitors and admirers not only from different parts of Japan, but from all parts of the world. Visitors were accommodated in mud huts like in Sevagram of Gandhi and had to participate in daily chores. To quote a visitor, “There are no modern conveniences in Fukuoka’s farm. Drinking water is carried in buckets from the spring, meals are cooked at a wood burning fire place and light is provided by candles and kerosene lamps. The mountain is rich with wild herbs and vegetables. Fish and shell fish can be gathered in nearby streams and sea vegetables from the Inland sea a few miles away.

There are the daily chores of cutting firewood, cooking, preparing the hot bath, taking care of the goats, feeding the chickens and collecting their eggs, minding the beehives, repairing and occasionally constructing new huts, and preparing soybean paste and soybean curd.”

Why the title *One Straw Revolution*?

The first sentence of the first chapter Look at this Grain, begins like this: “I believe that a revolution can begin from this one strand of straw. Seen at a glance, this rice straw may appear light and insignificant. Hardly anyone would believe that it could start a revolution. But I have come to realize the weight and power of this straw. For me, this revolution is very real.”

Elsewhere, he says “Spreading straw might be considered rather unimportant, but it is fundamental to my method of growing rice and winter grain. It is connected with everything, with fertility, with germination, with weeds, with keeping away sparrows with water management. In actual practice and in theory, the use of straw in farming is a crucial issue. This is something I cannot seem to get people to understand.

A word of caution

Before concluding this article, I would like to observe that what has become popular now as Organic Farming is different from Fukuoka’s methods. The organic farmers prepare compost, vermi compost, Panchagavya, Bio fertilizers, Bio pesticides etc. These methods are foreign to Fukuoka – who just left the soil to do its own work.

Yet, a word of caution would be in order. In some place in his book Fukuoka says “the geography and topography of the land, the condition of the soil, its structure, texture and drainage, exposure to sunlight insect relation,

the variety of seed used, the method of cultivation etc. are essential factors. These vary from place to place.

Fukuoka's own farm was somewhat exceptional. It had a humid climate with rain dependably falling throughout the spring months. The texture of the soil was clayey. The surface layer was rich in organic matter and retained water well.

If we tried to follow Fukuoka's do nothing after scattering the seeds in the dry belts of central and southern Tamil Nadu, or for that matter in any part of the world with scanty rainfall, or a sandy or loamy soil, the results would be disastrous.

Never-the-less, Fukuoka has created a new trend in farming. His method could be copied at least in some places. In other places with different soil and climatic conditions, one can avoid chemical fertilizers and pesticides and use organic fertilizers.

Lastly, what is inspiring as one reads through Fukuoka's *One Straw Revolution* is that he reminds us of Gandhi for his truthfulness, simplicity, spirituality and living with nature as part of it with minimal interference.

M.R. Rajagopalan is Secretary, Gandhigram Trust, Gandhigram, Tamil Nadu.

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## The Problems of Progress

*J S Mathur*

Conferment of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize on Al Gore and Rajendra K Pachauri (picture beneath), Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has focused discussion on the calamity that the human race faces as a consequence of climate change. Dr Pachauri remarks: "Something should be done immediately to mitigate the threats of global warming which are near and real". Gordon Brown has observed: "Climate change poses an urgent challenge that threatens the environment but also international peace and security, prosperity and development."

Global warming is only a symptom of the prevalent civilisation. We need to go to fundamentals and not be sidetracked by laying emphasis on various symptoms of the present ailment and trying to find a solution for these.

Gandhiji, writing in *Young India* on 6 April 1921 said: "We must refuse to wait for generations to furnish us with a patent solution of problems which are ever growing in seriousness. Nature knows no mercy in dealing with stern justice. If we do not wake up before long, we shall be wiped out of existence."

It is high time we listen to the sane advice of Gandhiji and radically change concepts that are associated with growth, progress and development. His message is Universal for the whole of humanity. He made experiments in

India and the people of India understood his simple language. Addressing himself to ‘American Friends’ he observed:

“The message of the spinning wheel is much wider than its circumference. Its message is one of simplicity, service of mankind, living as not to hurt others, creating an indissoluble bond between the rich and the poor, capital and labour, the prince and the peasant. The message is naturally for all.”

The international conferences on climate change in recent years have ended in pious resolutions. It appears that those who attend these deliberations are high ranking politicians and bureaucrats who are far away from the realities and the shortcomings of the present system. As one looks at the well-dressed and shining faces at conference tables one can understand the casualness in approaches to these problems. They are not prepared to change their lifestyles.

Let me draw attention to what Gandhiji said several decades earlier:

“I do not believe that multiplication of wants and machinery contrived to supply them is taking the world a single step nearer its goal ... I wholeheartedly detest this mad desire to destroy distance and time, to increase animal appetites and go to the end of the world in search of their satisfaction. If modern civilisation stands for all this ... I call it satanic.”

In *Hind Swaraj* he observed: “This civilisation is such that one has to be patient and it will be self-destroyed.” In the same book he remarked: “Civilisation is like a mouse gnawing while it is soothing us. When its full effect is realised we shall realise that religious superstition is harmless compared to that of modern civilisation. I am not pleading for a continuance of religious superstitions. We shall certainly fight them tooth and nail ...”

“In the evolution of civilisation needs created machines and simple technology. In modern civilisation this situation has reversed. In today’s world it is technology that creates wants (not needs) and that is the villain. Technology has created an age drunk, not merely with synthetic emotions and pleasures manufactured by entertainment factories, but dreams of power and of the conquest of outer space.”

The world faces a number of problems besides global warming: pollution, ecological imbalances, exhaustion of resources and the like. But far more important are the social and emotional problems that this unbridled development of technology has for the human race. One of these is a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness. Bertrand Russell said: “We are perhaps living in the last age of man, and if so, it is to science that he will owe his extinction”. (*The Impact of Science on Society*, p33) Albert Schweitzer



observed: “It is clear now to everyone that the suicide of civilisation is in progress. What yet remains of it is no longer safe”. (*Decay and Restoration of Civilisation*, p16)

Today technology is the domain of the specialist and a specialist is one who knows more and more about less and less. Relying on this technology which is beyond control we have all round centralisation with power concentrated in modern multinational corporations transcending national boundaries and which rely on competition, exploitation, coercion and manipulation. The remedy to the present ailments that the world and humanity faces is a thorough overhaul of our approach to life. Al Gore observed: “We have also fallen a victim to a kind of technological hubris, which tempts us to believe that our new powers may be unlimited. (*Earth in Balance*, p206)

One of the characteristics of technology is that there is no limit to its growth. Gandhiji remarked: “Machinery is like a snake-hole which may contain one to a hundred snakes ... “ He observed: “ Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilisation ... it represents a great sin”. Other features of technology are that it not only displaces human and animal labour, it has a will or genius of its own and depends on creation of wants (not needs), which are insatiable. It puts enormous concentration of material power and wealth in the hands of the few. Another feature is ‘parasitism’. Man is made to obey the machine. Along with these characteristics is widespread irresponsibility.

These views were expressed to warn humankind of the danger that unbridled technology has in its womb. Gandhiji was not opposed to technology as such but to technology that masters us and is beyond human control. He was for technology that empowers individuals and small groups and is dependent on renewable sources of energy, non-polluting, that lead to peace, cooperation and universal brotherhood.

Every now and then we read or hear that the world is on the brink of annihilation. We must now clearly understand the traits of a healthy society. A few traits that Gandhiji suggested are:

“In a well-ordered society the securing of one’s livelihood should be and is found to be the easiest thing in the world. Indeed the test of orderliness in a country is not the number of millionaires it owns, but the absence of starvation amongst the millions”.

“Man’s triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for mutual service. The law of the brute will be replaced by the law of man.”

The socio-economic system should provide full employment. Unemployment is a sort of economic capital punishment. Unemployment and idleness of millions must lead to anti-social values and even bloody strife. Employment means that work should be pleasurable and satisfying. Gandhiji said: “I should never be satisfied until all men had plenty of work, say eight hours a day ...” He continued: “In a healthy society concentration of riches on

a few people and unemployment amongst millions is a great social crime or disease which needs to be remedied.”

All this implies the wholesale repudiation of the current socio-economic political-technological system. There is nothing sacrosanct about the present order. Maurice Strong remarks: “That economic growth in countries like physical growth in people is natural and healthy up to a point. After that it can become cancerous .... From that stage we should regard real growth as intellectual, moral and social”.

Two world wars and the nuclear bombing of Japan and ever-growing sophistication of the means of mass destruction and exploitation, the all-round exhaustion of resources, pollution and ecological imbalance, rivalry and competition amongst nations to go nuclear are warning signals. Outmoded political structures, fossilised traditions, inflexible policies need to be abandoned at the earliest.

Gandhiji’s advice: “Civilisation, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment and increases the capacity for service”. This demands almost savage asceticism. Gandhiji dressed like the dispossessed and Tagore said: “He spoke to them in their own language; here was only living truth at last and not only quotations from books ....”. Gandhiji’s advice: “...begin with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeros to the one and the first zero will account for ten and every addition will account for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginner is a zero, in other words no one makes the beginning multiplicity of zeros will also produce zero value”.

Let us hope that Al Gore and R K Pachauri and their like will start a movement and listen to the advice of Gandhiji that centralisation as a system is inconsistent with a peaceful, nonviolent structure of society. A beginning has to be made. Each day begins with a dawn and it is never too late to begin and retrace one’s steps if they go in the wrong direction. The longest journey begins with the first step. Someone has to take the step. One Gandhi giving all his time to peace made news all over the world. Many people giving some of their time for peace and a nonviolent socio-economic system can make history. The idealist of yesteryears has become the only realist today.

J S Mathur is Director of the Basant Bihari Jairani Foundation for Peace Studies, Allahabad.

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Letter

Saving a life

I thought readers of *The Gandhi Way* might be interested in a book by the Australian philosopher Peter Singer, *The Life You can Save*. The book is aimed at the general public. Although it starts with a philosophical argument,

most of the book is essentially practical, dealing with people's objections to giving money to aid agencies and suggesting how best to do it.

I went to hear Peter Singer speaking about the book recently. *The Life You Can Save* builds on a philosophical argument Singer made in a philosophical journal in 1972, drawing an analogy between walking on by and allowing a small child to drown in a shallow pond, and allowing children elsewhere in the world to die by failing to give to aid agencies such as Oxfam. He argued that people should give to aid agencies in order to save a life, unless they have other demands on their money *which are of equal moral worth to saving a child's life*.

His views have been much discussed over the years by moral philosophers who have agreed that his argument is logically sound and consequently very powerful. In general it has been felt, I think correctly, that the standard he set is too high to be practical and that it would lead to an impoverishment of life for many people. Someone who followed through on his argument would not spend money on going to restaurants or the theatre for example, because such activities are clearly not of equal worth to saving a child's life – nor is spending money on fees to study philosophy or on buying books. Consequently, Singer's argument has not led to much action.

In the light of this, and being a good Utilitarian, Singer has now published his new book, *The Life You Can Save*, aimed at the general public and published in nine editions world wide. He opens the book with the pond analogy, but now proposes a new standard of minimum giving. A consequence of Singer's argument is that giving money to aid charities is not to be viewed as kind or generous, but rather a moral duty – indeed, not to give money to aid charities is to be viewed as a moral wrong. Singer proposes that the poorest people in developed countries should give 1% of their income. Most should give 5%, rising as their income rises. He suggests that the richest should give a minimum of a third of their income (which is what he himself does, although, as a university professor, he is by no means among the richest).

Singer wants people to tell others about their giving, which sounds boastful. His reason however, is that it will be seen as unacceptable and antisocial not to give significantly to aid charities. If successful, his campaign will lead to real change. Challenging stuff ! I strongly recommend reading this book, which also has an accompanying website at www.thelifeyoucansave.com

He can be heard in discussion about the book and also his views on animals on the World Service at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p002mr8x>

John Plimsoll, 118 Burket Close, Southall, Middlesex UB2 5NT

Book Reviews

Gandhi and the Middle East: Jews, Arabs and Imperial Interests

Simone Panter-Brick I B Tauris 2008 pp193 ISBN 978 1 84511 584 5 HB £47.50

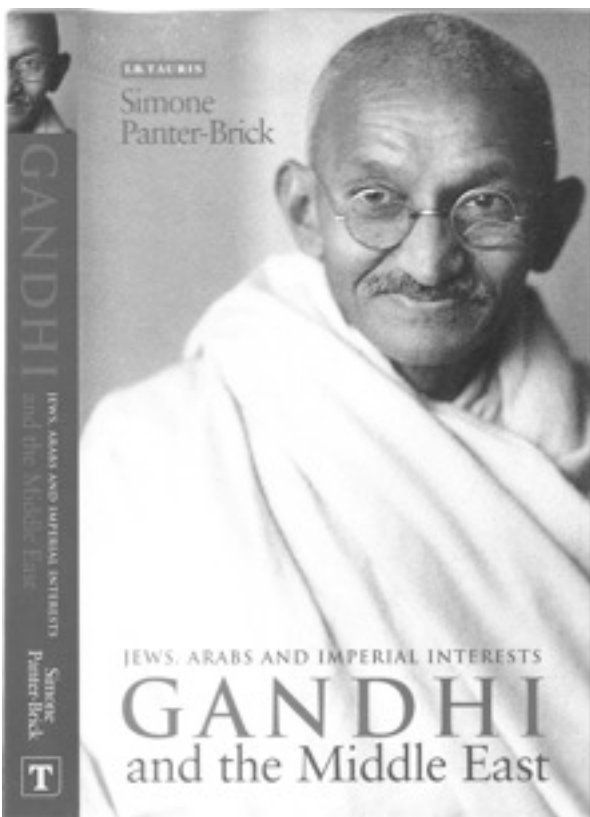
This study deals with Gandhi's involvement with the politics of the Middle East and in particular Palestine.

There were two periods when Gandhi became involved in Middle Eastern politics. The first was following the Great War when the victorious nations wished to abolish the Caliphate, ie the leadership of the Muslim world which was in recent times held by the Ottoman Sultan. Gandhi took up the cause as it was one that Indian Muslims were very concerned about and it would help to maintain good Hindu/Muslim relations. However, it was a rather outdated cause and the Turks led by the secular leader Ataturk themselves eventually abolished the Caliphate and Gandhi's involvement in the Middle East then ceased.

The second, which is the focus of this book, was around 1937. During WWI various promises were made to both Jews and Arabs about the post-war settlement. One of the most important was the statement by Arthur Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, concerning the establishment of a Jewish "homeland" in Palestine. The leading Zionist, Chaim Weitzmann, hoped that immigration would lead to 4-5 million Jews settling there and therefore a Jewish state would become viable. In 1922 the British fixed immigration quotas and the numbers settling rose until the late 1920s when numbers dropped off with the world recession. A Jewish Agency was set up to operate as a non-official government which even developed a military wing. In 1929 trouble began when there was rioting in Jerusalem as it looked as if the Jews would rebuild the Temple in place

of the Dome of the Rock. In the 1930s immigration greatly increased so that by WWII Jews constituted about 30% of the population.

In 1936 a Higher Arab Committee was established to include all Arab parties and it was chaired by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hadj Amin. They opposed the Jewish settlement and a violent revolt erupted in April 1936



which lasted about 6 months. In response the Jews expanded their defence force, the Haganah, and developed a more extreme off-shoot, the Irgun.

In 1936 Gandhi began to involve himself again. Hermann Kallenbach had been Gandhi's closest colleague in South Africa and he was Jewish, and he knew the representative of the Jewish Agency, Immanuel Olsvanger, who was also from South Africa. Dr Olsvanger went to see Gandhi in October 1936 and was supposed to be accompanied by Kallenbach, who was pro-Zionist, but he could not manage. Olsvanger was not favourably impressed by Gandhi's views and considered him to be naive. Kallenbach came to London in April 1937 to meet Olsvanger and also Weizmann and Maurice Shertok, head of the Political Department, then went on to Palestine before going on to see Gandhi. Gandhi promised Kallenbach he would study Zionist literature which he would be sent.

Gandhi's position was that Palestine was Arab territory and if Jews settled there they should not expect the protection of a colonial power (Britain). But Jews and Christians who were already there should have equal rights to the Arabs. The dependence of Jewish settlers on the colonial power became clear when 30,000 troops were sent during the 1936-39 rebellion. Gandhi's position was even more strongly held by Nehru who saw the Arab struggle and the Indian anti-colonial struggle as essentially the same.

In July 1937 Kallenbach left India taking a proposal from Gandhi to Shertok in Jerusalem and by letter to Weizmann in London. The letter by Kallenbach to Weizmann offered mediation between Jews and Arabs by Nehru, Azad (President of Congress) and Gandhi. In July also the British Government's Peel Report was published recommending partition, something which the Arabs did not like, and the Jews were disappointed about too because of the small size of territory proposed. Nevertheless the Zionists accepted it, as did the League of Nations, but the Arabs totally rejected it.

In September the British Commissioner of Galilee was assassinated and for 18 months there was virtual civil war. 3,000 Jews were recruited to the police, the Irgun resorted to terrorism against Arab and British, 200 Arab leaders were arrested.

In the 26 November, 1938 edition of *Harijan* Gandhi published an article called 'The Jews'. In it he wrote: "My sympathies are all with the Jews" calling them the untouchables of Christianity. However, he continued: "The cry for the national home for the Jews does not make much appeal to me." He wrote that "The Palestine of the Biblical concept is not a geographical tract. It is in their hearts". However if they do feel that they should settle in the geographical Palestine it should only be done with the approval of the Arabs there and done nonviolently and without the support of British arms.

This met with much criticism and it was clear that Gandhi's advice would be ignored. Gandhi's attempts to influence the politics of the Middle East in the 1930s were a complete failure. However the history of Palestine has been a sorry one indeed, with intermittent war for 80 years, but one that could have been predicted given the inflexibility of the protagonists.

Simone Panter-Brick's book tells us about a relatively obscure part of Gandhi's life but the reader will learn much about the Middle East and she does not neglect contemporaneous events in India. It is a complex story she tells which helps us to understand the events in Israel/Palestine today and the problem that the Jews, the Arabs and the world community still have to solve.

George Paxton

My Life in the 20th Century Anne MacEwen MA (Cantab)

Published in 2008 by The Essene Network pp182 ISBN 978-0-9518263-1-7

Anne MacEwen is a 20th Century woman, with a 21st Century awareness, and a lively spiritual outlook. She is a GF Friend, and lives in Dorset with her husband, David. Their 3 daughters have long flown the nest. What, to me, makes Anne's life of particular interest is her open honesty as she looks back on the positives and the negatives, her travels and adventures, her teaching career and the wonderful friendships and groups she has involved with her life. She describes herself as "privileged in some ways, deprived in others".

As a child in India, Anne had an 'encounter' with "a man dressed in white", who, after telling her very many interesting things and showing her pictures of what turned out to be something of her future, he disappeared. Although Anne's family discouraged "this sort of thing", Anne never forgot the encounter, and much later on, realised he had been a member of the Essene sect, which came prominently to light on discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Anne was the main founder of the Essene Network International, and to this day is its President.

When she and her brother were young in India, their mother discovered Gandhi was coming to Simla and arranged they should go and see this Mahatma she admired so much: "Round the corner they came, with Gandhi in the lead, dressed in his dirty white dhoti. Thin bare legs below". Her mother then made a bold gesture – which you can read about from page 12! This outing to see Gandhi had an influence on Anne, as she grew in awareness that "war is a grossly outdated method of trying to resolve conflict".

Having known Anne for many years (we were fellow colleagues in the Association of Wise Women in the 1990s) if you enjoy reading about people's lives, written in an entertaining way with an underlying philosophy, then you will enjoy *My Life in the 20th Century* – which also contributes to the social history of that period.

Denise Moll

Clothing Gandhi's Nation: Homespun and Modern India Lida Trivedi Indiana University Press 2007 pp205 \$29.95

Lida Trivedi teaches at Hamilton College in USA. On a study tour of India she travelled with, among others, an uncle who was a former freedom fighter and labour leader. Travelling for four months across northern and

western India she had the opportunity to meet many who had taken part in the struggle. In addition the oldest sister of her father taught her to spin on the charka. So she learned about khadi and swadeshi as the material facts of India's national politics.

Her study is about khadi – the self-made cotton for daily use and the role it played in the national struggle for independence. For many people outside India – and I was certainly one of them – the making and selling of khadi is an economic process. Khadi had to replace the imported cloth from Britain to re-establish the former Indian textile industry.

The movement which supported the idea was named swadeshi, the approach to economic self-reliance. One of the eleven Gandhian virtues, swadeshi meant belonging to or being made in one's own country. This policy of self-reliance meant in practice using only Indian-made cloth. In a wider sense it meant establishing India's economic autonomy as the basis for future self-government.

Thus khadi meant three different but related things: as a material artifact of the nation; part of a national economic policy; a visual symbol of the Indian people. In doing so it challenged the political boundaries of both traditional Indian society and the British colonial regime. The swadeshi movement found popular support and after some time the Indian National Congress through the Congress Working Committee created the All India Khaddar Board, comprising technical instruction, production and sales. It established in 1922 a new school to train swadeshi workers – the Akila Khadi Vidyalaya, which was in many ways the heart of Gandhi's Swadeshi movement.

Within the Congress however there was controversy. One of the issues was with regard to members of Congress wearing khadi at Party functions. In keeping with the principles of mass participation the Congress Working Committee decided in 1924 that a revised franchise required that Congress membership had to be earned, not just paid. Hand-spun thread had to be donated to Congress's Khadi Board and this had to become part of Congress membership. This decision however was not popular with many and within nine months the spinning franchise was repealed. There remained a diluted commitment to swadeshi politics and khadi.

This meant a defeat for Gandhi's form of swadeshi but khadi was brought to the general public with great success. Gandhi formed the All-India Spinners Association in 1925 which oversaw the development of the swadeshi movement from Satyagraha Ashram. The assets of the defunct Khadi Board were transferred to this new organisation and there was support from some industrialists. Swadeshi now included other hand-produced goods.

India had known a century-long tradition of weaving and textile production including colourful clothing which was an obstacle to undyed khadi becoming popular. To counter this, promoters used exhibitions, showing of lantern-slides, the use of the Gandhi-cap, and the charka flag.

The swadeshi movement achieved three things:

- * khadi became more than a boycott of foreign goods – it became a moral system of labour and consumption for the nation. It emphasised the distinction between indigenous and foreign production.
- * it provided a heterogeneous population with a sense of a united India, relocating rural and urban India within a market-place shaped by common taste and defined by common values.
- * the habitual khadi-wearer celebrated the principle of universal labour and self-sufficiency as the basis of political community and made him or her visible as an individual.

The Gandhi cap or topi emerged as a symbol of political dissent and as a signal of one's obligations, thus khadi became more than an economic issue. One more product of the khadi movement is worth mentioning, that is the flag of India. It no longer bears the symbol of the charka, the swadeshi movement emblem, but the Ashoka chakra wheel or dharma wheel but it still represents the hopes and aspirations of the people of India. The flag still has to be made of hand-spun and hand-woven wool, cotton or silk.

Lisa Trivedi has written a penetrating and comprehensive study of khadi in a lively style and is a pleasure to read.

Piet Dijkstra

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#### AMMUNITION:

Imagination is all it takes  
to pinpoint the target  
between crosshairs.  
Trajectory of a smart mind  
out of a clear blue sky,  
it pierces the hardest battle armour  
with uranium-tipped lucidity  
aimed squarely at the faces  
of the innocent.

Matthew Bain

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Gandhi Foundation's Annual Gathering 2009

This year's gathering was held at Kingsley Hall. It was a small gathering but there were several newcomers who came due to their deep interest in the Gandhi and his approach to life. In the morning Susan Denton-Brown presented the GF's Annual Report, together with a very comprehensive commentary and history of the Foundation's various activities and aims, in order to update and inform especially those new to the organisation. As current Chair of the Foundation, Susan shared with us how she came to be drawn into the GF through the interest of Surur Hoda and Cecil Evans in her peace education work ten years ago, as well as some of her thoughts and insights about the Foundation and its future work.

Photographs from the upcoming Educational Project (to be based at Kingsley Hall) were on display during the lunch recess, and Susan Denton-Brown kindly provided a brief history about the photographs that were displayed in chronology from Gandhi's life, that were viewed with much interest by all those present.

The afternoon forum had two presentations: on personal transformation by Geoffrey Court and Heather from "The Circle Works", a charity based in East London, followed by conflict transformation by Susan Denton-Brown based on the methodology of a School for Peace in Israel. Both presentations were accompanied by short films and discussion, and both were very much in harmony with the other, and generated much thought, reflection and discussion amongst everyone. The gathering ran over the scheduled time due to the atmosphere of deep enquiry, belonging and harmony that was felt and shared by all. A very rewarding day.

Sabera Chowdhury

The Children's Legal Centre

The Centre, which will receive the GF Peace Award on 14 October, is a national and international not-for-profit organisation which is committed to promoting children's rights around the world.

In Britain the Centre runs three national advice lines for vulnerable young people, their parents, and carers. The Centre receives calls about a range of cases, such as forced marriages, trafficked and smuggled children, unaccompanied children seeking asylum, homelessness and other problems.

Internationally the Centre works in more than 20 countries and is a consultant to UNICEF which contracts its legal work to the Centre's international team which are invited by governments to write legislation in child protection cases.

In 2009 the Centre started a three year project in Tajikistan – the Girls' Support Service – which is for girls aged 10-18 who have been or who are at risk of being sexually abused, trafficked or exploited. It is hoped that more than 800 vulnerable girls will be assisted and local authority, law enforcement and NGO representatives who are mandated to care for girls in the target group will be trained.

Further information from the website www.childrenslegalcentre.com

New Peace Centre in New Zealand

New Zealand's first centre devoted to the research and teaching of peace and conflict has been established at the University of Otago. It was set up by a trust which raised the funds and continues to seek funding for its expansion. The first professor is Kevin Clements whom some of the readers will remember delivered the GF Annual Lecture in 2000 on behalf of Adam Curle who was ill. Professor Clements is himself a New Zealander who has wide experience in peace and academic work including establishing a Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Queensland. The Trust's website is www.peacetrust.org.nz

Gandhi's house for sale

One of the houses that Gandhi stayed in while in Johannesburg is being sold by the current owner, Nancy Ball, an American artist who has lived there for over 20 years. The house was originally designed and owned by Hermann Kallenbach who was one of Gandhi's closest colleagues and Gandhi lived there with him off and on from 1908. Its unusual design led to it being called The Kraal.



Photograph from *Gandhi's Johannesburg* by Eric Itzkin

Consequences of meat consumption

The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation have estimated the growth of meat consumption in different categories of countries as follows.

	High income countries	Middle Income	Low income
1975	71.8 kg/person	18.5	6.4
2002	93.5	46.1	8.8

In addition the world's human population is over 6 billion and expected to rise to 9 billion by 2050. Nearly 1 billion people are undernourished at present. A meat diet requires substantially more land and more water than a vegetarian diet. Livestock production also produces more global warming gases, estimated at 18% of the total, compared to transport at 13.5%. This dietary trend is the opposite of that required for long-term sustainability. Ω