

Gandhi Foundation Multifaith Celebration Saturday 30 January 2010

This will take place in London but the venue has still to be arranged

Details will be posted on the website www.gandhifoundation.org
or you can phone 0845 313 8419

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Increasing Equality

Matthew Bain

According to Lord Griffiths, the Conservative peer and Vice-Chairman of investment bank Goldman Sachs "we have to accept that inequality is a way of achieving greater opportunity and prosperity for all". Has he hit on a clever, counter-intuitive truth? No, he is just plain wrong.

In their book *The Spirit Level*, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett show that practically all the problems of modern societies, from child mortality to drug addiction, mental illness to obesity, murder rates to environmental pollution, have the same root cause – inequality. "It became clear," according to Wilkinson, "that countries such as the US, the UK and Portugal, where the top 20% earn seven, eight or nine times more than the lowest 20%, scored noticeably higher on all social problems at every level of society than in countries such as Sweden and Japan, where the differential is only two or three times higher at the top."

We all know that the endless pursuit of economic growth is crazy, that higher GDP is a meaningless quest that does nothing to increase our collective happiness or well-being. What Wilkinson and Pickett show is that we must measure our society's success in terms of increasing equality, because this is the only reliable recipe for "greater opportunity and prosperity for all".

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

Tackling poverty is essential if we are to achieve an equal and just society. So is confronting greed. Although the Labour government has taken certain steps towards reducing poverty, such as introducing family tax credits, they have done nothing to restrain the rapacious behaviour of the economic elites. Peter (now Lord) Mandelson said in 1998 "we are intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich". We now see the damage that this laissez-faire attitude has caused, and is still causing.

So what is the answer? Redistribution of wealth? In fact the first thing we need to do is STOP redistributing wealth. The current system is set up to redistribute wealth from the poor to the rich. We see this clearly in the bailout of the banking system, where we have all dug deep into our pockets to keep the bonus culture afloat. We see it evidently in the various forms of privatisation, taking property that previously belonged to us all, and handing it to a small section of the population. We see the government choose to fund public infrastructure through expensive private finance, when it could borrow

Mahatma Gandhi and Environment Protection

Anupma Kaushik

Mahatma Gandhi never used the words environment protection however what he said and did makes him an environmentalist. Although during his time environmental problems were not recognized as such however with his amazing foresight and insight he predicted that things are moving in the wrong direction. As early as in 1909 in his book *Hind Swaraj* he cautioned mankind against unrestricted industrialism and materialism. He did not want India to follow the west in this regard and warned that if India, with its vast population, tried to imitate the west then the resources of the earth will not be enough. He argued even in 1909 that industrialization and machines have an adverse effect on the health of people. Although he was not opposed to machines as such, he definitely opposed the large scale use of machinery. He criticized people for polluting the rivers and other water bodies. He criticized mills and factories for polluting the air with smoke and noise.

What he advocated in place of industrialism and consumerism was a simple life based on physical labour. He implored people to live simply so that others may simply live. For he believed that earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed. So the rich must not only restrict their wants but must also treat their wealth as 'trust' for the poor and use it for the welfare of the poor. This can be done only if people can distinguish between their real needs and artificial wants and control the later. To him the real need meant to possess only what is absolutely necessary for the moment. To him this would not only help the unprivileged of today but would help protect the environment for the next generation as to him the earth, the air, the land and the water were not an inheritance from our forefathers but a loan from our children. So we have to hand over to the next generation at least as it was handed over to us.

He also believed that one must be the change that one wants to see in the world and hence he practiced what he preached. His life was his message. So he and his wife gave away all their property. They had nothing beyond the clothes that they wore and a change or two. He used scraps of papers to write brief notes and reversed envelopes for reuse to send letters. Even when he used to bathe with water of the free flowing Sabarmati river he consciously used only the minimum water needed for taking a bath. However he did not equate simple living with abject poverty. In fact he believed that to deny a person the ordinary amenities of life is far worse than starving the body. It is starving the soul – the dweller in the body. To him poverty was the most severe polluter. Hence poverty must be eradicated and that can be done only when everybody is taking their own share and not grabbing others' share by limiting their needs and sharing their resources.

However his concerns were not limited to human beings alone as he had a very strong sense of the unity of all life. He believed that all creatures had the right to live as much as human beings and felt a living bond between humans and the rest of the animate world. He believed that humans should live in harmony with their surroundings.

The best part of Gandhi's ideas was that they empower the individual. It is up to each and every individual to simplify his or her life; to share his or her resources and to care for his and her surroundings.

Dr Anupma Kaushik is Reader in Political Science, Banasthali University, Rajasthan, India.

Peace and Security and Economics

Eirwen Harbottle

The Editor has persuaded me to share some thoughts on developing our GF Trustees' discussion on monetary reform. I am clearly no academic; merely an ordinary member of the public who has become increasingly angry over the financial mess that is causing so much misery and the injustice of handing on such toxic chaos to the rising generation.

18 months ago, I asked Canon Peter Challen whether he would allow me to attend the weekly meetings of his Global Round Table on Monetary Reform since when I have been listening and learning, grateful for his kind tolerance of my often childish questions.

Now I feel led to share this diagram with GF supporters. It shows how I suggest we might accept the inter-twining of peace and security in which economics is a crucial factor.

Over the past 60 years I have experienced global un-peace stretching from the dying months of the British mandate in Palestine, through WW2 and the violent birth of the Cyprus Republic, subsequent Greek/Turk conflict on that island, world disarmament and (working with my Michael) a reappraisal of the military role in peacekeeping/peacebuilding. Now I can see with absolute certainty that the popular excuse "Oh, I don't do economics..." is just a lazy cop-out. It is totally unacceptable because our inaction is threatening the very survival of our peerless planet.



So what to do ? I admire the 3 leading tenets of Jainism: we must recognise the 'many-sidedness' of our lives, act with 'non-possessiveness' and 'do no harm' (ahimsa). Were these not akin to the bedrock of Gandhi's own thinking ? Would that it might also be that of all our bankers today ! If we are truly seeking financial 'perestroika', we have to educate ourselves on the history of money; the ethics of usury; the psychology of taking risks with no thought to the consequences of so doing; the rule of law to curb injustice; and ultimately to see all of this as the 'many-sidedness' of global wellbeing.

In his day, Buckminster Fuller often used the icosahedron 20-sided symbol to demonstrate wholeness. Perhaps we might use the same design now to present a Gandhian view of security and peace?

Eirwen Harbottle is a Patron of the Gandhi Foundation and a founder of Peace Child International. She received the first GF International Peace Award on behalf of her late husband Brigadier Michael Harbottle who founded Generals for Peace.

Reflections of God

Negeen Sai Zinovieff

People sometimes say in this secular society that Gandhi was old fashioned because he was deeply religious and spiritual. Yet his teachings are for the most part avant-garde. He believed, as did the Masters of Humanity, that Truth and God were synonymous and stuck tenaciously till the end, emphasising that Truth was that "spiritual inner voice" of those that practised Ahimsa and Satyagraha.

In *My Religion* he writes "There should be truth in thought, truth in speech and truth in action but truth is the right designation of God. Hence there is nothing wrong in every man following Truth according to his lights". But in practice we see many opinion leaders teaching from the pulpit of Truth which contradicts the Truth of other seekers. The theosophists such as Helena P Blavatsky have a slogan "there is no religion higher than Truth". Gandhi always praised the theosophist Anne Besant for introducing true Hinduism to him and he took a step nearer to God by saying He alone is the sought-for reward for a true disciplined heart and educated mind.

Then we see people swearing through their teeth that the gospel according to Truth is their slogan. Leninism and Maoism have captured the minds of reformists, scientists and academicians. These have done much harm to the Truth as God as practiced by Jesus or Zoroaster.

While Gandhi teaches nonviolence and passive resistance in response to the search for God, Marxism teaches brute violence and calls to arms those who labour and are exploited by the bourgeoisie and capitalists.

All those teachings which have denied man as spirit have helped to create a cerebral humanity who avenges itself on the spiritual cum emotional self by denying that soul, God and heart exist.

When Gandhi insisted that “the small inner voice” was his authority, he also says that one must find this self through discipline and perseverance. What is discipline, the key to the door of ‘inner self’ ? Gandhi believed asceticism, piety and chastity and life-long marriage with Haq (the Truth) was the basis for practicing Ahimsa (love) and well-informed reason for finding God. He says in *My Religion* (p 103):

“In such selfless search for Truth nobody can lose his bearings for long. Directly he takes to the wrong path he stumbles and is thus redirected to the right path.”

What the Sufis ascribe to the Spiritual Master, Gandhi ascribes to the educated self or ‘voice within’. Thus everyone is encouraged to practice self-effacement and search for God through himself. “Know yourself and you will know God.”

This Gandhian teaching, in times when Spiritual Masters have arisen everywhere, capturing the hearts and minds of ill-informed people, is an elixir.

The New Testament which inspired Gandhi a good deal invites people to practice ocean-consciousness. In John 4, verse 24 we read “God is spirit and all worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.” In book 3 verse 21 “But whosoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”

In the holy Quran we see many references to truth seeking. In Surah 16 verse 36, “so travel the earth and see what was the end of those who denied the truth. But he will be set right who selflessly seeks and observes the unfettered Truth.”

Zarathustra, the Persian prophet (1200 BCE) similarly called God Absolute Truth to be found by those who dedicate their lives in thought, word and deed to the pursuit of Divine Power, Ahura Mazda.

While Gandhi and Jesus spread the gospel of love, Zoroaster sought help through reason from the archangels of God, in particular the ‘Good Mind’ or ‘Spenta Mainya’. He taught that once the spirit of Benediction has been found, the Good Mind, one can know God as the Father of Truth.

It is with such a faith that the truth seeker practising Ahimsa and Satyagraha will reach the shores of peace in the whirlpool of existence. One cannot hope to find the right ‘inner voice’ without asceticism and self-discipline. Gandhi believed “truth resides in every human heart and one has to search for it there and be guided by the truth as one sees it. But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his views of truth (*The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, page 44). Again emphasising his commitment to Haq (God) he says in *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi* page 43, ‘But as long as I have not realised the Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I

have conceived it. That relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and my buckle.”

These teachings have been practised for several thousand years and we have to find them again. Zoroaster, Buddha, Confucius have all had the taste for God, self-realisation and ‘Fana’ (self-annihilation in God). Yasna 46 v. 18 has “Oh Mazda I seek but to fulfil your will through Truth”.

Everyone hence must strive to live a truth-inspired existence. Truth is like a vast tree which yields more and more fruit the more you nurture it, the deeper the search in the mine of truth, the richer the discovery of the gems buried there.

In the awe-inspiring Proverbs (the Old Testament) we are reminded that love and faithfulness never leave you. “Bind them around your neck and write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man” (Proverbs 3 verse 3).

Let us conclude with the much quoted saying of Gandhi: “Without Ahimsa it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. (*My Religion* p. 106).

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Movement for the Abolition of War Day School

Saturday 21 November 11.30am - 4.30pm

Whitechapel Gallery, 77-82 Whitechapel High Street, London

Bruce Kent and others on Iraq and Afghanistan 11.30am

Dr Clem McCartney on the linkage of past and present conflicts

with reference to the Spanish Civil War 2.30pm

Details: 01908 511 948; www.abolishwar.org.uk

Escalating War in Afghanistan

– can peace return to the troubled region ?

Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London

Tuesday 24 November 6.30pm -9pm 2009

World Disarmament Campaign & Action for UN Renewal

Contact: ActUN, Commercial Road, London E1 1RD

vijay@vmpeace.org ; 020 7377 2111

The Summer School and Gathering at the Abbey

We were very fortunate that we could gather again this year at The Abbey in Sutton Courtenay in the beautiful buildings and settings where so many Summer Schools of the past have taken place. As usual participants came from all over the country, some from abroad, and we were very pleased that Arya was able to join us again this year. Those who have attended past gatherings know the pleasure of seeing old friends again, as well as meeting new ones, and it always feels like the warm reunion of a large extended family. We were initially concerned about numbers but averaged twenty seven staying through the week. As we had hoped most came for the full

week and those who could not joined us for a substantial number of days. This helped create stability within the group and reinforced the relationships we created during our time together. We were particularly pleased to have three young families camping with us who brought a refreshing amount of energy and life to all we did, and we celebrated the fact that our ages together spanned 70 decades.



Penny McCarthy and Rob Price

The pattern of the days was as in previous years. Arya led a yoga session before breakfast for those who wished to join him and we had meditation time together before beginning each morning workshop. “Transformation” and “Becoming the change we wish to see” were our themes for the week and the morning sessions gave focus to several specific areas. We began by looking at transformations in Gandhi’s own life and his personal journey in the search for Truth, embracing within himself the changes he wished to see. Ways of creating positive changes within ourselves and reflecting upon times of transition within our lives followed this.

As the week progressed we explored ways in which we could create positive and transforming changes within our lifestyles, within in our communities and wider society as a whole. Our session on how to realistically develop the elements of an ideal society could successfully be explored at a future Gathering.



Clara Scott and Kiran Patel with an Abbey resident

We also spent time reflecting upon how we respond to the challenges of transforming and resolving conflict in the many roles and facets of our lives as well as in broader contexts. Discussions were lively and enriched with deep personal views, insights and experiences. The process was ongoing as

issues we raised in each workshop continued to be discussed and reflected upon throughout the week in our social and creative time. We were particularly pleased that the teenage young adults amongst us participated fully in the programme this year, and their thoughtful contributions brought a much valued multi-generational element to our work.

As usual we were also in groups to undertake shramdana, sharing the cleaning and other tasks needed to be done to maintain the high standards required for the wellbeing of the community. We were particularly grateful to Ken Scott and his team of talented cooks who gave us the consistently wonderful vegetarian meals which were such happy focal points in our day. There were afternoon activities but participants did not offer as many as we had hoped. Two members of the Abbey community led an interesting collage making session on our theme of transformation. Making boxes, artwork and music were on offer and Arya led sessions on the theory of Yoga. There was also the opportunity to work in the grounds and inner courtyard of the Abbey. Having a professional musician and two talented amateurs with us also meant that the Hall and grounds of the buildings were filled most afternoons with music, much of it improvised, and played on a range of instruments.

We gathered for our evening meetings as usual and closed the day with that special depth of meditation which living in community can bring. Thursday evening brought us all together around the now traditional bonfire with songs and stories – after a treasure hunt set by the children for the adults to follow – and on the Friday our traditional evening of entertainment and party was held. Even the youngest of the children made contributions to this, as they had to all we had done during the week. Circle dancing and song drew us closely together, as ever, at the end this last evening.

Before parting on the last day we reflected on the week and shared the things which had been most thought-provoking, enriching, or leading to personal growth. Some talked of very specific life-changes they would work towards making, or projects they now intended to establish or become involved with.

The week was described as being a wonderful, happy and harmonious experience and meeting again next year was looked forward to with the hope that even more old and new friends would join us. On a personal note, it was the first time I have had to organise and lead this gathering having only attended two previously myself. I was really encouraged and sustained by the ongoing affection and support that I was given during the week and thank everyone for all their very special contributions. I also value the retrospective comments made by the Abbey community and our own participants so that next year's Summer School and Gathering, with even larger numbers, can be even more successful.

Susan Denton-Brown



The GF 2009 International Peace Award and Annual Lecture

The Gandhi Foundation's Annual Lecture and Peace Award was this year held in conjunction with The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple. The venue was the historic Temple Church, a building originally founded by the Knights Templar and now used not just as a place of worship but also for understanding between faiths and peaceful dialogue on a variety of issues.

The Inner Temple had expressed their desire to have closer collaboration between The Gandhi Foundation and themselves as Mohandas Gandhi was admitted to the Inner Temple in 1888.

The preparation for the 2009 joint Annual Lecture started over a cup of coffee at the Sub Treasurer's, Mr Patrick Maddams, office in spring 2008. Later, when the Peace Award was agreed to be given to *the Children's Legal Centre* it was decided to join the two events.

The date of 14 October was chosen as the most suitable given that on 2nd October, Gandhi birth date, many other events would be taking place.



Professor Carolyn Hamilton receiving the statuette from Denis Halliday

Fasken Martineau, one of the world's leading international business law and litigation firms with more than 650 lawyers with offices in Canada, the United Kingdom, France and South Africa agreed to sponsor the event. This enabled us to offer free tickets for the event. Over 500 people from governmental bodies, legal firms, social services, academics and other organisations were contacted. Approximately 300 people actually came to the event – one of the largest numbers since Shabana Azmi received the award on behalf of Nivara Hakk in 2006.

Lord Bhikhu Parekh welcomed the guests and explained the reasons why the GF had chosen to present the 2009 International Peace award to the CLC. The Peace Award to CLC was presented by Denis Halliday, a former recipient of the award himself who had flown in specially for the event from Ireland.

The Gandhi Foundation International Peace Award is a means to acknowledge works of individuals or organisations that have actively and consistently adhered to the guiding principles of nonviolence and importantly have had an impact on either the political, legal or social challenges of our times.

The CLC certainly fits these criteria. One additional criterion that it fits is that of an 'un-sung hero', i.e. people doing incredible work but not having been formally recognised. When it was originally nominated the GF did not know much about the Centre but after a few weeks of research we were truly amazed at the breadth and scope of its work.

The work that CLC are doing in representing young and vulnerable children, especially girls, and in helping to change the legal structures relating to children is incredibly important as the outcomes affect not only the lives of these children but society at large and the future prosperity, not just in economic terms, of nations. The fact that CLC's work is especially focused in helping vulnerable girls from either social or legal abuse is, in our opinion, very important from a Gandhian perspective. "Mahatma Gandhi greatly valued the social role of women and called them the architects of civilization. He deeply lamented their inferior treatment and marginalization and insisted that unless women were given full equality society had no hope."

It must be that one of the defining features of any civilised society is how it treats those that are marginalised, vulnerable and without representation and CLCs work certainly brings that representation, care and humanity.

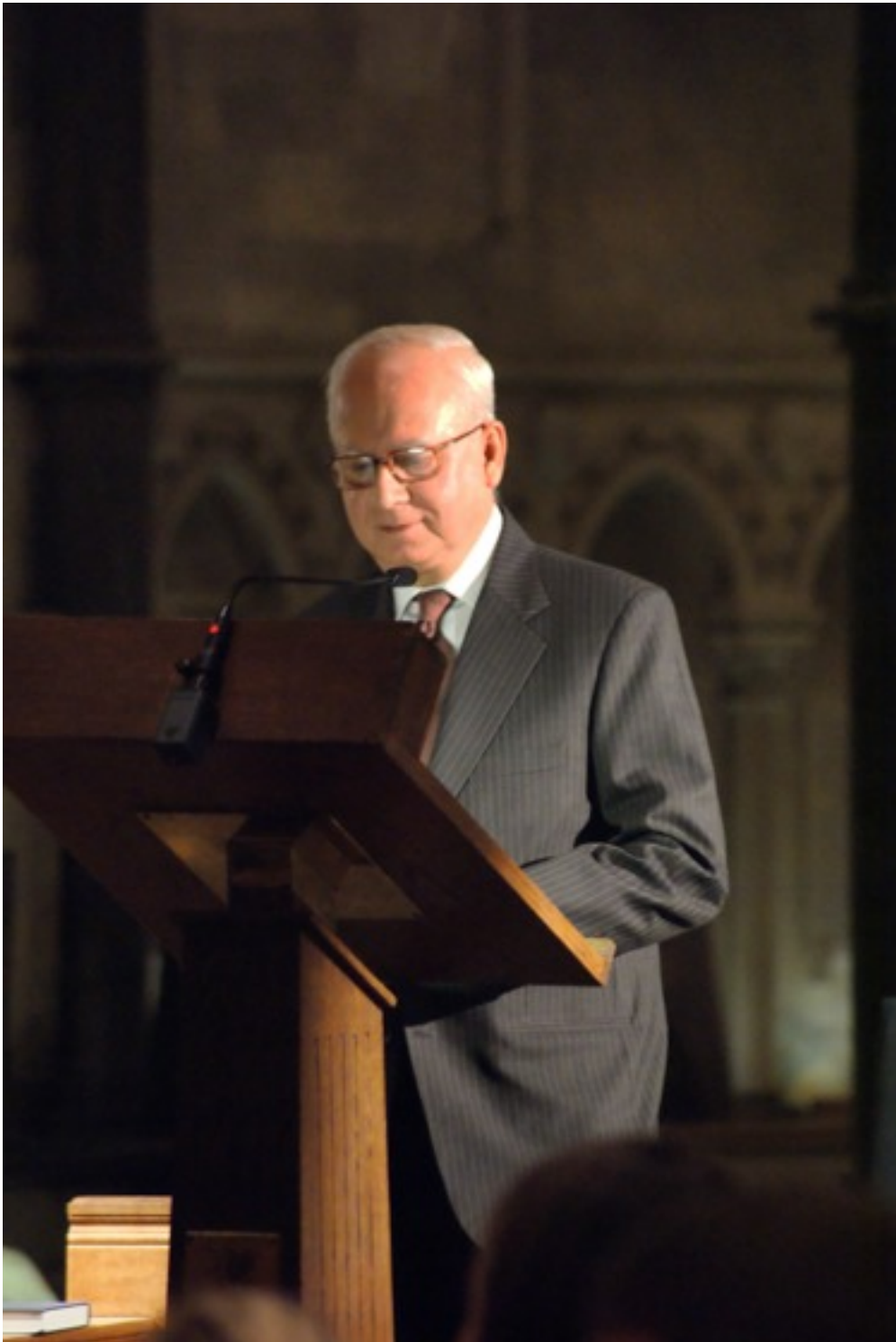
After the presentation of the award to Professor Carolyn Hamilton, Director of the CLC, Cherie Blair, a long time patron of the CLC, gave an acceptance speech. This will also be available shortly on line.

Following the presentation, The Rt Hon Lord Justice Laws, Lord Justice of Appeals, took the stage to introduce Justice Aftab Alam of the Supreme Court of India who had kindly agreed to give the GF 2009 Annual Lecture. His speech on the role of the Indian Supreme Court in upholding secularism in India was very well received and a number of emails have been sent to the GF asking for the transcript. This is

available on line at our web site. A DVD of the event will also be shortly available. The lecture will also be published by the Inner Temple.

Following the lecture, a short Q & A session took place followed by a drinks reception, sponsored by Hardwick & Morris. Some guests, including Justice Aftab Alam were also invited to dinner at the Inner Temple.

Omar Hayat, Trustee, The Gandhi Foundation



Justice Aftab Alam of the Indian Supreme Court

Book Reviews

The Nonviolent Revolution: An Intellectual Biography of Aldo Capitini Rocco Altieri Trans. by Gerry Blaylock IGINP 2008 pp182 \$10

Aldo Capitini (1895-1968) was probably the most important advocate of nonviolence in 20thC Italy. He was born in modest circumstances in Perugia and went to a technical school although his passion was literature. His health was poor but he drove himself to study and won a scholarship to study philosophy and literature in Pisa.

Capitini took up active politics when he observed the Concordat between the RC Church and the state in 1929. He believed that the Church could have brought down the fascist regime by noncooperation but disgracefully compromised. From then on he made a sharp distinction between religious institutions and a free religious faith exemplified by Jesus, St Francis and the Buddha.

He was dismissed from his teaching post in Pisa because he would not join the Fascist Party and returned to Perugia where he began writing and got his first book published in 1937. In it he wrote: "Pain, remorse, the thought of death are always real; and it is here that religion springs up". Gandhi's autobiography had been published in Italy in 1929 and he had visited Europe including Italy in 1931 and this had an impact. Altieri writes: "Nonviolence seems the highest spiritual teaching, a religious idea of absolute purity, to love for its own sake, the only power able to defeat fascism. If Mussolini in order to assert himself resorted to sinister means – deceit, lies, murder – Capitini counterposes the highest values of truth, non-mendacity, non-killing". Capitini believed that nonviolence should embrace all creation and he consequently became a vegetarian.



Capitini developed a political ideology called liberal-socialism which did not develop into a political party but was a very decentralised movement which attracted many young people. He was imprisoned three times in 1943-4 as were other activists. A Party of Action now developed in the

movement but Capitini kept apart from it as he saw the movement as an 'orientation of conscience' not a political party. In danger of arrest and deportation by the Germans when they occupied northern Italy he hid in the countryside.

In the post-war period Capitini refused to support any party, declaring himself a free religious and left-wing independent. He started to set up Social Orientation Centres around the country to counterbalance central power and encourage democracy. He also turned his attention to education for a renewal of culture and he taught in universities. The recent tragic history of Italy, he believed, was due to cultural and religious backwardness and the absence of collective moral conscience. He was nominated Rector in Perugia but was moved due to pressure from the Catholic Church.

In 1952 he set up a Centre for Nonviolence in Perugia and also promoted conscientious objection to conscription. He regarded Gandhi's approach as a third way between communism and capitalism. Crucial is the primacy of means in social change. Gandhi's way was revolutionary but it did not just change the structures as Marxism intended, but also a person's being.

Capitini became aware of Danilo Dolci, who settled in Sicily to help the poor in their struggle against the Mafia, and gave him his full support. Dolci's outlook and actions were essentially Gandhian.

Capitini held up Gandhi and Jesus as examples of those who detach themselves from the world, though remaining in the midst of humanity in order to transform society. Conflict cannot be avoided but responding with nonviolent action can create new positive relationships.

A march for Peace and the Brotherhood of People was organised by Capitini in 1961; walking from Perugia to Assisi it attracted large numbers.

Capitini's programme is a radical one indeed: abolition of armies, of borders, of property. A few days before his death in 1968 he wrote: "... Today's utopia can be tomorrow's reality". He recommended a green and nonviolent society with a rejection of consumerism and admired the Community of the Ark which was set up by Lanza del Vasto in France after he met Gandhi in India.

Altieri's study is called "An Intellectual Biography" and there is much more philosophy here than this review might indicate. Capitini was a deeply religious or mystical person although he rejected religious institutions.

We should be grateful to the International Gandhian Institute for Nonviolence and Peace (IGINP) which has published this English version and brought to non-Italian readers the life and thought of a person who ought to be much better known than he is.

George Paxton

The Address of IGINP is CESCO, Majagram, Kadavur, Madurai - 625 014, TN, India
They also publish a journal in English called *Ahimsa Nonviolence*.

Sketches from Memory: Vol I A Journey to Gandhi, Vol II Remembering Gandhi Margaret Chatterjee Promilla & Co 2009 pp194 +76 ISBN 978 81 85002 95 8 Rs. 300 www.biblioasia.com

Margaret Chatterjee is a philosopher and a Gandhi scholar, as well as a long-time Friend of the Gandhi Foundation. English by birth but now living, in her senior years, once more, in Delhi these two volumes are reflections on some of the experiences in her life and the people she has met who left a mark on her.

This is not an autobiography and there is thus much not revealed here including her marriage to an Indian professor of English, her move to India, and her children. Instead there are about 100 short sketches, some about relatively well known figures such as Mulk Raj Anand, Krishna Kripalani, Ninian Smart and Nirmal Kumar Bose, others about ‘unknowns’, even sometimes unnamed by the author, but not forgotten by her.

Her philosophical inclination showed itself early, around three years old, when she concluded that although a crumb of bread could be divided until it could not be seen that didn’t mean it wasn’t there. Unusually, her parents attended services in many different churches and different denominations exposing their daughter to different preachers and liturgies but also to the music performed there. Music is one of Margaret’s great interests which also extends to skillful performance of the piano and voice.

Her career took her to many countries – USA, Russia, Israel and various European states and there are stories from many of them. It was through Nirmal Kumar Bose, the Bengali colleague of Gandhi, above all that she became convinced that Gandhi was the “key to understanding India”.

In contrast to the author’s quite demanding writings on Gandhi and religion these sketches are a delightful easy read especially as she brings out the positive characteristics in the friends that she has met on her journey through life.

George Paxton

Checkers with Gandhi: The Life of Doug Kenney Larita Kenney Private publication 2009 pp102

This biography of Doug Kenny, now nearly 90, by his daughter Larita arose from an unexpected revelation at a family dinner. For 62 years Doug had been silent about his war service in the RAF. So surprising was the story he told that his daughter thought it worth recording.

The Second World War broke out when Doug was 19 and possessing a talent for mechanical work he joined the RAF as a fitter but before long he became one of the air crew in transport planes. He was sent to Asia and saw service in Afghanistan, India, China and Burma. The most traumatic experience of his life however was not while flying but when travelling by

truck in Burma. They were ambushed by Japanese soldiers and fired on. Receiving very severe wounds to a leg and his right hand (which never recovered power) he miraculously survived by crawling for miles while losing much blood and in great pain until he was helped by some Chinese. His life then became a series of operations, some without anaesthesia, and rehabilitation in a variety of military hospitals, the last being in Poona where he spent a year before being sent home.

There was someone else in Poona at that time, namely Gandhi who was detained in the Aga Khan's palace but who was, it would appear, able to visit the military hospital and on a number of occasions he played checkers with Doug Kenny. Doug recalls his games with Gandhi and his personality with great affection but they never discussed politics.



Apart from Doug's courage and resilience the thing that stands out for me is the horror of the war: the rows of dead and dying women and children refugees along a Burmese road; and the fact that of the seven young men who started their training together in England only Doug came home to their families.

No wonder he did not talk of his war experiences until he was an old man. But in spite of the physical and mental traumas of the war years – his children were not allowed to watch films of the war – he was able to build a long and successful career in teaching in Leicestershire, beginning in the toughest schools where he had a natural talent for dealing with the most challenging pupils.

While Doug himself thinks there is nothing special in what he did one can agree with his daughter when she describes him as “a quite British Hero”.

The book can be obtained through the website www.checkerswithgandhi.co.uk

George Paxton

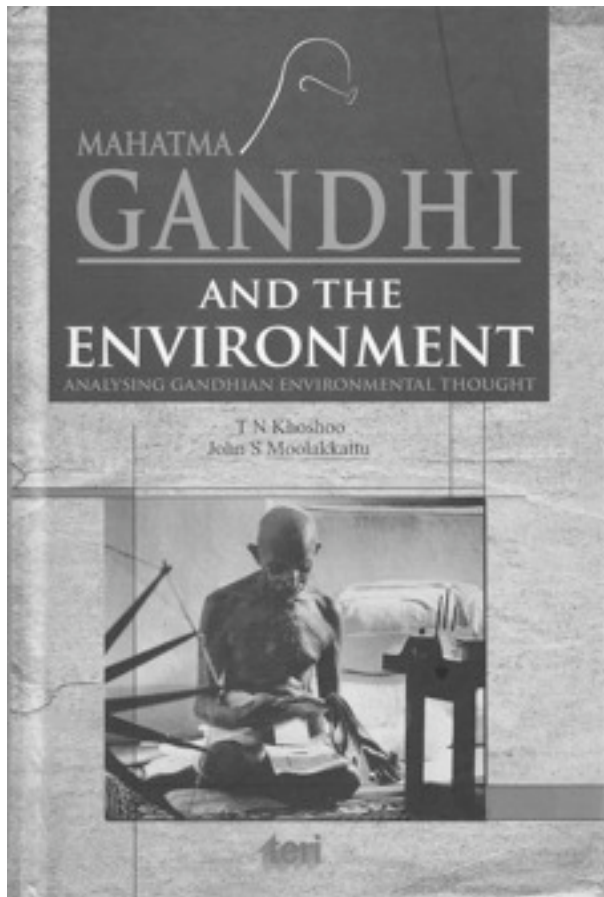
Mahatma Gandhi and the Environment: Analysing Gandhian Environmental Thought T N Khoshoo and John S Moolakkattu

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI Press) 2009 ISBN 978 81 7993 223 0 pp152 Rs 250 www.teriin.org

Few books on Gandhi and the environmental implications of his thought have so far appeared. It is only in recent decades that we have

become aware of the huge impact that human activities are having on our environment and although Gandhi did not say a great deal specifically about the environment his general outlook is very relevant to caring for our planet.

This book is based on one by the late Dr T N Khoshoo and is written by John S Moolakkatu who holds the Chair of Peace Studies at the University of Kwazulu Natal and is also Editor of *Gandhi Marg*.



Gandhi absorbed from his Indian background the idea of the unity of all things in the universe and this can lead naturally to a respect for all human beings, for animals and plants, and even for the inanimate. This is significantly different from the idea of exploiting nature for human benefit, which has been for some centuries the approach in the West. Gandhi's orientation is therefore cosmocentric rather than anthropocentric.

With Gandhi's life being his message his "personal lifestyle was the most sustainable one – simple, austere, clean, need-based, adequate worldly possessions, and reasonably comfortable" (p10) This however runs counter to the economic system we have all been exposed to and which is still the dominant one in the West and is rapidly embracing all countries. In

these circumstances Gandhi's approach is truly a revolutionary one. It is also, however, common sense. Unrestrained economic growth is simply impossible in a world which will probably have 10 billion people before long. Amazingly Gandhi saw this in his own time: asked if he would like to see the same standard of living for Indians as for the English, he replied: "It took Britain half the resources of the planet to achieve this prosperity. How many planets will a country like India require!"

Some of Gandhi's specific practices would make a big difference if adopted. Significantly reducing the quantity of imported goods and using as much local produce as possible (Swadeshi) is something we could move towards. Adopting a vegetarian diet is another – but why does the author call veganism 'puritanical vegetarianism' when there are strong evidence-based reasons for it? Trusteeship of one's wealth and possessions, meaning that they should be used for the wider good, not oneself alone; this would mean greatly reducing luxury items and thus reducing wasteful production.

While new technology will be of some help in reducing environmental impact in the hazardous decades ahead, changes in lifestyle will be more important and this puts Gandhian ideas centre-stage.

The book contains a very useful appendix of some of Gandhi's sayings relevant to the issue, although it is surprising that the references for the many quotations in the book are not given - nor is there an index.

Nevertheless it is an excellent presentation of a subject that is of the highest importance and demonstrates how Gandhi can challenge us all six decades after his death.

George Paxton

Books for Review

Would you like to review either of the following books ? If so, contact the Editor (details on back cover) who will send the book to you.

1. *The Collapse of the War System: Developments in the Philosophy of Peace in the Twentieth Century* by John Jacob English.
2. *Meeting the Mahatma: Gandhiji's Visits to Orissa* edited by Jatindra K Nayak. These are short essays by 25 authors.

Vasant Kothari (1934-2009)

Life Friend of the Gandhi Foundation, Vasant Kothari was born in 1934 in a small village in Rajasthan and grew up in Poona, a city of great historical and political importance and a centre of learning. He developed great interest in literature, philosophy, history and politics.

In 1955 he left India hoping to qualify at the bar in England but had to work in a variety of jobs to pay his way. He qualified at Lincoln's Inn and practised constitutional, criminal, civil and immigration law from the Inner Temple for over 50 years.

Vasant became involved in the School of Economic Science during its early stages and remained a committed student of the School. The SES provided him with intellectual companionship and an opportunity to pursue the studies of scripture and philosophy that had always interested him. At the School he established lifelong friendships.

He established the Chetana Educational Trust in London, and later in India, to promote the teaching and learning of Sanskrit and making it accessible to people from all walks of life. In these and so many other ways, Vasant has touched many a life through his journey through life.



GF Chairperson

Susan Denton-Brown's term of office as Chair terminates at the end of the year and, for personal reasons, she is unable to stand for re-election. Currently no other member of the Executive is willing to undertake the full responsibility for this role for 2010 and Friends will be informed of any relevant developments in the New Year.

Apart from her excellent chairing of meetings of the Executive Committee and helping re-organise the office along with Sabera Chowdhury, the part-time administrator, Susan has been the main organiser of the 2009 Annual Gathering at Kingsley Hall and the Summer Gathering at Sutton Courtenay. Although she will no longer be Chair, Susan intends to see through to completion, along with Mark Hoda, the educational project based at Kingsley Hall.

Gandhian Literature for sale

We have recently had a delivery from India of books by and about Gandhi. If you would like a complete list please request it from the Editor.

Satyagraha newspaper

This is the title of a South African newspaper produced originally for the Indian community but which is now widening its appeal to other SA communities. It appears monthly and can now be viewed on-line at www.satyagraha.org.za Ela Gandhi, a granddaughter of Mohandas, is Chair of the Trustees.

The Global Peace Index

Ways of measuring the peaceableness of different countries by comparing different indices has been devised by the Institute for Economics and Peace. It can be viewed at www.visionsofhumanity.org In 2009 it places New Zealand as the most peaceful country.

Qualifications in Peace Studies

The recently formed Peace Centre at the University of Otago, New Zealand is offering from 2010 Post Graduate Diplomas and Masters in Peace and Conflict Studies as well as MA and PhD by thesis. Details can be found at www.otago.ac.nz/humanities/ncpacs

The Wave – come together to stop climate chaos

Grosvenor Square, London at 12 noon on 5 December 2009

Encircling Parliament at 3pm

Organised by Stop Climate Chaos Coalition

www.the-wave.org.uk Wear something blue



Attendees at the Annual Lecture and Peace Award event

Alan and Shaheen Westcombe, Mary Holdstock, Denise Moll, Sabera Chowdhury,
Susan Denton-Brown, Trevor Lewis

Nominations for the GF International Peace Award

Each year the GF seeks nominees for the Peace Award. This was initiated specifically for those who had not been widely acknowledged, but whose lives and work were devoted to the cause of peace and social justice. It is not a monetary award but it is public recognition of the real value of their work. The recipient is invited to give a talk (somewhere in London) on their work.

Send details of your nominated person or organisation, saying why you think they are worthy to receive the Award, to Omar Hayat, 340 High Road, London N2 9AB or to omarhayat@chemecol.net

