

## **Gandhi Foundation Annual Lecture**

Thursday 13 October 2011 at 6.30 pm

The Nehru Centre, 8 South Audley Street, London W1K 1HF

*Is Gandhian Nonviolence Compatible with the Coercive State ?*

**Professor Anthony Parel**

Professor Emeritus of Political Science, University of Calgary, Anthony Parel, is author of *Gandhi's Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony* (CUP 2006) and Co-editor with Judith Brown of Oxford University of *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi* (2011)

*Please let Omar Hayat know if you intend to come:*

[ohayat@ceamd.co.uk](mailto:ohayat@ceamd.co.uk); or 340 High Road, London N2 9AB

## **The Gandhi Foundation International Peace Award 2011**

will be presented to

**Dr Binayak Sen and Bulu Imam**

**on behalf of the Tribal Peoples of India**

Wednesday 9 November at 6.30 for 7.00pm.

The Human Rights Action Centre (Amnesty International UK)

17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA

Lord Bhikhu Parekh will chair a Discussion Panel but names have still to be confirmed. Dr Binayak Sen and Bulu Imam will also speak.

*If you wish to attend please notify*

*John Rowley, 73 Carysfort Road, London N16 9AD*

[festival.of.nonviolence@gmail.com](mailto:festival.of.nonviolence@gmail.com)

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# Tagore and Gandhi

*Paul Mukerji*

This year marks the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. In 1913 Tagore won India's first ever Nobel Prize (for literature). In 1915 thanks to the efforts of C F Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi came to visit the school which Tagore had established in Santiniketan, West Bengal. This was to be the beginning of a friendship which would last until the Tagore's death in 1941.

Jawaharlal Nehru in his prison diary wrote: "Gandhi and Tagore. Two types entirely different from each other and yet both of them typical of India, both in the long line of India's great men ... It is not so much for any single virtue but because of the *tout ensemble* that I felt that among the world's great men today Gandhi and Tagore were supreme as human beings".

Their friendship developed and deepened through meetings, discussions, and the exchange of a large number of letters and telegrams. It was clear that each man had a great deal of respect, affection, and admiration for the other. However it was equally clear that there were fundamental disagreements and differences over certain issues. Most notable among these were Tagore's refusal to adopt the *charkha* (spinning wheel), his lack of support for Gandhi's non-cooperation movement, and his criticism of Gandhi over his comments on the 1934 Bihar earthquake.

Some writers have chosen to highlight the debates that the two engaged in to the exclusion of almost everything else yet in spite of, or perhaps because of these disagreements, the heartfelt friendship between them deepened over the years. It survived and indeed flourished due to the openness, honesty, love, and respect that one had for the other. Each recognized the greatness of the other's spirit, indeed it was Tagore who gave Gandhi the title 'Mahatma' and Gandhi who in turn referred to Tagore as India's 'Great Sentinel'.

During Gandhi's fast at Yeravda jail Tagore came all the way to visit and offer moral support. In moments of difficulty Gandhi often used to recite the words of one of Tagore's poems, "When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy". Towards the end of his life it was to Gandhi whom Tagore turned in order to request he take care of Visva-Bharati – the university he had founded and dedicated so much of his life to developing. Gandhi's verdict on the differences which occasionally surfaced between the two of them was summed up in his inimitable style when he said: "I started with a disposition to detect a conflict, but ended with the glorious discovery that there was none".

If the deep bond between them was evident from the letters they wrote it was also apparent to the people who knew them. Marjorie Sykes who spent time at Santiniketan noticed that both loved children and “possessed something of the eternal child in themselves”. She further commented on the similarities between the institutions linked to each of them: “to live and learn at Santiniketan drew (me) almost as closely into Gandhi’s orbit as Tagore’s. There was so much give and take between the two centres and a lot of coming and going. Segaon and Santiniketan were much nearer to one another in essentials than was often supposed”.



Over the years Santiniketan has preserved the link with Gandhi in different ways. A special edition of the Visva-Bharati Quarterly was devoted entirely to Gandhi in his centenary year in 1969; the statue of him by Ramkinkar Baij still stand in the grounds of Kala Bhavan (the art faculty); and the annual ‘Gandhi Day’ on 10<sup>th</sup> March commemorating Gandhi’s efforts to encourage the students of the ashram to clean, tidy, and cook for themselves still takes place to this very day. Indeed, the meeting of Gandhi and Tagore at Santiniketan and the friendship which developed as a result has been viewed as an event of historic importance to the extent that the authorities at the Visva-Bharati University are citing it as a key plank in their ongoing attempt to turn Santiniketan into a World Heritage site. It would be a fitting tribute to a beautiful friendship between two individuals whose paths may at times have differed but whose soul was one. Δ

# Are Soldiers Morally Equal ?

*Poppy Rowley*

*“The existence of massive standing armies in modern nation states has produced a professional class whose primary business (ultimately) is killing, maiming and destroying. ... There is an understandable tendency for these professionals and those who support their existence to remove any possible stain of criminality from their 'work'.”*<sup>1</sup> It is important, therefore, that close scrutiny is paid to their moral justifications.

In this essay I will address McMahan’s rejection of the moral equality of combatants. Although I agree with much of his argument, including his solution that combatants should be encouraged to come to their own moral decisions, I feel he places too much emphasis on the immorality of 'unjust' combatants and overlooks the point that 'just' combatants are often originally in very similar situations as their unjust counterparts.

When I refer to combatants I include soldiers (land, sea and air) and also *“those involved in the chain of agency directing the perceived aggression or wrongdoing.”*<sup>2</sup> This includes all those who supply and create the weapons as well as those who feed the army and of course, the public servants who instigated the war. Although generally considered civilians, it seems to me that they are also morally accountable. Also, when I refer to 'just' combatants I mean those fighting for a just cause and, by extension, 'unjust' combatants are those fighting for an unjust cause. Finally, although we may allow that there are some just causes that warrant violence in the form of war – I would argue that no moral concession should be made even if the war is deemed just.

McMahan believes the doctrine of the moral equality of combatants to be indefensible because *“the principles governing the conduct of war make no distinction between [combatants] whose war is just and those whose war is unjust.”*<sup>3</sup> ‘Jus in bello’ deals with what actions are morally acceptable in war: its two main principles are that of discrimination (defining legitimate targets) and proportionality (how much force should be applied)<sup>4</sup>. With ‘just war theory’ ‘jus in bello’ is treated as independent from ‘jus ad bellum’ (criteria to be met in order to determine whether war should be engaged in). The implication of their separation is that so long as combatants follow the rules of war, they are not to blame for fighting in an unjust war; only those who had a role in the decision-making. Instead, McMahan argues that the two are connected and therefore combatants are morally responsible,

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<sup>1</sup> Coady, 2008, p160-61

<sup>2</sup> Coady, 2008, p162

<sup>3</sup> McMahan, 2006, p377

<sup>4</sup> Norman, 1995, p905

when “*fighting in an unjust cause [and] are **not** morally justified in using violence, even against enemy combatants*”<sup>5</sup> because no one has a right to use violence to further immoral aims. And so, in unjust wars, the combatants do not meet the standards of the just war theory because those against whom they are fighting are ‘innocent’ and therefore illegitimate targets. By attempting to prove that combatants are not morally equal in cases where a war’s goals are unjust, he shows that the ‘just war theory’ is indefensible because it is supposed to apply universally, which it does not.

When defining innocence McMahan uses Walzer’s definition: “*...innocent people, a term of art which means that they have done nothing, and are doing nothing that entails their loss of rights.*”<sup>6</sup> McMahan believes that just combatants fit these criteria and so an attack by unjust combatants is unreasonable and the just combatants have a right to defend themselves. “*People don't lose moral rights by justifiably defending themselves or other innocent people against unjust attack*”<sup>7</sup> This application of the theory of self-defence establishes the innocence of just combatants in comparison to the guilt of the unjust ones and so the doctrine of the moral equality of combatants is indefensible.

I object to McMahan’s use of the term innocence on two fronts, that are supported by Uwe Steinhoff<sup>8</sup>. McMahan claims it is morally wrong to kill those who have done and are doing nothing wrong – the innocent. Unthinkingly, we include most civilians in this description but does it apply to just combatants too? In modern warfare we find instances of what the military call ‘collateral damage’; where combatants kill or actively contribute to the killing of innocent people. By McMahan’s terms this is an unjust action and because it occurs as frequently with just causes as it does with unjust ones we can therefore label ‘just’ combatants as unjust. Collateral damage is a common occurrence in warfare that is dominated by machines. Importantly, I feel that modern warfare must affect the combatants and their perception of war in comparison to the days of the charge and face-to-face fighting – it creates a distance from the action that needs to be bridged.

“*What was there to feel? Only the unnatural suspense and suppression of serving a machine which, for ought we knew, was killing our fellow men, whilst we stood there, blind, without knowledge or participation, subordinate to the cold machine.*”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> McMahan, 1993, p388

<sup>6</sup> Walzer, 2006, p146

<sup>7</sup> McMahan, 2006, p379

<sup>8</sup> Steinhoff, 2008

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence, 2011

Secondly, even if we allow that not all 'just' combatants are involved in cases of collateral damage, they still pose a threat. The term 'innocent' comes from the Latin 'innocens' meaning guiltless or harmless<sup>10</sup>. By this definition we cannot call 'just' combatants innocent (and therefore just) because they are men and women who have chosen to be trained to kill. They are a class of people threatening those who are not liable to be threatened. *“Therefore, in all those wars in which 'just' or justified combatants are responsible (...) for an unjust threat to innocents (...), they are liable to attack.”*<sup>11</sup> For example, although we generally deem the Allied soldiers in WWII as 'just', by bombing Berlin, they wronged innocent civilians in a terrorist attack<sup>12</sup> and therefore can be deemed unjust. The implication of this definition of innocence is that 'just' soldiers can be put on morally equal terms as 'unjust'.

However, I endorse McMahan's solution; that all combatants should morally reflect on the reasons for going to war and if they individually conclude that the result is an unjust cause then they should refuse to serve. Nevertheless, it seems to me that this solution brings out an important point about combatants and their justifications.

The reason it is of utmost importance that combatants hold true and justified beliefs about the aim of their war is because they are not dealing with something insignificant; they are dealing with people's lives. We can agree, I assume, that *“death is an evil because it brings to an end [with no chance of reinstatement] all the goods that life contains.”*<sup>13</sup> To take someone's life even when death is desired (euthanasia or suicide), is generally seen as abhorrent by many and is the subject of intense philosophical, political and psychological debate. Why then should a combatant, unjust or not, be able to take countless lives (who do *not* wish it) and not question either their individual, nor their nation and leaders' motives ! The asymmetry seems ridiculous.

Of course, refusal to serve brings its own problems. Combatant *x* might find that in doing so, more civilian lives are lost because they are not defended, even if *x* believes their cause to be unjust. However, unjust causes are often defined by offence rather than defence. And further, in this argument, we are addressing whether combatants should be making these decisions – if the answer is yes then we must hope for a future in which it is done so on a grand inclusive scale, rendering this objection obsolete.

So why the lack of moral questioning ? Some might have believed their cause to be just while others might have failed to attempt a basic understanding of the situation; some may not have been able to resist

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<sup>10</sup> Mahoney, 2011

<sup>11</sup> Steinhoff, 2008, p221

<sup>12</sup> I deem terrorism as 'violently attacking innocents with intention to kill, maim and destroy in order to influence others for the sake of a ideological cause'.

<sup>13</sup> Nagel, 1979, p1-2

coercive pressures while others could, but chose not to; and some may have been actively deceived by glorified rhetoric while others will have been reassured by the complacency of their comrades.<sup>14</sup> These however, are not justifications; they are excuses. Perhaps it could be argued that the combatant in question is not a criminal and need not be punished, but their actions nevertheless, are certainly morally questionable. I wonder how many 'just' combatants came to their own moral judgement upon which they decided to fight, in comparison to 'unjust' combatants? I propose that the number would likely be equal, and probably rather small.

McMahan's solution; that combatants think for themselves, seems to me the best antidote. Many might argue that it would be impractical or, even that it would undermine the whole military institution! We may note the necessity of a division in moral labour, for example, in legal institutions.<sup>15</sup> However, as I have stressed before, when the situation involves placing countless lives in the balance, it seems wise for all involved, especially those who are responsible for taking those lives, to make their own moral decisions rather than follow orders blindly. Even those institutions we feel innately trustworthy, in hindsight, have fought possibly more unjust wars than just ones. *"...how often in the past have soldiers followed their leaders into unjust wars, either because they were deceived, or because their leaders themselves were mistaken."*<sup>16</sup> Surely if combatants made their own judgement, this would benefit both man and country and confer a degree of moral dignity?

Although I find McMahan's argument persuasive, I believe he mistakenly directs the above critique almost solely at those whose cause is 'unjust'; with little criticism of the combatant whose cause is 'just'. In so doing, he overlooked the morality of the 'just' combatant by his focus on the morality of the cause itself. How many of these 'unjust' wars were thought to be that when they began? When troops invaded Iraq they were told that there were 'weapons of mass destruction'; there were not. Was it a 'just' war at first and 'unjust' when the truth was discovered? This implies that a war is judged to be 'just' or 'unjust' *after* the war has begun, and sometimes after it has ended. Therefore, because the war is judged to be just or unjust by others, whether or not a combatant can be considered 'just', is simply luck. The majority of wars can be considered 'unjust' purely by the atrocities committed by both sides during combat, but at the time, both sides would undoubtedly claim that they were in the right.

In conclusion I must underline that my argument only stands when considering the hierarchical structure of the army today for only when a majority of combatants make their own moral decisions will the moral status

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<sup>14</sup> McMahan, 2004, p700

<sup>15</sup> For more detailed background of the argument from institutional commitment see: McMahan, 2006, p384-388

<sup>16</sup> McMahan, 2004, p703

of a war not be luck. Misjudgements are inevitable but perhaps fewer 'unjust' wars would be fought. Under my definition 'just' combatants are those who reflect upon the conflict in which they are about to enter and after weighing both sides decide that more 'good' will come of war than 'evil' – that it is a just cause. We must allow for the differences between people and nations which will effect their decisions. But if we stick by the principles of 'jus ad bellum' and 'jus in bello' I believe most combatants should be able to come to a morally respectable conclusion.

Finally, from the reading I have done for this essay I would question whether wars can ever be 'just'. I do not claim complete non-violence; if my family were being attacked, I believe I would kill to save them. This is essentially the argument for self-defence that is repeatedly used when justifying war. However, I feel that these hypothetical situations are far removed from the reality of conflict. If Smith kills Jones in self-defence we may understand it because we have an instinct to survive. In war it is not one man against another and it is not just families or cities in the moment. The effects of war are far-reaching and catastrophic, leaving a land ripped apart and impoverished, with a traumatised and dysfunctional society that haunts future generations. I do not propose an answer; there will always be governments and individuals who want more power and more land, or feel so strongly regarding one ideological strain or another that they feel the need to attack and destroy. There will always be a need for defence against these individuals. The problem is the escalation – the huge numbers who become involved against their will. If we agree that killing is wrong, how can any war ever be a just war ?

*“So scrub my skin with women  
So chain my tongue with whisky  
Stuff my nose with garlic  
Coat my eyes with butter  
Fill my ears with silver  
Stick my legs in plaster  
Tell me lies about –  
Iraq  
Burma  
Afghanistan  
Israel  
Iran  
Tell me lies about Vietnam”<sup>17</sup>*

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<sup>17</sup> Mitchell, 2011



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## Postscript

The Editor accepted this essay by my daughter, Poppy, before I told him who had written it. She submitted it on 25th April as a 2nd year student of Philosophy at Leeds University. On 7th July, The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg ruled that the UK "must apply full human rights to lands under its military occupation". This has huge implications for all European countries and for each person deciding to join, or remain in, the armed services.

I did not send Poppy's essay to the Judges although she was right before they were ! More importantly, now that we have the ruling, the implications need to be spelt out in detail and somebody should check whether it is now being made plain to all and monitor its impact on recruitment.

John Rowley



# The Vegans have landed !

*Bill Palethorpe*

It was mid June and dozens of vegans were landing in Malaga from all over the world. They came in peace from twenty four countries and were all converging on the coastal town of Ricon de Victoria for the 13<sup>th</sup> International Vegan Festival.

The aim of the festival was to support and promote the vegan lifestyle as a healthy, ethically and ecologically responsible alternative to the consumption of meat and animal products which are increasingly having a devastating effect on malnourished people in the developing world, unhealthy people in the West, all non-human animals and the amazing planet Earth.

The festival consisted of sixty events from early morning daily Yoga to late evening ethnic entertainment such as Flamenco music, circle dancing, a jazz trio and an Indian music night. There were daily cookery demonstrations together with relevant stalls one of which sold delicious chocolate or orange drinks fortified with Aloe Vera.

Lectures were grouped under various themes namely Veganism Worldwide – Animal Exploitation & Animal Rights Campaigning – Leisure & Culture – Nutrition, Sport & Fitness – The Educational System & the Law from a vegan perspective – The Way Forward. There were many excellent well qualified speakers including our Eastbourne vegan marathon and Olympic runner Sally Eastall who spoke on “Veganism and Athletic Performance”. The group of six London Jain vegans gave interesting talks on “Jainism & Jain Vegans” and “The Dairy industry in India – an undercover operation”. They additionally took one of the cookery demonstration slots with “Indian snacks”. Marti Kheel from the USA spoke on “Gender, Flesh and Dietary Identity” tracing back to the connections between non-human animal abuse and exploitation to slavery, speciesism and genderism.

Some of the facts although often already known to many of us are absolutely appalling and reinforces the view that our current way of life is unsustainable with the world human population of 6.9bn now consuming on average resources requiring 1.5 Earth planets. The UK is even more profligate requiring 2.0 planets.

1% of world adults own 40% of the assets. 44% of Brazilian soil is used for animal feed. Bottom trawling for fish was likened to hunting rabbits with a JCB with 40% of the catch being thrown back dead unwanted. Humans have destroyed around 85% of the world’s trees in the mango swamps. These used to lessen the impact of Tsunamis and were a place for young fish to safely develop. The average UK child uses the resources of eight Indian children. Fish stocks worldwide were decimated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and if we continue at the present rate all stocks will have gone by 2040. The fish that are currently caught in ten days using modern technology would have taken a year to catch in the 1960s. The input to produce a 225gm steak would feed the

equivalent of forty people on a grain diet. In the Amazon region of Brazil there are 75 million cows which exceeds the human population. In theory the meat & dairy industry is gearing up to double its output (e.g. mega dairies/pig farms) by 2050 when the human population will hit 9bn. However many experts think this increase will be unsustainable environmentally. Bizarrely humans are the only mammal to regularly consume “reproductive products” i.e. eggs from chickens etc and non-human milk plus dairy products. Most people then continue to do so right through adulthood.

An audio visual presentation included under-cover filming of the abuse of animals in sport & leisure such as Bull fighting and cultural/religious festivals in Spain & France which involve shocking cruelty to defenceless animals. We learnt that both these countries are trying to get bull fighting accredited as part of the cultural heritage of their countries thereby protecting and guaranteeing their continuation.

In the USA in 2010 approximately 108m pigs were slaughtered. In the UK 50% of all antibiotics are routinely added to animal feed and 60% of those are given to pigs. They are needed because conditions in which “pharm” animals are reared, cramped together in sheds, favour the spread of infections. For example British scientists have just identified a new type of MRSA in milk provoking fears it could spread to humans. Modern intensive factory farming is not only a scar on our conscience but it is also rapidly becoming a real threat to our health. Sadly billions of sentient innocent animals are increasingly competing with us and our efficiently produced veg (etari)an food for land, fresh water, food and the very air we breathe. A vegan diet utilises only one seventh the resources of an omnivore diet.

Approximately half of the world’s harvest is fed to sentient animals for meat which is only about 10% efficient whilst world hunger is increasing. About 80% of the vast Brazilian soya crop is fed to animals. However people in the developing world are increasingly switching to a meat & dairy diet resulting in Western diseases with for example one third of African women and a quarter of the men now being overweight.

The good news is that everyone can lead a healthy life which is not only beneficial for them but also for people in developing countries, the non-human animal population and the beautiful planet we are sharing but not caring about.

Non-smokers live on average ten years longer than smokers. A healthy diet extends your life by 5-10 years. Physical activity (say 60 mins per day) gives you 5 extra years whereas being overweight reduces it by 2 years and obesity by 10 years. A good basic test is to check your BMI and also see if your waist size is the same as when you were 20 ! If you consume alcohol keep within the recommended units.

All in all a thought provoking and uplifting festival which left many of us wondering will we humans who have so much power and knowledge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have the wisdom and humility to live in peace and harmony with the rest of Nature. The sand is rapidly running out in the hour glass but we

can still change our ways. The trip to the stunning Caves of Nerja put human beings in perspective.

There is so much dietary and environmental information available. Two booklets for example have a wealth of advice & facts viz. "Plant based nutrition" a Vegan Society publication and "Ecological Consequences of Meat Consumption" available from the European Vegetarian Union. Bill Palethorpe at Eastbourne can provide further relevant information. [hobdell@fastmail.fm](mailto:hobdell@fastmail.fm) 01323 411707

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## How should we remember Battle of Plassey Day ?

### *Muhammad Ahmedullah*

Since 2007 Brick Lane Circle has been organising annual events – conferences, East India Company Walks and poetry readings – to explore important issues relating to the the English East India Company's rule over Bengal. The first conference was held on 24 June 2007, which was designed to help remember and understand the nature and impacts of the Battle of Plassey that took place 250 years ago.

In 2008 we received Heritage Lottery Fund to engage a group of young people, aged 18-25, to undertake research and write a book on the East India Company's heritage of London. This culminated in the publication of a book in May 2011 called *Plassey's Legacy: young Londoners explore the hidden legacy of the East India Company*. Details of the project are available on [www.the-eastindiacompany.org](http://www.the-eastindiacompany.org).

How should we remember 23 June 1757 ? This day in June this year will be 254 years after the Battle of Plassey when the English East India Company conquered Bengal, under the leadership of Robert Clive. The battle itself was quite an insignificant event, lasting only a day and fought on an unimportant field, about 100 miles north of Kolkata (Calcutta). However, it was a highly momentous event, being the springboard for and the beginning of the British Indian Empire.

Bengal and Britain have nearly four hundred years of direct links. The early phase, mid-1600s to 1757, was mutually beneficial, consisting mostly of trade, where Bengal supplied a number of goods, including the fabric 'Muslin', the famous textile of Bengal, for markets in the UK and beyond. The period 1757-1947 was the colonial phase when the British were the boss and did virtually whatever they liked. Many books have been written by all manners of people on the nature of British rule. A general consensus is that it consisted of both negative and positive elements. On the other hand, both societies in Britain and in India were dynamic and complex and that within those heterogeneous complexities, on all sides, some people profited while others suffered to different degrees.

When the British took over Bengal in 1757 it was known to be a rich province. In the words of the its conqueror, Robert Clive:

*... The country of Bengal is called, by way of distinction, the paradise of the earth. It not only abounds with the necessaries of life to such a degree, as to furnish a great*

*part of India with its superfluity, but it abounds in very curious and valuable manufactures, sufficient not only for its own use, but for the use of the whole globe. The silver of the west and the gold of the east have for many years been pouring into that country, and goods only have been sent out in return. This has added to the luxury and extravagance of Bengal.*

(Horn, D B and Ransome, M, (editors), *English Historical Documents, 1714-1783*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1957, pp. 809-811).

However, when the British left India in 1947, Bengal was one of the poorest places in the world. How does one explain that change in fortune ?

Post 1947 has been a new era for both Britain and the Indian subcontinent. Three independent countries are now marching forward with differing degrees of success and Britain is becoming an ever more diverse and multicultural place with large-scale migration of people from around the world, including the Indian subcontinent.

The first people of India conquered by Britain, the Bengalis, live in their largest UK concentration in East London, which was the heart of the East India Company from where it planned and carried out most of its activities relating to the rule of India. Bengalis in the UK, most of whom are from Sylhet region of modern day Bangladesh, are also making their own unique contributions to the ever increasing multicultural, diverse, creative, dynamic, prosperous and enjoyable UK. In this context, how should we remember the Battle of Plassey Day: 23 June every year ?

Secretary, Brick Lane Circle [www.bricklanecircle.org/](http://www.bricklanecircle.org/)



Robert Clive purchased Walcot estate in 1764 for £90,000 from his Bengal loot.

# Creativity and Non-Violence

## Forging a path as a Humanistic Composer

*Jenny Rees*

My mother was a child during the second world-war, both my grandfather and father at different times were conscripted into national service and fought in wars. During my childhood I heard many stories of war, these cast a shadow on my heart. I felt war was unwise and cruel and was certain that violence could only lead to suffering. Even though I was very young, I gave the matter considerable thought and came to the conclusion that peace would only be established when each individual embraced nonviolence.

*“Let there be no cant about non-violence. It is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being.”* Gandhi [*Non-Violence in Peace and War*, vol. 1 p.66].

Home-life was difficult. My father was a troubled, violent and abusive man, always a dreamer, I became withdrawn. My dreams and my mother’s love gave me a reason to live and to hope. My first dream was the dream of peace – my second the dream of music. As I have grown to adulthood I have sought to unite these dreams.

In 1997 I was introduced to and began to practice the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin within Soka Gakkai International. A Buddhist leader told me that Buddhist practice was about ‘opening doors to the heart’. I could see that I had indeed closed many doors within my heart and from that moment I began a process of inner transformation.

Gandhi said, *“You must be the change you want to see in the world”*.

These words of Gandhi’s are reflected in Nichiren Buddhism which believes the world is a reflection of our hearts. The transformation of the heart or inner self, one of the foremost aims of Buddhist practice, sometimes called ‘human-revolution’ is a process in which the practitioner strives to transform that within their own heart which causes suffering for self and others. I will be going on to write about my creative work as a composer but wish to state here that I consider the supreme act of creativity for a human-being to be the forging of a nonviolent heart.

### **Creating a ‘Beautiful’ Heart.**

Buddhist philosophy believes that an artist’s work is imbued with its creator’s life-state. As such the artist’s foremost challenge, and it is my own challenge, is to create a ‘heart’ that is deep and profound, pure and beautiful. In Buddhism a ‘beautiful heart’ exhibits the qualities of compassion, courage and wisdom. Works produced from such a heart have the ability to deeply move others in a positive way. In contrast, work which is created from the desire for fame, from greed or arrogance, even ignorance, no matter how superficially well crafted and learned lacks the power to create true value.

Founder of the Soka Gakkai Buddhist movement in Japan, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, espoused a framework in which to place daily work based on three core principles *‘Beauty, Benefit and Good’*. ‘Beauty’ signifies work in which one is fulfilled and able to express one’s highest potential. ‘Benefit’ signifies the fair

earning of money by which one sustains and supports life. 'Value' signifies work which creates value in the world. Along with many Buddhists, I strive to apply these principles to my daily work.

I am a composer, much of my current work is in the area of 'media' providing music for production library releases which are then used in film, television, radio and internet. These communication industries reach the lives of many people. Of course, their influence is not always value creating. I believe that part of humanity's present challenge is to awaken to our responsibility towards our planet with its wonderful diversity of life and to use all avenues available to us to create a peaceful world where we can respectfully co-exist. I feel part of my responsibility as a humanistic composer is to help create a current of positive change within the arena in which I work.

I view all life as sacred, 'respect' is a key word for me in my work and a guiding principle. I work only on projects which I believe are contributive in a value creating way. I never accept work which supports violence and disrespect for life. Music can inspire hope, create unity and engender passion for peace. It can help us view our selves and others through the eyes of compassion and awaken us anew to the beauty and precious nature of life. Part of my vision is to forge new pathways and partnerships with like-minded others and find creative avenues in which to use my compositional work for the sake of humanity and the planet.

*"The confidence and joy of knowing that our daily action, dialogue and engagement are moving the world in a better direction – this unleashes hitherto unimagined energy and power from within people's lives. We are moved by the knowledge that each of the world's seemingly ordinary individuals can be a protagonist in the creation of a new era. No force can match that of a fundamental transformation in the human spirit. Members of SGI are determined to continue working in solidarity and partnership with those who share our aspirations for a new global society of peace and co-existence."* Excerpt from Daisaku Ikeda's 2011 Peace Proposal.

Influences that colour my work come from many world cultures, this is reflected in the instrumentation I use in my work. Whatever instruments I choose for a particular work, be it a simple wooden flute, a complex percussive instrument like the piano, a tapestry of highly evolved orchestral instruments, or complex synthetic sound design elements, I bring to mind the commonality they all share – they are instruments to express and to touch the human heart. *"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed."* UNESCO Constitution. I fully support this sentiment but like to substitute the word 'heart' for 'mind'..... both violence and peace begin within the heart therefore I strive for my musical work to speak with and influence the hearts of others.

### **The Strength Derived from Making a Vow.**

As a young attorney working in South Africa Gandhi made a pledge to work against social injustice and he encouraged others to join him, speaking at a rally he said, *"If you have not the will or ability to stand firm even when you are perfectly isolated you must not only not take the pledge but you must declare your opposition before the resolution is put .... Every one must be true to his pledge*

*even unto death, no matter what others do.”* Louis Fischer [*The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* p.76].

The principles Gandhi expounds above and his life example of never giving in to injustice are central in Nichiren Buddhism. Founders of the Soka Gakkai Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and his disciple Josei Toda were imprisoned at the beginning of the second world war for their resistance to the Japanese military authorities who tried to compromise their Buddhist activities and beliefs. Mr Makiguchi died in prison and on his release Josei Toda determined to uphold his mentor's vow to propagate the Buddhist ideals of peace and respect by re-building the then scattered fragments of what was to become the Soka Gakkai humanistic Buddhist movement. Daisaku Ikeda, third president of Soka Gakkai International embraces this same vow and works to promote a peaceful world based on respect. These men are embodying the Buddha's desire to lead all living beings to happiness.

It may seem the life examples of such great men are far removed from our daily life, but when we embrace the same vow for the happiness of all and take action based on that, we too are following the path of true greatness as a human-being.

*Each of us, no matter how weak or ineffectual we may feel ourselves to be, must build deep within our hearts a stronghold for peace, one that will be capable of withstanding and in the end silencing the incessant calls to war. This is the only way humanity's tragic predilection for violence can be reformed and its energies channeled in new directions.* Daisaku Ikeda [Ikedaquotes.org website – category non-violence]

Recently I embraced Daisaku Ikeda's vow to rid the world of nuclear weapons by 2030, and determined to dedicate my musical work towards creating a peaceful world where the dignity and preciousness of life are fully realised and celebrated. Embracing a vow strengthens the heart, doing so has given me the courage and confidence to take action in daily life, to reach out to others, to put my work forwards, to walk my dream. The lives of great men such as Mahatma Gandhi and Daisaku Ikeda act as beacons of hope and inspiration, they set the torch of our hearts aflame – we burn from within and the radiance of our determination illuminates the way for others. I say this with all humility because I believe that each human-being carries within their hearts the potential to bring about incredible transformation for good in the world. Many Soka Gakkai members are devoting their lives, each in their own unique way to fulfilling their vow to help create a peaceful world where diversity is respected. It is a cause for great joy that peoples from diverse cultures and backgrounds, religions and philosophies throughout the world are also working towards this same aim.

In October of this year Soka Gakkai members in Wales [my home country], are hosting the *Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace* Exhibit. Engendering awareness of the work, ethos and philosophies of these great men is essential in keeping their visions alive. In this way their life examples, their dedication to social injustice, to the sanctity and dignity of life and world peace, will continue to inspire others to follow and strengthen the paths they have opened for us.

We are each notes in the great symphony of life, let us make music of outstanding beauty and enduring value.



You can visit my website and hear examples of my work at [www.jennyreesmusic.com](http://www.jennyreesmusic.com)

I would love to hear from you. To learn more about Soka Gakkai International and the work of Daisaku Ikeda visit [www.sgi.org](http://www.sgi.org) or [www.daisakuikeda.org](http://www.daisakuikeda.org) For Soka Gakkai in the U.K. visit [www.sgi-uk.org](http://www.sgi-uk.org)

***Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace Exhibit.***

**Oct. 3 - 16 Pierhead Building. Cardiff Bay. Cardiff. Oct. 17 - 28 2011 Swansea Museum. Swansea.**

Mohandas K. Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Daisaku Ikeda, three men from three different cultures and continents, have followed a common path of profound dedication and achievement in improving the lives of all people. *Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace* conveys the themes and pivotal principles in the lives of these giants of the 20th Century.

This exhibit is divided into sections that present their lives as they relate to key themes:

- Forging Destiny imparts the importance of mentors and the key influences upon each man's life.
- Humanity at the Heart explores their common belief in the innate dignity of humanity.
- Principles into Action illustrates how each man was able to translate his principles into dynamic action.
- Nonviolence explores the principles of nonviolent action as a way of life and a means to bring about positive change in society.
- Adversity and Resistance shows each man's ability not only to triumph over adversity, but to utilise it to further their growth as humanists.



**Diana Schumcher**

Patron of the Gandhi Foundation, Diana Schumacher, was recently awarded an OBE for her work "for the environment, sustainable development and humanitarian issues" – a well deserved recognition.

Diana is also involved in the **Schumacher Centenary Festival** to be held in Bristol on Sat 8 - Sun 9 October. The GF will be sharing a stall at this event with Jeevika. Further details and booking at [www.schumacher.org.uk](http://www.schumacher.org.uk) or Tel: 0117 9031081

**Peace Studies and Global Philosophy**

Dr Thomas Daffern, whom some will remember from his days with the GF in London, has now settled in the west coast of Scotland and has established an International Institute of Peace Studies and Global philosophy in Argyll. He offers courses which combine training and practical work in conflict resolution with studying the entire range of global philosophy and spiritual traditions. He can be contacted for further details at The Castle of the Muses, Carrick Castle, Loch Goil, Argyll PA24 8AG; tel: 01303 703 053.

## Gandhi in Noakhali

Following the GF's AGM at Kingsley Hall on 21 May the meeting went over to a multi media presentation focusing on the theme of Gandhiji's visit in Noakhali during the communal riots which plagued Bengal in 1946. Incidentally, Noakhali is now part of Bangladesh and was the epicentre of the famous 1970 tornado and floods. The presentation started with **Shaheen Choudhury Westcombe** relating her own family's horrific experiences within the area at the time of Gandhi's visit. She also confirmed that to this day there is a Gandhi Ashram Trust within the Noakhali area established in response to his visit and promoting his philosophy of rural development, peace and social harmony. See [www.gandhiashrambd.org](http://www.gandhiashrambd.org) It was followed by a film showing Gandhi trooping around the area armed only with his staff and bare feet. Iconic though the images were, for me it was rare to see actual footage of Gandhi in contrast to Lord Attenborough's film and other cinema views. It was also stressed one should move away from the romanticised version of Gandhi turning up as a talisman and suddenly bringing peace, when in fact there was plenty of hard work that needed to be done.

This film was followed by a recording of a speech that Gandhi gave at Kingsley Hall in 1931. This can be found on youtube.com by searching Mahatma Gandhi Speech. To conclude the audio part of the presentation several poems on Gandhian themes were read by **Saif Osmani** and **Rashmi Munikempanna** (who also took photographs that can be seen on our website) and to accompany the presentation there was an exhibition of paintings inspired by Gandhi by Saif Osmani and entitled *The Spaces Inhabited by Gandhi*. *William Rhind*



A ferry similar to the one Gandhi was on when in Noakhali (Photo courtesy of M Ahmedullah)

*Saif Osmani describes the exhibition **The Spaces Inhabited by Gandhi**:*

Kingsley Hall is the place Mahatma Gandhi chose to stay in during his visit to London in 1931 for the second Round Table conference.

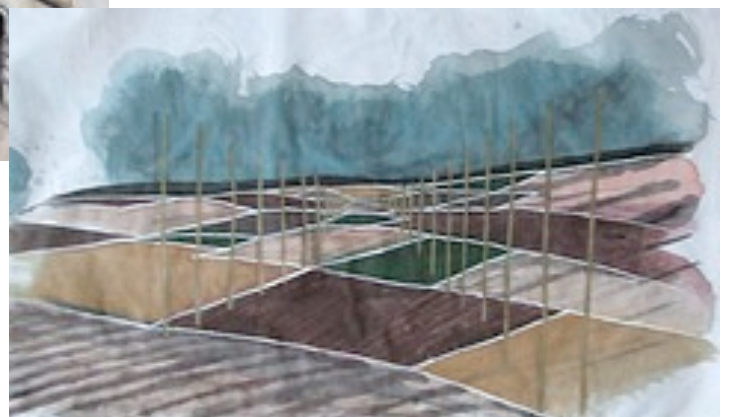
I began researching the footprint of the Kingsley Hall building from the local archives at Bancroft Library. In media coverage of Gandhi's visit of 1931, the newspapers attempted to present a romanticised and disaffected view of the East End. Photographs were taken over a broad skyline, away from the factories which lined the major roads and arteries of the locality.

The style of painting I have chosen borrows from far eastern practices, from Chinese, Japanese and Taiwanese rural paintings on cloth. I initially started with broad, loose brush strokes, layering the details and features of the buildings in an attempt to re-create a sense of time and place, whilst playing with perspective. Each piece was further abstracted by imbuing meanings extracted from testimonies in Noakhali and London, such as in the piece 'Top of Gandhi's head' and 'Beyond Landscapes'. Through abstraction I am exploring Gandhi's influence over physical occurrences as well as tracking his thought process and philosophy.

The iconography and aesthetic of Gandhi's public image was difficult to steer away from. I find that traditional canvas often prompts the viewer to search for a reality, as if looking through a portal into an imaginary world. By painting on cloth I am attempting to break away from this and allow the viewer to search for his or her own meaning.

The focus on the spaces Gandhi occupied come from my own practice which often follows narratives in space, by recording the displacement of people and changes in spatial configurations, as means of understanding socio-political aspects of human behaviour.

**These paintings will form part of a larger exhibition, intended to be shown as part of Open House weekend – Kingsley Hall on Saturday 18 September, 11am-5pm.**



*The following is an edited transcript of the talk by **Shaheen Choudhury Westcombe MBE**:*

I am neither an academic, nor a politician, philosopher, sociologist or writer. I have been invited to speak simply because there is a family link with Gandhi's historic visit to Noakhali that dates back over six decades. My paternal ancestors come from the Feni area in Bangladesh which was then in the Noakhali district of undivided Bengal. My father happened to accompany Gandhi in 1946 when he visited the area during the horrific and inhuman communal riots between the Hindus and Muslims that tore the region apart.

Communal violence has existed all through history. Conflicts associated with religion is a sensitive issue in today's world.

It is said that some proponents of nonviolence preach love and respect. This is seen in Jesus when he says '*love thine enemy*'; in the Taoist concept *wu-wei* or effortless action; in the philosophy of the martial arts, *Akido*; in the Buddhist principle of *Metta*, loving kindness towards all beings and the principle of *Ahimsa* or non-violence towards any being, shared by Buddhism, Jainism and some forms of Hinduism. The very word Islam means Peace. An example has been cited in the story of Abel in the Quran.

Gandhi believed in truth or *Satya*. He believed in having a dialogue. One must hear one's opponents in order to be heard.

In 1946, whilst negotiations were progressing for the Independence of India and political leaders were discussing the details of a separate homeland for the Muslims, riots broke out in Calcutta (Kolkata). It spread like fire to the villages of Noakhali and then to Bihar and the Punjab.

Hindu and Muslim families who had co-existed side by side for decades, their children who had grown up together into adults turned against one another. As in all riots, during such events the barbaric instinct takes over resulting in brutal killings. Alongside the loss of life and damage to property, there is looting, raping and kidnapping. Children are often left homeless and parentless. The mental scars of such violence can never be repaired.

People resort to all sorts of means to protect themselves. My parents lived in Calcutta at the time of the riots. This was soon after I was born. I had heard from my mother that they were so frightened of attacks that everyone moved to the top floor of the house. My father was away, and the members of the extended family were mostly women. They had pots of water boiling on the stoves day and night. Rows of kettles were ready with hot water. Should there be an attack, the women would pour the water from upstairs. They had crushed all the red chillies in the house to prepare a paste to throw at the attackers in self defence. Fortunately this never happened.

All around were sounds of slogans '*Allah hu Akbar*' said the Muslims '*Bande Mahtaram*' shouted the Hindus.

My family are Muslims. My small green rubber baby changing mat was used as a flag and waved at the Muslim attackers who had on a number of occasions mistaken the family to be Hindus and approached the house. The green flag with a white crescent and star was to be the flag of Pakistan later, the symbol of the new Muslim state. Gandhi did not want the partition of India but it happened.

Riots continue even today, a documentary titled *The Final Solution* which I saw not long ago shows footage of the Gujarat carnage that took place some years back. Families wiped out; a pregnant woman kicked brutally and a young survivor vowing to take revenge when he grew up.

Even after partition there have been communal riots in the then East Pakistan. I remember my father worrying about his Hindu friends during the troubles and doing everything to make sure they were alright. My mother who was the Principal of a school brought the Hindu Sanskrit teacher home when there were communal tensions. He spent a fortnight hiding in the attic. Although we were protecting him, he kept the door locked at all times. Such was his fear. My mother arranged for him to be escorted back safely to his village home to be re-united with his family.

Going back to Gandhi's trip to Noakhali in 1946, it is said that Muriel Lester had begged Gandhi to go on this peace mission. I do not know how my late father Muhammad Habibullah Bahar Choudhury (1906-1966) joined him. Gandhi's philosophy of peace and harmony was very close to his heart. My father, as I have said before belonged to the Noakhali region but had settled in Calcutta. He was a writer, a columnist, a politician and a sports personality who in his youth was the captain of the 'A' Division football team of the Calcutta Mohammedan Sporting Club. From his student days he had been active in the movement for the Independence of India. His close school friends were the famous freedom fighters, Anantalal Singh and Ganesh Ghosh – disciples of the famous Surya Sen.

At the time of Gandhi's peace mission, my father was a Member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly of undivided India in Calcutta. He believed firmly in communal harmony, respect and co-existence. He published and edited a magazine titled *Bulbul* during the 1930s. The spirit of secularism echoed through its pages and a large number of the then literary masters including the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore and Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam wrote in it. After partition, he was a Minister of the first cabinet in the then East Pakistan. He is still remembered for what he stood for and his contributions to society. His birth centenary was celebrated both in India and Bangladesh in 2006. In Kolkata a copy of a selective issue of *Bulbul* was printed after 70 years.

An event in Dhaka, now the capital of Bangladesh that took place on 21st February 1952 marks the beginning of another chapter in the history of the sub-continent. Shots were fired at students killing several of them when they took out a procession demanding that Bengali, their mother tongue should be the national language of Pakistan. The day is observed globally today as the International Mother Tongue Day .

After two decades and following a war in which millions lost their lives, Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan, split up from Pakistan and became independent under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The killing of the students during the language movement of 1952 broke my father's heart. Soon after he had a stroke and lost his memory. I was only about seven years old and regret that I never had a chance to hear about the historic mission to Noakhali with Gandhi from my father. My sister recalls my mother saying that when my father returned home from Noakhali after months he could not be recognised. The clean shaven handsome man looked unkempt and had grown a thick dark beard.

In Noakhali, Gandhi went from village to village through the muddy paddy fields. He carried his holy books. He appealed to Hindus and Muslims, men and women that they should pledge not to kill each other and ensure peace. His tireless journey lasted four months.

Andrew Whitehead, a journalist, writes about his own visit to Noakhali some years back (*The Indian Express, May 20, 1997*). He mentions the Hindu village of Jayag where a *zamindar's* (wealthy landlord) house has been converted into an *ashram*. It is now the centre of social development programmes.

Every morning and evening people gather for a prayer meeting in a room that contains mementos of Gandhi's visit. It is a living memorial of this remarkable peace mission. He mentions Jharna Choudhury who runs the ashram today. She recalls her memories as a child regarding how their house was set on fire by the attackers, some of whom they actually knew.

Abdur Rauf who took Andrew Whitehead to the spot where he had watched Gandhi pass 50 years ago, said, "Gandhi came from that direction, from the north. I remember he was wearing two pieces of *khadi* cloth, and there was a watch at his waist. He took support from the shoulders of two women. All the Muslims were pleased to see him and respected him".

Andrew Whitehead writes, "Gandhi visited dozens of villages in the four months in the area. The troubles had largely burnt itself out by the time he arrived in November. But there is no doubt that his calming presence and message, the concern he showed for both communities, and the sight of India's foremost leader, barefoot, negotiating the narrow bamboo bridges, had an immense impact".

After the riots were over, Lord Mountbatten, Viceroy of India wrote to Gandhi on 26th August 1947:

*My dear Gandhiji ,*

*In the Punjab we have 55 thousand soldiers and large scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal our forces consist of one man, there is no rioting.*

*As a serving officer, as well as an administrator, may I be allowed to pay my tribute to the One Boundary Force, not forgetting his Second in Command, Mr. Suhrawardy ? You should have heard the enthusiastic applause which greeted your name in the Constituent Assembly on the 15th of August when all of us were thinking so much of you.*

Sixty-five years on, the world today is still crying for peace. On the 10th November, 1998, the United Nation General Assembly proclaimed the first decade of the 21st century, the years 2001-2010 as the International Decade for the Promotion of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. It is an irony that there is more violence today on a global scale. We need to reflect and remind ourselves of Gandhi's teachings.

In Gandhi's own words,

*'If my faith burns bright as I hope it will, even if I stand alone I shall be alive in the grave and what more speaking from it. '*



