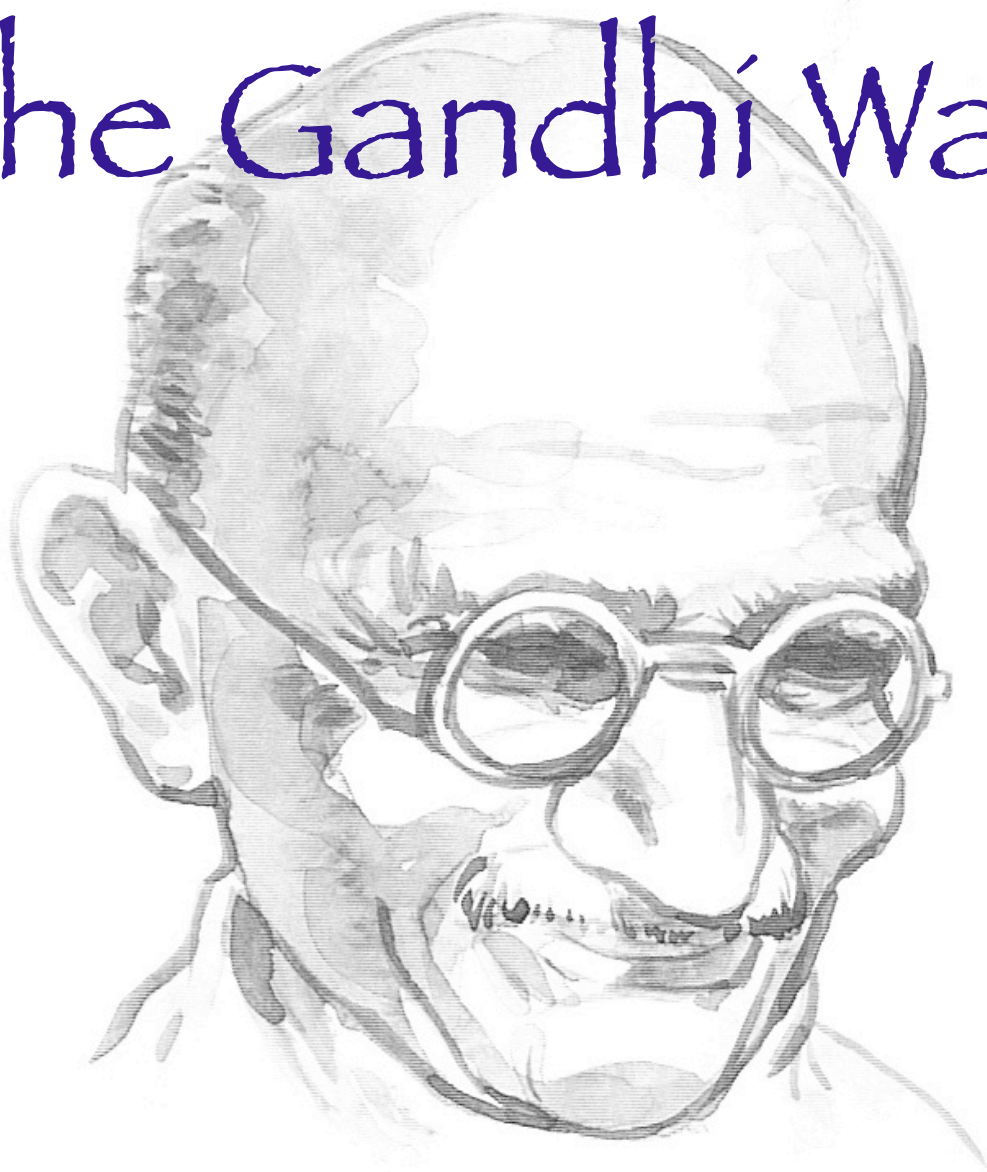


# The Gandhi Way



Watercolour sketch by David Gudgeon

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### **The Gandhi Foundation AGM**

All Friends of the GF are invited to attend the meeting  
on Zoom at 3pm on Saturday 28 November 2020

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88063918473?pwd=M3ZTVkdpZ0FCTXVUNVlwR1FHamo0QT09>

Meeting ID: 880 6391 8473

Passcode: 283016

### **The Gandhi Foundation Multifaith Celebration**

will be held in 2021 online on

Saturday 30 January 2021 from 3pm to 4pm via Webinar/Zoom

There will be both live and pre-recorded offerings

Everyone is very welcome to join. The link with password will be sent to everyone whose e-mail we have before the event. Otherwise, do let us know if you would like to take part

### **Welcome to a New Patron – Sandip Verma**

Baroness Verma of Leicester has kindly agreed to be a patron of the Gandhi Foundation. She was born in Amritsar in Indian Punjab and came to the UK as a young child in 1960. She married – her husband Ashok and she have a daughter and son – and went into business, joined the Conservative Party and stood in Parliamentary elections. Sandip Verma was made a Life Peer in 2006 and has held posts including Under Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change 2012-15. In 2019 she became Ministerial Champion for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Overseas and is chair of the UN Women's UK committee.

### **Contents**

Employee Ownership – GF AL 2020 Part II	Graeme Nuttall
Gandhi, Covid, Namaste	Ramnarine Sahadeo
Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the journey not made	Graham Davey
A Tribute to John Hume 1939-2020	Jane Sill

# Employee Ownership with Added Gandhian Purpose

## The Gandhi Foundation Annual Lecture 2020, Part II

*Graeme Nuttall*

### **EO v1.0**

How can Mahatma Gandhi's ideas help develop further the successful employee ownership business model?

Employee ownership is successful but what exactly do we mean by "employee ownership"?

In 1987 I helped write the first book on the legal and tax aspects of employee ownership. There wasn't an accepted definition. I concentrated on who owned the shares in a company. This is what I call "EO Version 1". The book identified three main forms of employee ownership:

- individual employees owning shares personally in their company;
- a trustee owning shares in an employee trust on behalf of all employees, as a class of beneficiaries of that trust; and
- a hybrid model that mixed the two.

This definition worked well when describing the legal mechanics and tax consequences of moving from one set of shareholders to another. This definition fitted in with the times and the lobbying emphasis of the Employee Ownership Association (or Job Ownership Limited as it was then called). By 1987 the UK had a useful array of tax advantaged share and share option plans, which allowed executives and other employees to acquire shares personally in their company. Lobbying to promote employee ownership was part and parcel of promoting all types of employee share ownership including executive share plans. Although tax changes were achieved, to promote individual employee share ownership, none of these acted as the trigger to large scale growth of employee ownership.

### **Nuttall Review**

In 2012 the Coalition Government decided to review why employee ownership had not taken off in the UK private sector. The initial announcement of this review wasn't clearly understood by the Press. There was an assumption that the Government was simply going to look again at employee share plans. It was obvious that employee ownership needed a clearer definition.

### **EO v2.0**

The Nuttall Review of Employee Ownership defined employee ownership in a significantly different way, call this EO Version 2. This started with EO

Version 1, by including trustee ownership as well as individual employee ownership and hybrid models. But importantly the definition went beyond looking at who owned shares to requiring that the employees' shareholding underpinned genuine employee engagement. It also made it clear that share ownership by a few employees wasn't enough to count: it had to be all employees. And it wasn't enough that all employees owned an insignificant percentage of a company's shares. The shareholding had to be significant, so that it could underpin meaningful employee engagement.

This definition helped move employee ownership from being seen as an add-on to the standard business model to a business model in its own right. This emphasis also helped move EO from being promoted by reference to the tax system to being seen as something that had strong commercial merits. It was good for business success and happier staff.

As a result of the findings of the Nuttall Review the employee ownership trust was introduced in the Finance Act 2014. My review had emphasised the benefits of the trust model of employee ownership and I argued for a level playing field. Why should there only be tax advantages for individual employee ownership? After discussion with HM Treasury two key tax advantages were introduced:

- one that provides a complete exemption from capital gains tax for individuals selling a controlling shareholding to the trustee of an employee ownership trust or EOT
- and another to make cash bonuses to all the employees of an EOT controlled company income tax free, up to £3,600 per employee per tax year.

Sellers to an EOT usually have to wait for several years to be paid in full. The capital gains tax exemption is a vital part of making a sale to an EOT work in practice, as well as acting as a nudge to professional advisers to talk about employee ownership. And the income tax exemption means there's a tangible benefit to employees from this ownership model. As far as I'm aware tax hasn't distorted decision making.

I expected there to be an increase in the use of the trust model and thought that other models based on employees holding shares directly would also continue to be popular. But the EOT has turned into the dominant type of UK employee ownership.

In 2012 EO Version 2 changed the emphasis towards the main trigger of EO's success: genuine employee engagement.

Is it timely, in 2020, to adopt an expanded definition of employee ownership?

## **EO V3.0**

What Gandhi encourages us to consider is a new definition of employee ownership, a bolder definition that defines EO with expanded corporate purpose, so that employee-owned companies are synonymous with good corporate citizenship.

As I've explained, a company isn't employee-owned if all its shares are held by a few senior managers. And even if all employees own a few shares in a company that won't create employee ownership. Employees must have genuine voice individually and as a group in how the business is run and a share in its profits. Why not get to the point of saying a company isn't employee owned unless it also serves society and the environment, locally and globally, as well as its shareholders, its employees?

### **Unfinished business**

This is unfinished business from the Nuttall Review. I did consider requiring employee-owned companies to have a clear corporate mission and also to have a limit on pay differentials. I consulted on these ideas. I was impressed by how many employee-owned companies had powerful mission statements and how some had express limitations to prevent senior management being paid more than a reasonable multiple of average pay. It seems uncanny at first glance that in Gandhi's draft trusteeship formula we find references to:

- fixing both “a decent minimum living wage” and “the maximum income that would be allowed any person in society”, and
- also “the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed”.

But it's not so surprising when one of the UK examples of employee ownership I had in mind in 2012 was The Scott Bader Commonwealth. This was established by Ernst Bader as an express attempt to realise Gandhi's trusteeship principles. Indeed some in India refer to The Scott Bader Commonwealth as an example of how to adopt trusteeship principles.

### **Changed times**

What has changed since the Nuttall Review in 2012? That's an easy question to answer isn't it? EO Version 3 would be a new definition fit for the age in which we now live: one in which we have no choice but to tackle inequality, sustainability and climate change.

Much has changed and changed quickly.

Nationally and internationally there is a wide-ranging set of initiatives to tackle societal and environmental problems, encompassing corporate social responsibility, environmental, social and governance (or ESG) criteria, purpose beyond profit and the like. There have been well-publicised moves

by major organisations that demonstrate a major shift away from shareholder primacy, the idea that a successful company is one that maximises its profits for its shareholders.

It helps to mention briefly a couple of these initiatives, to get us thinking about what it might mean in practice for a company to have a positive impact on society and the environment.

### **Global initiatives**

There are global initiatives such as The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States, which has at its heart 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including no poverty, zero hunger and good health and well-being.

As another example, the United Nations supported Principles for Responsible Investment (or PRI) initiative helps integrate ESG considerations into investment decision-making. In relation to environmental issues, PRI highlights climate change as well as water risk, sustainable land use, fracking, methane as a climate pollutant and risks associated with plastics. Social issues highlighted by PRI are human rights and labour standards, employee relations and conflict zones. Governance issues highlighted are tax avoidance, executive pay, corruption, effective director nomination processes and cyber security risks.

### **National initiatives**

There are country specific responses.

In 2014 a change to Indian company law made it mandatory for large private and public sector firms to spend at least 2% of their net profits on corporate social responsibility projects as set out in the law. This change was entirely in keeping with Gandhi's trusteeship principles. The list of possible projects includes, as examples, promoting gender equality, empowering women, setting up homes and hostels for women and orphans; setting up old age homes, day care centres and other facilities for senior citizens. By 2019 social impact spending had grown by 100% in the relevant companies. The majority of spending was through third party implementation agencies, rather than a company's own foundation or direct spending. Education and health and sanitation projects accounted for the majority of expenditure.

In the UK certain larger companies now have to include a statement, known as a section 172(1) statement, within their Annual Report and Accounts, explaining how directors have "had regard" to what are called "enlightened shareholder value" considerations. These statements set out company specific actions. It is too early to tell what impact this additional accountability is having and there are suggestions that additional

regulation is needed to help ensure that the reporting is done with integrity and meaning.

### **The key issues**

Certain key issues recur when trying to define what is needed from corporations:

- to what extent should wider corporate purpose be integral to how a business operates;
- if it is integral how should it rank compared to serving shareholders' interests; and
- to what extent should achieving a wider corporate purpose be compulsory?

And just as importantly, having identified what change is needed, how in practice do you achieve substantive positive change?

### **Wider corporate purpose as integral to business**

How does my proposed new definition of employee ownership fit in with these key issues?

I see wider corporate purpose as integral to how a business operates. I am not talking just about worthwhile activities such as ad hoc charitable donations that are incidental to doing business. Obviously, I don't mean using CSR as a marketing tool to increase profits. My proposal is that employee owned companies make changes in how their business operates so as to impact positively on society and the environment. This means going beyond compliance with the letter of relevant ESG laws and innovating to help avoid, mitigate and indeed solve societal and environmental problems.

Upholding shareholder value is what UK company law currently prescribes as the default duty on directors. This duty is, importantly, caveated by a requirement in the Companies Act 2006 that Directors must "have regard to" various matters including the impact of the company's operations on the community and the environment. So the directors of an ordinary trading company can, under UK company law, already take into account corporate interests other than maximising profits, if they wish.

### **Choice over prioritising wider corporate purpose**

As to how these wider interests rank alongside, for example, making a profit and providing good work, well I believe that for now there needs to be flexibility.

The long process culminating in the Companies Act 2006 considered the idea of changing a director's duty so it is not just about a duty to the shareholders but also to employees, the wider community, and the

environment. A pluralist approach like this would have forced directors to consider the interests of each set of stakeholders in arriving at a decision. The directors would have had to weigh these interests against each other when making decisions and shareholder interests could lose out. This change was rejected because it would confuse decision-making and ran the risk of creating a litigious climate.

What exactly does it mean to serve these wider interests? As you will probably have worked out from my earlier example initiatives, in practice, you have to move swiftly from concerns at a State level, to look at industry specific concerns and business specific concerns to answer this question. What are priorities for one company will not be the same for another. Some companies will find it harder to make a positive impact locally and or globally than others.

A flexible solution is needed at a corporate level.

### **Compulsion**

As to compulsion, well I would like all employee-owned companies to embrace serving a wider corporate purpose. How they do that would be left to each business but it would be great to see all employee owned companies around the World accepting this obligation.

There are calls for UK companies of all types to be required to state their purpose. The directors' duty would then be to promote that purpose. There are calls for a change in directors' duties to adopt a pluralist approach such that social, environment and employee interests are on an equal footing with shareholder profit. There is some momentum around these initiatives. Current law does not readily permit directors to further wider corporate interests, at the expense of shareholders, and it may not provide protection to the directors of companies that promote purposes beyond shareholder value, unless this is expressly permitted under a company's articles of association.

A 2014 UK Government report on corporate responsibility noted that "There was a near equal split between those who favoured more legislation in this field and those against it". I wonder what the proportion in favour of additional legislation would be now?

### **Novelty and radicalism**

How novel and radical a suggestion is my expanded definition of employee ownership?

It's certainly not new to call for companies to be good citizens. This is part of Gandhi's theory of trusteeship.

It's not radical in the employee ownership sector, in that there are already employee-owned companies, such as Riverford Organics and Paradigm

Norton which are Certified B Corporations. This means they have had their standards of social and environmental performance, public transparency and legal accountability verified through the B Corp Certification process. They have articles of association that require a company to make a positive contribution to society and the environment as well as serve shareholders. The success of the Certified B Corporation community has encouraged me in formulating my proposal that employee ownership should also involve making an overall positive contribution to society and the environment.

We have other examples of how wider corporate purpose co-exists with employee ownership. Public service mutuels are employee led organisations that deliver public services. These are often structured as community interest companies. And of course worker co-operatives already champion this ideal. Cooperatives are people-centred enterprises owned, controlled and run by and for their members to realise their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations.

The 2018 Ownership Dividend report found that a majority of employee-owned companies made explicit commitments to contribute directly to their local communities, albeit with an emphasis on sustaining local jobs. If the Ownership Effect inquiry was held now I am confident you would find those same companies talking more broadly about the positive impact they are making on society and the environment.

### **Immediate step**

Gandhi has encouraged me to be bold and to propose an all-encompassing idea. He would I am sure want me to be practical in how that idea is encouraged. He would also, I believe, agree that one step at a time can be good enough.

I am not expecting every employee owned company to become a Certified B Corporation or to adopt the detailed provisions Scott Bader Company Limited has in its articles of association (or its unique ownership structure). A mission statement or equivalent document could contain these commitments to make an overall positive contribution to society and the environment, suitably adapted to the circumstances of a business. This wider corporate aim could be succinct. For example, the Useful Simple Group is a group of companies with expertise in engineering, design, architecture and communication. Their objective is to “improve the human environment by delivering useful, simple outcomes that are beautiful and good”.

If you want to get into governance specifics, an employee ownership trust deed could contain a purpose clause that includes these wider purposes. My firm, Fieldfisher, already includes as standard a Main Purpose clause that requires a trustee to ensure the company it controls has good employee engagement. That clause can extend what an employee ownership ethos

means to include making an overall positive contribution to society and the environment. This will help overcome company law concerns about whether serving the interests of shareholders is compatible with wider stakeholder concerns.

If the 1979 Conference on Trusteeship was reconvened today, possibly the employee ownership trust with added Gandhian purpose would be recognised as a model of responsible business that can serve for all.

### **Safe hands**

Why is this new definition of EO such a good fit for the employee ownership sector?

- employee owned companies are most of the way there already to being good corporate citizens. They already take care of their workforce and deliver great customer service. Many are also already taking care of society and the environment;
- employee owned companies have good systems of governance and accountability to ensure companies will fulfil these wider purposes: systems that can be readily adapted to encompass a broader corporate purpose;
- in particular, employee ownership offers the stability of ownership required to fulfil these purposes; and
- we need everyone's ideas to tackle societal and the environmental issues and what better force for good is there than employee owners.

### **More than a business model**

This new definition may sound a technical change. But for me it's part of a bigger need and that's for employee ownership to be recognised as more than a business model. Franchising is a business model. I would like employee ownership to be more than that. What I would eventually like to see is that employee ownership is an "-ism", a distinctive belief system that is synonymous with good corporate citizenship. I would like people to be able to say I believe in employee ownership. And who's encouraged me to think in these terms, M K Gandhi.

Gandhi said of his theory of trusteeship that it "... is no makeshift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all other theories. It has the sanction of philosophy and religion behind it ..." I can't claim the same of employee ownership but Gandhi encourages us to be more ambitious in striving towards similar aims.

We need to see positive changes in society and our relationship with the environment. What better dynamic to make these essential changes than to channel the energies of employee owners towards finding and implementing solutions. The employee ownership sector can become an

exemplar for good corporate citizenship by embracing wider corporate purposes as part of what it means to be employee-owned.

## **Summary**

In summary, I would like to see every employee-owned company making an overall positive contribution to society and the environment, as part of promoting the success of the company, and to make this commitment in the strongest terms appropriate to its business. This would be a step on the way to a new definition of employee ownership, one that is synonymous with good corporate citizenship. This would send a strong message to other businesses that they also need to adopt wider corporate purpose.

## **Build back better**

The COVID-19 pandemic has delayed me giving this lecture. I was going to say exactly the same thing before the novel Coronavirus intervened. What's different is that every business and every individual will now understand more clearly why we need wider corporate purposes. In support of my Gandhi empowered proposal, I can read out in full the Build Back Better UK campaign's statement of what it wants:

“Let's not go back to normal. It's time for a new deal that protects public services, tackles inequality in our communities, provides secure well-paid jobs and creates a shockproof economy which can fight the climate crisis”.

Thank you again to the trustees of the Gandhi Foundation for inviting me back and for giving me this opportunity to explain how employee ownership can be redefined with added Gandhian purpose.

**Graeme Nuttall OBE, partner Fieldfisher, London**

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## **United States-India Collaboration**

A United States Congressional Committee has recently cleared the Gandhi-King Scholarly Exchange Initiative Bill to promote the legacies of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. The Bill had been sponsored by the late Congressman John Lewis, a champion of civil rights, justice and democracy and co-sponsored by Ami Bera, the longest serving Indian-American member of the US Congress. It will establish an Annual Education Forum of scholars from both countries, a Global Academy to train representatives from government and non-government organisations in Gandhi-King approaches current to issues, and a Development Foundation to give grants to tackle health problems.

Read more at: <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/in-perspective/gandhi-king-and-their-legacies-875867.html>

# **Gandhi, COVID-19, Namaste**

*Ramnarine Sahadeo*

Many still question Gandhi's relevancy and youths today know little or nothing about him, a concern that adults, educators, spiritual and world leaders should address. Admirers of Gandhi must do more to teach the current generation how they too can make a difference in this world by following the principles that he practiced and perfected. One of them is the Universal greeting NAMASTE.

Covid-19 is unfortunately also a global concern and as dangerous as any pandemic before it. It has claimed over one million lives worldwide. It has taught us many lessons. Everyone is a potential target as the virus does not distinguish between wealth, class, creed, gender, race or religion. Uncertainty, fear and anxiety are also related health issues.

People are asked to stay home, wear a mask, and practice social distancing. All the customary forms of greeting are now looked upon as an agent of transmission. Hugging, kissing, nose rubbing, fist pumping, touching or shaking the feet and even the most common practice of shaking hands are all suspects in spreading the Corona virus. NAMASTE the most ancient form of greeting has become the norm and recommended by world leaders. French, English, Americans, Pastors are all resorting to it.

Breaking old habits is not easy. Even Prince Charles attempted to hold out his hand to his host but quickly pulled in back and put his palms together with a slight bow. Indian Prime Minister Modi has called on his people to resort to the old habit. Even though the practice originated in India and connected with the ancient texts and the universal practice of Yoga the manners taught by the colonial master were at one time more widely accepted. It appears as if we have not learnt any lesson when the SARS epidemic ravaged the world as recent as 2003.

The virus should be an indelible reminder that certain accepted habits are harmful to health. Regretfully even among some Hindus practicing this ancient form of greeting has been, and will continue to be a challenge. Those who limit this form of greeting as merely a religious practice may now have to heed it as sound medical advice. There is also the scientific and spiritual significance to consider. It is a display of humility removing all egos as one bows to the creator in others. Scientifically it acts as a healing agent when various pressure points in the palms and fingers are put together.

NAMASTE is a complete sentence made up of two Sanskrit words, NAMAS and TE. It means "I honor the place in you in which the entire universe dwells, the place in you which is of truth, of light and of peace". However "YOU" refers not to the physical person but the inner being. Thus the deeper meaning is "the divinity in me greets the divinity in you". This greeting transcends race, religion or nationality, can be used day or night, in all circumstances, in any place, to stranger or friend of any gender, age, or social status.

Namaste is also the most hygienic way of conveying respect, discipline and culture. Because the parties do not physically contact each other there is no fear of passing on infections like flu as you may in shaking hands, hugging or kissing. The words are usually accompanied by a slight bow made with hands pressed together, palms touching and fingers pointed upwards, in front of the chest. In so doing you share a sense of grace, humility and peace. It was used in India for thousands of years and is now universally recognized as the most dignified means by which two souls can demonstrate mutual respect and love.

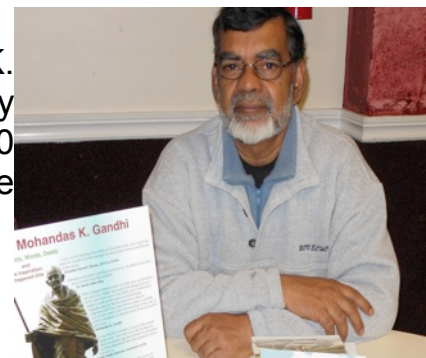
It was a distinctive characteristic of Mahatma Gandhi who made humility and simple truth more powerful than empires and he practiced it to his last words.

It was January 30, 1948 and Gandhi was late for his prayer meeting. The assailant bowed to him and said "Namaste Gandhiji". The saintly man replied "Namaste" before three bullets entered his chest and abdomen. He fell on the ground palms still joined as he said his last words "HEY RAM", his final act of Ahimsa. It was 5.17pm and the rest is history.

*Note:* Namaste is not a magic cure for the virus; it is just one of the ways of preventing it from spreading. Please continue other methods as instructed like regular washing of hands.

The book by Ramnarine Sahadeo MOHANDAS K. GANDHI, THOUGHTS, WORDS, DEEDS, has many universal concepts like Namaste, the Golden rule in 20 different religions, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Universal Declaration of Human rights.

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## Tax Justice

A number of British organisations including New Economics Foundation, Oxfam, British Quakers, Ethical Consumer and about a dozen others issued a statement in June calling for a more just tax system to tackle inequality. Part of the statement is:

‘The UK’s approach to tax is dysfunctional: we don’t raise enough money, avoidance is rife and wealth is under-taxed. Despite some recent progress, estimates suggest that £35 billion to £90 billion of tax goes uncollected per year. The government also spends over £164bn a year on tax reliefs – many of which are badly targeted and largely benefit the well off and big companies. The corporate tax rate has been slashed from 28% in 2010 to the current 19%. The UK also contributes through its reliefs and loopholes to a broken international tax system, which deprives other countries, and in particular those in the Global South, of revenue.’

The organisation TaxJustice.UK is campaigning for changes.

## **Nuclear Weapons – Always Immoral – Now Illegal**

A banner with the above slogan was carried to Britain's nuclear submarine base at Faslane following the announcement on 24 October that 50 countries had ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It will enter into force on 22 January 2021.

Present governments of the nine nuclear-armed states have no intention of giving up their illegal weapons but it does give a boost to those who believe such weapons have no place in a civilised country and the hope that they will in time be renounced. In Japan over a quarter of local assemblies have adopted a written statement demanding that central government sign and ratify the Treaty. Nuclear Free Local Authorities and the International Trade Union Confederation have welcomed the Treaty.

## **Virtual Opening of Ahimsa Peace Garden**



To mark Gandhi Ji's birth anniversary on 2nd October, the One Jain community organised a virtual on line opening of their Ahimsa Peace Garden in Harrow Recreation Ground where 1,000 trees had been planted in 2019. The event was beautifully organised with a mixture of short speeches, prayers, music, meditation and a virtual guided tour of the Gardens which are open to the public. If you would like to see the event, you can access the link for the YouTube video of the ceremony at:

<https://youtu.be/AhzFUri1ilw>

GF Friend **Jane Thomas** is a photographer who has taken many nature studies, among other subjects. She has agreed to share some of them with readers of *The Gandhi Way* and so each future issue will contain one of Jane's photographs. She will also choose words by Gandhi to accompany the pictures. Jane lives with husband Geoffrey in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire.

A Goldfinch



Freedom is like a birth. Till we are fully free we are slaves.  
*Young India* 15 December 1921

# **Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the journey not made**

*Graham Davey*

The great German churchman and theologian is best known from the publication of his *Letters and Papers from Prison* and from featuring in John Robinson's *Honest to God* in 1963. He was born in 1906, the sixth of eight children of well-to-do parents living in Berlin. At school he was a brilliant student and exceptionally gifted as a pianist but to his parents' surprise, he chose to study theology at Tübingen University.

Bonhoeffer and his family shared with most Germans of their class a strong resentment of the terms under which Germany was humiliated by the Versailles Treaty. While at Tübingen, Bonhoeffer joined a student cadet corps and went on a two week camp which included secret military training in contravention of the terms of the Treaty. At this stage of his life, he had no thought of pacifism and believed it would have been natural and honourable to take up arms in defence of his country. Nevertheless, during the winter of 1924-5 he talked with a fellow theology student about Gandhi's personality and work.

In this environment and with the hardship endured under the Weimar Republic, the National Socialists (later the Nazis) gained influence. Their anti-Semitism and persecution of other minorities were largely accepted through fear of a Communist revolution and also as a necessary condition for achieving the supreme aim of 'making Germany great again'. Bonhoeffer returned to study at the University of Berlin and then in 1928 spent a year as an assistant pastor for the German congregation in Barcelona, Spain.

From September 1930 to August 1931 Bonhoeffer's studies continued at the Union Theological Seminary in New York. In the company of a black fellow student he became more fully aware of social deprivation in a rich country, of racial abuse suffered by his companion and of the vibrancy of worship in Harlem. He was also deeply influenced by a French student, Jean Lassere, who opened his mind to the possibility that Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chaps 5-7) might be taken literally rather than being seen as an unrealistic ideal.

Bonhoeffer returned to Berlin as lecturer and then pastor but he developed his ecumenical international links through his appointment as Youth Secretary of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches. One of the meetings he attended in 1932 took him to Geneva where he talked with Gandhi's close associate, Charlie Andrews. From October 1933 to April 1935 he was pastor for two Lutheran congregations in London at St George's, Sydenham, and St Paul's, Aldgate.

In addition to the work this involved, he made time to develop his ecumenical contacts and to stiffen opposition of other German pastors in England to the Reich church, the majority of Protestants in Germany who supported the Nazi regime. Leaders of those who opposed the Nazification of the church met at Barmen in the Ruhr and declared their allegiance to Jesus Christ as the only source of God's revelation. Bonhoeffer became co-founder of the emergent Confessing Church.

While in London, Bonhoeffer's interest in Gandhi had increased through his reading of Gandhi's autobiography and hearing a talk by Gandhi's close associate, Madeleine Slade. In October 1934 he wrote to Gandhi and the letter has only recently been discovered among papers in the huge archive that Gandhi left. Thanks are due to William Rhind, the Gandhi Foundation's indefatigable digger-out of interesting information for passing on this fact. Bonhoeffer asked if he could join Gandhi's ashram for about six months, not simply to resolve the issue of the efficacy of nonviolence in the German situation but to seek the path by which Western Christianity might be regenerated. He wrote: *"The great need of Europe and of Germany in particular is not the economic and political confusion, but it is a deep spiritual need. Europe and Germany are suffering from a dangerous fever and are losing both self-control and the consciousness of what they are doing... What we need therefore in our countries is a truly spiritual living Christian peace movement. Western Christianity must be reborn on the Sermon on the Mount."* Gandhi replied saying that Bonhoeffer would be welcome provided that he, Gandhi, was not in prison.

Bonhoeffer had hoped to go to India in the winter of 1935/6 but the needs of the small Confessing Church had to take priority. He was asked to direct a seminary for the training of pastors and spent the last few weeks of his time in England visiting Woodbrooke, the Quaker college, and various other denominational establishments for the training of ordinands. The seminary was established on the Baltic coast and operated secretly until it was closed down by the Gestapo in July 1937. Bonhoeffer organised a less visible form of training in which students were allocated in pairs to village pastors and met together weekly for instruction and discussion. This arrangement continued until March 1940.



Bonhoeffer (Wikipedia)

Meanwhile, Bonhoeffer had become increasingly involved with civilians and top military officers who were opposing the Nazis. His sister, Christel, had married Hans von Dohnanyi, the son of the Hungarian composer Ernst and the father of Christophe von Dohnanyi, the well-known conductor. Hans worked as a lawyer in the ironically named Ministry of Justice and was therefore aware of the increasingly cruel oppression of the Jews and other minority groups. In the late 1930s the conspirators, together with some high-ranking military commanders, had planned to arrest Hitler and replace his regime with a non-Nazi government. In 1940 there were rapid military successes so Hitler was seen to have achieved in days what the German army had failed to do in four years of the First World War. His arrest was now impossible and in the following year he assumed the role of Commander in Chief of the whole army.

In his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, based on his studies of the Sermon on the Mount, Bonhoeffer had wrestled with the issue of whether a Christian could use violence to achieve a desirable end. He came to the conclusion that there was no realistic alternative and continued his association with those who were planning Hitler's assassination. The immediate need was to avoid conscription. He felt he could not apply for exemption as a conscientious objector as this would be seen as confirming the non-patriotic nature of the Confessing Church. The answer came in an invitation to join the Abwehr, the German Military Intelligence organisation, where many of the conspirators were concentrated. Ostensibly, Bonhoeffer was recruited in order to use his wide range of international contacts to gather information useful for the German war effort. In fact, he did all he could to spread news of the plans of the conspirators and to promote support for the post-Nazi government if it could be formed. He was arrested and imprisoned in April 1943, initially on a charge of corruption in connection with the provision of a large sum of money needed to smuggle Jewish refugees to Switzerland. The Gestapo also suspected that they were not, as claimed, Abwehr agents.

While in prison, Bonhoeffer's pastoral support for fellow prisoners encouraged one or two warders to smuggle letters out in addition to the official ones he was allowed to send to his family. They were addressed to his close friend, Eberhard Bethge, and outlined his analysis of the reasons for the decline in belief in God and commitment to the teaching of Christ. Post-war readers of *Letters and Papers from Prison* were introduced to the concepts of 'Deus ex Machina' as reason for diminishing religious belief and 'Christianity without religion' as the basis for putting the church at the centre of life as it is rather than as church people would like it to be.

The work of the conspirators culminated in the failed bomb plot of July 1944, the last of some forty attempts by various groups and individuals to

end Hitler's life. Two months later, the Gestapo discovered files which showed Bonhoeffer's indirect association with those planning Hitler's assassination. He was interrogated more intensely though not tortured. When Germany's defeat became inevitable, Hitler decided that none of those connected with the plot against him should survive. Bonhoeffer and others were hanged on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1945, four weeks before the surrender.

The publication of Bonhoeffer's letter to Gandhi prompted me to read again the monograph, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Twenty-first Century* by Norman Scotney, former member of the Gandhi Foundation Executive Committee, and to compare the two twentieth century martyrs. They came from very different backgrounds in terms of culture and religion and experienced different levels of support at the time when they were seeking to have the greatest influence on events. Gandhi, by his writing and speeches was able to mobilise large numbers of people prepared to suffer for the causes he espoused. Bonhoeffer was more and more isolated as the majority of the Lutheran church acquiesced with the oppression committed by the Nazi regime. Yet there are similarities between the two men. Both were strongly influenced by the Sermon on the Mount. While both accepted the principle of nonviolence, neither was an unconditional pacifist – they accepted that in extreme circumstances the exercise of nonviolent methods would be ineffective or too slow. Both men were criticised by members of their own religion and both were killed by extremists who saw them as traitors.

A statue of Gandhi now stands in Parliament Square. A few yards away a statue of Bonhoeffer is mounted on the west front of Westminster Abbey. A short distance from both statues lies the debating chamber of our 650 parliamentary representatives most of whom ignore the principles by which both men lived and died.

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### **Fire at School for Peace, Israel**

On the night of 31 August the School for Peace at Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam was severely damaged by fire. A few days later the village Peace Library was also set on fire. This community, lying half way between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, has been a model for coexistence between Israeli Jews and Arab-Palestinians for over 40 years. It now appears that it is being targeted by those opposed to its work.

The Gandhi Foundation has sent £500 as a gesture of solidarity and to help with rebuilding. [www.oasisofpeace.org.uk](http://www.oasisofpeace.org.uk)

## AN EYE FOR AN EYE

An eye for an eye blinds the entire world.  
By this action one negates the whole truth;  
And so creates a boomerang unfurled.

With bitter hate and villainous uncouth,  
There is fallacy that might is right, thus  
By this action one negates the whole truth.

With sordid haste, being so atrocious,  
The world's play-book flutters with rage, selfish;  
There is fallacy that might is right, thus.

By this token, without any blemish,  
An eye for an eye may seem justified;  
The world's play-book flutters with rage, selfish.

While millions of people are petrified,  
Flailing hopes and dreams only fantasy  
An eye for an eye may seem justified.

All lives matter in eyes of Gandhiji;  
An eye for an eye blinds the entire world.  
Flailing hopes and dreams only fantasy;  
And so creates a boomerang unfurled.

Leonard Dabydeen (a terzanelle poem)

Leonard Dabydeen is a Guyanese born Canadian writer and human rights activist. His books include *Watching You, A Collection of Tetractys Poems*, Exlibris Publishers (2012) and *Searching For You, A Collection of Tetractys and Fibonacci Poems*, Exlibris Publishers (2015).

## Tribute to **JOHN HUME** KCSG (18 Jan 1937 – 3 Aug 2020)

Born in very humble circumstances in Derry with ancestral roots both in the Catholic community in Ireland and, on his father's side, from the Protestant community in Scotland, John Hume's life challenged the polarisation of identity according to religion, nationality or background. In that way, he followed very much in the footsteps of Martin Luther King Jr and Mahatma Gandhi who had both inspired him in his striving to achieve equality of opportunity and living conditions for all in the island of Ireland. His achievements were to enable the peace process and lead towards realising his lifelong goals as well as transforming him into an international figure respected by people from all persuasions.



Hume's early upbringing informed his later career or, maybe it would be more appropriate to call it his 'calling'. His first memories were of living in a single room with his father and mother and five brothers and sisters, due to the gerrymandering and appalling housing situation for Catholics at that time. John's father became unemployed when John was 8 and would never work again because of the shortage of work and a system which all but barred Catholics from accessing it. John helped to support the family by taking on a daily newspaper round. John's father, a very intelligent man, had a strong sense of social responsibility and John's early memories were of a stream of people visiting their

small home waiting for his father to write them letters in his beautiful copper plated script, either personal letters or to help them make requests to the authorities. John would later assist in the same way. John's memory of his father was of someone who always seemed worried and preoccupied, meticulously thinking through every problem until he found a solution and then resolutely sticking to it – a trait John would emulate himself.

This early experience of helping people through difficult times would lead to a lifelong service of the community, on ever widening scales, and also to the strong belief that people had to help themselves. This gave rise to a range of activities and projects from the Derry Housing Association, the Credit Union movement of which he was a founder member and later President, the University for Derry Committee, the Derry Development

Association, a local smoked salmon business bringing work to the local community, the Civil Rights movement and, finally, the founding of a new political party: the SDLP of which he was leader/deputy leader from 1979-2001.

John was able to escape the limitations of poverty by benefiting from post war Labour reforms allowing him to receive a grammar school education. He then went on to study History and French and, because of his strong religious convictions, began training for the priesthood. However, the restricted life did not suit and John returned home where he began teaching French using innovative ways. This attracted the attention of the French consulate in Belfast who arranged for him to receive a scholarship to spend a month at a French university. This exposure to the Continent would later play a role in John's commitment to the European Union and the meeting of peoples from varying background and cultures coming together for a common aim, particularly relevant in post war years after the loss of so many millions worldwide.

The growth of the civil rights movement across Northern Ireland in the late 1960s drew John further into politics. He stood as a left of centre independent candidate in Derry and was elected. His 1969 manifesto statement is very clear: "What I stand for fundamentally is a society in Northern Ireland in which Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter can work together to build a new community and base political action on political attitudes rather than use religion as a political weapon. This is a question of issues not personalities, and one which should be fought in open contest without bitterness or rancour. The people must decide". Fittingly, when the SDLP was launched in 1970, it welcomed Protestant as well as Catholics. "We are non-sectarian and anti-sectarian alike", John declared.

The chance for a peaceful resolution of the divides was put on hold following the events of Bloody Sunday in 1972 in which peaceful protestors taking part in a Civil Rights march in Derry were shot dead by the army. A further escalation of violence would ensue for years to come, euphemistically known as 'The Troubles'.

During this time, John never lost sight of his aim, in spite of the many setbacks and pressure put on him from all sides, to pursue the path of peaceful resolution. This culminated in a ceasefire and finally the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 after which both John Hume and David Trimble from the Ulster Unionist Party were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. This was followed by the Martin Luther King Award in 1999 and the Gandhi Peace Prize in 2002. Later that year, John Hume was invited to deliver the Annual Gandhi Foundation Lecture in the Nehru Centre.

In his lecture, an abridged copy of which appears on the Gandhi Foundation website, John declared:

When I received the Mahatma Gandhi Peace Prize on the first day of February this year, I spoke of my deep sense of pride at being honoured in memory of one of the greatest leaders – and one of my greatest inspirations – of the 20th century. I also asked the question whether we as people have the capacity to choose peace over war, friendship over hatred, compassion for our fellow human beings over ruthless self-interest. The inescapable conclusion I drew then was that the ideas and ideals by which Gandhi lived did not just have a relevance for his own people and his own time, his ideas and ideals have a resonance that will echo for all people and all time. And perhaps now more than ever we must look to Gandhi in these unstable and uncertain times of change and challenge ... throughout the entire world as we seek to leave behind the tragedies of past conflicts and injustices and build instead a new order of peace, justice and equality for all people, regardless of the colour of their skin, the creed of their faith, or the continent of their birth.

... Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. Love for Gandhi was a potent instrument for social and collective transformation. It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and nonviolence that I discovered the method for social reform that I had been seeking.

Social transformation through nonviolence. This was the essence of the Northern Ireland civil rights movement in the late 1960s of which I was a member. Our people demanded to be given equal rights and opportunities. Our goals were equality, justice and fair play. But we also demanded that not one drop of blood be spilled in the pursuit of this honourable goal.

John Hume was committed to the vision of the European Union and served as an MEP from 1979 until 2004. Recent events, particularly with the impending departure from the EU, are creating fresh challenges and dangers of a return to a blinkered, narrow world of nationalism with all its associated perils. Let us hope that the voice of reason and tolerance, based on a deep understanding of the interdependence of us all, espoused by John Hume throughout his life, will prevail.

- Recommended reading: *A New Ireland – Politics, Peace and Reconciliation* by John Hume, with an introduction by Tom McEnergy and foreword by Senator Edward M Kennedy, 1996.

*John Hume – in his own words*, Ed Sean Farren, 2018.

**Jane Sill**

# The Gandhi Foundation

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



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## The Gandhi Way

Articles, book reviews and letters of a specifically or broadly Gandhian nature will gladly be received by the Editor. Maximum length 2000 words.

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