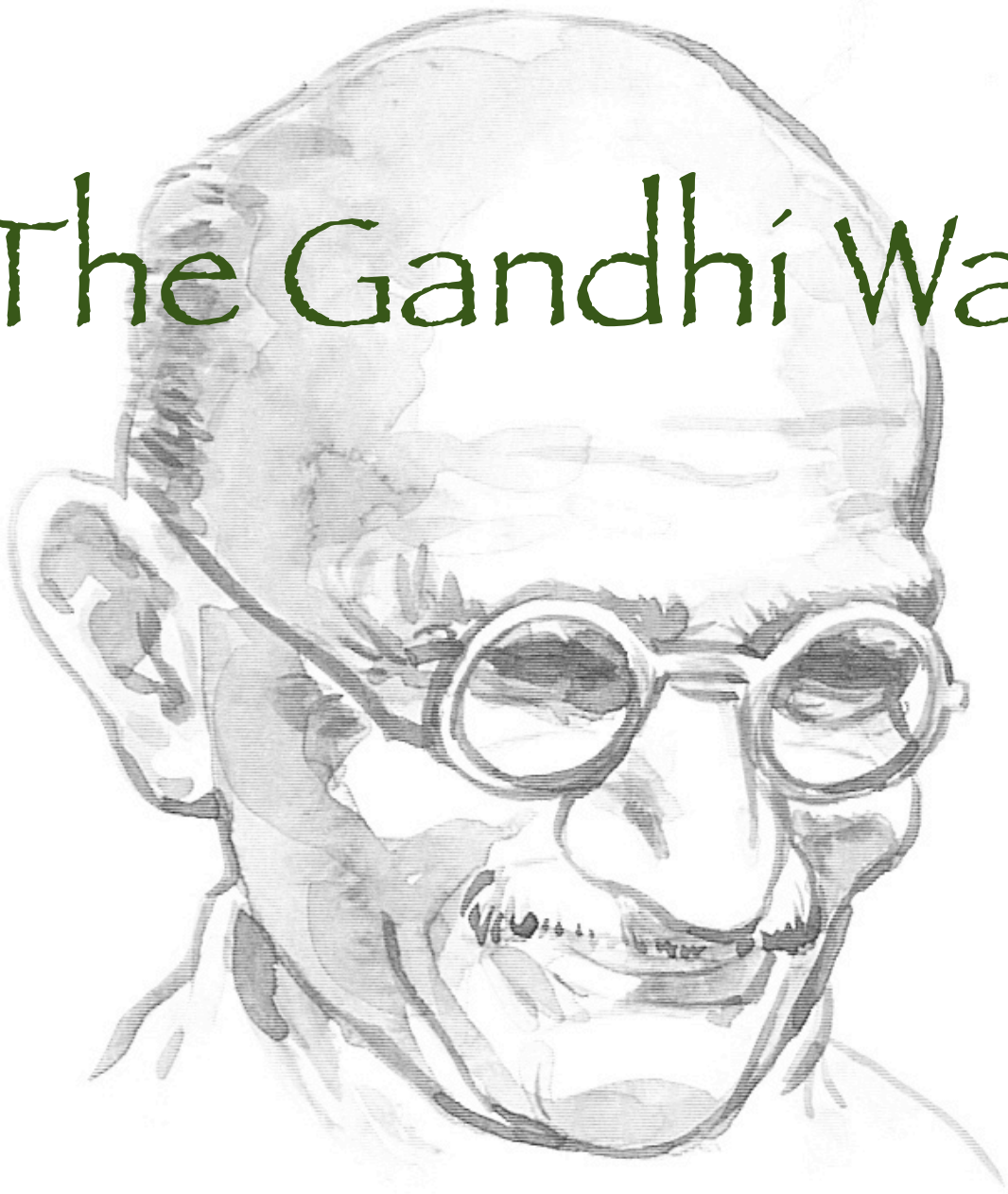


# The Gandhi Way



Watercolour sketch by David Gudgeon

Newsletter of the Gandhi Foundation

No.147 Spring 2021

ISSN 1462-9674 £2

## John Rowley

It is with sadness that we announce that John Rowley, long term Trustee and active member of the Gandhi Foundation, died on 28 January 2021. A full obituary of his life will appear in the Summer issue of The Gandhi Way.

Lord Parekh, President of The Gandhi Foundation, pays tribute on page 23.



John Rowley at the GF International Peace Award to Shabana Azmi in the Indian High Commission in 2006

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# Gandhi's Religious Beliefs

*Graham Davey*

Soon after the Gandhi Foundation was started in 1984, a Multi-Faith event was initiated to commemorate the assassination of Gandhi in 1948. It is held on or near the date of the assassination and this year it is taking place on 30<sup>th</sup> January, exactly 73 years to the day after a charismatic Hindu was killed by another Hindu. The purpose of the Commemoration is to consider why it happened and what lessons the assassination has for us today as we try to promote Gandhi's life and teaching.

Gandhi's upbringing and early influences are well known in Gandhi Foundation circles. He came from a fairly well-off family in Gujarat and was influenced mainly by his mother who was a devout Hindu but also very sympathetic to principles followed by Jains. This led Gandhi to argue throughout his life for the humane treatment of animals and to condemn vivisection in the strongest terms.

Arriving in London in 1888 he found it difficult to obtain a satisfactory diet having promised his mother to remain a vegetarian. Eventually he found the London Vegetarian Society and this brought him into contact with Christians who commanded his respect, unlike some missionaries whose activities he had witnessed in India. He read and was deeply impressed by the teaching about loving one's enemies in the Sermon on the Mount and by Christ's willing acceptance of suffering and death. This led to the belief that violence always produces more violence and makes matters worse.

Gandhi also met Sir Edwin Arnold in the London Vegetarian Society and was introduced to Arnold's translation into English of the Bhagavad Gita – the first time he had read the essence of Hindu teaching. From this he gained the conviction that ends and means are inseparable, that one is never justified in doing evil with the purpose of achieving a greater good. The Gita also teaches that emotions must be controlled and that there is no place for anger in personal relationships.

On his return to India in 1891, Gandhi failed to establish a career as a lawyer and two years later he accepted a contract to represent a Muslim businessman who was engaged in a dispute in South Africa. From the time of his arrival in South Africa, Gandhi experienced the discrimination and oppression that was the common lot of the Indian community. Soon after the dispute was settled he founded and became leader of the Natal Indian Congress and began to put

into practice his ideas on achieving social justice by nonviolent means. During his first year he read some 80 books being particularly influenced by the writings of John Ruskin, Henry David Thoreau and Leo Tolstoy.

Gandhi sought a word to describe his evolving philosophy and came up with the term Satyagraha. The word has been used to describe nonviolent activists as satyagrahi but for Gandhi it had a much deeper meaning. The Sanskrit words from which it is derived mean seeking, grasping and holding on to Truth and for Gandhi, Truth was almost synonymous with God. He believed that every religion was a valid means of approaching the same God and therefore opposed attempts to persuade people to convert to another religion. A Christian should try to be a better Christian, a Hindu, a better Hindu etc.

He resisted some gentle pressure to become a Christian by citing the impression given by Christian missionaries that their religion was superior to all others and therefore justified proselytising. He also could not accept the doctrine that Jesus was the only Son of God. Gandhi was equally critical of Hinduism and condemned the caste system, particularly untouchability which he said was Hinduism's greatest plague. He was strongly opposed to child marriages, the dowry system, the treatment of widows, the low status of women and animal sacrifice.

Gandhi set up four ashrams in South Africa and India and his religious beliefs were expressed in holding two prayer meetings every day comprising readings from the literature of various religions and their songs or chants. Those who have not been to India should know that religion there plays a much more important part of everyday life than it does in this country. There is active participation in the rituals of religious festivals, practices such as fasting, yoga and meditation are widely used. Gandhi's charisma came from his being seen as a man of God rather than as a politician. He was not a theologian but as a Hindu, he would be described as a follower of karma yoga, a person of action believing that political action and religion were connected. He said "Those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."

Gandhi's Universalist approach to religion was not unique to him. The Bengali mystic, Ramakrishna (1836-1886), claimed that individual religions can express aspects of the Truth but not its totality. Therefore all religions have validity and can lead to the same ultimate goal. Ramakrishna influenced Vivekananda (1863-1902) whose message was that all living beings are an embodiment of the divine self and therefore God can be served by service to humankind. Vivekananda spoke with great conviction and effectiveness at

the first Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893, the year Gandhi went to South Africa. Gandhi would have known of Vivekananda's beliefs although they never met.

Gandhi freely associated with members of other religions throughout his life but his close collaboration with Muslims was of special importance in his attempts to quell the fighting which accompanied the Partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Abdul Kalam Azad was a brilliant scholar who worked with Gandhi in the struggle for independence and opposition to communal violence. Abdul Ghaffar Khan came from the Pashtun area of North West India and because of his total commitment to nonviolent action, was known as 'the Frontier Gandhi'. His close association with Gandhi from 1919 onwards contributed to what success was achieved in securing justice under British rule and reducing the killing as that rule came to an end.

Gandhi had no difficulty in justifying these collaborations. He said, "I hope it is not necessary to demonstrate why it is the duty of a Hindu to march abreast of their Muslim compatriots. The essence of true religious teachings is that one should serve and be friends with everyone." Unfortunately some Hindus disagreed with him which is why Gandhi did not die of old age and we are gathered this afternoon.

Much of the conflict and abuse of human rights in the world today is caused or exacerbated by two related problems – religious extremism and nationalism. Gandhi's assassin, Nathuram Godse, was a member of the RSS, a right-wing Hindu nationalist paramilitary organisation founded in 1925. The RSS has evolved into the BJP and the current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, was a full-time worker for the RSS in 1971. Nathuram Godse is now being seen as a hero by BJP members and some want statues of him to be set up in Indian towns, presumably distant from statues of Gandhi.

Conflict in the Middle East arises partly from the Sunni-Shia split in Islam and proxy actions fuelled by Iran and Saudi Arabia. Muslim extremists in Islamic State and related terrorist organisations commit atrocities against Western countries either in protest against military interventions in the Middle East or in condemnation of Western culture compared with their ideal image of Islam. The right-wing government of Israel continues to practise systematic oppression of the Palestinians as it moves relentlessly towards a nation state consisting exclusively of Jews and occupying all the territory between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. In this aim it is supported by the powerful lobby of Christian evangelicals in the United States.



In the UK we have seen how easily Christian principles can be discarded in the spectacle of Roman Catholics fighting Protestants for 30 years in Northern Ireland. China appears to accommodate Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism without problems so the current persecution of Muslims seems to be based more on nationalism and political control than on religious differences.

It's easy to feel helpless in the face of these problems and it's true that as individuals we have virtually no influence with regard to the policies of governments other than our own. We can, however, encourage our MPs to put pressure on the appropriate ministers when the UK is paying little or no attention to the abuse of human rights in other parts of the world. In addition, Gandhi's example shows the need to learn more about the beliefs and practices of religions other than our own, to engage with members of other faith communities and to counter prejudice whenever we experience it.

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On 22 January 2021 when the **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons** became international law there were demonstrations, many on line, around the world. Bhikkhu Nagase chanted prayers for an hour at the London Peace Pagoda and was joined by passersby.

## Multifaith Celebration: Many Hearts – One World

*Dedicated to John Rowley (Gandhi Foundation Trustee)*

In keeping with the times, the annual commemoration of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi was moved on line. This year, the event took place on the actual day – 30<sup>th</sup> January, beginning at 3 pm to allow people from around the world time zones to be able to take part. Very sadly, word came through that just 2 days before the event, on 28<sup>th</sup> January, John Rowley, long term member of the Gandhi Foundation and Trustee, passed away due to complications compounded by Covid. It was decided that the multifaith celebration would be dedicated to his memory. The title given to this year's event, 'Many Hearts – One World', was very appropriate. As Lord Bhikkhu Parekh, who led the tribute and one minute's silence, reflected: John had a very big heart and was a very caring and demonstrably affectionate person who for many years had put his whole heart and energy into supporting the Foundation, along with many other causes.

The event was introduced by the Gandhi Foundation Chair, Mark Hoda, who welcomed and thanked Saara Hasan who, assisted by Mark and others, had spent many months preparing the rich and diverse programme of prayers, readings, music and song some of which were delivered live and others pre-recorded. Saara had been instrumental in co-ordinating the event for the past 2 years when it was held in the beautiful setting of Golder's Green Unitarian Church. Many of the participants kindly agreed to take part once again in a virtual way.

Following the pattern of many years, the programme began with the chanting of Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo by Reverend Nagase, resident monk at the London Peace Pagoda. This chant had been introduced to Gandhi Ji's ashram at Wardha by the Most Ven Nichidatsu Fujii who stayed there in the 1930s and it became an integral part of the early morning prayers. The atmosphere set, there followed a series of readings and reflections by Graham Davey, Trustee of the Gandhi Foundation, who explored the vast topic of Gandhi Ji's religious beliefs, skilfully tailored to fit the tight time-frame. A full version is published in this issue.

There followed a most beautifully sung traditional Hindu bhajan by Saara's niece, Divya Jha, illustrated by a backdrop of colourful images and photos created especially for the occasion by Saara. Divya Jha had kindly recorded her offering while still recovering from a serious leg injury. Her music was healing for us all.

Julia Katarina, a classically trained musician and singer, whose unique voice was etched into the memory of those who had attended the previous 3

events, offered two recordings filmed in beautiful landscape – a welcome breath of fresh air for those of us confined to inner cities during lock-down. Julia had converted to Islam and fittingly her first offering, ‘Sweet was the Song the Virgin Sang’, a beautifully melodic medieval Christian ballad, was followed by ‘Surah al Fatihah’ and ‘Ayatul Kursi, both’ sung recitations from the Quran.

Saara Hasan continued the performance with a recording of ‘A Heart of Many Forms’, the title given to the event which was based on a text by Ibn Arabi, a 12<sup>th</sup> century Arab-Andalusian Sufi mystic and philosopher. This was followed by ‘Divine Image’, a song by Vaughan Williams, based on a poem by William Blake. This was beautifully illustrated by a backdrop of images from William Blake’s ‘Songs of Innocence’. As Executive Committee member, William Rhind, pointed out in the chat box, this was a very apt choice as John Rowley had a deep regard for Blake and was a member of The Blake Society.

Saara went on to introduce Dr Kishan Manocha, Head of the ‘Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department’ at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, based in Warsaw, and former Director of the Office of Public Affairs of the Baha’i community of the UK. Dr Manocha spoke on the theme of ‘global challenges and aspirations’, especially appropriate during this time of pandemic.

Another overseas contributor and long-time friend of the Gandhi Foundation, Esther Klaassen, who was a regular attendee at the Summer Gatherings, recorded an atmospheric rendering of St Francis’ ‘Prayer for Peace’ in her local church in Deventer, the Netherlands, attended by socially distanced members of her congregation.

Dennis Evans, FRSA, then read one of his deceptively simple yet profound poems from his collection, ‘Occasional Poems’, entitled ‘And the Desert Flowered’. This was seamlessly followed by a beautifully choreographed original video animation, ‘Be Alive’ by James Mills which added yet another artistic dimension to the event.

Perhaps one of the most memorable contributions was a poem, ‘May we live in interesting times’, composed especially for the occasion by the talented young poet, who writes under the label ‘Spoken Thiiird’. This was the second time that he had composed an original work for the event.

The finale of the concert came in the form of two contributions from Sacred Songs Choir, Manchester, which were sent in and introduced by Asha Buch. The vibrancy and energy of this multifaith, diverse group of women, shone through the excellent recording of their rendition of ‘Tala Al’Badru - Nasheed,



in praise of the Prophet of Islam, followed by 'Sarvesham Swastir Bhavatu', a Sanskrit prayer and blessing for universal peace.

There followed an opportunity for those who took part from around the world, including Mark Tully, Patron of the Foundation from New Delhi and others in Europe and Asia, to have an interchange of thoughts and reflections following this rich and inspiring tapestry of offerings. Asha Buch's mother spoke in Gujarati as she recalled attending interfaith gatherings at which Gandhi Ji had himself been present. She said that the event would have met with his full approval and appreciation.

While it was not the same as being able to meet in person at a live event, there were many messages to say how it raised spirits and offered a window of warmth and hope in the midst of a difficult time for so many. One advantage was that we were able to make a recording which will be shared on the Gandhi Foundation website, along with a PDF offering direct links to the various contributions which had been sent in. This will enable everyone to be able to view the performance, including Ela Gandhi, Gandhi Ji's granddaughter from South Africa, who had wanted to attend but had another event at the same time. We hope very much that we will be able to meet for real again at our next event but we will aim to continue with the livestream to enable many more to attend from afar.

A final dedication was made to John Rowley whose memory was in all our minds. A fitting tribute which I am sure he would have appreciated very much.

*Jane Sill*

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### **The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi: His Message for the Modern World**

is the title of a course to be delivered by Ketan Varia, a long time member of the Gandhi Foundation, online from CityLit on three Sundays from 21 February to 7 March 2021, 11am-1pm.

*We will explore Gandhi's life (1869-1948), his message and legacy. We will also consider what Gandhi may have said of our 21st Century challenges including the emergence of nationalism and consumerism and world challenges in climate change and the role of technology.*

*For further details:*

<https://www.citylit.ac.uk/courses/the-philosophy-of-mahatma-gandhi-his-message-to-the-modern-world>

# Was Gandhi A Humanist ?

*Mohan Chauhan*

Gandhi claimed that he believed in the Hindu religion. He also believed in the existence of God and engaged in daily prayers.

If we accept that religion was very important to Gandhi you may wonder why I would pose the possibility of him being a Humanist.

Please bear with me.

Gandhi read the scriptures of all religions of the world in great detail. I believe he did this as a way of searching for the meaning of life and to see if other religions could show him a path. After all his reading he settled for the religion of his birth. He learnt Ishopanishad by heart when he was in Yeravda Jail (1922). This scripture is part of Upanishad which enjoys the reputation of being part of the original Vedas.

Though he would often refer to himself as a Hindu, he rejected the dictates of Hindu pandits (scholars) or even their Shastras (Scriptures) in their entirety. He has written that the Smritis (part of the Hindu Scriptures) “bristle with contradictions”. He has further written that his belief in Vedas, Smritis and Puranas does not require him to accept as authentic everything that contradicts the fundamental principles of reason and morality. “I am not required to accept the ‘ipse dixit’ (without proof) or the interpretations of pundits.” This attitude of his put him at odds with some of the Hindu orthodox. It is no wonder that he was hated by them and, indeed, in the end murdered by them.

So, if he rejected the scriptures as written then what did he believe in. First, he defined God as truth and truth as God, and not as a personality. He also believed that Prophets through the ages, in whose name different religions were propagated, were genuinely seeking truth. He did not reject the existence of Prophets like Zoroaster, Abraham, Buddha, Mahavir, Mohammed, Guru Nanak and indeed Jesus (the Christian Son of God, not Prophet). In fact, Gandhi learned from them by viewing them with an open mind. Gandhi never liked preaching, in fact he disapproved of it, therefore, he never engaged in finding contradictions in other religions. He believed that only the person who practices their chosen religion was entitled to interpret and criticize it.

He believed that the whole essence of Hinduism or for that matter any religion was contained in the very first verse in the Ishopanishad. He further said that you need not take anything in Hinduism which is inconsistent with or contrary to the meaning of this verse. Below is Gandhi’s translation of the original stanza which was written in Sanskrit.

*All this that we see in this great Universe is pervaded by God.*

*Renounce it and enjoy OR Enjoy what he gives you.*

*Do not covet anybody's wealth or possession*

He explained further that, the act of renunciation of everything is not a mere physical renunciation but represents a second or a new birth. It is a deliberate act, not done in ignorance. It is, therefore, a regeneration.

So, he had his own definition about god and religion. This is my key argument. The definition of god or religion as understood and practiced by Gandhi was different to how it is practiced and structured today. Gandhi always said “my life is my message”.

Let us examine his life, but before we do let us remind us of what being a humanist means. A Humanist makes their ethical decisions based on reason and empathy and concern for human beings and other sentient animals.

Gandhi based his life on the fundamental principle of searching after truth through nonviolent means. That means human beings first and religion second.

He lived his life practicing the following 5 virtues:

1. Truth – Knowledge
2. Non-Violence – Physically and mentally
3. Non-Stealing – If you take or consume more than you need, it is regarded as stealing
4. Celibacy – He was disciplining his mind to be celibate as well
5. Non-Possession – He owned nothing

He never indulged in any religious rituals. In fact, he did not like visiting temples unless he was invited. He did not use rosaries, forehead marks or make offerings.

He regarded all religions on an equal footing.

His love and caring for animals is legendary.

He did not believe in Hell or Heaven. He once said that the only devils and gods in the world are those running in our hearts, and that is where all the battles should be fought, controlling one's anger, lust, pride, greed, envy, or jealousy.

Gandhi wrote in *Young India* on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1925, that “Religion without the backing of reason and enlightenment is a worthless sentiment, which is bound to die of inanition. It is knowledge that ultimately gives salvation”.

I do not think any Humanist will have a quarrel with the above.

He did not believe that study of theology was equivalent of that of religion.

Gandhi's view on prayer was that one should not be merely reciting words. It is no mere repetition of empty formulae. Nor is it about petition. If it is about petition then it should be for the cleansing and purification of one's thoughts, for freeing it from greed, evil, lust etc. He regarded prayers as a tool to discipline one's mind, behavior, and thoughts. For example, if you are prone to becoming angry, how do you control your anger ? If you begin your day by forcing your mind to have the discipline of not becoming angry and do the same at night, that to Gandhi was prayer.

Prayer is about building character. If one has formed bad habits and want to undo them and build new ones of courage, intelligence and action that can be achieved by discipline and study. I don't think any humanist will have a problem with his interpretation of 'prayer'.

He also conducted public hymn singing and gave talks. He always chose his hymn carefully to be inclusive of all religious sentiments. In fact, lip-prayer to him was hypocrisy.

He was not opposed to inter-religion marriages. His only condition was that neither party should be obliged to change his or her religion for the sake of the marriage. He further believed that the child born of such inter-religion marriage should choose his or her religion only after he/she has grown up.

His encouragement of Indira, a Hindu (daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru) marrying Firoz Gandhi, a Parsi is proof of this. Further, he actively engaged in marrying a Harijan boy in his Ashram to a Brahmin girl. He would not attend their wedding if he was against an inter-caste marriage.

If the above was not a practicing Humanist than I do not know what Humanism is. Gandhi said this of Charles Bradlaugh MP from Northampton and founder of National Secular Society in the UK: "Bradlaugh insisted on proclaiming his innermost conviction. He had to suffer a lot for thus speaking the truth, but he delighted to the joy resulting from the observance of the truth. This joy, however, is not at all worldly, but springs out of communion with divine. That is why I have said that even a man who disowns religion cannot and does not live without religion".

I am not sure if Bradlaugh will agree with Gandhi about communion with divine and living with religion, but it says a lot about Gandhi's interpretation of religion. As a note, Gandhi attended Bradlaugh's funeral in London in 1891.

I firmly believe that Gandhi was a Humanist first and religious in the accepted term second. In fact, if every so called religious person acted and behaved like Gandhi then we would not need secularism or humanism in this world.

I firmly believe that Gandhi was a true Humanist and that he religiously practiced Humanism. Many claim to be religious yet lack the humanity that Gandhi so clearly demonstrated throughout his life. Ω



## The Owl by Jane Thomas



It is unwise to be too sure of one's own wisdom. It is healthy to be reminded that the strongest might weaken and the wisest might err.

M K Gandhi, *Harijan* 17 February 1940



## **We are all at Fault**

We are all at fault  
you and I  
and others too  
in the canon of our trajectory  
catapulting peace over perjury  
harmony over angst  
no one cooks rice  
without sifting it  
always some desirables  
within complex webs  
of our minds  
where our karma revolts  
or echoes involuntarily  
in matrix of peace and sanctity  
as we grapple with sinews  
and seek bhakti  
embellishing dharma  
being this change we wish  
for you and me  
immersing melodic stotras  
within gems of Bhagavad Gita.

This poem is by Leonard Dabydeen, Guyanese born Canadian writer and human rights activist.

# May we live in interesting times

by Spoken Thiiird

A virus came from China with no caution or warning  
Around the world people woke to a whole new morning  
Standstill,  
Lockdown  
Separation  
Knocked down  
They said keep 2 meters away but it felt like miles  
They said to wear a mask but it can't hide a face without a smile  
They said 'may we live in interesting times' but did we ever think  
That interesting times was a curse and the world is on the brink  
Of mental health catastrophes to the ones who guard our lives  
To economic obliteration to hospitalities now who will make us 'man and wife'  
That the knives are out to the restaurants who provided us with food and laughter  
That children's fairy tales are the only way they will ever experience a happily ever  
after  
Stuck in a disaster and all of us on our own  
Caught in a thunderstorm shivering to our bones  
But every cloud has a silver lining who would have known  
That it would be the technological miracle of our phones

Silicone valley bridging a gap between the virtual and reality  
Showing us a new way to be connected in times of disarray  
Lifting us up when we are held by the pandemics gravity  
Where families could still be connected when far far away

Where students learnt about the wonders of the world without going outside  
Where work was brought inside the comforts of our bedside  
Where religious communities brought hope to people across all the 7 seas  
Where having FaceTime with a loved one became the highlight of the week

Technology came to the rescue and united the world and all of its people  
The virus truly showed us that flesh bone and blood is all but equal  
We owe it to the ones who can no longer feel the strength of the sun  
That while the pain remains this is the time to reflect and move forward as one

May we live in interesting times  
An expression that needs to be read between the lines  
The curse has been revealed but the blessing is yet to come  
All of us from all over the world felt the pain as one  
Felt the longing to be together and the hurt of being apart  
For the first time humanity realised that is just one world with many beating hearts

# The Globalisation of Calamities

*Nitin Mehta*

Plagues and other deadly pandemics have ravaged the human race for thousands of years. However for the last 70 years the Western World also known as the First World has been relatively free of major disasters.

The poorer nations suffered the double whammy of extreme poverty and unrelenting disasters. In the West we kept hearing of the miseries that befell the people of the Third World. Droughts, hurricanes, diseases, hunger and other catastrophes seem to be never ending in the poor countries of the world. In 1855 a plague that started in China killed 10 million people in India.

Though the West has been relatively free from major pandemics over the last 70 years this was not always the case. In 1348 Britain had the Black Death pandemic which was a bubonic plague. According to Professor Tom Jones Black Death turned the society upside down in England. Between 1347 and 1351 it killed about half of all Londoners and 30 to 60 percent of all Europeans. France lost half of its population. People were buried in communal graves. There were hardly enough living to care for the sick and bury the dead. The plague returned regularly in 1361, 1370's and 1380's. In 1665 London had the Great Plague. It spread by the bite from the black rat flea. It spread to other people through coughing and sneezing. It killed 75,000 Londoners. According to Martha Henry writing in *Cambridge Today* there was a smallpox pandemic in 1721 followed by cholera in 1849 and influenza in 1918. Around 500 million people worldwide were infected with this influenza and it killed around 50 million people worldwide.

The relative peace that the people in the West experienced from these miseries has shielded the populace and left them not best placed to face the terrifying Covid19 pandemic. It is estimated that almost 10 million people in the UK could be suffering from mental health issues. The parameters of the society that we were used to have been changed fundamentally. The economic slump, job losses, the zoom technology which has radically changed the work culture all have created fear and anxiety. We are still in the midst of a ravaging Covid 19 and both the short term and long term consequences could be devastating. The gains made over the last 70 years in reducing poverty and inequality could be reversed and cause social unrest. Some media outlets which routinely report on the disasters in India and its failures to manage pandemics are finding it hard to comprehend that we are all in this together!

Covid 19 is not the only catastrophe to hit the Western or developed countries. Last year Australia was devastated by raging fires. The United States of America is constantly plagued by natural disasters. Now that we are seeing the return of the globalisation of calamities we need to urgently correct our ways as a human race. The first and foremost correction has to be our relationship towards the animal kingdom. We need to change from being the tormentors of the animal kingdom to being compassionate and partners in the fight to save future generations from living on an inhabitable planet. It is said that Covid 19 started with experiments on bats in China which went wrong. Then there are the so-called wet markets where wild animals are sold for meat. Around 80 billion animals are raised for meat. All of them spend their short lives in utterly cruel conditions before being killed mercilessly. Bizarre experiments are carried out on animals to satisfy some human foible. Trillions of fish are trapped in vast nets which also trap and kill all kinds of aquatic animals. Millions of animals are exported around the world in horrific conditions only to be brutally killed on arrival. So indifferent have we become that we fed herbivorous cows with meat of infected sheep. Thousands of lives were ruined as people consumed the meat of these cows which led to CJD. When the horror of this dawned on lawmakers they decided to slaughter tens of thousands of cows. We are facing an existential crisis and the solution to save ourselves is staring us in the face. Make peace with the animal kingdom. Grant them fundamental rights. Return to a plant based diet. It is now or never.

## Book Reviews

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***Christianity in the Twentieth Century*** Brian Stanley  
Princeton University 2019 ISBN: 9780-691-196848

In 1900 Protestant and Catholic leaders alike confidently predicted the global triumph of Christianity in the new century; atheist spokesmen equally confidently expected the total demise of religion under the impact of secularism and scientific education. Neither prophecies were fulfilled. Christianity became worldwide with unexpected numerical preponderance in the Global South, but ended the century markedly diminished in its 1900 western European heartland. Secularisation was ascendant in the latter, but globally modernisation coincided with resurgence of all major religions.

This overview and fifteen major themes – such as World War One's impact on faith, Churches and Nationalism, faith amid genocides, Church under Soviet persecution, the Ecumenical Movement, Christian-Muslim relations, the rise of Pentecostalism – are revealingly analysed by Brian

Stanley's wide-ranging, fact-packed but non-chronological study *Christianity in the Twentieth Century*.

Post-1918, Europe's 'trusteeship-conscience' Churches spent greatly on welfare in colonial Africa and Pacific, but abandoned earlier 'missionary internationalism'; Spiritualism and church attendance surged, especially among women; but the fundamental question of how the world's professedly most Christian nations denied the essence of their faith to engage in mass slaughter, is oddly not raised. 1920s-1930s' deep theological divisions between conservative and liberal Christians in US and elsewhere became set and remain to today, with stances on gender issues now highly contentious.

Stanley's analysis of Christianity and Nationalism with case studies on Poland and South Korea is especially revealing. Poland's 10th century conversion to Catholic Christianity fused the unity of Church and nation in the collective memory, with Mary as 'Queen of Poland' a spiritual focus of unity for a people whose state was frequently fragmented among powerful neighbours. When Poland re-emerged post-1918, the Catholic Church undergirded its identity and unity, doing so again with Pope John Paul II's prophetic role in dissolving Communism. Less well known is the close alliance of evangelical protestantism and resurgent nationalism in South Korea's rise from a down-trodden people to the self-confident, prosperous capitalist democracy of today. Its mass revivalism, huge prayer assemblies and 'mega-churches' are unique in the Christian world. Yet too close an embrace of faith and nationalism is often ambiguous and at worst destructive, as the Yugoslav Civil Wars tragically showed.

Discussing Christianity in alien environments, Stanley juxtaposes the Church under Stalin's persecution with French Catholicism's weakening under pre-1914 political anti-clericalism. The latter certainly marginalised the Church in French society (albeit the Notre Dame fire and terrorist attacks on churches prompted recent reaffirmation of 'France's spiritual heritage'), but this is not in the same league as the 1930s suffering of Russian Orthodox and Baptists. Revisionist history stressing the complexity of Church and state under Hitler can risk down-playing the Protestant Confessing Church's opposition to Nazism, thus ill-serving the memory of such heroic figures as Bonhoeffer and Niemöller.

Both new Pentecostal churches and charismatic movements in mainstream Catholic and Protestant structures became the globally significant phenomenon of Spirit-centred Christianity, especially in Africa and Latin America. The wholly unexpected development challenged many traditional Christians, with 'prosperity Gospel' and 'deliverance ministry' expressions notably problematic. Mass migration to the USA and Europe saw establishment of Latino, Chinese, Korean, African and other ethnic churches. US wars in the Middle East caused the ancient Assyrian Church of the East to relocate its patriarchal see to Chicago – with 100,000 adherents in USA, but only 85,000 in Iraq and 25,000 in Syria, its erstwhile heartlands. In the UK,



London's Black-led churches contribute significantly to rising church attendance and inner-city evangelical renewal.

Strangely, the remarkable rise of the Church in Communist China is virtually ignored; 'Jesus the Universal Man' theology is too readily denigrated; the global mass evangelism of such figures as Billy Graham, Louis Palau and Reinhard Bonnke, is unassessed. Despite these and other caveats, this major work of scholarship greatly informs and illumines our understanding of Christianity in the 20th century world.

(The author is Professor of World Christianity at Edinburgh University.)

*Rev Brian Cooper*, Baptist minister & Inter-faith Secretary, Uniting for Peace

**Sunnis and Shi'a: A Political History** Laurence Louer  
Princeton University Hardback £25.00 ISBN: 9780691-186610

In recent decades the Middle East has been the world's most conflict-torn region. Its conflicts have expressed deep divisions within and between its states and societies: secular Pan-Arabism and Arab Socialism against Islamist political forces: Jews against Arabs; pro-Western and anti-Western alignments; economic, social and generational inequalities. US/European military interventions – and their consequences – have intensified divisions. The parallel clustering of political rivalries between radical Shi'a Iran and ultra-conservative Sunni Saudi Arabia, reveals the ancient fault-line between the two rival versions of Islam itself.

This latter division, politically so significant in today's Middle East, dates from the early days of Islam. When Mohammed died in 632 without a male heir, Sunnis – 'the followers of tradition' – declared his companions should choose his successor, whereas Shi'as – 'the partisans' – believed God had inspired the Prophet to appoint Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, as leader. The resultant schism has reverberated down the centuries, sometimes (but not constantly) in military conflict, often in a peaceful even cooperative co-existence or an uneasy truce marked by political rivalries, with theological disputes and differences in spiritual perception a constant.

Laurence Louer, professor at Centre for International Studies at Science Po, Paris, gives a comprehensive historical and theological narrative spanning the Islamic world, sets this religious rivalry in its various changing political contexts. Whether Islam should be a force supportive of ruling elites or critical voice holding them to account, theocracy as the most desirable and authentic model of Quranic teaching, the emergence of majority Sunnism and the role of Shi'ism as 'ideology of opposition to establishments', have remained key themes in the rivalry. Shi'ism sparked significant offshoots, most notably the Druze (Lebanon and Syria) and Alawites (Syria).

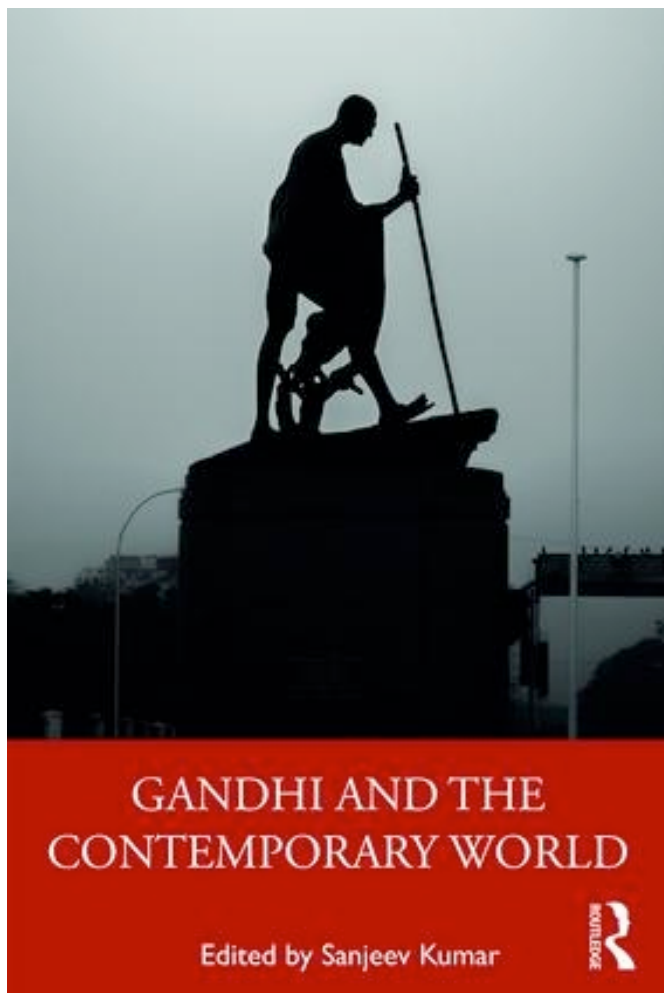
Since Islam never experienced an equivalent of Europe's Church-State separation in mediaeval Christendom and Reformation, the fundamental

question persisted: what is the authentic form of Islamic political authority ? A Caliphate uniting religious and political power ? An Islamist government imposing Sharia law ? In contemporary terms, a theocracy incorporating democratic elements ? Al-Qaeda and Isis posed this question in extreme terms. Today it is raised less extremely, but more challengingly, by the Taleban in Afghanistan and the geopolitical-military rivalry between Iran's Shi'a theocratic republic with its Hezbollah associates, and Saudi Arabia's Sunni monarchy – causing conflict across Middle East. Although Shi'ism remains very much the minority faith compared with the Sunni majority, its significance and influence are out of all proportion to its numbers. Yemen's bitter war, causing huge humanitarian crisis, is but one evidence.

This richly informative study is a very useful aid to understanding the faith dynamics across Middle East today

*Rev. Brian Cooper*

**Gandhi and the Contemporary World**, Edited by Sanjeev Kumar  
Routledge 2020.



Some readers may recognise this title from years ago since this was the title of a book of essays published by the GF about 25 years ago, co-edited by Antony Copley and myself. There are other links – our President, Bhikhu Parekh, has written the Foreword for the new book and the book is dedicated to the memory of Antony Copley, one-time Academic Adviser to the GF, and one of the essays is by Antony.

There are 16 authors including the editor, Sanjeev Kumar, who has written a fine introduction to the collection. He points out that Gandhi was such a complex person and led such a rich life that there is an abundance of material for study and interpretation. The first three essays expound some of Gandhi's basic ideas – Truth (satya) and nonviolence (ahimsa), both ancient concepts given new meaning by Gandhi, and satyagraha, a new word

to replace 'passive resistance' but whose meaning Gandhi later widened into a whole philosophy.

The next three essays consider another major concept, swaraj, normally understood as home rule or Indian independence. Included in this, Gandhi believed, should be economic independence since Western style economy is materialistic and perpetuates inequality and deprivation of freedom for the majority. For Gandhi swaraj also meant self-rule in the inward sense or control over the self. But another great Indian of the time, Rabindranath Tagore, was suspicious of rejecting British or Western culture and hoped for an inclusive universalist world culture. He opposed Gandhi's noncooperation movement.

The next section on social justice focuses on two issues – untouchability and the 'race issue', both of which have received a great deal of attention in recent years. Caste discrimination is outlawed in the Indian Constitution but it persists in the actions of many people because for many it is an integral part of their understanding of Hinduism. The essays focus mainly on the different approaches of B R Ambedkar, a contemporary of Gandhi born into an untouchable (Dalit) caste but who managed to achieve higher education in the UK and USA and is now regarded as the leading Dalit liberator. He and Gandhi differed in their approach to abolition of untouchability but totally agreed that it needed to go. Although Gandhi in his early period accepted an ideal form of caste system he was always opposed to some people whom he regarded as Hindus being excluded and discriminated against. Naturally Ambedkar as a born 'untouchable' was antagonistic to higher caste Hindus who wanted to retain this corrupt tradition. Gandhi wanted the traditional Hindus to reform themselves and treat Dalits as equals. Ambedkar saw this as impossible and fought Gandhi's gradualist approach believing that the Dalits had to fight vigorously for their rights. Gandhi eventually gave up the idea of all the castes and Dalits being equal within Hinduism and realised that the caste system itself should be abolished. Mustakim Ansary deals with the issue of caste raised by Arundhati Roy in her Introduction to a reprint of Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* and thoroughly demonstrates Roy's extremely selective approach which misrepresents Gandhi's position.

In recent years Gandhi has been accused of displaying racism with regard to native Africans while working in South Africa. There is some truth in this, after all it was a very common attitude at that time, believed to be supported by scientific evidence. However he was inconsistent and sometimes spoke of positive characteristics of the Zulus whom he knew best. More importantly he changed his outlook as he developed as he did on so many issues. Hari Nair believes that Gandhi was assisted in his change by his acquaintance with a book called *Race Prejudice* by Jean Finot (English translation 1906) and the Universal Races Congress held in London in 1911. Gandhi's close colleague, Henry Polak, spoke at the Congress and reported on it in *Indian Opinion*. The thrust of anthropologist research was then in the direction that there were no superior/inferior races.

The final section, Post-Gandhian Legacy: Issues and Challenges, begins with Copley's survey of the state of India today. This is a very wide sweep of Indian society with many digressions/parallel cases beyond India. Overall it is not an optimistic picture. Economic development has benefitted many but there is massive inequality revealed by the level of child poverty. The popularity of the BJP has led to discrimination against Muslims and Christians as the followers of Hindutva have grown bolder.

The other social issue is the level of corruption in Indian politics. Mahendra Singh focusses on the appearance of the anti-corruption movement exemplified by Anna Hazare's India Against Corruption (2011) and its offshoot the Aam Aadmi Party. The latter has become significant in Delhi and some north Indian states. The movement has raised another unfortunate feature of Indian political parties – the high number of candidates with criminal records. Their emphasis is on a more participative and cleaner democracy – how effective they will be time will reveal.

I like J Gray Cox's essay since he applies his interpretation of satyagraha to some of the most important issues of our time which he identifies as the ecological crisis, weapons of mass destruction, and ever 'smarter' technology. They have arisen from humanity's deficient type of reasoning which presupposes a 'neutral' form of reason from which arises moral relativism. In contrast he calls satyagraha a "dialogical process of practical rational inquiry which can discover emergent objective moral truth". Our economic system has given rise to the ecological crisis, our habit of war combined with technology has given us nuclear weapons, and the rapid development of artificial intelligence may carry these dangerous practices further – future developments in AI need to be brought under human, and humane, control. He suggests we need to become Rational Moral Actors instead of Rational Economic Consumers. We can start this process by changing our own Western lifestyle which is unsustainable and he lists the kind of things we can do now if we have the will. His call to action is very Gandhian.

The final piece is by Anandita Biswas who makes a passionate plea for Gandhi's inclusive and tolerant spirit to permeate Indian society especially, but by implication the wider world.

By no means all aspects of Gandhian thought and practice can be covered in any book and one I would like to have been addressed is the state of Gandhian movements in India today. Although some Gandhian movements or campaigns in the independence period are covered or mentioned there is not much of the current situation. I hope it is not because they hardly exist today. There is no mention, for example, of P V Rajagopal and Ekta Parishad and their work with farmers and the landless that I would have liked to read about and there are surely others. But the book is a substantial piece of work by some of the academics who are working in the field of Gandhian studies today.

*George Paxton*

## Tribute to John Rowley from the GF President

The news of John Rowley's death filled me with enormous sadness. Having worked together on various projects we had grown fairly close.

If I were to define John in terms of a single identity, I would say that he was a 'man of causes'. For many years he took up the cause of nonviolence and devoted himself to it. He talked about it to everyone interested in the subject and urged them to organise conferences. A little later he took up the cause of the tribal people in India and persuaded a small group of MPs and me to make representations to the Tatas in India who were reported to have been evicting the tribals from their long held land. More recently John was deeply interested in co-operative economy, and exploring alternative modes of ownership to capitalism and communism. I recall with great pleasure a long meeting in the House of Lords where he pressed the idea on me and produced a list of individuals and firms with interest in the subject. The result was the excellent one day conference we organised with the help of Sister Jayanti and her colleagues. The list of John's causes goes on. He brought to them great energy and commitment. And since these could sometimes unsettle people, he could be at times difficult to work with. He knew that and did his best to reassure everyone working with him. John was a kind, generous and morally sensitive person, full of good will to his fellow human beings. We shall miss him.

Bhikhu Parekh

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The creating of the Gandhi Foundation's **new website** is now well underway and will be launched soon.

If you use **email** but do not receive email notifications and zoom links but would like to do so, please send your email address to [gpaxton@phonecoop.coop](mailto:gpaxton@phonecoop.coop)



# 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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**The deadline for the next issue is the end of April 2021**

Printed on recycled paper using vegetable based inks and 100% renewable energy  
by [www.hillingdongreenprint.co.uk](http://www.hillingdongreenprint.co.uk)  
Tel: 020 8868 7852