

The Gandhi Way



Statue of Gandhi in Bellevue, Washington State, USA, with Atreya

Newsletter of the Gandhi Foundation

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Gandhi Foundation Multifaith Celebration 2018

The venue and date has not been fixed yet
although it will probably be in the last week of January.
When finalised details will be posted on the website
and there will be other notifications.
The theme will be Music, Art & Drama.

Gandhi Foundation Summer Gathering 2018

Making the World Great

Sat 21-Sat 28 July

St Christopher School, Letchworth Garden City

Further details will be available in later editions of The Gandhi Way
and will be posted on the website: gandhifoundation.org and elsewhere.

Contents

The Power of Music in a Hard Land – GF Peace Award 2017 to Kamandjati	Omar Hayat
The International Arms Trade and Gandhi	Graham Davey
Gandhi for the 21st Century – GF Annual Lecture by Satish Kumar	Wm Rhind/Mark Hoda
Gandhi's Influence in Guyana	Ramnarine Sahadeo
Chandos' Theory	Anthony Russell
Book Review: <i>Gandhi in a Canadian Context</i> (Ed.Alex Damm)	George Paxton

The Power of Music in a Hard Land

The Gandhi Foundation International Peace Award 2017 to Kamandjati

On Tuesday 17th October at the House of Lords The Gandhi Foundation gave its International Peace Award to Ramzi Abu Redwan and his organisation Al Kamandjati (The violinist). The meeting was hosted on behalf of the Gandhi Foundation by our president Lord Bhikhu Parekh who with his usual mastery of these occasions welcomed the fifty or so guests and gave an overall introduction about Ramzi and his organisation. Prior to the event starting Lord Bhikhu had hosted Ramzi and his wife Celine for tea at the House of Lords.

The evening began by Omar Hayat speaking about the power of imagination and how the world had been transformed by imagination and that music too was an audio representation of someone's imagination and so had the possibility of changing the world. Omar Hayat went on to explain why the Trustees of the GF gave the award to Ramzi. He explained that despite the desperate situation of the people and especially children living in the refugee camps in Ramallah, Ramzi sought an alternative narrative to bring together people who have been convulsed by decades of violence and animosity. He went on to read the citation which states that music breaks down the mental borders and allows us to elevate to a higher calling and helps to foster in us an ability to 'hear' the vision of the 'other' and to understand that a common relationship exists. It is precisely through these types of involvement that we will see a change in the thinking of people leading one day to a common understanding and realisation of a common destiny for all the people of the region. The citation went on to explain that though Ramzi was born in Bethlehem and grew up in the Al Amari refugee camp he chose to direct his energy in resisting the occupation through music and using music also to show the human side of all through this common medium and although the goals of bringing people together are ambitious and long term the immediate benefits of the Al Kamandjati music schools are on the lives of the children attending. The children are from the refugee camps and villages and have experienced first-hand the cruelty of occupation. The schools offer a sanctuary and an opportunity for children to learn to play musical instruments and of their musical heritage whilst allowing them to express themselves through music. The association reaches around 100 children every year and organises concerts and festivals to showcase their talents.

Peter Tatchell, award recipient 2016, had kindly agreed to attend the award and was asked to say a few words as to what the award meant to him and then passed on the award to Ramzi, as is the tradition. Ramzi then read his acceptance speech which is below.



Ramzi Abu Redwan with Celine Dagher and with Peter Tatchell

Following the speech there was a lively Q&A with the audience and people were genuinely interested in what Ramzi was doing and how the occupation could be resolved.

Although the House does not generally give permission for music to be played, a blind eye was turned towards Ramzi, who played the violin for the guests. It was a wonderful way to finish the evening, to have a world renowned artist play.

After the event ended, a few interviews were conducted by TV press crews.

For those who wish to read more of Ramzi's life story there is a book:

Children of the Stone: The Power of Music in a Hard Land by Sandy Tolan. *Children of the Stone* is a story about music, freedom and conflict; determination and vision. It's a vivid portrait of life amid checkpoints and military occupation, a growing movement of nonviolent resistance, the past and future of musical collaboration across the Israeli-Palestinian divide, and the potential of music to help children see new possibilities for their lives. Above all, *Children of the Stone* chronicles the journey of Ramzi Aburedwan, and how he worked against the odds to create something lasting and beautiful in a war-torn land.

Omar Hayat

Acceptance Speech by Ramzi Aburedwan

I would like to express in front of all my sincere joy for receiving the Gandhi International Peace Award that I dedicate to my Grandfather. If you look at my photo in 1987, throwing stones on Israeli soldiers, you would think “how come this person is receiving an Award for peace?”

I grew up in Al Amari refugee camp, near Ramallah. But this refugee camp is not where my grandfather grew up and lived. He lived in Al Ramleh, in what is now considered Israel, until 1948 when they were chased by the Jewish militia. From Al Amari refugee camp, where he ended up, my grandfather used to remember the enchanting smell of orange blossom and the taste of oranges of Naani.

For my part, my childhood, as that of most Palestinian children at the time, was rather marked by the smell of tear gas and gunshots in my refugee camp. Since very young, after school, we were used to sneaking out from our houses to prevent the Israeli soldiers from committing their regular abuses in our camp. And before school, at the rise of dawn, I would go around selling newspapers in order to help my family needs.

Then one encounter changed the course of my life. Soreida Hussein, to whom I sold newspapers, saw in me a drive for music. And not long after, she ensured that I join a music workshop in the Popular Art center. This is where I discovered the viola. Since then, music became part of my life. Two years later, I was selected to receive a scholarship for music studies in France. Aware of the impact music had in my life, I saw the need to give the same chance to other Palestinian children to learn music. This is when Al Kamandjâti Association (meaning the violinist) was born. I founded Al Kamandjati in France, and then, as soon as I finalized my studies, I returned to Palestine to start this new adventure.



Ramzi Abu Redwan, Lord Bhikhu Parekh, Dr Omar Hayat

Al Kamandjâti aims at spreading music culture among all members of Palestinian society, building empowered and creative persons, aware of their Palestinian national identity, who contribute to develop a cohesive society that respects freedom of expression, tolerance, equality and cooperation.

Thanks to its several music centers in Palestine and Lebanon, AK teaches music to thousands of Palestinian children yearly, with a focus on the most disadvantaged ones. They learn new ways of self-expression, get more self-confidence and self-esteem, learn essential social skills and above all, it creates an important outlet and opens new horizons for them. In addition to its music education program, the association organizes more than a hundred concerts every year. These activities aim at spreading the musical culture among Palestinian society, highlighting their own musical heritage, as well as opening them to other cultural traditions.

Music taught me resilience, as well as how to be proud and protect my culture and heritage, and this is why we can consider music to be pacific resistance. I would like to thank once again the Gandhi Foundation for this recognition. Yet my story should not be used to discredit or demonize other forms of resistance my people are employing to get freedom: the right of Palestinians to resist Israeli occupation is part of international law. Clearly, Israel is denying and violating this law by suppressing even peaceful protests by detentions, shooting on demonstrators, including hundreds of children. And this highlights Israel's attempts to completely delegitimize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. And by criminalizing even nonviolent resistance activities, Israel advances what Jeff Halper has labeled its "matrix of control"— a complex web of legal, architectural and systemic devices designed to fragment and isolate Palestinian society.

Additionally, the international discourse, particularly coverage by western media outlets, serves to perpetuate and further solidify the stereotype of the Palestinian 'terrorist', discounting the severity of the apartheid regime, disregarding the relevant international treaties — and therefore discrediting the right to resist.

Gandhi said: "I wish the Arabs had chosen the way of non-violence in resisting what they rightly regarded as an unwarrantable encroachment upon their country. But according to the accepted canons of right and wrong, nothing can be said against the Arab resistance in the face of overwhelming odds."

Here I would like to ask you – given that we all know the famous 21 days of Gandhi's fasting – does anyone know how many days more than 1500 Palestinian prisoners went on hunger strike for just this past April ? Over 40 days !

Gandhi and the International Arms Trade

Graham Davey

The AGM of the Gandhi Foundation took place at Kingsley Hall a few days before the Defence and Security International Exhibition at the Excel Centre, only two miles away. After the AGM, Graham Davey used the proximity of this huge arms sale in time and place to give an illustrated talk about British exports of major weapons and possible alternatives for the defence industry.

The case against arms exports has been presented by Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) for over 40 years. The main arguments are:

1. Arms purchases by governments of developing countries represent a considerable waste of scarce resources when their populations still lack basic services. This is caused partly by the glamour of military equipment and also by the intensive salesmanship of arms manufacturers and the British government.

2. Arms sales promote abuse of human rights when sold to repressive regimes. A 2015-6 UK report on human rights identified 28 countries of concern because of human rights abuse. Arms export licences were granted for sales to 18 of them including Israel, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Arms sales may give direct support to repressive regimes with sales of surveillance equipment, vehicles, handcuffs, shackles etc. They also give increased authority to the military and their capacity for human rights abuse through showing international acceptance or approval.

3. Conflict – the weapons get used. Arms sales to areas of tension make conflict more likely and if it does break out, the destruction and suffering are worse. Most (80% or more) of the casualties are civilians.

The current major issue is arms sales to Saudi Arabia through two programmes known as 'The Dove' and 'Peace'. Tornado and Typhoon aircraft sold with bombs and missiles under these schemes have been used by Saudi Arabia to attack Houthi rebels in Yemen. The UN estimates that over 10,000 people killed and 3 million displaced. Half a million are suspected of having contracted Cholera and over 2000 have died from this disease so far.

CAAT has taken the UK government to the High Court to challenge the legality of £3.3 billion of arms sold to Saudi Arabia since the war in Yemen broke out in April 2015. Unsurprisingly, the Court found in favour of the government but CAAT is to appeal.

4. Corruption in the arms trade is rampant. BAE Systems is the largest British defence firm and one of the largest in the world. It has been accused

of bribing politicians and officials to facilitate sales to Saudi Arabia, South Africa and other countries.

Support from the British Government

Despite these arguments, the government gives disproportionate support to arms exports. The Defence and Security Organisation in the Department for International Trade has 180 staff to promote arms sales, 142 for everything else although arms sales form only 1.5% of total UK exports. One of their responsibilities is organisation of the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) biennial exhibition at the Excel Centre, next to Royal Victoria Dock. Here some 1500 firms will be demonstrating their products to delegations from all over the world.

In addition, military attachés serve at embassies overseas. Government ministers visiting countries are briefed to push arms exports. The military are used for demonstrations to potential customers and members of the royal family are used when deemed necessary. Grants for research and development and other services add to the tax-payers' contribution to boosting the trade.

In response to criticism, the government argues that arms sales guarantee the supply of arms and equipment to the British military forces. It is said that longer production runs reduce unit costs but often customers require variations which are very expensive to add to an existing design. The government claims that arms exports bring big benefits to the balance of trade and the British economy and while there might have been some truth in this in the past, the arms trade is now dominated by huge multi-national corporations. BAE Systems operates in 40 countries and many foreign firms manufacture in this country and supply the Ministry of Defence. The argument of the Foreign Office is that arms sales give Britain influence for good in recipient countries but there is little evidence of this in Saudi Arabia for example. Politicians, when cornered, have been known to resort to the drug pusher's argument that if we don't sell them arms, some one else will.

Frequently government spokespeople refer to the rigorous vetting system to prevent arms going to human rights abusers and areas of potential conflict. The fact is that the culture of the government is to allow any sale unless there would be extreme political embarrassment if it went ahead. In a recent period, 9760 licences were granted and only 220 refused. In the same period, 900 arms sales were licensed for India and Pakistan and none refused. Once the arms have been delivered, the UK has no control over their use or future sale.

Another reason why the government is so supportive of the arms trade is that it is subject to intense lobbying by the defence industry, e.g. BAE Systems, in Downing Street. Industry representatives are frequent attenders at meetings in Whitehall and Parliament. There is also the 'revolving door' syndrome for politicians and civil servants going from the public sector into

defence industries. CAAT has identified 172 former public servants now working for arms and security firms.

The final argument put forward to justify arms sales is that if they were restricted, jobs would be lost. Yet because the defence industry is so capital intensive, arms exports account for only 0.2% of the total UK workforce. And there are alternatives.

Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards Combine Committee Corporate Plan

In 1976, Lucas had 17 factories with 18000 employees. About 70% of production was for the military and 20% of work-force were threatened with redundancy. The Shop Stewards Combine Committee, representing trade union members throughout the work-force, sent a letter to 180 outside bodies asking for advice but received only 3 replies. Tony Benn, who was then a government minister, explained to the Committee that the government could not nationalise the firm to save jobs but advised the men to look at possible alternative products. As a result, a survey was sent to the whole workforce asking employees to consider their skills and the equipment available to them and to think of socially useful products that they could make which stood a good chance of being profitable. What became known as the Lucas Plan came up with 150 products described in 5 volumes each of about 200 pages.

There were three aims:

1. To show that there were alternatives to military production and cuts to military orders would not necessarily cost jobs;
2. to minimise the alienation and frustration caused by stressful working conditions;
3. to recognize the increasing importance of energy and to devise ways of reducing demand so as to make international conflict over energy less likely.

Examples of product ideas were:

Hobcarts for children with spina bifida;

A bus capable of running on road or railway lines;

Heat pumps;

Dialysis machines – there were 3000 deaths per year from kidney failure;

Hybrid power packs for vehicles to reduce fuel consumption and pollution;

Regenerative braking systems;

Telechiric devices for working in hostile environments (radio-active, deep sea, etc.)

There were some positive results from the project. Centres for research and study set up and there were conversion initiatives at factories in other parts of the defence industry e.g. Vickers at Barrow and Elswick. There was also considerable international interest notably in West Germany and Sweden.

However, the response of Lucas Aerospace management was unsympathetic and none of the product ideas was taken up. One of the arguments offered was that the products were not compatible with the existing range but the real reason the Lucas Plan was not adopted is that it raised the question, 'Who runs the firm, us or you?', and the answer was that the trade union movement had no role in strategic planning.

However, there was a 40th anniversary conference in Birmingham in November 2016 possibly prompted by fear that Brexit will increase pressure to promote British arms sales world-wide.

What would Gandhi say and do ?

There is good reason to believe that Gandhi would have condemned the arms trade for all the reasons given above. One of his principles was Sarvodaya – 'the uplift of all'. He would be particularly sad to see that India is now a major importer of arms – buying 14 % of total world arms sales between 2011 and 2015.

He would probably have referred to the fundamental principle of Satyagraha – 'seeking Truth', and asked what is Truth when considering nationhood. What makes a nation great ? Is it moral leadership or military might ?

A third principle promoted by Gandhi was Swadeshi – local production by spinning and weaving to replace imported cloth. He would have given strong support to all grass-roots initiatives to produce socially useful things rather than armaments.

The world is full of suffering and injustices but in Gandhi's absence, one cause worth taking up is opposition to Britain's continued involvement in the arms trade.

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## **Disarmers acquitted**

In October Quaker Sam Walton and Rev Daniel Woodhouse were acquitted after breaking into a BAE Systems' factory in January 2017 to 'disarm' Typhoon fighter jets which are being used by Saudi-led forces attacking Yemen.

After hearing evidence of the accusations of war crimes District Judge James Clarke said: *'They were impressive and eloquent men who held strong views about what they were doing and what they wanted to achieve. They impressed me as being natural in their delivery and honest throughout their evidence....'*

*'I heard about their belief of BAE's role in the supply of aircraft to Saudi Arabia. I heard about their beliefs regarding the events in Yemen, that they include the death of civilians and the destruction of civilian property, and the basis for their belief that this amounted to war crimes ...'*

*'However, having considered in full the defence under Sec 5 Criminal Damage Act 1971, I find the defendants not guilty.'*

## Gandhi for the 21st Century

GF Annual Lecture 2017 by Satish Kumar

Through the good offices of former Gandhi Foundation trustee and current patron Diana Schumacher the Foundation was honoured to have Satish Kumar deliver this year's Annual Lecture at the Nehru Centre on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September.

Satish started the lecture by recounting how he started his adult life as a Jain monk but at the age of 17 he read Gandhi's autobiography and that entirely transformed his outlook and therefore his life. If you want to transform the world you have to be active in it, was the message that first struck him but this must be conditioned by knowing why you are doing it. He continued talking about how service can be a spiritual practice and how this can be applied to all professions. Spirituality being something that can be applied by everyone, but is something experienced not studied from books. By doing this one can engage in what he called reverential economics and we must seek to return to the original meaning of economics (relating to the home) and its relationship with words such as ecology. To do this we must look at the whole planet as our one and only home. Therefore one replaces a desire for power with a desire to serve.



Mark Hoda and Satish Kumar

He continued by tying in concepts that our lives are much more than simply defined by our jobs. And by integrating this with a life of service we can create the embodiment of Gandhi's word sarvodaya. This phrase usually means looking to achieve a good for all, but here it must strive to achieve that for the whole planet not just humans. This goes beyond a socialist utilitarian conception of the greatest good for the greatest number.

From here we can look into ideas such as conservation, peace, etc. To facilitate this we must start to develop a sense of gratitude towards nature. Additionally until we remove personal ego we cannot be truly happy as we are otherwise serving ourselves. Satish did caution against assuming such acts are going to be easy or straight forward – they also require imagination.

Following the lecture Satish kindly spent at least half an hour answering questions from the floor. He was asked how does this message work with an ever increasing global population; the answer stressed the importance of education and reducing consumption. Mary Holmes of Action Village India asked how we could reconcile individual desires and community; Satish focused on how we cannot ignore community whether in our own locality or with a global perspective giving the examples of Vinoba Bhave's life and his own book, *I think therefore I am*. Long standing Foundation member Brian Parker asked about how we should deal with dark forces in the world. To which Satish felt we need to put things in perspective namely that in a world of roughly 7 billion only 200,000 are engaged in war. Matthew Bain asked about the world's fixation about economic growth to which Satish felt the need to establish a new paradigm where happiness is more important. Further questions dealt with the need for dialogue when differences of opinion arise, thinking globally whilst acting locally, the opportunity that Brexit might allow Britain to become more self-reliant, and how the Gandhi Foundation could perhaps develop a Gandhian political manifesto.

Report by William Rhind and Mark Hoda

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### **Human Welfare Society Lucknow**

This Indian NGO has been running programmes since 2002 working towards people helping themselves. They fight corruption and other legal practices and provide free legal help. Their women's programmes have helped over 5000 women with training in skills and education. Their President is a poet and writer who has written plays related to Gandhi. Further information: [www.humanwelfaresociety.com](http://www.humanwelfaresociety.com)

# Gandhi's Influence in Guyana

*Ramnarine Sahadeo*

Mohandas K Gandhi was born in Asia, educated in Europe, and matured in Africa but never touched the soil of the Americas yet his influence was global and it would be a dim perception to conclude that his life and message was restricted to a few continents.

His impression on the USA is indelible. President Barack Obama stated in India in 2010 that he would not have been President had it not been for Gandhi and the message he shared with America and the rest of the world.

Martin Luther King who also lived and learnt in India stated in 1955 "Christ gave us the goals ... Gandhi gave us the tactics ... he influenced my life in terms of action more than anybody". Cesar Chavez used non-violence strategy to protest the exploitation of California farm workers and showed patience when he stated the rich have money but we have time.

Similar acknowledgement of Gandhi's inspiration in Latin American and the Caribbean may not be so well known but has been documented.

Indentured Servants who were sent as labourers from India to replace slaves on the many plantations across Caribbean and Guyana (British Guiana) was one of the Mahatma's concern. He had experienced their maltreatment in South Africa and was involved in the massive Anti-Indenture campaign waged in India from 1910 to 1917 resulting in the abolition of this new form of bondage.

His emissary was Rev C F Andrews referred to in the movie *Gandhi* as Charlie. Born in England but after his missionary activities in India exposed him to blatant arrogance and racial discrimination against Indians he found himself immersed in the struggle for freedom. He was sent by Gopal Krishna Gokhale to assist Gandhi in South Africa, returned to India then joined the nationals who vehemently opposed the indentureship system in Natal and Fiji.

Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. He and Reverend Andrews toured Vancouver in 1929 from where the latter left for British Guiana as the guest of the British Guiana East Indian Association formed in 1916 with political and cultural objectives that brought national attention to the plight of Indians. The Indian National Congress introduced him as the man whom Gandhi considered a younger brother and gave him the name Deena Bandu, friend of the poor. During his three months sojourn Andrews obtained information about the inhumane conditions of some villages and others that functioned well.

His presence in the colony mirrored the treatment and activities of Gandhi in India. The children of Bharat turned out in huge crowds to hear him waiting long hours for him to finish in English and then in Hindi making them nostalgic for Mother India. A dinner in his honour would attract over 500 people. The situation described in his report *Impressions of British Guyana* 1930 revealed similar problems among the East Indian communities in South Africa, Fiji, and even India some of which bedevil these nations even today.

These include child marriages, illiteracy, non-registration of religious marriages resulting in children deemed illegitimate; nominal priests not qualified to raise the moral standards of the society leading to gross superstitions and demoralization; religious conversion, government encouraging missionary work instead of practicing religious neutrality; absence of Indians in the civil services and in the police forces who did not speak or understand Indian language or customs; buildings unfit for human habitation; overcrowded classrooms with few girls; Hindu and Muslim children compelled to say Christian prayers in government aided schools; few Indian teachers in Christian-run schools since many refused to change their religion in order to be employed; abundance of rum shops and excessive alcohol consumption unlike the lifestyle of Indians in northern India; non-registration of voters particularly East Indian women who could not read nor fill in the form which was only in English; poor race relations.

On the positive side he was impressed with a few leaders there among them Dr Jung Bahadur Singh, president of British Guiana East India Association. This stalwart of Indian culture was the first Hindu to be elected to the National Assembly, had travelled 24 times on ships between India and Guyana rendering medical service, and who would be the first person to be cremated in 1956 at a time when cremation was not yet legal.

On July 14, 1929 Andrews officially opened the Dharam Sala in Georgetown established by Pandit Ramsaroop Maraj in 1921. This is perhaps the longest humanitarian mission in Guyana and possibly the Caribbean.

His visit lifted the national consciousness of the people and enabled the few leaders to pursue their goals with greater determination. People even came over from neighbouring Suriname to meet the Mahatma's best friend in the hope that he could persuade the plantation owners and the authorities to improve the working and living conditions there also.

Reverend Andrews left his mortal body on April 5, 1940 in Calcutta but his remarks still ring true today:

"I am not forgetting that conditions in large over-populated malarial areas in India are even more distressing than those I have found in Guiana. But when people leave their mother country to come abroad and make sacrifices of habit and tradition it should at least be expected as an axiom that the material

conditions to which they come, by Immigration, must be superior to those they left behind".

There are many statues of Gandhi all over the globe and several groups organise annual events to celebrate his life. However in this age of terrorism, excessive materialism, and extreme climate change, more must be done to teach this and future generations about his message. Fortunately there is an abundance of materials on Gandhi.

Every individual or organisation can be an agent of change initiating sustained educational activities promoting peace, truth and justice. The challenge is to prove one prediction of the great Einstein wrong by ensuring that the time will never come when posterity questions the fact that the Mahatma once graced the surface of this earth.

Ramnarine Sahadeo, ([ramjihindu@rogers.com](mailto:ramjihindu@rogers.com)) was born in Guyana but is now a retired lawyer residing in Brampton, Ontario, author of *Mohandas K Gandhi, Thoughts, Words, Deeds* and his Inspiration the Bhagavad-gita; established the Jung Bahadur Singh Scholarship and hopes to see more activities and studies on Gandhi.

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Chandos' Theory

Humanity is an integral part of a relatively benign natural world
and our modern artificially generated hostility manufactures predators

Anthony Russell

Those raised within the bosom of Western civilisation struggle to appreciate how it has molded us to its liking with a complex narrative we now take for granted. An example is surely the notion that great men change history and guide us to a glorious, ever-greater future. Perhaps the realisation that Lord Acton's famous quote: "*Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely*", seldom includes reference to his following sentence; "*Great men are almost always bad men*", proves the persistence of that insidious power.

But ask the indigenous peoples of Australia where I happen to be writing this, just how glorious or progressive has been the combative, striving culture that reached their shores so recently. Do we stop to consider for how long our cultures have been dominated by men ? Historians generally agree that only in the last 3,000 years – a period coinciding with the rise of patriarchal monotheism – has the male, female power balance been lost.

And yet we must also ask ourselves if this insistence on using violence on a global scale is so inevitably natural to 'man-kind'. We use the blunt tool of our aggression to combat perceived enemies or just to seek new pastures and dig up deeper minerals. But only the truly deluded now deny the

environmental devastation left in our path. Nor for that matter, the psychological impact on our own spirit, so weary and confused by its obsessive 'progress'.

We've a responsibility to realise that the victors of this violence have written our history. But Tolstoy for instance, was convinced of the realistic limits to the power of Napoleon and Gore Vidal quoted John F. Kennedy as telling him how powerless he felt once in power. What we here call civilisation is predominantly vanity, built on the suffering and exploitation of millions. And yet, within our culture is also the seed of something special; an understanding of genuinely civil behaviour. Despite the excesses of imperial hegemony, civility has grown slowly through the will of the people. While individuals have often inspired when their rhetoric caught the prevailing spirit, it is brave groups forging a powerful consensus that have made the difference, through determined struggle and often at great personal cost.

This gradual progression towards ever-greater understanding, cooperation and peace is often overlooked as actually a profoundly natural process. It was Prof. Stephen Pinker who clarified that relative to an increasing global population, levels of human violence have actually steadily decreased. It would appear that despite our best efforts, humanity is destined to live ever more harmoniously upon our precious planet. This might be hard to believe from the constant reporting of global conflict by the media. But we must appreciate both how brief has been our destructive reign compared to the ancient history of humanity on Earth, as well as the forces at work now obstructing a clearer understanding.

For one, bad news appears to be good business. So we shouldn't take as gospel truth the notion that everything is falling apart around us. Then there is the realisation that powerful corporate forces have now taken international control of much mass-media. There are coercive agendas at work, where elite forces are aligned to multi-national industries such as oil, steel and that most infamous misnomer 'defence'. Their prevailing narrative is one of conflict and confrontation within a hostile and frightening world that makes little sense. Such phrases as 'the war on terror' well illustrate the poverty of this perspective, attempting to portray a selfishly motivated world in frightening chaos. Discovering the original source for the financing of these 'terrorists' helps an appreciation of how we are being manipulated.

Any notion of the natural civility of humanity or of our having a basic ethic common to all is drowned in an attempt to re-write the *Origin of Species* as a horrific natural battleground. This was never Darwin's intent and even Prof. Richard Dawkins wished he had not used such a loaded title for his highly influential book *The Selfish Gene*. It is surely time to take another look at the natural world and be inspired by its order, constant cooperation and economy.

There is so much modern fear of nature that many children today are denied this precious interaction. Our culture appears to have gone out of its way to prove the hostility and unpredictability of a frightening natural world.

And yet, is it not strange that despite the lethal armament of horns, teeth and claws on so many males competing for space and females, that very rarely is any serious damage done ? It does not appear to be the aim of nature to waste energy on retribution or revenge or anything else other than for the purposes of survival.

Then consider the relationship between humanity and those creatures most commonly attributed with violent intent towards us. In reality, we have no natural predators to fear, though we mistakenly give that title to many innocent creatures. Sharks do not like or seek out human flesh. Though admittedly of little consolation in the event, if bitten by one, it is likely because it was not impressed with your swimming style and considered you a dying seal. Shark attacks may be on the rise in a world in which both their existence and food stocks are at risk but there is no evidence that their desperate measures are vindictive or calculated. In our sentimentality, we mustn't confuse violence with the natural necessities of survival.

In fact, supposedly dangerous wildlife usually does all it can to avoid contact with humanity, perhaps sensing that such association will not end well. Snakes, lions and bears are only dangerous when surprised by humans without any perception of their environments or the wit for true respect. Anyone who has taken a walking tour through an African wildlife reserve will know that the intent of a good guide is to be aware of the wildlife and often to give it notice of benign intent. Then, hippos, lions, leopards, rhinos, hyenas, buffaloes and all other supposedly aggressive animals can be seen to be more concerned to keep well away.

Our popular culture is littered with examples of where our over-active imaginations have victimised creatures. The bat, the toad and the snake have been particularly maligned in this destructive process. But a favourite of mine is the common fly, which evokes for me less thoughts of a dangerous health-hazard than the numinous sound of inner nature. Surely to anyone of religious inclination the 'Lord of the Flies' is not a terrifying apparition but a creator of great wonder.

Even the harmless house spider becomes a feared enemy. The reality is that if children are taught to respect and cherish all nature, then the fear born of ignorance will melt away. We seem to need to separate ourselves from each other, from nature and from truth itself. But every time we create a distinction to make a limited sense of the world, we get further from the whole of which we are a precious part, a whole that includes the smallest creature and even matter itself. As my father the poet Rodney Russell put it: *'Sacred is the Dust'*.

This fearful sentiment is also the reason why we have become so suspicious of nature, while some are even disillusioned with its perceived Creator. "How can a loving God allow such cruelty?" In his book *The Power of Now* Eckhart Tolle puts it like this: *"If a fish is born in your aquarium and you call it John, write out a birth certificate, tell him about his family history and two minutes later he gets eaten by another fish – that's tragic. But it's*

only tragic because you projected a separate self where there was none. You got hold of a fraction of a dynamic process, a molecular dance, and made a separate entity out of it."

So if despite the spikes created by the warped narrative of dangerous elites, humanity is finding greater understanding and cooperation, how can we define this civil behaviour ? Then, how can we write a new narrative that can actually give us hope ?

Forget the notion of merely voting every 4 or 5 years, the ancient spirit of our democracy is of rule by the people; as many involved as possible and of greater significance than our elected 'representatives'. In the words of Ivo Mosley: "*In truly democratic communities, political participation is not a profession but a right — and perhaps also a duty . .*" Surprisingly enough, it is also the antithesis of capitalism because rather than a commodity, democracy is built on the very natural reality of endless bounty. The sun shines on all alike without prejudice or limit. Nature is not judgmental, respecting all life. In its true sense, rule by the people must include all of us without judgment of status or wealth.

This understanding has slowly grown despite the worst excesses of our imperial past; from well before the equity of The Enlightenment to the more recent struggles for universal suffrage and the rights of minorities. This is not so much rule by the mob or even the majority but by us all, active and participating to make our systems constantly accountable and adaptable. That makes democracy more of a spirit that any particular place or culture and therefore a constant process or if you like, a gradual *civil-isation*.

One could give as an example of this 'spirit' the situation in modern Hong Kong. It is true that Britain never granted the vote to the people there but there was something even more precious that had become part of the culture of the Island. It was a belief in the dignity of the individual, in the rule of law and respect for all people. It might be hard to quantify but that doesn't make it less valid or crucial to the evolution of a truly civil society.

This process relies on the belief in the dignity of humanity but also of all life and ultimately our precious planet itself. That is why we assume to give a vote to everyone – and where democracy is better realised – involve as many as possible in the act of rule, through education and socio-political process. A sure sign of the degradation of this spirit or process is where for example 'defence' is championed in preference to education or environment concerns. The latter process not only reduces the ability of a population to participate but ultimately enslaves them in the triple damnations of war, debt and bondage. As I write, many in the US will be aware this change of spirit, as that country slides down the Global Peace Index ranking.

A society that revolves around the purchase and sale of commodities, will never fully appreciate the limitless bounty of nature. The most profound realisation is that nature gives us unconditional love, the ultimate non-commodity. Love might be democracy in its purest sense but more realistic is the lesser prerequisite for respect. If you like, it starts with toleration and then

matures to fundamental respect, with the ultimate vision of love for all life. It is the concept described in all the great religions before oppressive statecraft hijacked their momentum for the purposes of domination. But it is just as much the sentiment of non-believers with the wisdom to perceive it.

Without that vision of the true meaning of love, there really is no hope. But with it, an ever-growing consensus can build the culture of democracy freed from the limitations of any one individual; a culture that is also one of peace, and as we have seen, the natural order.

Bhungroo wins the Buckminster Fuller Challenge 2017

Bhungroo, a project of the Sustainable Initiative Forum in Gujarat (Gandhi's home state) has won the above Challenge with a highly effective 'low-tech' device that can filter, inject and store water from precipitation in the water table. It uses only 1 square metre of surface area to drill and will be of great benefit to poorer farmers. Although simple to implement and operate, it is highly sophisticated and is based on a deep understanding of climatic, hydrological and geological factors. The model is spreading to other parts of India and is attracting interest in other countries.

Book Review

Gandhi in a Canadian Context: Relationships between Mahatma Gandhi and Canada Edited by Alex Damm Wilfred Laurier University Press 2017

How much do you know, dear reader, about the connections between Gandhi and Canada? This reviewer confesses to have known almost nothing (apart from it being the home of leading Gandhi scholar Anthony Parel) until this book arrived courtesy of a GF Friend of long standing who is the editor of the book – Alex Damm.

It is a collection of essays written by academics teaching mostly in Canadian universities. Alex himself teaches a course on Gandhi at Wilfred Laurier University, Ontario, in addition to Biblical courses. His introduction to the book sets the scene and in a further paper he considers Gandhi's understanding of Canada. In his early years Gandhi referred to Canada as a self-governing colony of Britain and indeed Canada was closely tied to Britain for most of the 20th century; he appeared also to be hardly aware of the French Canadians and the Native Canadians. His focus on Canada up till 1917 was on how the country treated Indian immigrants and later he considered Canada in the context of Indian home rule. Indians before the First World War travelled to British Columbia seeking labouring work but they were generally not welcome and were discriminated against which led Gandhi to criticise the government in *Indian Opinion*. However he was pleased to see

the Indian immigrants in Vancouver beginning to stand up for their rights as British citizens. By 1929 he observed that Sikhs had integrated quite well in Vancouver. From 1917 Gandhi saw Canada more as a model for India's future self-governance but after a decade he shifted his sights higher towards total independence for India.

But how have Canadians regarded Gandhi ? One Canadian of Indian origin who has helped to develop interest in Gandhi and his ideas is biologist Professor Rama S Singh. In 1993 he established the Gandhi Peace Festival in Hamilton which celebrated its 25th Festival recently. He helped to initiate Gandhi Lectures at McMaster University in 1996 which have been delivered by well known activists and academics, many from India, and he also helped to found a women's development organisation in India called Mahila Shanti Sena (Women's Peace Corps) in 2002. Anne M Pearson (granddaughter of Canadian Prime minister Lester Pearson) has been much involved in this which includes arranging student interns to go to India for up to three months. She also teaches Gandhi studies at McMaster University.

The longest essay in the book is by Harold Coward, Founder Director of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria, who gives an overview of the place of Gandhi in Canadian religious studies. One of the interests is Gandhi's religious pluralism and here Gandhi's early contacts were a factor in developing this outlook – as a child he knew Jains and Muslims as well as the Hinduism of his family; when he went to Britain as a student he had contact with Christians and in South Africa with Christians and Jews. Coward shows how Canadian scholars have contributed to understanding Gandhi's developing outlook as he matured and also produced critiques of Gandhi, an area which he feels was somewhat neglected. Another theme is the role of the Bhagavadgita in Gandhi's outlook including his unorthodox interpretation of it with regard to war which he read as metaphorical in contrast to such readers as those advocating Hindutva (a Hindu nationalism) who took it literally. A further theme receiving attention of Canadian scholars has been Gandhi's pro-feminine outlook; another is the influence of Gandhi's critique of technology and modernism on George Grant, one of Canada's leading political philosophers.

Under a familiar title 'Do Gandhi's Teachings Have Relevance Today?', Kay Koppedray, who taught a course on Gandhi for 22 years, wanted to find out if the teaching had any lasting impact on her students. In retirement she was only able to contact 28 students and of these 17 actually returned write-ups so the sample was small. On most of these students at least the study of Gandhi had a lasting impact. Part of the benefit of study, she says, could have been gained from a liberal arts course with different content which would also have developed critical thinking, but the teacher was surprised at how much knowledge of Gandhi had been retained and also how some said they continued to reflect on Gandhi and his ideas for years, with a few mentioning trying to integrate their lives with Gandhi's philosophy.

Concerned about the negative image of Muslims in the media, Ramin Jahanbegloo looks to the many connections that Gandhi had to Islam and Muslims. One of the earliest in Gandhi's life was his boyhood friend Sheikh Mehtab, a relationship that was however a mixed one; Gandhi admired Mehtab for his athleticism and courage but it was the same youth who led him, for a short time, to eat meat. Later his employer in South Africa was a Muslim merchant, Abdullah Sheth, and it was at this period that he read the Qur'an in translation. Back in India Gandhi took up a Muslim cause following the Great War, namely, the Khilafat movement through which he hoped to unite Hindus and Muslims. Most important, however, were the influence of his Congress colleagues Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Azad was an Islamic scholar who believed in a pluralistic, democratic polity which India could become. Ghaffar Khan was remarkable in his strong belief in nonviolence who formed a nonviolent army among his fellow Pathans. It is to such individuals as Azad and Khan, as well as Gandhi, that Canadian Muslims should look for inspiration.

Klaus Klostermaier, another (former) Professor of Religious Studies this time in Winnipeg, emphasises the importance of Gandhi's two great principles of Truth (satya) and Nonviolence (ahimsa) for the creation and maintenance of a healthy society. He also points out that Gandhi was a natural environmentalist before society became aware of the importance of ecology. The idea of simplicity of lifestyle, small scale and local development make sense however unpopular they are in developed societies.

Paul Younger taught a course at MacMaster University called 'The life and Thought of Mohandas K Gandhi' every other year from 1970 to 2007 during which period the composition of the students changed somewhat. From 1962 a liberalisation of immigration rules led to an influx of South Asians particularly Hindus and Muslims to add to the Sikhs who had come early in the century. In the 1970s further legislation allowed political refugees to enter more easily and people of Indian descent arrived from Uganda and Guyana; in the 1980s Sri Lankan Tamils arrived. The new arrivals from the 1960s found that a point of contact with their Canadian neighbours was the name 'Gandhi' even if they knew only a little about the man. Many of the students joining the class in the 60s were draft dodgers and hippies who were interested in the spirituality of Gandhi as well as his nonviolent advocacy. The 1970s was the age of the women as Indo-Canadian women started to enter the universities and some were drawn to the Gandhi courses. They were often surprised to find that Gandhi had a very natural relationship with both Western women from his student days in Britain onwards, as well as Indian women who if they came from traditional families were encouraged by him to leave purdah behind. This stimulated an examination of their own position in Canadian society. The 1980s was the age of multiculturalism as the Government responded to reality with appropriate legislation. The Gandhi course saw those Indo-Canadians attending forming a majority the first time and there was a tendency for them to divide into their own cultural sub-

groups, especially Sikhs and Tamils. The 1990s brought interest in environmental issues and the connection to Gandhi's ideas on technology and lifestyle. In McMaster University the Gandhi course attracted increasing numbers of Canadians of Indian origin who found Gandhi a help in developing the idea of community.

Finally, the paper which I personally found most useful happens to be the one least connected to Canada. Scott Daniel Dunbar who teaches at Monash University in Australia, has written on 'A Dent in His Saintly Halo ? Mahatma Gandhi's Intolerance Against Cowards'. One of the puzzles in Gandhi's life is how he participated in war (albeit as a noncombatant) yet regarded nonviolence as one of the two great principles directing his life. One reason is that he had great respect for human courage which he believed could be displayed in war and this could lead him to recommend participation in war to those who did not believe, like him, in nonviolence. Dunbar thinks that Gandhi's attitude to cowards, often expressed in very strong language, amounts to intolerance and he traces this particularly to the influence on Gandhi of traditional Indian culture's respect for the brave warrior, expressed in the Bhagavadgita among other scriptures. The ideal satyagrahi, however, remains the fearless nonviolent warrior ready to die in a good cause.

The reviewer found this a stimulating and uncommon collection of essays but the book is a costly hardcover. It is to be hoped that more than a few libraries will find the resources to stock it. *George Paxton*



2 October 2017

Twisha Chandra and Prem Prakash are a couple who lived in London until they moved to the USA three years ago but have remained members of the GF Executive. Since then their son Atreya (in this photo and the front cover) has been born and they now live in Bellevue, Washington State.

On 2 October they planned to go to the Gandhi statue as is their practice on Gandhi's birthday but then heard the news of the terrible mass shooting in Las Vegas and decided to make it a candlelight vigil to show sympathy towards the victims. Atreya is seen with his dad Prem beyond receiving a candle.

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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