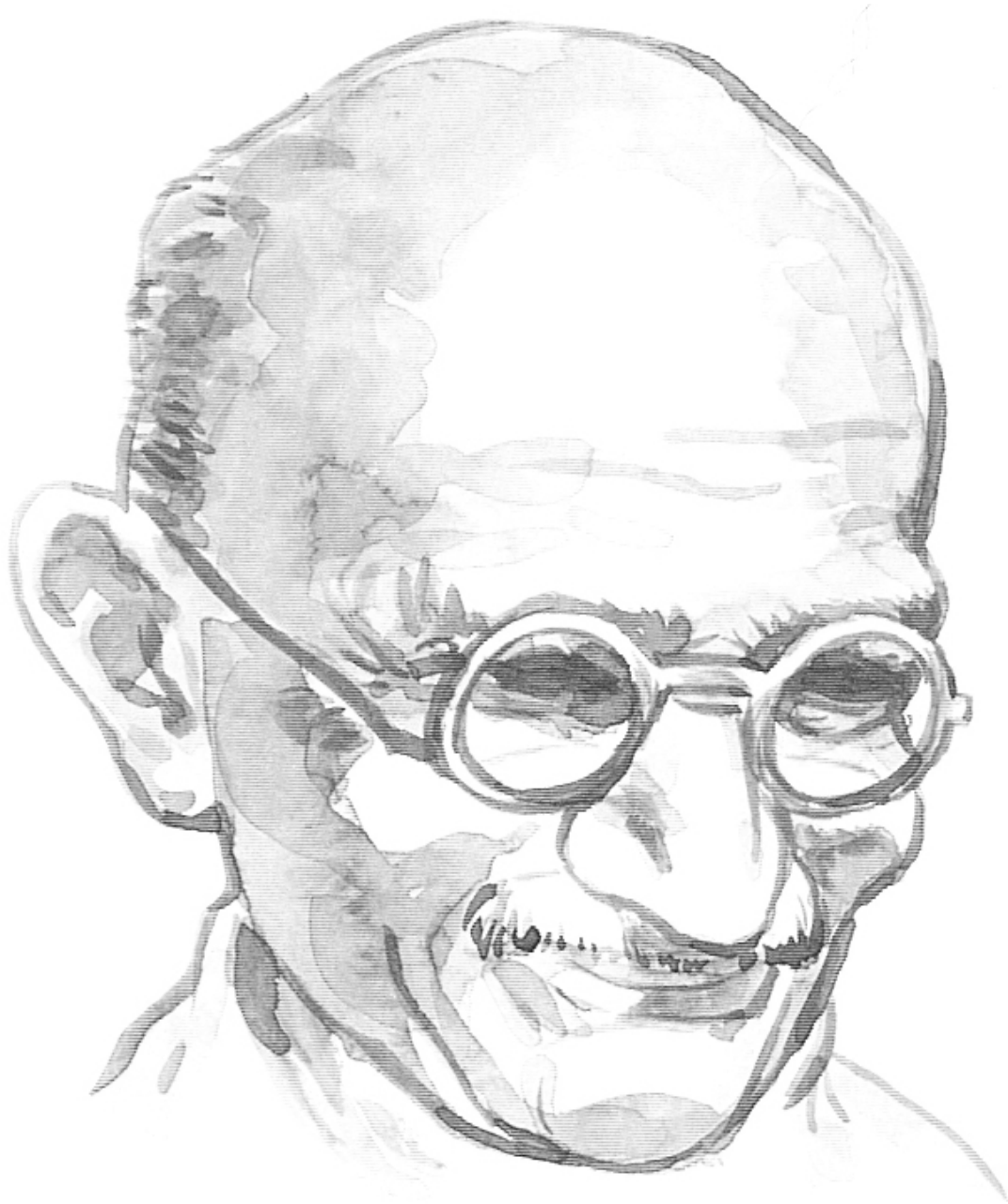


The Gandhi Way



Newsletter of the Gandhi Foundation
No.164 Summer 2025 ISSN 1462-9

GANDHI – FICTION AND TRUTH



GANDHI FOUNDATION ANNUAL LECTURE 2025

Professor Krishna Kumar, eminent Indian academic, noted for his writings on the sociology and history of education and former Director of the National Council of Educational Research and Training on a short visit discusses what Gandhi thought about learning and the symbols of ‘progress’.

*Copies of Professor’s latest book, ‘Thank You, Gandhi’ will be on sale. Q&A
Light refreshments will be available.*

THURSDAY, 22nd MAY 2.30 PM

Kingsley Hall, Powis Road, Bromley by Bow, London, E3 3HJ

FREE ENTRY – TICKETS BY EVENTBRITE

www.gandhifoundation.org, gandhifoundationemail@gmail.com

Eventbrite link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/gandhi-foundation-annual-lecture-tickets-1317881933339?aff=oddtcreator>

Gandhi—Fiction and Truth by Krishna Kumar

Summary of GF Annual Lecture 2025

The distinction between fiction and fake helps us to consider how, at times, fiction provides the only access to truth. My book *Thank You, Gandhi* engages with him through the imagined story of a life-long friendship between two boys born after his assassination. The genre enables Gandhi to be liberated from his historical context, leaving us free to have a hard talk with him, where we can tell him how we feel today. His own little book, *Hind Swaraj*, presents a similar, imaginary dialogue, written during a journey by ship. It contains Gandhi's scream – his rejection of the rational and its idea of progress. His scream brings to life the role of fear in making violence seem a reasonable choice.

Gandhi's doctrine came alive during the recent pandemic when both rich and poor nations struggled as equals in a stand-still world. Millions of urban migrants walked hundreds of miles back to their safer villages, belying received economic wisdom that urbanisation means progress. That same wisdom urges us to hope that technological progress will avert the catastrophe that we currently title 'climate change.' Gandhi's doctrine continues to reveal its truth. Marjorie Sykes, his British associate who stayed back in India, wrote about Gandhi's *nai talim* (new education): to the extent it was true, its time will come.



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What can we learn from Gandhiji's life and work?

Asha Buch

Countless people have written numerous volumes about Gandhi's life and work. Most of it has been read and discussed. He has been praised and revered, and criticised too at the same time. But how much have we understood his principles and put them into practice ?

At present, divisions in the name of religion and inciting violence is on the rise all over the world. Leaders bearing the Right wing ideologies are re-emerging in many countries. Attacks on human rights – especially women's rights – are on the increase; and as if this is not enough, the problem of environmental crisis is engulfing the entire human society. At this dark moment we tend to turn to Gandhi for the solution. Why? Perhaps his ideologies are just as much or even more relevant than ever.

Here is the essence of Gandhiji's writings and his work as I understand it. If whatever we see, listen and read supports the Truth, then we must implement it in our daily life. We must have faith in the fact that if one person can put those principles into practice, so can the whole society (that is why after seeing the play about the king Harishchandra Gandhi thought, "Why can't we *all* become the pursuants of Truth like king Harishchandra?" and he implemented his idea and tested it in various Satyagrahas. Here the stress is on the word 'All' and that suggests his trust in the people's power. Every individual and group of people is free to seek revenge for insults and injustice they endure. Only the way to demand justice should be different; it should be a nonviolent means to achieve their goal. After ensuring that the truth is on their side, they should present rational arguments to the perpetrators of the insults and injustice and ask to protect their rights, be prepared to negotiate and compromise. Only if having failed in all these peaceful means should they take more effective actions. In doing so, they must protect the respect of themselves as well as that of their opponents. Satyagrahis must fight not to chop the heads of their opponents, but rather help them realise the impact of their unjust behaviour, which will change their hearts. It is justified to take all nonviolent measures – such as promote communal resistance, observe strikes, organise peaceful protests, deliver speeches for protection of one's own rights, but in doing so, one has to be prepared to die, not to kill. We have to be trained to be totally nonviolent.

We can present the facts politely, but firmly even to the highest command in the government. One can mention one's own religious principles and cultural values, but should avoid any vain remarks.

For every citizen it is a crime to break a just law, but it is also wrong to obey an unjust law. To break unjust laws is not only the right of citizens, but it is a duty of a responsible citizen too.

Passive resistance should not be inactive or ineffective. It must be an active effort to protect our own rights. Fight against the rage and injustice inflicted by your opponents, but do not incite them to inflict unjust and violent acts upon you. A Satyagrahi must not think of killing any individual, group of people or representative of government for imposing and implementing wrong and unjust laws, but always work towards making them realise their wrongdoings by changing their hearts. The truth was on his side and that is why Gandhiji could see eye to eye and talk to the judge about the unjust laws imposed on the indigo farmers in Champaran district. This is the reason why Gandhi had courage to say to the Viceroy of India, "You are ruling in someone else's land. See the wisdom in peacefully leaving our country." He could make this bold and brave statement because he had faith in the nonviolent movement and his firm commitment in not resting until the goal was achieved.

From all political and social movements that Gandhi propagated, all his associates, political and social leaders learnt the lesson that if you adhere to the truth and remain fearless, you will be victorious. If you want to serve the people, live among them, only then will you be able to put your finger on their pulse and become capable of guiding them into the right direction to help them to protect their own interest.

As Richard Attenborough said, Gandhi is still inspiring the world, people still respect him. Why? Gandhi believed that even if he is in the minority of one, he will live his life considering truth as the only ultimate goal. He paid the ultimate price for his action. He did not own any material wealth, he did not hold any political position, nor did he possess any creative skills of an artist, and yet when he was assassinated, the whole world was in mourning. Through Gandhi's life and work it was proved that Truth is more powerful than the empire. The belief that might is right was proved wrong, and that right is mightier was proved to be true.

We pray to God to grant us courage to put these simple and easy principles into practice.

New Peace Pagoda inaugurated in India

Although Buddhism was born in north east India and spread throughout the country and then north and east to much of Asia it did in time disappear from its country of origin (probably by 12 century CE). In the 20th century it began to re-establish itself in India.

The first Peace Pagoda in south India in modern times has been built and inaugurated at a ceremony on 21 February 2025 at Sankaraankovil.

Bhikkhu G Nagase of the London Peace Pagoda was present having walked from Gandhigram, leaving on 11 February, via the Gandhi Museum Madurai. He took the photographs below..



Bhikkhu G Nagase cordially invites you to attend
**The 40th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF
THE LONDON PEACE PAGODA ON SATURDAY, 21st JUNE 2025 AT 2 PM**

*** Annual ceremony of Nipponzan Myohoji
with various Buddhist traditions.**

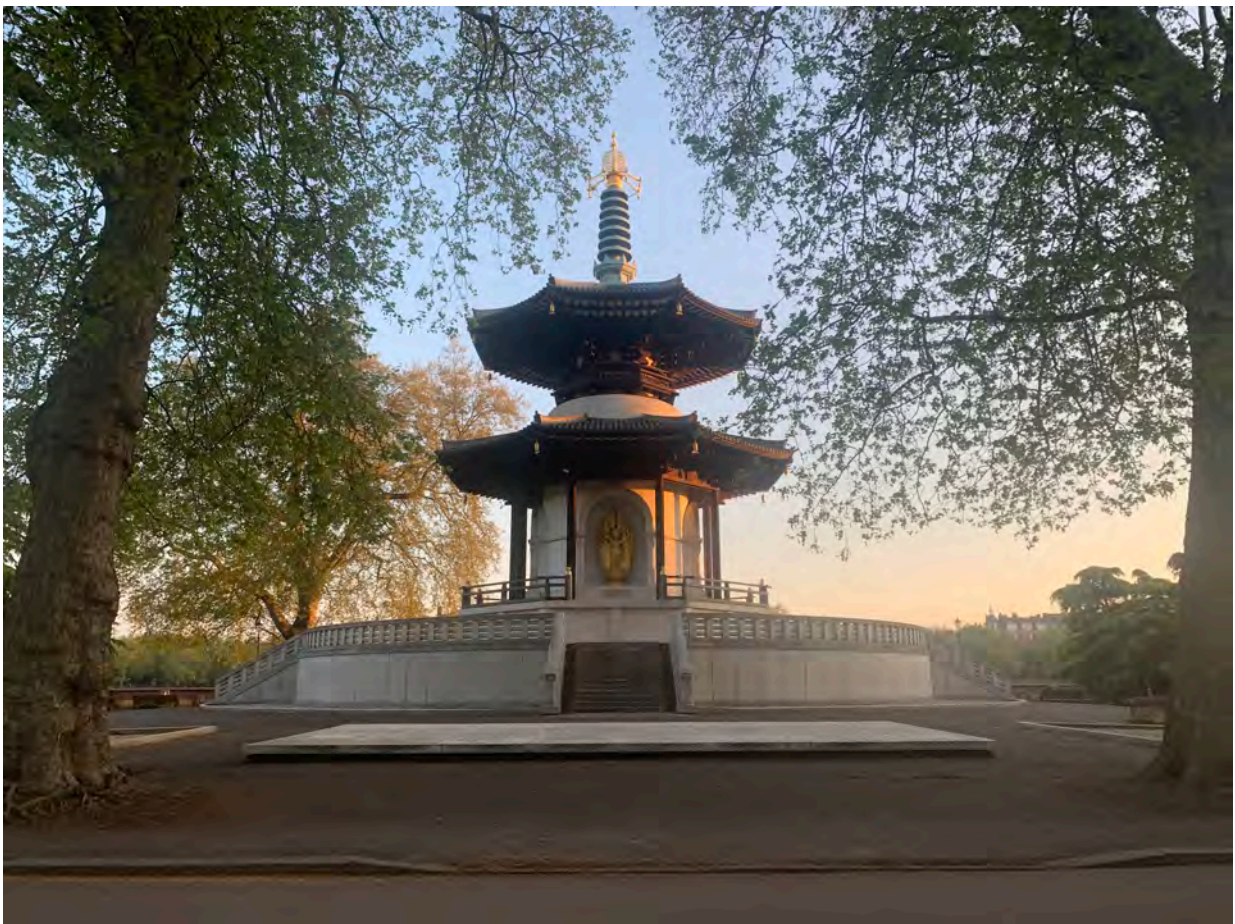
*** Interfaith prayers for peace.**

*** Messages and speeches.**

*** Devotional music and dance.**

The programme will be followed by an offering of tea and light refreshments,
ending by 5 pm.

Everyone is welcome to spontaneously offer incense, flowers, candles, etc.



Future events:

Wednesday, August 6th ***Hiroshima Day** at Tavistock Square (12 noon to 1 pm)
organised by London Region CND, Tel: 020 7607 2302.

Saturday, August 9th **Nagasaki Day** – Peace Walk from Westminster
Cathedral (TBC) to the London Peace Pagoda followed by a
Lantern Lighting Ceremony at sunset (no float).

Gandhi and Journalism

Prasun Sonwalkar

One of the many remarkable aspects of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's life is that until the age of 19, when he arrived in England to study Law in 1888, he had not read any newspaper. By then, the technology of print had proliferated in colonial India, first in Calcutta from 1780 and later across the sub-continent. But newspapers and journalism were to play a major role not only in his personal evolution but also how India's political fortunes played out, though there has been less focus on the study of Gandhi as a journalist.

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, which run to almost a hundred volumes, draw massively from his writings in the three journals he founded and edited. He was closely associated with at least five publications: *Indian Opinion* (English), *Young India* (English), *Navjivan* (Gujarati), *Harijan* (English), *Harijansevak* (Hindi) and *Harijanbandhu* (Gujarati). More than 75 per cent of the editorial content in the publications came from his own pen. It is estimated that Gandhi wrote more than 10 million words during his lifetime.

Like his views on various subjects, his ethical and moral perspectives about journalism stand out as a reference point, as a gold standard to aspire for, even though in reality journalism in India and across the globe today is facing degeneration and practices that Gandhi warned of.

For example, he wrote: "In my humble opinion, it is wrong to use newspaper as a means of earning a living. There are certain spheres of work, which are of such consequence and have such bearing on welfare that to undertake them for earning one's livelihood will defeat the primary aim behind them. When a newspaper is treated as a means of making profits, the result is likely to be serious malpractices...The true function of journalism is to educate the public mind, not to stock it with wanted and unwanted impressions. The sole aim of journalism should be service".

Gandhi's tryst with journalism began in England, where he began seriously reading newspapers such as *The Telegraph*, *Daily News* and *Pall Mall Gazette*. He was friendly with members of the London Vegetarian Society, which had its weekly, *The Vegetarian*. He wrote regularly for the weekly on subjects such as food, festivals, rituals and customs of Indians. His first piece was published on 7 February 1891 with a headline, 'Indian Vegetarian'. Gandhi became so engrossed in writing for the weekly that he sent a two-part

article, 'On My Way Home again to India', after returning to India, published in *The Vegetarian* on 9 and 16 April 1892.

While in England, Gandhi saw and understood the power of the written word to educate, inspire, and mobilise people. He carried forward this newly acquired skill to powerful effect first in South Africa and then in India. He sought to mould and mobilise public opinion through his writing, challenge British colonialism and promote Indian nationalism. Gandhi's journalism was characterised by its emphasis on simplicity, clarity, and used his publications to communicate complex ideas and moral principles to a wide audience.

In South Africa, he first published the *Green Pamphlet* in 1896, a brochure on the situation there, which created quite a stir in India. It was discussed by almost every Indian newspaper and printed 5,000 times in two editions. Seeing the wide impact of the written word, he established *Indian Opinion* in 1903. The weekly had two main objectives: to represent the grievances of South African Indians to the rulers, especially to urge the removal of barriers to settlement and employment considered 'undeserved and unjust'; and to unite the diverse elements among the Indian diaspora. He wrote in the journal that "we are not, and ought not to be, Tamils or Calcutta men, Mohamedans or Hindus, Brahmans or Banyas, but simply and solely British Indians, and as such we must sink or swim together". The weekly was published in English, Hindi, Tamil, and Gujarati.

Gandhi later wrote about *Indian Opinion* in his autobiography: "Satyagraha would probably have been impossible without this weekly. For me, it became a real treasure trove of insights into human nature in all its nuances...It was as though the entire community was thinking aloud in this communication with me. It made me very conscious of the responsibility of a journalist, and the influence it gave me over the community made the future struggle truly possible, while also giving it its proper dignity and irresistible strength".

Gandhi's time in South Africa not only shaped many of his ideas and traits, but also made him an astute journalist, as he later wrote: "My newspapers became for me a training ground in self-restraint and a means for studying human nature in all its shades and variations. Without the newspapers a movement like Satyagraha could not have been possible".

Journalism taught Gandhi the discipline of being fair and remaining cool even when he was criticised. It helped him clarify his own ideas and visions, to stay on track, to be consistent, to assume full accountability for his actions

and words, to think globally and to walk the talk. A unique characteristic of his writing is its simplicity, which made it easy to understand.

Gandhi later wrote in his autobiography: “In the very first month of *Indian Opinion*, I realised that the sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countryside and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within. If this line of reasoning is correct, how many of the journals in the world would stand the test? But who would stop those that are useless? The useful and the useless must, like good and evil generally, go on together, and man must make his choice”.

Gandhi returned to India in 1915 and used journalism as a potent tool against colonialism and seek India’s independence in the face of several restrictive laws. He took over the English-language weekly *Young India*, as well as *Navjivan*. In 1933, he also launched *Harijan*, a weekly newspaper whose sole aim was to improve the living situation of a section of society called the untouchables, referring to them as ‘Harijans’ (people of God), and dedicated the newspaper to them.

Gandhi remained both politically active and a media figure right up until his death, interacting with Indian and western journalists and staging newsworthy events such as the Salt March in 1930 that brought him global attention.

Krishnaswami Swaminathan, chief editor of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, has highlighted the transparent simplicity of Gandhi’s prose, which, he wrote, “is a natural expression of his democratic temper. There is no conscious ornamentation, no obtrusive trick of style calling attention to itself. The style is a blend of the modern manner of an individual sharing his ideas and experiences with his readers, and the impersonal manner of the Indian tradition in which the thought is more important than the person expounding it. The sense of equality with the common man is the mark of Gandhi’s style and the burden of his teaching. To feel and appreciate this essence of Gandhi the man, in his writings and speeches, is the best education for true democracy”.

It is clear that Gandhi saw newspapers and journalism as powerful tools in his life’s mission, but he was not the first or only such leading light to use them.

The torch of using the printed word to oppose the British was first lit by individuals such as Rammohun Roy (1772-1833; died in Bristol), H L V Derozio, Balshastri Jambhekar and Bhabhani Charan Bandopadhyay in the early nineteenth century. A century later, like Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and B R Ambedkar were among several leaders who used the press to present Indian perspectives and oppose the British to gain independence.

Gandhi and his colleagues used the power of the printed word to gain independence in 1947, but as historians have noted, the process that led to the Round Table Conference in London 1930-31 was begun by Rammohun Roy and his colleagues, who first opposed the East India Company imposing restrictions on the press. The following section puts Gandhi's use of journalism in historical context.

Early Indian Journalism

The origin of Indian journalism is marked by political flux, when the Mughal Empire was in decline and a commercial enterprise from England—the East India Company (EIC)—was coming to terms with the reality of having assumed political power over most of the sub-continent. Journalism emerged amidst such conditions and uncertain attempts by the Company government to introduce new, modern ways of governance and other measures, most of which proved controversial and faced opposition from Indians.

The Company government was at the time engaged in battles across India, and watched uneasily as English-language journals were launched from 1780 onwards, when James Augustus Hicky published the first journal, *Hicky's Gazette Or Calcutta General Advertiser*. Alert to the dangers of Jacobinism, the EIC tried to control the press and prevent its growth from as early as 1799, by when British entrepreneurs and agency house came together to launch more journals. The Company government succeeded in controlling the press until 1818, by when the combination of a proliferating commercially driven print culture, a growing British community, a new generation of British editors and administrators, Christian missionaries and Indian elites alert to new ideas and impulses, ensured the growth of journalism and the idea of a free press. Several English-language journals followed Hicky's journal.

Members of the Indian intelligentsia, such as Rammohun Roy, living in Calcutta responded in creative ways to aspects of European culture that became available to them. They were quick to absorb new ideas from the west; at the heart of the excitement was the technology of print. In the last

two decades of the eighteenth century, Calcutta rapidly developed into the largest centre of printing in the sub-continent.

From 1818, several new journals appeared. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Calcutta was seen as home of the first fully formed print culture to appear outside Europe and North America, distinguished by its size, productivity, and multilingual and multinational constitution, as well as its large array of Asian languages and its inclusion of numerous non-Western investors and producers among its participants.

Print journalism had found a fertile soil in colonial Calcutta, but it also generated near-panic among colonial officials about its potential subversive effect on the army. In 1823, a rigorous Press Ordinance was promulgated, which made it mandatory for editors and publishers to secure licences for their journals. To secure the licences, they had to submit an affidavit to the chief secretary under oath. For any offence of discussing any of the subjects prohibited by law, the editor or publisher was liable to lose the licence.

The Indian opposition to the ordinance was led by Rammohun Roy, who was closely associated with at least five journals: *Bengal Gejeti* (Bengali, 1818), *The Brahmunicipal Magazine* (English–Bengali, 1821), *Sambad Kaumidi* (Bengali, 1821), *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* (Persian, 1822) and *Bengal Herald* (English, 1829). Roy and five others submitted a memorial in the Supreme Court, asking the court to hear objections against it. Besides Roy, it was signed by three Tagores (Chunder Coomar, Dwarkanath, Prosunno Coomar), Hurchunder Ghosh and Gowree Churn Bonnerjee.

The memorial discussed in a logical manner the general principles on which the claim of freedom of the press was based in all modern countries, and recalled the contribution Indians had made to the growth of British rule. It created a sensation at the time and came to be described as the ‘Areopagitica of Indian history’.

The memorial was read in court, but the judge dismissed it. The only other recourse Roy and his group had was to appeal to the King-in-Council in London. Roy then drafted another memorial, more sophisticated in its logic and arguments, and sent copies to London. Over 55 numbered and lengthy paragraphs, Roy repeated the opposition to the Press Ordinance, but this memorial too failed to overturn the Press Ordinance. Together, the two memorials were seen as a daring act by Roy and his group at a time when expanding colonial rule was marked by arbitrary official decisions, racism, punishment, imprisonment and the rapacious extraction of resources. But

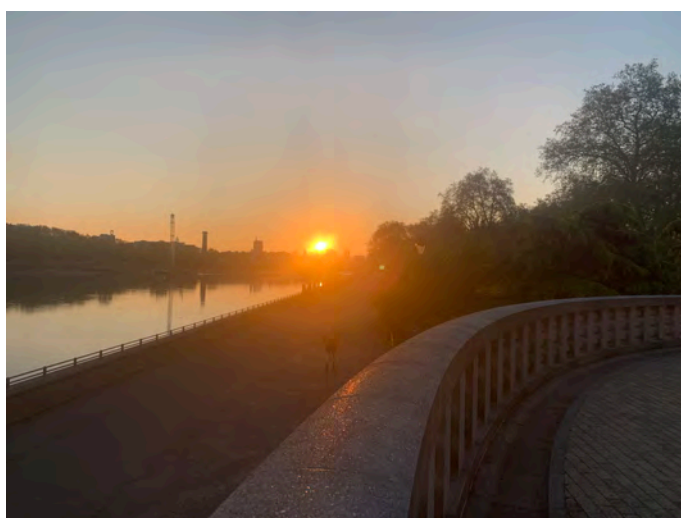
Roy took another daring step at the time: he closed his Persian journal, and set down the reasons for doing so in its last edition.

Roy's actions did not succeed in changing policy, but their significance lies in the ways in which the colonial authorities dealt with the press subsequently: the Press Ordinance was not implemented. The issue of freedom of the press had gained much publicity in London and in 1835 all the licensing and other restrictions on the press were removed. By then, the idea of a free press had become a key element of a growing public sphere in Calcutta and elsewhere in colonial India. The press had become a key site of discussion and protest as the Company government introduced new laws and initiatives to govern India. The largely permissive situation for the press continued until the 1857 rebellion, by when opinions and positions had hardened on both sides, as Indian journals openly criticised the British and the EIC imposed new restrictions on the press.

But the press had grown all over colonial India, despite new repressive measures. As historian R C Majumdar put it, “(The) daring act of Rammohan and his five associates marks the beginning of a new type of political activity which was destined to be the special characteristic of India for nearly a century”. As the colonial anthropologist and historian L S S O'Malley wrote, the Round Table Conference of 1930–1931 “might never have come about had the great Ram Mohan Roy not taken the lead, and three Tagores, a Ghose, and a Banerji, not joined him in the starting the process that led to it”.

Gandhi, through his words and deeds, effectively carried forward Roy's torch that culminated in India's freedom.

Prasun Sonwalkar, PhD, is a London-based writer and former academic.



Gandhi and Schweitzer

Feargus O'Connor

This year is the 150th anniversary of the birth of Dr Albert Schweitzer and so I think it appropriate to pay tributes to both Dr Schweitzer and Mahatma Gandhi, two of the moral exemplars who have most inspired so many of us. Towards the end of his life Leo Tolstoy corresponded with Mahatma Gandhi, who was influenced by the great Russian writer's ethic of nonviolence and followed his noble and inspiring example, as Dr Martin Luther King was inspired by Gandhi himself.

Gandhi proclaimed that the fourfold foundation of the ethical principles inspiring his life and religious philosophy were *satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (nonviolence), *tapas* (austerity) and *swaraj* (self-rule). He believed that *satyagraha* (that force born of truth and love) required a 'high level of courage'. This instilled him with a sense of communion with all fellow living beings. It in turn required him to practise comprehensive nonviolence and recognise our universal kinship with all who live and breathe.

As a Hindu with a profound respect for the Jain ethic of *ahimsa* and as a regular reader of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Gandhi believed that all living beings were immaterial souls or selves (*Atman*).

He knew well that it is taught in the *Mahabharata* that all sentient beings, all animal souls, are fragments of the Cosmic Soul infusing and animating this immense Universe.

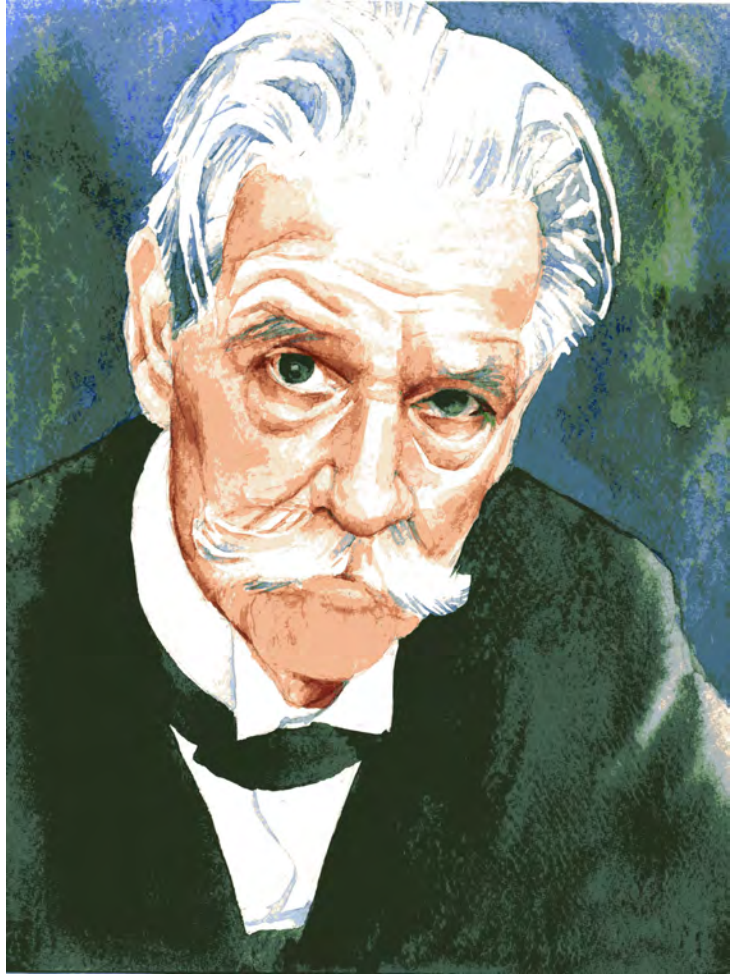
'The wise see the same Atman in a Brahmin endowed with wisdom and cultivation, in a cow, in an elephant ...in a dog or outcast.' (*Bhagavad Gita*) For that reason he strongly opposed animal experiments.

'I abhor vivisection with my whole soul. I detest the unpardonable slaughter of innocent life in the name of science and humanity, so called, and all the scientific discoveries stained with innocent blood I count as of no consequence.' Gandhi rejected purely utilitarian arguments in favour of such cruel experiments as utterly hypocritical and irreligious.

'The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way animals are treated. Vivisection is the blackest of all the black crimes that man is at present committing against God and His fair creation. It ill becomes us to invoke in our daily prayers the blessings of God, the Compassionate, if we in turn will not practise elementary compassion towards our fellow creatures.'

For Gandhi appreciating the grandeur of Creation and loving and cherishing all kindred souls require absolute adherence to *ahimsa* in all our actions towards fellow living beings. We must strive to refrain from harm at all times.

Dr Albert Schweitzer's foundational ethic was 'Reverence for Life' (in his original German *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*). This religious philosophy led him to reject anthropocentric ethics. To Schweitzer as to Gandhi, all living beings have inherent moral worth and this should awaken us to a sense of the interconnectedness of all sentient beings: a religious sense embodied in the Seventh Principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Schweitzer held that this ethic of reverence for life is nothing but Jesus' 'great commandment of love'.



'When the abuse of animals is widespread', he wrote, 'when the bellowing of thirsty animals in cattle cars is heard and ignored,

when cruelty still prevails in many slaughterhouses, when animals are clumsily and painfully butchered in our kitchens, when callous people inflict unimaginable torments upon animals and when some are exposed to the cruel games of children, all of us share in the guilt.'

He believed that to the truly ethical person all life is sacred' and we must 'seize every occasion to feel the happiness of helping living [beings] and shielding them from suffering and annihilation'.

Schweitzer, like Gandhi, looked forward to that time when 'thoughtless injury to life' would clearly be seen as incompatible with true ethics.

Speech by Feargus O'Connor given at our Gandhi Foundation multi-faith commemoration on 8 February 2025.

Painting of Schweitzer is by Setsuko Yoshida.

Saving lives in Gaza: honouring Gandhi and Schweitzer

'The suffering being inflicted on children in Gaza is unfathomable', according to Save the Children. 'In 15 months of conflict, over 17,000 children have been killed. Many more perished from hunger and

disease. Behind these appalling stats are the stories of individual children. They are buried under the rubble, cut off from their families, alone and afraid. The survivors face constant hunger and horrific violence. Many are stricken by terror and grief... Because right now, Gaza is on the brink of famine. Malnutrition and disease threaten children's survival. They urgently need food, shelter and medicines.'

According to the United Nations, the International Red Cross and other international relief agencies, at least 46,707 people have been killed in Gaza, including babies dying in incubators. Over 100,000 people have been injured. The health system has collapsed. Over 1000 health workers have been killed. Nearly 1,900,000 Gazans have been internally displaced.

If you wish to support this emergency appeal please send a cheque payable to the **British Red Cross** and kindly earmark it on the back to the **British Red Cross Gaza Crisis Appeal** and send it to the **British Red Cross, 44 Moorfields, London EC2Y 9AL**. You can make an online donation at **www.redcross.org.uk** and telephone donations on **0300 004 0338**

The British Red Cross has expressed its thanks to Gandhi Foundation members for their generous donations to this emergency appeal at our GF multifaith event at Golders Green Unitarians on 8 February. With additional donations from Gandhi Foundation members £1038 has been given to this Gaza appeal.

Gandhi's Evolving Perspective on Apartheid and Racism

Kumar Shubhamoorty

Those who have read a wrong history or have read history wrong are extremely vulnerable to be misled into a violent present. This applies to the group which defiled the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Washington DC in 2020 as part of Black Lives Matter protests. Gandhi has often been misunderstood about his perspectives and actions on the issue of apartheid in South Africa and on the plight of Dalits in India. The cause of misunderstanding is not lack of information but ignorance about the concept and dynamics of nonviolence.

The message to the charter conference of United Nations in San Francisco just after World War II in 1945 gives an insight to inclusive and indiscriminating ontology of Gandhi. The message highlights "the terrible deceptions and fraud" of war and emphasises that there could be no peace for the world without "universal freedom and equality of coloured races and nations". Here the mention of freedom and equality of coloured races gives a new meaning to the idea of freedom and equality. It clearly shows that Gandhi was not a leader who would ignore the issue of apartheid. Not only

intellectually but emotionally also, Gandhi had rid himself of all traces of apartheid.

Indulal Yagnik, a well known Gandhian worker recounts a story from a time when he was imprisoned along with Gandhi in Yerwada Prison in Pune between 1922 to 1924: “One evening our Negro warder, Aden, from Somaliland was bitten by a scorpion on his hand. He gave a shout. Mr. Gandhi was quickly on the spot. He first asked for a knife to cut the wound and let out the poison. But he found the knife dirty, so, missing no moment he quickly washed the area round the wound and applying his lips to the wound began to suck out the poison. He went on spitting after sucking and eventually stopped when Aden felt relief”.

Any person with any sense of apartheid in him could not have even thought of it. This is an example from Gandhi’s later days. Do not think this is to avoid the facts of Gandhi’s early days spent in south Africa. To assess those days and to appreciate his attitude correctly, one must know about his formative years as a child.

In his early childhood Gandhi or Moniya (Mohan) befriended Uka a boy of his age belonging to a cast considered to be untouchable among untouchables. They were playing and enjoying every day as the mother of Uka had to visit Gandhi’s house to scavenge the night soil. For many it is still anathema to touch a person from this cast. Gandhi’s mother objected to this and asked Moniya to stop playing with the boy. But Moniya began to argue with her. Why should I not play with him, while I can play with other boys freely, he questioned. His mother, less religious and more spiritual could not find any justification. She allowed Mohan to play with him on the condition he take a full bath before entering the house.

Another example of Gandhi’s spontaneous sense of unity with “the other people” is a Muslim boy who became a close friend of Gandhi. He advised Gandhi to eat meat if he wanted to be strong enough to defeat British imperialists. Gandhi took the advice of his Muslim friend. But within a few months Gandhi became convinced that vegetarian food is equally nutritious and stopped eating meat. For him it was a great relief.

These and several other documented instances show that Gandhi had no hesitation in mixing with people of untouchable castes or of other religions. On the contrary he had an inclination to do so from early childhood, always eager to widen his horizons.

Today people ask why Gandhi did not fight for the Blacks together with the Indian cause when he was in South Africa. These questions often presume that Gandhi was not against the apartheid regime in South Africa. The reality is just opposite. He was equally in favour of Black’s rights as about rights of Indians.

During the 'Zulu rebellion' of 1906, a group of Zulus was seen marching towards Gandhi's Phoenix Ashram in Natal. People thought they were going to attack the Ashram. That was simply not their motive. Gandhi was serving the injured Zulus as head of an ambulance corps permitted by White rulers. He could see that it was not a rebellion but a one-sided 'manhunt' of Blacks by White imperialists. He served Zulus with full dedication. His honest and immense feeling during this work of service, led him to the idea of taking the vow of celibacy (Brahmacharya) and inspiring many others to do the same.

When Gandhi began to take up the cause of the Indians called 'coolies', it was clear to him that any action had to be completely nonviolent. For those who do not know about the dynamics of nonviolence, it is difficult to understand why Gandhi did not take up the cause of Black people during his Satyagraha movement in South Africa.

To have a grasp of it, let us go forward to 1922, when Gandhi suddenly terminated his first non-cooperation movement in India. The movement was at its peak, it had galvanized the whole nation with participation and support from the educated and the rich to illiterate and beggars. The thought of withdrawal was opposed by almost all popular thinkers and leaders of India. The move was opposed by prominent leaders such as Ravindra Nath Tagore, Nehru, C.R. Das, Patel, and as would be expected by extremists who believed in violence.

Gandhi stood firm despite this opposition and ended the satyagraha. This was due to the violence committed by Indian people at Chauri Chaura, a remote place in eastern India. A procession of non-cooperators was attacked by police and beaten badly. People began to flee in panic. These leaders immediately gave a call to the mob to attack the police. The police retreated to their station and for safety they bolted themselves inside only to be burnt alive. Twenty-two policemen were killed.

Everyone asked the same question, "How can you withdraw such a great nonviolent movement on the pretext of violence committed only at one small place?" The non-cooperators were beaten so badly that they lost their control. It is human nature. Moreover, the number of policemen who died was not that big. But Gandhi was not convinced. His reply, "Go to the family of one policeman and ask his wife and children and you will get the answer".

Gandhi withdrew the nationwide movement which was started with a promise of "Swaraj (freedom) in one year". He went further to call the noncooperation movement a 'Himalayan Blunder'. It was launched when people were not prepared and trained for a nonviolent struggle. Gandhi risked his reputation and leadership for the sake of upholding the principle of nonviolence.

Analysing Gandhi's period in South Africa in the light of this incident can help us understand why Gandhi did not take up the issue of Apartheid in 1906 along with the issues of Indian people.

The Zulu leader John Dube, who studied in America and had settled at a place where Gandhi later established his Phoenix Ashram in 1904, had understood well the commitment of Gandhi to nonviolence and his acumen to carry masses along with him. In 1906, he saw a march of Coolies (Indians), facing a brutal attack by the police silently and marching towards their destination. The incidence inspired him to make a comment, "Gandhi was able to tap a vein in the Indian character that he was not sure existed in the Africans".

When in 1936 he was asked by historian Howard Thurman and his wife Baily, why he did not launch a joint movement with Blacks in South Africa, Gandhi replied promptly, "No, I purposely did not invite them. It would have endangered their cause. They could not have understood the technique of our struggle, nor could they have seen the purpose of utility of nonviolence".

It does not mean that Gandhi was unconcerned about the rights of the Africans. Back in 1894 Gandhi wrote in a letter to Times of Natal (26/10/1894) in response to what he obviously saw as an attempt to run down Indians in African eyes, "the Indians do not regret that capable Natives can exercise the franchise. They would regret it if it were otherwise. You, in your wisdom, would not allow the Indian or the Native the precious privilege under any circumstances, because they have a dark skin".

But yes, Gandhi was not in favour of a joint front. This was well understood by Nelson Mandela when he said, "that was the time and circumstances that Gandhi kept a distance with Blacks". The technique to use the power of nonviolence was at a nascent stage. However, it had created fear in the minds of the imperialists. In 1907 Churchill cited fears from "Africans learning evil ways from Indians".

If there had been a joint front of Blacks and Indians, most probably one section might have retaliated violently only to be crushed by the Government, already fearful of the "evil ways of Indians". If understood well the factor of "time and circumstances" mentioned by Nelson Mandela explains many strategies and behaviour of revolutionary leaders which otherwise we may misunderstand or may not understand. This is true with Gandhi when in his early days in South Africa he used words like 'savages' or 'Kaffirs'.

In later years as Gandhi gained enough experience of nonviolent struggle he began to advocate the strategy of complementing each other's struggles. But he was still not in favour of a joint front. In 1939 Gandhi said to Rev Tema, who was also a member of the ANC, "It will be a mistake (if a joint front is organised). You will be pooling together not your strength but weakness. You will best help one another by each standing on its own legs. The two cases are

different. The Indians are a microscopic minority. They can never be a menace to the white population. You on the other hand, are the sons of the soil who are being robbed of your inheritance. Yours is a far bigger issue. It ought not to be mixed up with that of the Indian. the Indians can help you by always acting on the square with you. They may not put themselves in opposition to your legitimate aspirations, or run you down as ‘savages’ while exalting themselves as cultured people to secure concessions at your expense”.

In a meeting of AICC, in Mumbai in June 1939 Gandhi advised, “if the rights of Indians in S. Africa” conflicted with their (the Africans’) vital interests, Indians should forgo those rights.

The above quotes make clear that for Gandhi, Native rights in South Africa should always take precedence over the rights of Indians or other people. But he was also clear, the struggle for Natives’ rights must be carried on under their own leadership. The aggrieved must fight on their own. Pyarelal quotes Gandhi’s words: “they should cultivate their own leadership”. Gandhi was sure, as he said to Mr Tobias at his Sewagram Ashram, “With right, which is on their side, and the choice of nonviolence as their only weapon, if they will make it such, a bright future is assured”.

In conclusion, I must emphasise that for Gandhi, truth and nonviolence gave rise to unbeatable strategies, rather win win strategies. Gandhi always meant by nonviolence, nonviolence of the brave. During the communal riots triggered by the partition of India, he lamented that the nonviolence of India was that of the cowards and not of the brave. Earlier (1939) when asked by Tema, Gandhi had replied “(Africans should adopt) nonviolence of the brave, not of the coward”. A few years earlier, in 1936, when he knew more about Negroes and the Negro spirituals, Gandhi said that “possibly the Negroes would deliver nonviolence to the world.”

Today the African Americans and the Whites must keep this promise of nonviolence in their mind, a promise not only from Gandhi but also from Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. It’s ‘time and circumstances’ of theirs.

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Dissatisfied with the education system and the purpose it served, **Kumar Shubhamoorty** discontinued with his college education to join the Gram Swarajya Sarvodaya movement led by Vinoba and Jay Prakash Narayan in 1970.

In 1974, when Jay Prakash accepted the invitation of the students of Bihar to lead their movement against corruption and rising prices, Shubhamoorty assisted Jay Prakash for channelling the student energy towards the idea of an integral revolution. Under Jay Prakash's leadership the movement, called Sampurn Kranti (Total Revolution), rapidly gained momentum drawing support from across the nation and from people of all walks of life. Success led to greater repression by governments at both state and central levels, eventually leading to declaration of a nationwide state of emergency in mid 1975. Shubhamoorty was arrested and spent the next year and a half as a political prisoner.

Shubhamoorty then joined his wife, Kalpana Sashtri, who had formed an NGO, Samudaya, to work with the most downtrodden people of a most backward area in Bihar, work was with women and children considered to be untouchables. In the next 25 years Samudaya worked with women and children, with a focus on community health activities. During this period Shubhamoorty continued to coordinate and network with Sarvodaya and other Gandhian movements.

In 2006, the state government of Bihar offered Shubhamoorty the chairpersonship of Bihar Bhoodan Yagna Committee, a post in which he continued for 12 years. The Committee is responsible for the distribution of donated land received through the land gift movement led by Vinoba. There was a huge backlog which Shubhamoorty cleared during his tenure, distributing the land to about 50000 families, with all the title deeds in the name of women. Shubhamoorty is currently focused on countering fascist tendencies that are beginning to dominate governance in India.

Militarisation, climate change – and peace

Military investment is ineffective at creating jobs and increases environmental pollution. Military spending is not a viable strategy for growth or the creation of good jobs, as it is an inefficient form of public investment. Whereas other forms of investment in infrastructure or manufacturing are in continuous use, adding a new social or economic value, military equipment is not. Alternatively arms are exported, fuelling deadly conflicts and displacement in climate-vulnerable countries.

Meanwhile the military and associated industries are energy-intensive and environmental destructive.

Military spending should not be greenwashed or presented as the best route to growth.

The big winners of the global arms race are weapons companies (the big five being Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics, RTX, and Northrop Grumman in the US, BAE Systems, Airbus, Leonardo, Thales, and Rheinmetall in Europe) and their financiers, all of which are closely linked to the fossil fuel industry. Militarisation is a victory for corporate power and fossil capital.

From a Briefing for Climate Organisations produced April 2025 by Transnational Institute, North South Tipping Point, and Scientists for Global Responsibility.

The US has warned that China is rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal. The Defense Intelligence Agency previously claimed that China had around 200 warheads in 2020 and that it would reach at least twice that by the end of the decade. Now it says that China has already reached 500 such weapons and will have more than 1,000 by 2030.

Defense News, 24 October 2024

Tax Avoidance

Public services in the UK and especially the NHS are in dire need of extra funding. Yet a recent report showed that because of an ageing population they will need an extra £142 billion each year just to maintain the present standard of service. How could this be achieved?

TaxWatch recently demonstrated how big tech firms could be starving the UK's public purse of billions a year. This is standard practice by many multinational companies 'shifting' profits to countries where corporation tax is low or non-existent. One case is Amazon which for their main UK division paid no corporation tax in the UK for two years, despite making a profit of £222million in 2022. This is achieved by generous tax breaks for business investment in the UK. In addition Amazon declares a lot of its revenue in Luxembourg instead of the UK, where the rate of tax is generally lower than in the UK. In 2017 the European Commission stated that Amazon did not pay tax on almost three quarters of their profit.

Globally, Tax Justice Network estimate that £3.8 trillion will be lost to tax avoidance over the next decade. Tightening up on tax avoidance is one method – only one – for bringing in some revenue for public use.

In November 2023 groundwork for the creation of a new United Nations Tax Convention was laid when 125 states voted for it. Sadly, but not surprisingly, 48 states (mostly the rich) voted against it. (*Tax Justice UK*)

Pope Francis 1936-2025

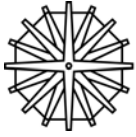


The commandment of peace is inscribed in the depths of the religious traditions. Believers have understood that religious differences do not justify indifference or enmity. Rather, on the basis of our religious faith we are enabled to become peacemakers, rather than standing passively before the evil of war and hatred. Religions stand at the service of peace and fraternity. For this reason, our present gathering also represents an incentive to religious leaders and to all believers to pray fervently for peace, never resigned to war, but working with the gentle strength of faith to end conflicts.

We need peace! More peace! We cannot remain indifferent. Today the world has a profound thirst for peace. In many countries, people are suffering due to wars that, though often forgotten, are always the cause suffering and poverty. The world, political life, and public opinion all run the risk of growing inured to the evil of war, as if it were simply a part of human history.

“Let us not remain mired in theoretical discussions, but touch the wounded flesh of the victims ... Let us think of the refugees and displaced, those who suffered the effects of atomic radiation and chemical attacks, the mothers who lost their children, and the boys and girls, maimed or deprived of their childhood.” (Fratelli tutti, 261)

Against War: Building a Culture of Peace, Pope Francis, Orbis Books 2022
[Photo by Jane Sill in Westminster Cathedral]



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

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