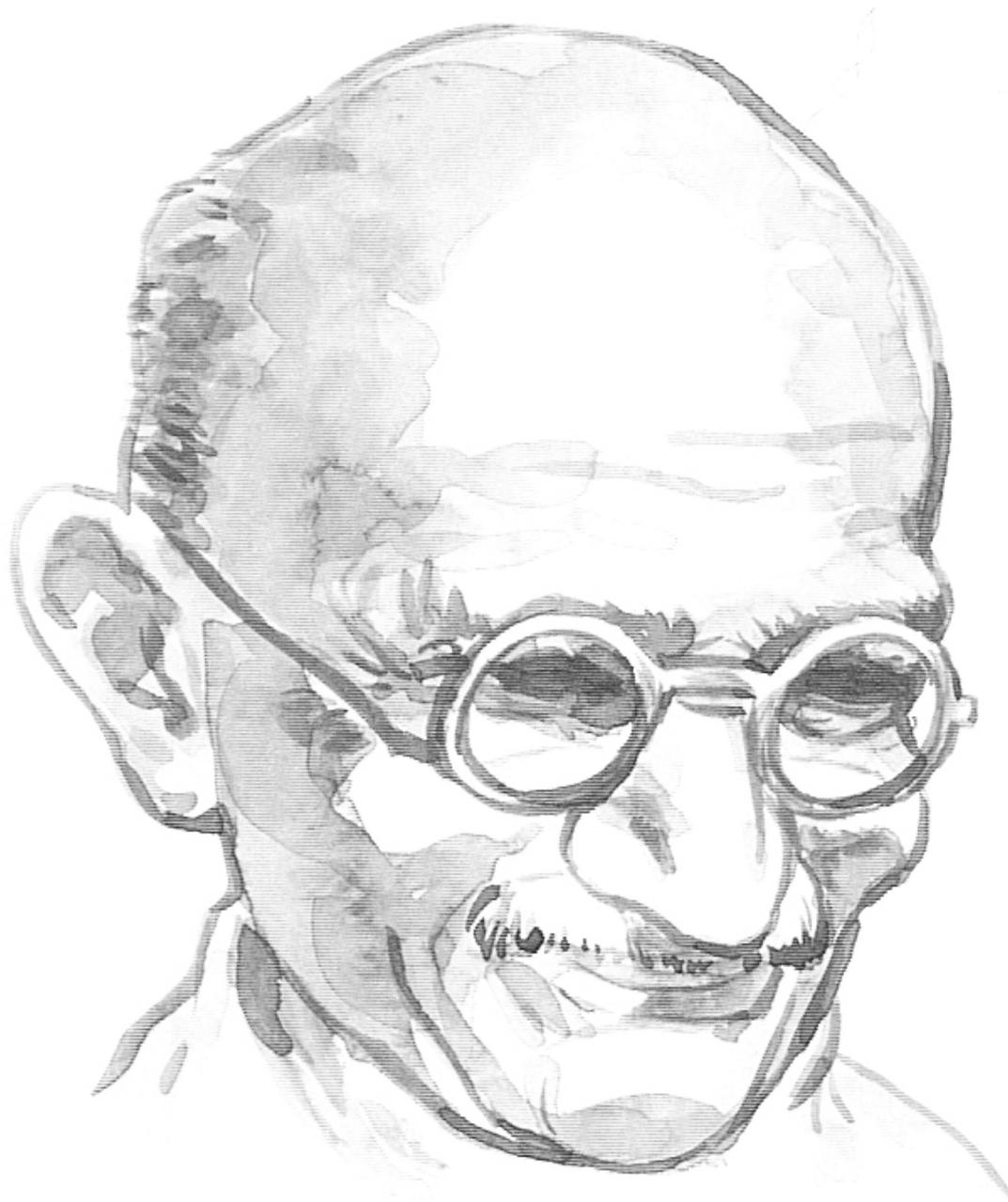


The Gandhi Way



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The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi

His Message and Relevance for the Modern World

A new online interactive course spread over 3 consecutive weekday evenings will be launched by the Gandhi Foundation on Tuesday 14 April 2026.

The course is led by Ketan Varia who has run it at City Lit, London, along with other courses relating to Indian history and religion over a number of years. The course offers an overview of the life and philosophy of Gandhi spanning his time in London, South Africa and India. This is set within the framework of examining its relevance in today's world. The course will consist of video presentations along with group discussions in which participants will be invited to reflect on Gandhi's message in relation to current world issues.

The course is introductory and will be available free of charge to Gandhi Foundation members or at a cost of £20 which includes membership of the Gandhi Foundation. The course will be limited to 15 per intake with applicants being asked to complete an application form prior to the start. The only prerequisite is an open mind and an interest in learning more while being respectful to others' views in the group.

Contact janesill@aol.com for an application form.

Course dates: Tuesdays 14th, 21st, 28th April from 7-9 pm using Zoom link.

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In the Global Abyss of Despair a Glimmer of Hope from Mahatma Gandhi

Pascal Alan Nazareth

(By author of *Gandhi's Outstanding Leadership* and *Gandhi: The Soul Force Warrior*)

Many decades ago Gandhi had averred : "When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it--always."

Amazingly Napoleon had articulated a similar thought but in a different idiom. On the eve of his demise, at his remote St. Helena Mansion where he was exiled / died, he had averred : " There are but two powers in the world, the Sword and the Spirit. In the long run the sword is always conquered by the Spirit."

20th century history validates the veracity of these affirmations.

In 1918, Britain was at the zenith of its power. The German, Austro Hungarian, & Ottoman Empires had been defeated & Pax Britannica established worldwide. Its proud boast was "The sun never sets on the British empire". In one way this was true. As its empire extended from Fiji in the east to Vancouver in the west, the sun shone on a British flag in some part of the world every hour of the day ! Yet just 29 years later, in 1947, a "half naked fakir", plucked the "brightest jewel in the British Crown". By 1980 most of its colonies, as also those of other European imperial powers had attained independence. When the UN was founded in 1945 it had 51 members. In 2000 it had 189 !

In the 1920-1945 period three highly militarised fascist powers – Italy, Germany & Japan dominated the world. They conquered most of Europe, North Africa, East & South East Asia. During this period they appeared invincible. But by August 1945 all three had been defeated & devastated. Their leaders, Benito Mussolini was shot by fellow Italians, Adolph Hitler committed suicide & Hideki Tojo hanged as a war criminal.

Post 1945, USA & Russia (the latter in its new incarnation as the Soviet Union), emerged as global super powers. Each had its own military alliance: NATO with 15 members & Warsaw Pact with 8 members. However, the Non Aligned movement, which opposed military alliances & was founded in 1955, had 115 Asian, African & Latin American countries as members by 1979.

From 1980 onwards nonviolent revolutions brought down Communist dictatorships in Poland, Czechoslovakia. Romania, East Germany & the Soviet

Union. Most of them or parts thereof, emerged as democratic states & joined the European Union. Elsewhere, nonviolent revolutions ended Apartheid in South Africa, racial discrimination in the US & military dictatorships in the Philippines, Chile & Bolivia. They gave Philippines & Chile their first women presidents, Bolivia its first indigenous Aymara president, South Africa & USA their first Black Presidents .

These radical changes were the most sweeping democratisation of national politics and international political geography in world history. Roger Markwick has written about these revolutions in his book titled *From Violence to Velvet: A Century of Revolutions 1917 – 2017*.

In recent years the global discourse has been mainly about wars in Ukraine, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Iran & Venezuela. In the Ukraine war, the lead role was that of Vladimir Putin. In all the other wars Donald Trump & Benjamin Netanyahu have had leading & closely coordinated roles. The US veto has provided them complete immunity from any UNSC condemnation for their many blatantly contrary to international law acts like bombing Iran's nuclear sites & abducting Venezuela's President & his wife from their Caracas Mansion & flying them to New York for trial. Their combined military strength being greater than that of all other military powers, they appear invincible. This has created the present 'Global abyss of despair'.

Nonetheless, both of them & their countries have major vulnerabilities. The latter are heavily mired in debt, their societies highly divided / restive & their armed forces, particularly Israel's, considerably over stretched. Besides, Donald Trump & Benjamin Netanyahu are criminally indicted in US & Israeli courts, the latter also by ICJ.

Israel's brutal genocide of the Palestinians has aroused global revulsion & anger. Prominent among those opposing this genocide are 'Jewish Voices for Peace' & 'Rabbis for Palestine', both of whom have denounced Zionism & exposed the vital fact that Israel is a 'Zionist' & not a 'Jewish' state. Pro-Palestinian rallies have been held in over 100 cities worldwide from Canberra, Djakarta, Cairo & Cape Town to Paris, London, New York & San Paulo.

Israel is now widely regarded as an 'Apartheid' and / or 'Pariah' state.

In a 2024 UN General Assembly vote, 174 countries, with 94 percent of the world population, voted in favour of Palestinian self determination, while only the United States, Israel, Nauru & Micronesia voted against it.

By laying claim to Greenland & threatening to impose a 25% tariff on any country that opposes this claim, President Trump has splintered the Western

Alliance. Some of its members now prefer to trade with China & India rather than the US.

BRICS membership has increased from the original 5 (Brazil, Russia, India, China & South Africa) to 19 with Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Uganda & Uzbekistan joining it by 2025. It now has 56% of global population (4.45 billion) & 44% of global GDP. Its member states are increasingly handling mutual trade in their own currencies or the Chinese Yuan, NOT the US dollar.

Since January 1, 2026, New York city has a 34 year old India origin, Uganda born, pro-Palestinian Muslim as its Mayor [Zohran Mamdani] despite it being the world's largest, wealthiest, 'Zionist' city !

To me, these vital developments are an indication that the tectonic plates of the global political & economic order are likely to have as major a shift as in 1945 & 1991.

War and the environment

Russia's war in my home country Ukraine has caused environmental damage on a vast scale. Roughly 2.4 million hectares of agricultural land – an area almost the size of Wales – are now littered with unexploded ordnance. Thousands of oil, chemical and ammunition facilities have also been damaged, releasing toxic substances into rivers, wetlands and the Black Sea. The 2023 destruction of the Kakhovka dam on the Dnipro River alone flooded 600 sq km of land, destroying entire ecosystems. And total war-related emissions are now estimated to stand at the equivalent of around 230 million tonnes of CO₂. This is comparable to the annual emissions of Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia combined.

Levgeniia Kopytsia, U of Oxford (Jonathan at The Conversation 15/1/26)

Support for Environmental Policies

The Scottish Government is to introduce the taxing of flights by private jet planes. It has also been found through opinion polls that various environmental taxes are more popular than politicians in the UK and in Belgium believe. A clear majority wish frequent flyers to be taxed, support government subsidies for solar panels, as well as other environmental proposals.

Gandhi and the Contradictions in His Life

Ketan Varia

Many people can spot contradictions in what Gandhi said. This, I argue, is not a weakness of Gandhi, but a willingness to work with reality as it unfolded. He didn't rely on a good working memory to be consistent but on guiding principles that allowed him to make fine judgements.

We will dig deeper through some of the contradictions we observe including use of racial language, his vows, his dependence on rich philanthropists, and the educational opportunities for his children. It demonstrates both the progression of his thinking and his willingness to decide based on the practical realities before him.

Gandhi and Racist Language

When Gandhi arrived in South Africa in 1893, his political outlook was still narrow, shaped primarily by the exploitation of fellow Indians who lived in degrading conditions. Gandhi was instinctively drawn towards this injustice, and his early activism focused almost entirely on defending the rights of his own community. During this period he sometimes used disparaging terms for African people, reflecting the racial vocabulary of the colonial society he had entered.

One of the most cited examples is a statement from 1904, when he wrote:

*“Under my suggestion, the Town-Council must withdraw the Kaffirs from the location. About this mixing of the Kaffirs with the Indians, I must confess I feel most strongly. I think it is very unfair to the Indian population...”*¹

The context of this passage is essential. The Indian Location in Johannesburg was already dangerously overcrowded, and the municipality had suddenly forced African labourers into the area without providing any planning or accommodation. Sanitation collapsed almost immediately after the municipality reduced the number of cleaners from one per stand to only a handful for the entire settlement. Gandhi feared that the situation would lead to an outbreak of bubonic plague, a fear that proved correct when plague spread shortly afterwards. His strong feeling in the passage above was therefore directed at the public-health breakdown, the mismanagement of the municipality, and the unfair burden placed on Indians, rather than at the principle of racial mixing itself. This does not absolve the racial terminology, but it clarifies the circumstances under which Gandhi spoke.

Despite the limitations of his early language, Gandhi's actions frequently showed a broader humanitarian instinct. During the 1906 Zulu War, where Gandhi became part of the Stretcher-Bearer Corps, Fischer writes *“Since white physicians and nurses would not tend sick and dying Zulus, the task*

*was left to the Indians who witnessed all the horrors of black men whipped till their skin came off in strips. Gandhi's party sometimes came on the scene five or six days after the whites had passed by and found the victims suffering agony from open, suppurating wounds."*²

As his worldview expanded, his writings also shifted. By 1910 he wrote in *Indian Opinion*³: *"The negroes alone are the original inhabitants of this land... We have not seized the land from them by force; we live here with their goodwill. The whites... have occupied the country forcibly and appropriated it to themselves."*³

Gandhi's South African years were a journey, not a destination, marking the beginning of his lifelong evolution in understanding justice. Later, when back in India, he developed an interest in Black rights movements both in South Africa and in America.

Vows and Health

After returning to India in 1915, Gandhi continued to test the boundaries between idealism and human need. One major ethical struggle concerned his vow to renounce all milk because it was clear to him that cows were treated cruelly and that sold milk was not the excess left over after feeding a calf.

*"I had come to know that the cow and the buffalo were subjected to the process of phooka [forced production of milk], I had conceived a strong disgust for milk. Moreover, I had always held that milk is not the natural diet of man. I had therefore abjured its use altogether."*⁴

However, during a serious illness in 1918 he was persuaded to take goat's milk to save his life. He later wrote with striking honesty:

*"By natural implication [the vow] covered the milk of all animals... somehow beguiled myself into emphasising just the letter of the vow and decided to take goat's milk. I was fully conscious, when I started taking mother goat's milk, that the spirit of my vow was destroyed."*⁵

But he also realised he had a great purpose... and wanted to live ... he could see the sadness in his wife's eyes.

This episode shows Gandhi confronting the limits of absolutist morality.

Ahimsa, Stray Dogs, and Ethical Realism

During the 1920s Gandhi attempted to apply *ahimsa* universally, yet reality often challenged him. Addressing the issue of dangerous stray dogs, he wrote in *Young India* (October 1926), *"Imperfect, erring mortals as we are, there is no course open to us but the destruction of rabid dogs. At times we may be*

faced with the unavoidable duty of killing a man who is found in the act of killing people.”⁶

Fischer in his biography of Gandhi adds, *“The dog fight established the record for heat... but a little calf also precipitated a storm. A young heifer in the ashram fell ill. Gandhi tended it and watched it suffer and decided it ought to be put to death. Kasturbai objected strenuously. Then she must go and nurse the animal, Gandhi suggested. She did and the animal’s torment convinced her. In Gandhi’s presence, a doctor administered an injection which killed the heifer. The protest mail was heavy and fierce.”⁷*

Gandhi insisted that for his duty towards animals he had acted correctly out of compassion; revealing again the clash between principle and reality.

“My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a given question, but to be consistent with truth as it may present itself to me at a given moment. The result has been that I have grown from truth to truth.”

Wealth and Practical Idealism

Gandhi envisioned an India built from the ‘village up’, he called this Sarvodaya and a form of socialism that was not dependent on the rich. Yet the national struggle required funding on a large scale. This produced one of his most notable contradictions: his reliance on wealthy industrialists.

In Louis Fischer’s biography, he asks Gandhi whether a British official claim that Congress was ‘in the hands of big business’, was correct. Gandhi responded: *“Unfortunately, they are true.”* Gandhi added: *“Congress hasn’t enough money to conduct its work... We thought in the beginning to collect four annas from each member... but it hasn’t worked.”⁸*

When asked how much of Congress’s budget came from rich donors, Gandhi replied: *“Practically all of it.”⁸*

And Fischer adds *“Most of the money for the maintenance of Gandhi’s ashram and of Gandhi’s organisations for Harijan and peasant uplift and the teaching of a national language came from G. D. Birla, millionaire textile manufacturer”⁸*

“It takes millions to keep Gandhi poor” attributed to C. Rajagopalachari

The Empire and Freedom

Gandhi’s attitude toward the British Empire represents one of the most striking transformations in his political life.

In his early South African period (c.1900), he professed loyalty:

“We want to serve the community, and in our own humble way to serve the Empire... We have firm faith in the British Constitution.”⁹

Three decades later, after witnessing the systemic exploitation of India, he wrote to Viceroy Lord Irwin.

“Why do I hold the British rule in India to be a curse?... It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation... It has reduced us politically to serfdom... It has degraded us spiritually.”¹⁰

This evolution from imperial supporter to leader of civil resistance illustrates Gandhi’s capacity for deep political transformation as reality unfolded.

Education and Family

Gandhi’s contradictions extended into his personal life. Although he sent his nephew to London to study, he refused the same opportunity to his own sons. In his autobiography he writes:

“I could not devote to the children all the time I had wanted to give them. My inability to give them enough attention and other unavoidable causes prevented me from providing them with the literary education I had desired, and all my sons have had complaints to make against me in this matter. Nevertheless, I am of opinion that.... I should never have been free, as I am today, from anxiety on their score, and the artificial education that they could have had in England or South Africa, torn from me, would never have taught them the simplicity and the spirit of service that they show in their lives today, while their artificial ways of living might have been a serious handicap in my public work.”¹¹

Still, once his oldest son insisted he wanted to study, he did not stop him but wrote to Harilal and said, *‘Personally, I feel that the education you are having is of the wrong kind. Still, I regard you as friend, with due affection, so that I do not wish to order you. I want to bring you round only by appealing to you. I do not wish to exploit your filial piety to make you do anything. There is no anger in this. I do this as a matter of duty. Still, I must advise you to shake off this craze for examinations. If you pass, it won’t impress me much. If you fail, you will feel very unhappy. However, take the course you think is best.’¹²*

It is interesting that after Gandhi’s death, apart from Harilal, none of his sons complained in public, at least, about their education or lack off. Interestingly, many of Gandhi’s grandchildren went to university, showing that this part of his thinking did not survive.

Gandhi was never against education, and in fact at his Ashrams education was a key part of activity. However, he didn't like the Western style which he felt was to create wealth and status for individuals and not good for the wider society.

Conclusion: A Life of Evolving Principles, Tested by Reality

Gandhi's life reveals a man in constant moral experimentation. His contradictions on race, wealth, empire, nonviolence, personal vows, and family were not signs of hypocrisy but of growth, struggle, and honesty. He often confronted the limits of idealism with remarkable transparency. His views changed as he changed; his actions sometimes contradicted his words; and he frequently admitted his own errors.

To understand Gandhi is not to find perfection, but to see a human being wrestling with immense ethical challenges and making judgements on practical idealism. It shows spirituality at work, not buried in books and lofty statements.

Ketan Varia teaches *The Philosophy of Gandhi* at City Lit Adult Education College in London.

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Green Shoots in the Gloom – The Path of Hope

The annual Gandhi Foundation Multifaith celebration, timed to coincide with the anniversary of Gandhi's assassination on 30th January but also close to Candlemass when the dark gloomy days of winter slowly cede to the longer, lighter days of Spring, took place on 7th February. Amidst the seemingly endless rains of January, not to mention the stormy political clouds of worldwide turmoil and heartbreaking loss of life in so many countries, the event offered a very welcome respite and time for reflection. Once again, we were welcomed by Reverend Michael into the very beautiful and atmospheric space of Golders Green Unitarian Church where the hall had just had a bright and colourful make over for use by a nursery group.

Saara and her group of Sacred Sounds and fellow musicians put together a moving selection of music, singing, readings and poetry interspersed with prayers for peace from many different faith traditions. 'Little Ana' who we have watched grow up over the years had written a poem on hope especially for the occasion which gave testimony to the commitment of the young generation to carry on the work to make the world a more peaceful and just place for all. Midway, there was an opportunity for everyone to light a candle and offer their own personal dedication accompanied by the melodic notes of the Bansuri by Ricky . Tributes were given to Mark Tully, a long time friend and Patron of the Gandhi Foundation who sadly passed away the previous month.

This year, the event was chosen by Reverend Feargus to launch the **Gandhi Schweitzer Humanitarian Fellowship** with the aim of honouring Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Albert Schweitzer by raising money for life saving appeals for Save the Children also Red Cross and Red Crescent urgent medical and other humanitarian appeals for the people of Gaza and other victims of war. A substantial sum was generously donated by those present with more contributions welcome. (See the talk by Feargus O'Connor below).

The gathering also offered the opportunity for Ketan to speak about his on line course on Gandhi which is due to start in April. Further details on the inside cover of Gandhi Way.

Finally, there was an opportunity to catch up with friends and members of the Foundation, many of whom had travelled some distance to attend, over a welcome cup of tea and refreshments.

A recording was made by Omar and will be made available to Members and on the website.

Jane Sill (text and photos)



Omar Hayat / Saara & Sacred Sounds / Earth Calling with Caroline Chen



Offering candles of peace / Ana recites her poem / Enjoying a cuppa



Address to The Gandhi Foundation Interfaith Event on 7-2-26

Friends, it is indeed an honour to us at Golders Green Unitarians to host every year this Gandhi Foundation interfaith commemoration of the death of Mahatma Gandhi. I feel particularly honoured as minister emeritus to be asked to give an annual address in the spirit of the Mahatma and his ethic of ahimsa to this gathering of dedicated fellow Gandhians of all faiths.

In previous addresses I have paid tribute to Leo Tolstoy, Dr Albert Schweitzer, Dr Martin Luther King, Thich Nhat Hanh, Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama and other apostles of nonviolence who continue to inspire us. Today I wish to honour not only Dr Albert Schweitzer and Gandhi himself but three other inspirational humanitarians and propose a practical way we can honour their memory and their mission.

The first is Clara Barton (1821-1912), the Universalist founder of the American Red Cross and the 'Angel of the Battlefield' during the American Civil War. A practical humanitarian like Lord Shaftesbury, Gandhi and Albert Schweitzer, Clara did make a real difference for the benefit of suffering humanity. She was driven above all by an ardent compassion for humankind, a burning desire to save lives and succour the victims of war and natural disasters. What nobler passion can there be?

We may feel drawn to reflect on those Universalist principles animating Clara in her works of practical compassion, principles which continue to inspire the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide in their life

saving work: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

The second is Henri Dunant (1828-1910). The international Red Cross movement owes its existence to the vision of this Swiss humanitarian. After witnessing the bloody battle of Solferino in Northern Italy, where Napoleon III's French army was fighting the Austrian forces, Henri was moved to write a short book *A Memory of Solferino*. In it he describes the battle itself, depicts the battlefield, with its 'chaotic disorder, unspeakable despair and misery of every kind' and the desperate efforts to care for the wounded. In his book he advocates the establishment of an international society of relief organisations to provide care and succour for the war wounded.

In 1863 a Geneva society was established and 39 delegates from 16 nations held a conference in Geneva to set up what became the International Red Cross. In 1864 12 nations signed an international treaty, commonly known as the Geneva Convention, and the familiar red and white cross emblem was adopted. Dunant poured his money and energies into this humanitarian endeavour and was later to die in penury and neglect.

Although Henri Dunant had suggested in 1864 that Red Cross societies provide disaster relief as well as wartime services Clara became its strongest advocate in the years that followed. During the Third International Red Cross Conference in Geneva in 1884 the American Red Cross proposed an amendment to the Geneva Treaty calling for the expansion of Red Cross relief to include not only victims of war but also those of natural disasters. This resolution passed and became known as the 'American Amendment to the Geneva Treaty of 1864'.

Dunant's living memorial is the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, just as Clara Barton's is the universal humanitarian mission of the Red Cross in all countries of the world in responding to natural disasters of all kinds as well as alleviating the terrible sufferings caused by the scourge of war. Is this not the true spirit of the Good Samaritan in action?

The third humanitarian I wish to honour is Eglantyne Jebb (1876-1928). In 1919 Eglantyne began handing out leaflets in Trafalgar Square after seeing horrifying newspaper photographs of starving children in Austria and Germany, innocent victims perceived as 'enemies' during the First World War. Although a ceasefire had been declared on 11 November 1918 Allied forces continued to mount a blockade against so-called 'enemy' ports which severely restricted their access to essential supplies of food and medicines. As a result famine threatened more than three million children.

The newspaper images Eglantyne saw inspired her to join the Fight the Famine Council, a concerned group working to get life saving food and

medical supplies to these children. Eglantyne and her sister Dorothy, who became a Quaker and acted in the benevolent spirit of the Religious Society of Friends, actively campaigned for humanitarian aid to help children, no matter who they were or where they lived, and to lift the post-war blockade. Eglantyne defied Edwardian social norms on accepted women's behaviour and went to Trafalgar Square to arouse public interest in these starving children. Her leaflets showed a shocking photo of emaciated children with the headline 'Our blockade has caused this – millions of children are starving to death.'

Eglantyne was arrested for her protest in London. She was found guilty but the prosecutor was so impressed with her passion and her commitment to the welfare of innocent suffering children that he offered to pay the fine himself. It was the first donation to the organisation she went on to found, in 1919, Save the Children (then called the Save the Children Fund).

Within two years Eglantyne was leading a massive relief effort for children in Europe. The Russian famine of 1921-22 put millions of children in immediate and dire jeopardy. Many were dying of starvation. Through her impressive and tireless fundraising efforts Save the Children brought shipments of hundreds of tons of food and medical supplies to Russia. Hundreds of thousands of children were fed each day.

Eglantyne recognised that children have unique needs and she passionately believed that everyone around the world should take responsibility for children's rights and well-being. She went on to write the historic Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which was adopted at a 1924 League of Nations convention in Geneva. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child captured what Eglantyne believed were the innate human rights of every child.

'I believe we should claim certain rights for children and labour for their universal recognition, so that everybody – not merely the small number of people who are in a position to contribute to relief funds, but everybody who in any way comes into contact with children, that is to say the vast majority of mankind – may be in a position to help forward the movement.'

The Declaration was adopted much later in an extended form by the United Nations in 1959. This in turn inspired the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a landmark human rights treaty for the protection of the world's children.

Eglantyne, exhausted by her campaigns and seriously ill with a thyroid condition, died in 1928 at the age of 52. Her vision and her life saving mission live on in the dedicated worldwide work of Save the Children, now operating in 120 countries.

Today we embark on a practical initiative not only to honour but also follow in the footsteps of these inspirational humanitarians. In the spirit of our Gandhi Foundation and of all people of goodwill of all faiths we are launching the Gandhi Schweitzer Humanitarian Fellowship. The purpose of this interfaith fellowship is to honour the memory and ethical mission of compassion and profound empathy of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Albert Schweitzer by bringing people together to raise funds for life saving appeals by Save the Children and the British Red Cross for the victims of war.

'Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world.' (Jerusalem Talmud)

'Whoever saves one life saves all of mankind.' (The Qur'an)

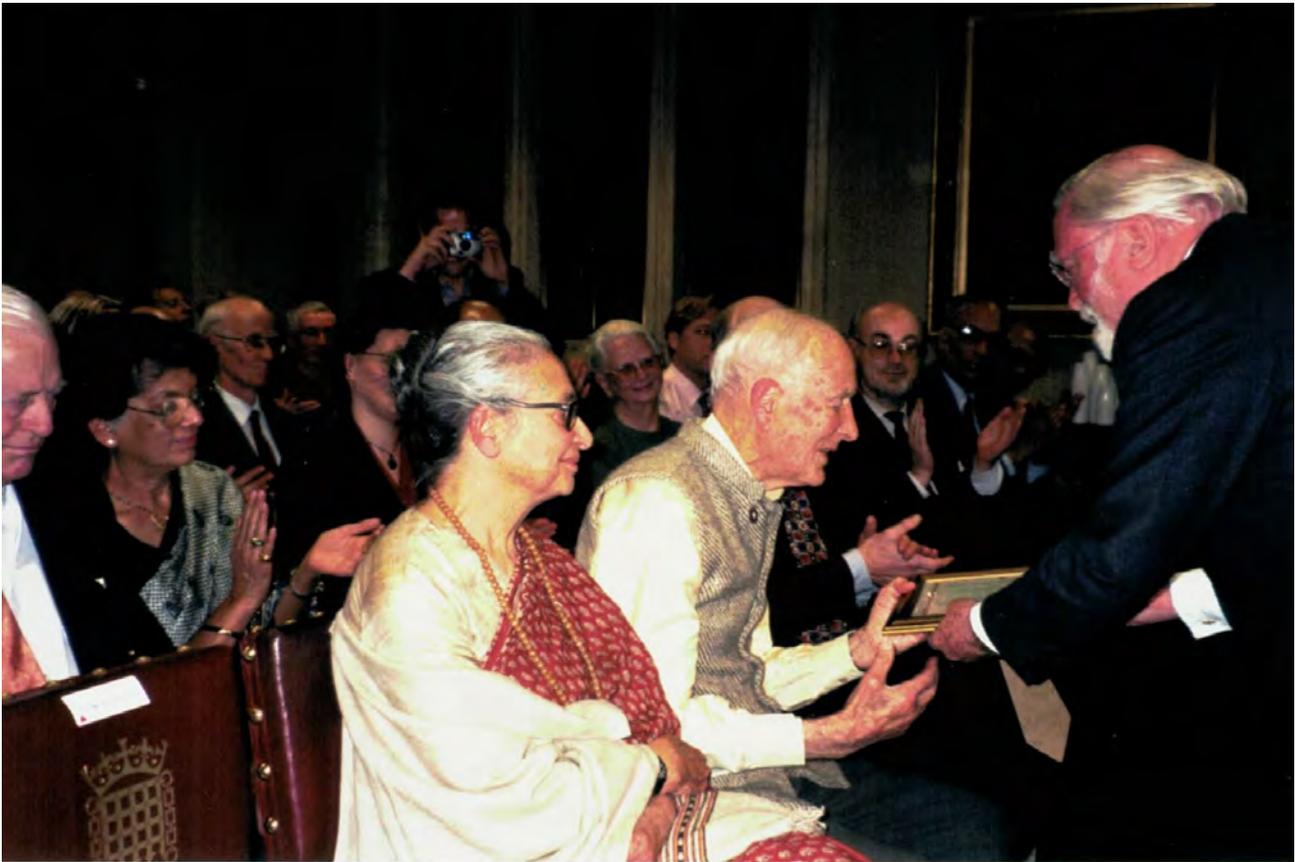
It is this concern for the lives of all victims of war which motivates us to act. I hope that you will join our Fellowship and act in a practical way to work to help end wars, cultivate an ethic of universal peace and compassion and act to save precious human lives.

Mehr Fardoonji 1930-2026

Mehr Fardoonji, a Life member of the GF, has died at the age of 95. She was born in Lahore (now in Pakistan) to Parsi parents. Her father died when she was five. In an interview with P Sujatha Varma in 2014 she said, "My mother was a very independent and advanced woman. She has been the light of my life. She had met Gandhi and was greatly influenced by his philosophy which she infused in me. We went to England in 1937 with an idea to come back to India after two or three years. But war started and the Mediterranean was blocked."

With the family staying on in Britain she later studied at the London School of Economics. "Before I knew my result, I set off for India with just a rucksack. I travelled by land, all by myself and I was perhaps the first woman to do so." It took her seven months to reach Pakistan. She then headed to Gandhiji's Sevagram ashram and worked there for a year, learning to be a village worker.

Mehr recalled, "I have always been different and I am happy with the way I am. I have travelled extensively, far and wide, so much that at times I feel that I belong to nowhere ... or I belong to everywhere. I am a citizen of the world".



Mehr with her husband Nicholas Gillett who received the GF Peace Award 1999

In 1955, Mehr walked with Vinoba Bhave to Orissa to attend the Puri Sammelan. She then worked in the Tarai region as part of Vinoba's Bhudan movement. "For four years we lived in thatched houses, in the foothills of the Himalayas, redistributing land to the landless."

"During my stay at Gandhi's ashram, I was convinced that land was the basis of life and that organic farming was the only way to the health of the land and people. Land is the most important thing in the world without which we don't exist. The world has treated land like the poor. People have ruined it by raising concrete jungles and by using artificial fertilisers."

In late 1950s, family demands drew her back to Britain to Manchester where she had grown up. There she took up organic farming on four-acres of land her brother had bought for her and her mother. Mehr went on to set up one of the first organic market gardens, the Oakcroft Organic Garden near Malpas in Cheshire.

Philip Bryers who lived nearby recalls this period of her life: In its heyday the Garden contained several polytunnels and lots of strawberry plants amongst other crops. It was very labour intensive and the upstairs in her house provided accommodation for a stream of volunteers who helped keep the garden under control. In the breaks during the working day, she engaged the volunteers in lively conversations which often focussed on her

experiences of India and her regular visits back. Much of these centred around Gandhi and her time working with groups seeking to live Gandhi's principles. As well as selling her produce in Chester market, she engaged with the local community, running yoga classes amongst other activities.

Mehr retained the simple life-style of Gandhi. "I don't see television, I don't use a mobile phone and neither do I have a computer. People's lives have become so cluttered with electronic gadgets. I am interested in the beauty of life rather than mechanical things. I like people around me all the time and I love to work with my hands. I have done pottery, I can make clothes, I read and I also teach yoga and its philosophy."

For some years she cared for her mother who came to live with her in Cheshire, and who – like Mehr – could be described as indomitable. Late in her life she married Nicholas Gillett. Her links with the Gillett Quaker family in Bristol went back many years. The book by Nicholas – *Men against war* (1965) – first published by The Gandhi Book House in New Delhi told the stories of 8 advocates for peace, including Mahatma Gandhi. Nicholas was given the Gandhi Foundation Peace Prize in 1999 for his work in peace education. Mehr spent a happy time with Nicholas, a fellow spirit, until his death. His final resting place is a small woodland coppice at the bottom of the garden.

When the garden eventually became too heavy a burden for Mehr she arranged for others to take over its running – insisting always that the organic principles were retained. She kept up her classes for as long as she was able and her enthusiasm for life and for the teachings of Gandhi and his followers were undiminished.



Something Understood – Anglo-Indian fusion

A Tribute to Sir Mark Tully (24 October 1935 – 25 January 2026)

Tributes came in from all over the world, especially from India, Mark's country of birth and the country where he was to spend most of his adult life. Born in Tollygunge, Calcutta, to a British businessman who was a partner in one of the leading managing agencies of the Raj and a mother who had herself been born in Bengal to a British family who had lived in India for generations, Mark spent the first 10 years of life shielded from all things Indian being brought up by an English nanny and scolded when he learned to count in Hindi from their Indian driver. Nonetheless, the country and culture would form deep roots which were reawakened on his return to Delhi as bureau chief of the BBC, the smells and sounds of Indian life triggering a sense of being back 'home'.

Mark began his education at a quintessentially British boarding school in Darjeeling at the age of 4 before being sent to Twyford School in Hampshire aged 9 and then on to Marlborough College, a traditional English public school founded to educate the sons of clergy. There Mark found a deep connection with the Anglican liturgical services but railed at the repressive and dictatorial style of education where corporal punishment and bullying were the norm and where humility had no place, with sporting or academic success the only things that counted. 'An education in absolutes' as Mark would later refer to his experience. After 2 year's national service, Mark studied theology at Trinity Hall, Cambridge and was encouraged by his tutor, Robert Runcie, to go on to Lincoln Theological College. Having spent his whole life immured in institutions, Mark experienced doubt and inner conflict and left after 2 terms, deciding instead to join the BBC in 1964, moving back to India in 1965 as their Indian correspondent. Not for the first time, destiny seemed to step in.

As Mark remarked in his semi-autobiographical *India's Unending Journey*, published in 2007, 'much of what I had learned at school, I later had to unlearn in India'. Gone was the unquestioning certainty that 'academic ability was the only index of intelligence', with 'humility not a virtue that had been encouraged'. Instead came an exposure to a country in which a huge diversity of religious expression, culture, language and ethnicity were embraced, not without inevitable frictions, in the melting pot which over millennia had formed the Indian sub continent. Mark celebrated this diversity and openness of expression and belief, while remaining firmly rooted in his own Anglican tradition. The plurality of view, expressed very vividly in the expression 'Neti, neti' – not this, not this ... allowed for a rich interchange of dialogue and discussion which Mark appreciated in traditional Indian village life. During his time as Indian correspondent for the BBC, Mark would cover many major incidents ranging from Indo-Pakistan conflicts, the Bhopal gas tragedy, the assassinations of Indira Gandhi and later Rajiv Gandhi, not to mention the storming of the Sikh Golden Temple by the Indian army to remove militants, and the demolition of the Babri Masjid mosque by Hindutva activists who reflected their distrust of the BBC by issuing death threats to Mark who was locked in a room until a local official and Hindu priest helped him to escape.

On his return to India, Mark became fluent in Hindi and established a network of friends and contacts which allowed him to be fully assimilated into Indian society and also allowed him to be able to communicate freely with people from all backgrounds including the poor indentured labourers and villagers who were mostly ignored by the elite. Mark was expelled from India shortly after Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency in 1975 but returned a year and half later. He decided to remain in the country after resigning from the BBC in July 1994 following disagreements in management style by the then director general, John Birt. From then on, Mark worked as a freelance journalist and broadcaster based in New Delhi, co-presenting documentaries

on Indian Steam trains, another of his passions, travelling the length and breadth of India researching for his numerous books while taking part in national discussions and dialogues on the subject of religious dialogue, literature and being a regular presenter for the long standing BBC radio series, 'Something Understood' until its demise in 2018. Rather than choosing a quiet retirement back in the UK, Mark would spend the rest of his life between both countries. As he said, he had made so many friends during his time there and was so deeply rooted, he was not willing to leave these behind.

'A Marriage of East and West' (A term coined by Father Bede Griffiths)

'For me, as someone brought up as a Westerner yet much influenced by India ... if the marriage is to take place, the West must be flexible in its thinking and suspicious of certainties. It must seek for balance between the material and the spiritual, between reason and other means of perceiving reality, between tradition and change, between individuals and society, between humans and nature. It must have the humility to live respectfully with different faiths and cultures and to be prepared to learn from them too. That, of course, means that the East also has to have the humility to learn from the West ... We should not fall into the error of assuming the East has got it all right and the West has got it all wrong. For me, India acknowledges that we can never find absolute answers to the most important questions in life, but we must go on asking them. This is why I have called my book, 'India's Unending Journey'. It is a journey that we can all learn from.' (*India's Unending Journey: Finding Balance in a Time of Change* by Mark Tully, Rider Books, 2007.)

Ever the seeker, Mark retained a lifelong curiosity and interest in the rich diversity of peoples and their backgrounds while remaining firmly grounded within his own tradition. His attitude displays tremendous respect and humility and openness of outlook which was at such variance to his early education. His life and achievements cannot be neatly 'boxed' but was forever evolving, constantly being enriched from every encounter. For him, the great danger was denying this plurality and falling into the dangers of inflexibility and dogmatism, a trend which Mark warned against given the rise of autocracy worldwide, including India. Ever the rebel and identifier with the underdog, as a young man his 'understanding of Christianity led me to believe that it was immoral not to be a socialist', Mark would retain his deep warmth and humanity, aware of the many imperfections and foibles, while appreciating the possibilities for positive change and development.

Mark was not without his critics. Some said he was too indulgent of India's poverty and caste based inequality, while others expressed concern about his

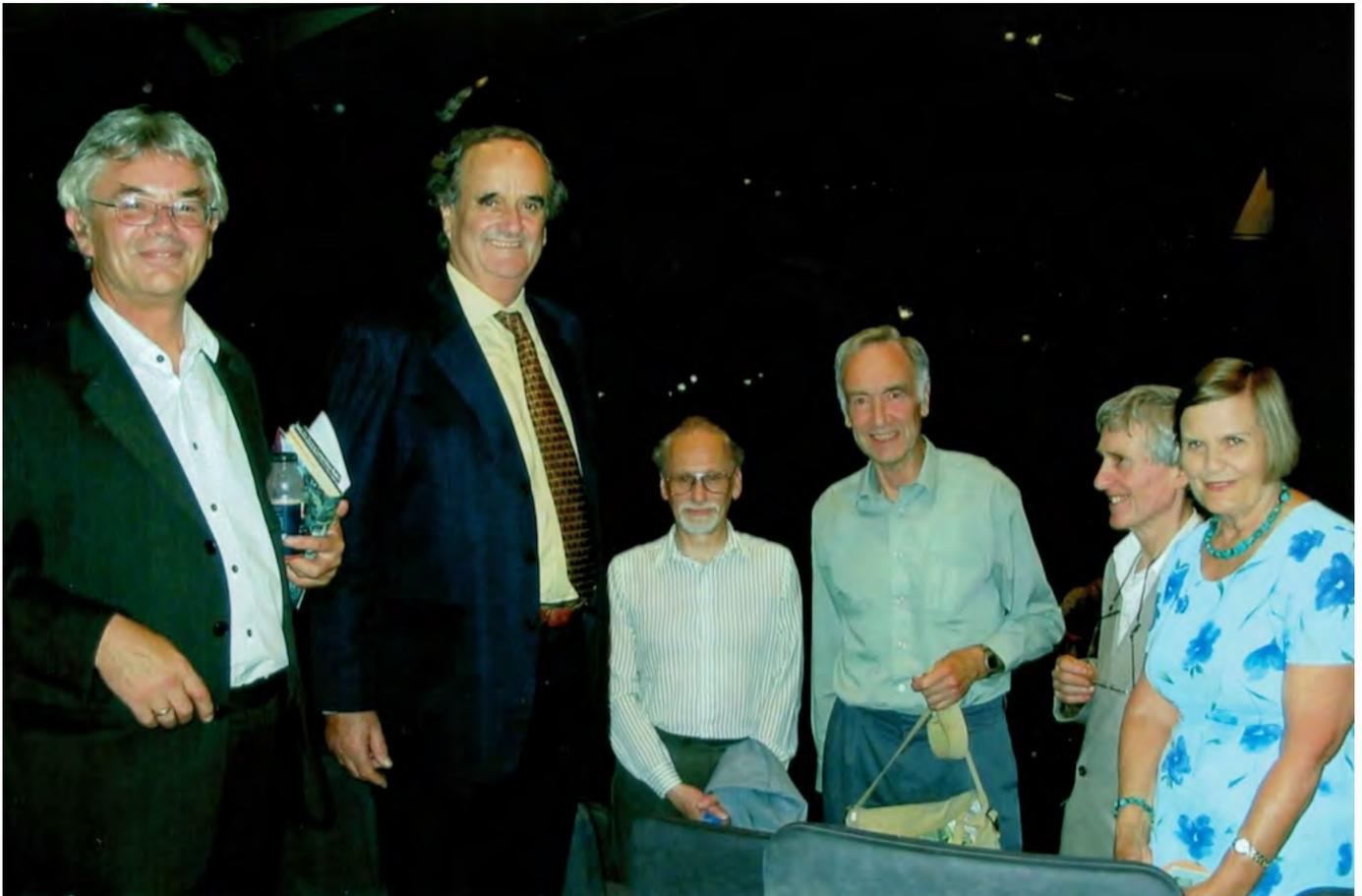
interest in religion as somehow backward looking to which Mark replied that he saw an equal danger in the deification of consumerism and greed at the expense of nature and community. In 2016, Mark told an Indian reporter, 'It is really important to treasure the secular culture of this country, allowing every religion to flourish ... we must not endanger this by insisting on Hindu majoritarianism'.

During his lifetime, Mark gained the rare honour of receiving the highest awards in both the UK and his adopted country of India. He was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1985, was awarded the Padma Shri in 1992, was knighted in the New Year Honours in 2002 and received the Padman Bhushan in 2005. Mark was also patron of the British branch of Child in Need India. He retained both English and Indian nationalities.

In 1960 Tully married Margaret with whom he had 4 children in the 1960s. After 1981, he shared his life and interests with Gillian Wright with whom he collaborated on many of his books and writings.

In 2005, Mark delivered the Annual Lecture for the Gandhi Foundation at City Hall and has been a long time Patron and friend for many years. He passed away after a short illness in hospital in New Delhi at the age of 90. He will be greatly missed.

Jane Sill



Mark Tully (2nd from left) with members of the GF Executive Committee 2005

A few quotes from Gandhi

Truth

You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz that God is Truth and Truth is God. And I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth which began nearly fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to truth was through love ... But I never found a double meaning in connection with truth and not even atheists had demurred to the necessity or power of truth. But in their passion for discovering truth atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of god from their own point of view rightly. And it was because of this reasoning that I saw that rather than say that God is Truth, I should say Truth is God.

Young India 11/10/28

Trusteeship

By the nonviolent method, we seek not to destroy the capitalist, we seek to destroy capitalism. We invite the capitalist to regard himself as a trustee for those on whom he depends for the making, the retention and the increase of his capital. Nor need the worker wait for his conversion. If capital is power, so is work. Either power can be used destructively or creatively. Immediately the worker realises his strength, he is in a position to become a co-sharer with the capitalist instead of remaining his slave.

Young India 26/3/31

War

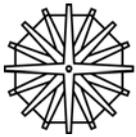
War with all its glorification of brute force is essentially a degrading thing. It demoralises those who are trained for it. It brutalises men of naturally gentle character. It outrages every beautiful canon of morality. Its path of glory is foul with passions of lust, and red with the blood of murder. This is not the pathway to our goal.

Indian Opinion 12/2/1910 Speech to Emerson Club

Nonviolence

For me, nonviolence is something to be shunned if it is a private virtue. My concept of nonviolence is universal. It belongs to the millions. I am here just to serve them. Anything that cannot reach the millions is not for me. It should be so for my colleagues as well. We were born to prove that truth and nonviolence are not just rules for personal conduct. They can become the policy of a group, a community, a nation. We have not yet proved this, but that alone can be the aim of our life.

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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. Maximum length 2000 words.

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