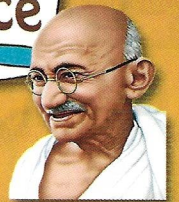


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## MK Gandhi; *A Timeless Experiment & Great Men in the footsteps of the Mahatma*

*By Sangita Acharya Thiruvaiyaru S R Krishnan*

Of the 330 million people who welcomed the Independence of India more than seventy-one years ago, a third was ignorant of the role of, and sacrifices made by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi<sup>1</sup> (“Gandhi”) for a ‘free’ India. However, compared to the rest of the Nations on their respective leaders, the awareness and admiration by 2/3rds of the spiritual nation, Bharat, was a record then and a record today even on a percentage basis!<sup>2</sup> In this fast world where acquisition of wealth - national and personal – or the ‘economic wellbeing’ seems to be the main, if not the only, mantra, it will be painful to speculate whether even a third of today’s India remembers ‘Bapuji’ or ‘Rashtrapita’<sup>3</sup> (the Father of the Nation), or the Mahatma and/or desire to know what he stood for or achieved not only in India but around the world! In today’s turbulent political climate all over the world, everything that Gandhi said and stood for, is becoming increasingly relevant, more so now than perhaps during his time. Many nations are troubled and divided by radical groups of dissidents, by wrong notions of ‘nationalism’, ‘populism’, and self-serving definitions of Democracy. Intolerance, prejudice and bigotry are creeping back in to the civil society after nearly half a century! Winning at all costs seems to be the popular motivator; civility, mutual respect and compassion often sound as hollow expressions. It is in these moments when hundreds of millions are resorting to soul searching, Mahatma’s life and influence on some of the greatest leaders this planet has been blessed to witness require reexamination.

Today, most of the world believes that they have “the global knowledge and the Information” in one’s

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<sup>1</sup> Gandhi (2 October 1869 – 30 January 1948) was born in Porbandar in Bombay Presidency now known as Gujarat State, India.

<sup>2</sup> India’s current population from January 1948 to date has swelled four times to more than 1.33 billion and growing exponentially.

<sup>3</sup> Subhash Chandra Bose (aka Netaji) called Gandhi such in 1944 from Singapore in a radio speech.

palm, thanks to the Internet despite the questionable authenticity/ reliability of most of the available information. Considering the fact that hundreds of titles, in scores of languages, have addressed Gandhiji’s life, his philosophy and his perspectives on Life, I write with the caveat that I do not intend to offer anything new on those topics. Great leaders who followed Mahatma Gandhi’s most admired traits and convictions, i.e., Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>4</sup>, Julius Nyerere<sup>5</sup>, Nelson Mandela<sup>6</sup>, are just a few of the greatest of Thinkers, Leaders and Human Rights’ Activists of the world. Many of them fought for freedom, personal and religious, and spent years of incarceration for the benefit of humanity and in the cause of uniting divided societies by Love, Non-Violence and Spiritual approach to settling differences, small and big. It is this influence of the Mahatma on world leaders and global issues that I plan to highlight in this article. Reference is also made to the contexts where the ways of the Mahatma also caused consternation of some of his contemporaries who questioned his stated path of ‘non-violence’, ‘non-cooperation movement’ et al.

I grew up in an era when the daily distractions were lot less than today and recollect that in those days, the whole nation remembered Gandhi at least four times in a year<sup>7</sup>. As for school and college students, Gandhi was a favorite topic, year-round, under one

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize (1964) was honored by the Government of India with the Award for International Understanding in 1966.

<sup>5</sup> Julius Nyerere (1922-1999) was the recipient of The Award of International Understanding (1973) and The Gandhi Peace Prize (1995) from India.

<sup>6</sup> Nelson Mandela (1918-2013) was a recipient of The Award of International Understanding (1979), the ‘Bharata Ratna (1990)’ and The Gandhi Peace Prize (2001) from India. Mandela also won Nobel Peace Prize in 1993, and the US Presidential Medal of Freedom (2002).

<sup>7</sup> Republic Day, Gandhi’s Memorial Day, Independence Day and Bapu’s birthday.

pretext or the other. The Indian history and struggle for Independence were inseparably intertwined with the Life of Mahatma. Thus, I was musing at the many titles and accolades conferred on the great Father of the Nation and how he was unaffected by all of them only to be reminded of the famous GITA quote<sup>8</sup>. It kindled my archival memory<sup>9</sup> of train journeys in 1957-1959, for music concerts, with my Guru and father Kumaramangalam Srinivasaraghavan (“KSR”). Those long train journeys felt like great ‘vacations’, for very many reasons - the most significant being the opportunity for ‘open communication’ with my father (a retired Royal Air Force Officer, a musician-composer and), a great devotee of Mahatma Gandhi. He belonged to a generation of learned men who felt ‘not only content but also conscious’ of their adherence to ‘principles’ over everything else! Those qualities seemed (then) to exhibit, albeit rarely, an aura of intellectual arrogance or spiritual calm evidenced by minimalistic conversations. ‘Questioning’ the ‘elders’ borne out of childish curiosity or quest for knowledge was often considered impolite or improper. But the train journeys tended to help my father open up, with a relaxed willingness to answer, explain or elaborate on diverse topics, the most favorite ones being ‘Indian History, Patriotism, Gandhiji, Netaji’. He also knew that I was very fond of my mother primarily for her unhesitating responses to (all) questions, her great devotion to Mahatma and her penchant for easy dissemination of lofty Puranic & Epic lore and Gandhian way of life into simple bed-time stories and perhaps followed her example when he really ‘opened up’.

I finally got the answer (from my father) for my repeated questions on Mahatma as a teenager, just before my Inter-varsity oratory meet in 1961; and, indeed, to many other questions on ‘Gandhi-ji’. My father reflected the then common belief that the Nobel Laurette Rabindranath Tagore called Gandhi as Mahatma<sup>10</sup> in March 1915. On November 30, 1999, the Gujarat High Court ordered for-the-record that it was Tagore who gave the title to Gandhiji! This story was, however, turned on its head seven years later after many other anecdotes<sup>11</sup> were unearthed as to ‘when Gandhi was titled ‘Mahatma’. In 2006, Sabarmati

8 दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः । वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते [Gita 2.56] (One who is not disturbed in mind even amidst the threefold miseries or elated when there is happiness, and who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is called a sage of steady mind).

9 Archival memory works across distance, over time and space (Re: Plato & Aristotle’s Memory and Reminiscence – ‘Parva Naturalia’).

10 Gilman, D. C.; Peck, H. T.; Colby, F. M., eds. (1905). "Mahatma". *New International Encyclopedia* (1st ed.). New York: Dodd, Mead.

11 और इस तरह गांधी महात्मा बन गए

Ashram in Ahmedabad came up with a document (presented by Gandhian Manu Bhai Parekh) that showed that the founder and Royal Physician Jivram Shastri of the erstwhile princely state of Gondal conferred the epithet in January 1915 at a royal reception to honor the famous barrister and his wife (Kasturba), who returned from South Africa after fighting the apartheid from 1908 to 1914. This same quest in me emboldened the follow up question ‘where & when did Gandhi and Tagore meet?’, if they did; my father asserted that they did in 1915 and admired one another for many of their common beliefs and goals, but also referred to their differences in approach to life’s struggles! Unfortunately, the global media highlighted mostly their ‘differences in opinions and attitudes’ as having resulted in Tagore’s famous letter<sup>12</sup> to Gandhi condemning the ‘Non-Cooperation Movement’ as ‘asceticism’ and ‘orgy of frightfulness’ which found ‘a disinterested delight in any unmeaning devasta



-tion’, ‘a struggle to alienate our heart and mind from those of the West’, ‘an attempt at spiritual suicide’.

“It is true”, my father mused, “that the world-renowned Tagore, divinely handsome in flowing robes, and Gandhi, an ascetic in loin-cloth, projected two very different self-images”. There seemed little in common, as one was a celebrant of life’s many splendors while the other’s primary concern was the creation of a moral Utopia! My father seemed pained but did not hesitate to reiterate that the vast areas of agreement between the two great personalities were substantially ignored by the peoples of the world and by well-known literary journals (who seemed keen only to highlight their differences in approach to humanity and methods of resolutions than on their major agreements). The simple explanation that was offered to me some fifty-five years ago was that the

12 Tagore to Gandhi, Mar 1921, Gandhi, *Collected Works*, XX (Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad 1966), 539, 540-1.

lack of understanding of their individuality was the reason, even though both, in many ways, were typical products of nineteenth-century India, struggling to grapple with the 'Colonial Experience'. My curiosity in that regard was hardly satisfied by the very limited interactions with my father, himself a poet, who seemed to admire the Nobel Laureate (more!); he however hastened to clarify that his reverence for Gandhi was



lot more intense, personal and refined (to offset his admiration for the 'poet') and that Gandhi's strong belief and imagination on the 'Indian Civilization' was 'spiritual' because "the essentially spiritual nature of man" was a discovery of that civilization!

KSR was also a fan of Subhas Chandra Bose (aka "Netaji")<sup>13</sup> until 1939 when Bose was ousted as the president of 'Indian National Congress'. Bose was respected as a Nationalist whose defiant patriotism made him a hero to millions in India; but, his attempt during World War II to rid India of British Rule by aligning with Adolph Hitler/Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan left an ambivalent legacy which broke the hearts of millions like my father. This is what pushed KSR to become an ardent devotee of Gandhi. A meeting with Mahatma in Segaon Ashram (which became "Sevagram") became the turning point that also made KSR join the Indian Air Force as a flying officer in 1940. My mother told me, after my father's demise, that my father experienced a personal grief, for months, on hearing about Gandhi's assassination in 1948 and the grievous loss exacerbated his disappointment (in the years that followed) with most of the nation which did not seem to realize Mahatma's principles and/or sacrifices. During our conversations in the four years before his unexpected passing away in 1964, KSR resented the Indian politicians who

clung to power on claims of sacrifices made for a 'Free India'. I was fresh out of University when I lost him and had little grasp of the intensity of his resentment or bitterness on the selfish politicians. KSR used to admonish me often that *I should never use his closeness to Mahatma for any benefit in my life, as he felt that it was the least I could do to pay homage to a real 'tyAgi', a true Mahatma, who refused to acknowledge the praise, admiration or reverence 'thrust' on him!*

For the next fourteen years, I rarely spent any time on the Gandhian way of life, teachings or on scores of books available then, thanks to my globe-trotting life - aimed - towards personal well-being or for the betterment of my family.

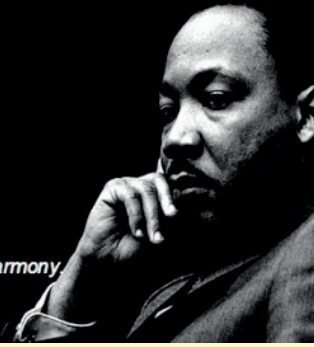
My visit to the state of Mississippi, US on an International Fellowship in 1978 came with an express arrangement with the sponsor, 'Rotary International' Foundation, that I stay with two dozen local, American (Caucasian) families in as many counties of that relatively less known State. Although I was politely 'prepped up' by the then Consulate General of the US in Madras, I was too naïve to grasp the background and history of race relations then prevalent in the poorest state of the Union! By then, I had read the famous autobiography of Gandhi (The Story of My Experiments with Truth), as I was advised that I may face the local media in every city or town I planned to visit. I did face some interesting, but somewhat unsettling, incidents of overt racial bias in a few towns/cities in Mississippi during my visit and did not know how to process or handle them without rushing to judgment about a country which I had previously 'dreamt' as the 'cleanest, fairest, most orderly democracy which valued all races and religions alike with strictest laws enforced on the face of the Earth!'. My experiences, during that visit, were mostly pleasant and memorable but did teach me some pragmatic lessons, if not an indication of the state of race-relations in many parts of the United States! Ironically, forty years later, and despite substantial efforts and commendable progress thanks to several U.S. Presidents, from Jimmy Carter to Barrack Obama, our country today seems even more challenged to tackle some of those very same bias not only in Mississippi but also in many other states today! At such cross roads and times, I reminisce not only the suffering and sacrifice of the Mahatma who struggled to elevate not only the national conscience but also the need for soul-searching by other nations such as the United States, (even if they were perforce or unplanned) but also those of great leaders who followed his way of life!

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.hindujagruti.org/articles/47\\_subhash-chandra-bose.html](https://www.hindujagruti.org/articles/47_subhash-chandra-bose.html)

## Martin Luther King on Mahatma Gandhi

Jesus showed the idea,  
but Gandhi gave us the method.  
Gandhi unpacked the life of Jesus  
more than anybody in history"  
- Martin Luther King, Jr

"If humanity is to progress,  
Gandhi is inescapable.  
He lived, thought, and acted,  
inspired by the vision of humanity  
evolving toward a world of peace & harmony.  
We may ignore him at our own risk"  
- Martin Luther King, Jr



This brings back memories of Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) and his many struggles and sacrifices that I was perforce exposed to, for the first time in my life. The young wife of a newspaper magnet, who hosted me with love and respect (in 1978) in one of the cities in Mississippi, gave me a book titled 'The Trumpet of Conscience' by the Nobel Laurette Martin Luther King, Jr. At my request, my host also passed on some crumpled copies of brochures or small books that included the famous speeches 'I have a Dream'<sup>14</sup> and 'Nonviolence and Racial Justice'. I was 32 years of age when I was exposed to MLK's writings and that shook me; especially his statements, 'Nonviolence means not only avoiding external physical violence but also Internal Violence of Spirit'<sup>15</sup>, 'You not only refuse to shoot a man but refuse to hate him!'. I cannot but quote, repeatedly, those profound statements in these troubled times, in the US, especially during the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of the great Mahatma! MLK's reverence for Mahatma and how Mahatma's approach directly influenced MLK will be well appreciated<sup>16</sup> when one realizes that MLK argued that the Gandhian philosophy was 'the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in



14 Speech by Rev MLK at the 'March on Washington'.

15 Rev MLK on 26 November 1956 – article to Christian Century

16 From the early days of the Montgomery Bus boycott, MLK referred to Mahatma as 'the guiding light of our technique of nonviolent social change (5:231); MLK became passionate about traveling to India since 1956 and finally did in 1959.

their struggle for freedom; MLK's visit to India in 1959 to experience, firsthand, the 'Land of the Mahatma' was an eye-opener and took him closer to Mahatma's vision and ideals. Upon return from India, MLK made the famous Palm Sunday Sermon<sup>17</sup> preaching the significance of Mahatma's 1928 Salt March<sup>18</sup> and his fast to end discrimination against India's untouchables.

During the years that followed my visit to Mississippi, I started reading and collecting books on Theology<sup>19</sup> & Philosophy (eastern and western), and finally a lot more on Gandhi. Like my father, I too saw a lot of opportunism in and amongst Governmental and NGO circles that celebrated 'Gandhi' and used 'Gandhi' for political and personal uplift! This resulted in my expressing my musings and observations as stories in regional magazines and newspapers in India, on such opportunism and hypocrisy. With age and inevitable maturity, came the calmness to shun bitterness and criticism to help enjoy the 'Life and Teachings of Gandhi', including pondering many aspects of Gandhi's life which became a subject of controversy during and after his life. A dozen years ago, I went back to my diaries and archives on Mahatma Gandhi in the context of preparing for a fundraiser-concert featuring the compositions of three dozen saint composers

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17 Palm Sunday Sermon on M K Gandhi delivered by MLK on March 22, 1959, Montgomery, Ala. Returning to his pulpit after an absence of nearly two months, King discusses the life of Gandhi, suggesting that "more than anybody else in the modern world" he had "caught the spirit of Jesus Christ, and lived it more completely in his life." Referring to Gandhi as one of Jesus's "other sheep," he observes that "it is one of the strange ironies of the modern world that the greatest Christian of the twentieth century was not a member of the Christian church." King continues by comparing the lives of three martyred leaders, Jesus, Gandhi, and Abraham Lincoln, noting that the latter two were shot for their efforts "to heal the wounds of a divided nation." He concludes with a warning: "God grant that we shall choose the high way. Even if it will mean assassination, even if it will mean crucifixion, for by going this way we will discover that death will be only the beginning of our influence." This transcript is drawn from an audio recording of the service.

18 The Salt March, also known as the Dandi March and the Dandi Satyagraha, was an act of nonviolent civil disobedience in colonial India led by Gandhi to produce salt from the seawater in the coastal village of Dandi (now in Gujarat), as was the practice of the local populace until British officials introduced taxation on salt production, deemed their sea-salt reclamation activities illegal, and then repeatedly used force to stop it. The 24-day march lasted from 12 March 1930 to 6 April 1930 as a direct-action campaign of tax resistance and nonviolent protest the British salt monopoly. It gained worldwide attention which gave impetus to the Indian independence movement and started the nationwide Civil Disobedience Movement. Mahatma Gandhi started this march with 78 of his trusted volunteers. Walking ten miles a day for 24 days, the march spanned over 240 miles.

19 Theology is a subset of philosophy - at least in part. But whereas philosophy is a lot broader than theology, philosophy does not encompass theology

including Gitanjali of Tagore!<sup>20</sup> This search rekindled memories of my discussions with my father forcing me to go deeper in to such understanding or lack thereof. My angst to get closer to the lives of Tagore and Gandhi led to some unpleasant awakenings. The former called the latter ‘Mahatma’ and yet mercilessly critiqued him and his beliefs. This is the reason for the long analysis and comparison that follow. Gandhi and Tagore were analyzed by two uncompromising group of admirers and thus the resulting criticisms were tainted by their respective biases. The poet was skeptical of features central to Gandhi’s agenda – such as Mahatma’s prescription that everyone should spend some time, daily, using the ‘charkha’, the Neolithic spinning wheel - to make one’s own clothes! Tagore failed to see what would be gained by people - better suited for other work - struggling to become ‘clumsy’ spinners!

The two most eminent personalities of emerging India projected two very different self-images. Tagore, however, was a great admirer of Satyagraha<sup>21</sup>, and opposed violence in every form. This was one of the reasons for his profound respect for Mahatma. Several journalists and writers of Bengal and other provinces criticized Tagore for espousing Gandhian way of “non-violent (ahimsa)” protest. There were other issues, however, that caused Tagore to denounce other activities of Gandhi in later years. Likewise, others had issues with Gandhi’s refusal to assist Bhagat Singh<sup>22</sup> and the repeated failures of his protest-movements alienated the more aggressive freedom fighters, such as Netaji, the Anushilan-Samiti<sup>23</sup> and the Jugantar<sup>24</sup>. Soon, Gandhi had become so unpopular in those circles that

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20 The original Bengali collection of 156/157 poems was published on August 14, 1910. The English Gitanjali or Song Offerings is a collection of 103 English poems of Tagore’s own English translations of his Bengali poems first published in November 1912 by the Indian Society of London. Tagore received the Nobel Prize for Literature, largely for this book in 1913.

21 Satyagraha (सत्यग्रह) - holding firmly onto Truth or Truth-force – is a form of nonviolent resistance or civil resistance. The term was coined and developed by Gandhi. He deployed Satyagraha in the Indian independence movement and also during his earlier struggles in South Africa for Indian rights. Satyagraha theory influenced Martin Luther King Jr.’s and James Bevel’s campaigns during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, and many other social justice and similar movements.

22 Bhagat Singh (1907-1931) was an Indian nationalist considered to be one of the most influential revolutionaries of the Indian independence movement. He is often referred to as Shaheed Bhagat Singh, the word "Shaheed" meaning "martyr" in several Indian languages.

23 Anushilan Samiti (Ānūshīlōn sōmīti, lit: body-building society) was a Bengali Indian organization that existed in the first quarter of the twentieth century, and propounded revolutionary violence as the means for ending British rule in India

24 Jugantar or Yugantar - (meaning New Era or more literally Transition of an Epoch) was one of the two main secret revolutionary trends operating in Bengal for Indian independence

the freedom fighters advocated stern actions to break the enormous power of the ‘British’. Gandhi’s aversion to ‘violence’ even if it were for the just cause of obtaining Freedom, distanced him from millions of the elite and intellectuals who openly criticized Gandhi for being too weak and two-faced! Ambedkar<sup>25</sup> had issues with Gandhi on the latter’s support of “Hindu Caste system” in his writing in Gujarati papers while, seemingly, opposing it in his English writing. Ambedkar did not hesitate to criticize Gandhi in his interview with BBC and thus refuse to acknowledge the title of ‘Mahatma’ while referring to Gandhi! True to his principles, Gandhi had no hesitation reaching out to each one of those who criticized him, to convert their energies towards ‘Satyagraha (‘holding on to Truth’) also often universally used for “total non-violence’.

Amidst all these disagreements highlighted by the British-Indian Media, there were vast areas of agreements between Tagore and Gandhi rarely publicized or acknowledged. Gandhi’s foremost comment on Indian problem in 1920s to 1940s was one basic evil, i.e., ‘modern civilization’, that he called a threat to all that was worthwhile and moral in human values, not only in India but in other parts of the globe. Tagore endorsed this, although for distinct reasons. Let us see them here.

Gandhi reiterated that the British were to be pitied, not hated, for spreading the pandemic of the so-called ‘civilization’ but expressed his angst that the Indian infatuation with “that civilization” oppressed the common man in India. Gandhi warned that portraying mankind as a creature of desires and ‘Capitalism’ creating endless ‘wants’ were the conscious policies promoted by that Evil espoused by British. ‘Multiplication’ of wants hence becomes the sine qua non of the entire system which dehumanized Man, legitimized violence against Nature, deprived mankind the understanding of Life’s full meaning and its purpose beyond the endless fulfilment of desires. The end-results of such soul-destroying pursuits, Gandhi wrote, were ‘loss of all autonomy, mutual suspicion, violence and the exploitation of man by man’. Man, both as worker and consumer, had become slave to machines. Imperialism and racism were integral to such a civilization. Even its apparent benefits were of

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25 Dr. B R Ambedkar (1891-1956), popularly known as Babasaheb Ambedkar, was an Indian jurist, economist, politician and social reformer who inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement and campaigned against social discrimination towards the untouchables (Dalits), while also supporting the rights of women and labor. He was independent India’s first law and justice minister, the principal architect of the Constitution of India, and a founding father of the Republic of India.

a highly dubious nature. Modern medicine produced patterns of dependence which were highly unnatural; modern transport, far from making life easier, ironically helped spread disease. Wisdom had been reduced to knowledge in quest of power; morality, equated with enlightened self-interest, had become a form of prudence. The much-vaunted dynamism of the West, to Gandhi, was “western chase for wealth” was little more than mindless activism. He saw in its excessive effort, a sign of inherent weakness, and an unnecessary over-expenditure of energy for which there was always a price to pay. In Europe, there were already signs that Nature was calling for repayment. The excess of effort in every sphere of life had created patterns of elaboration and ever-increasing excitement which relegated human beings to a position of insignificance. The cruel pressure of competition reduced the workers to something inferior to machinery. In the West, powerful groups crushed weak ones, big money starved out small money and, in the end, swallowed it like a pill. Only on two points was Gandhi willing to concede some moral merit to modern civilization. He admired its spirit of scientific enquiry for he saw in it a genuine quest for truth. He also found much to learn in the organizational aspect of western life: the civil virtues were informed by the moral qualities of discipline and co-operation.

Tagore, despite his great admiration for many features of western life, was quintessentially in agreement with Gandhi’s judgement. Gandhi had described Indian infatuation with the “West” as “moha”, and the high road to cultural suicide. The poet compared the western impact with disease. He nevertheless added, by way of apology and explanation, ‘Everything is for the good in its own place; but even what is good becomes dangerous rubbish in an inappropriate setting.’ He was, also far from certain that everything was for the good in Western Civilization. His multi-faceted critique of the West focused on certain basic themes which recur again and again in his writings. Gandhi wrote that money was ‘their’ God. Tagore stated the same idea in a more elaborate language: “Every Feature of western civilization is an item commanding very high price. Everything from pleasure to warfare costs a great deal of money. Money has become a great power as a result and the worship of money now surpasses all other forms of worship. Everything is therefore difficult to achieve or attain, everything is shrouded in complexity. This is the greatest weakness of Western Civilization”. Tagore linked this apotheosis of money to another central feature of western civilization, mindless activism, which he

found even more disturbing. Tagore was unequivocal in his rejection of this material civilization. He did not believe in it, he wrote to Gandhi, just as he did not believe ‘in the physical body to be the highest truth in man’. In his statements on Western Civilization, Tagore frequently invoked the concept of relativist which was a commonplace in the cultural discourses of nineteenth-century Bengal. A common theme in this discussion is that one cannot judge one civilization from the point of view of another because each civilization had its characteristic proneness. Tagore, citing Guizot<sup>26</sup>, noted the uniqueness of Western Civilization in its multiplicity of drives and the co-existence of often incompatible institutions and tendencies.

The Indian civilization of Mahatma’s imagination was essentially rural in character in contrast to the city-based modern civilization of the West. Its survival over millennia despite countless assaults was evidence of its viability, vitality and moral validity. It was spiritual because the essentially spiritual nature of man was its discovery. Gandhi recognized an age-old culture hidden under ‘an encrustment of crudity’ in rural India and” the apparent brutishness of peasant life”. The self-governing, self-sufficient and harmonious village communities of yore were the institutional bulwark of this ancient culture. Gandhi saw in the Hindu caste system a social order which recognized the basic differences in human temperament: but denounced ‘untouchability’ as an aberration, a fall from grace. Gandhi felt, Indian society was essentially tolerant, perceiving (from the days of the Upanishads to the current) the truth underlying apparently divergent beliefs. It was also a grand synthesis of diverse cultures, with an infinite capacity for assimilation. Thus, in terms of human values it was superior in every way to the competitive, materialistic and violence-prone civilization of modern Europe and Americas driven by insatiable desire forever seeking satisfaction of new wants. The British and the emerging West, to bolster up their own power, trashed Indian culture; Indians who were regrettably infatuated with the West, believed this propaganda. Curing Indians of this painful and vicious moha was one essential element of Gandhi’s agenda for reconstruction.

Tagore’s idealization of Indian society and his implied declaration of faith in its essential superiority was

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*26 François Pierre Guillaume Guizot (1787 - 1874) was a French historian, orator, and statesman. Guizot was a dominant figure in French politics prior to the Revolution of 1848. A moderate liberal who opposed the attempt by King Charles X to usurp legislative power, he worked to sustain a constitutional monarchy following the July Revolution of 1830. He finally served as prime minister of France 1847-1848.*

based on an imaginative interpretation of what he had seen and experienced. He too repeatedly emphasized its essentially rural character. And what Gandhi had described as the predominantly spiritual proneness of India's civilization, the poet pictured in terms of very concrete images. He contrasted Europe's endless and frantic pursuit of pleasure with the Indians' very different style of quest for happiness. Tagore saw an essential balance, an element of unity between the various aspects of their existence in the life of the peasants in rural Bengal: "There is no grandeur; no complexity there. One does not need a great deal of philosophy, science or sociology to live one's life at this far end of the world and satisfy one's few modest wants. One requires only a few ancient rules which govern the family, the village and one's duties as a subject of the king. They blend very easily with people's lives to become a total vibrant reality."

Are All the above analyses of Gandhi's and Tagore's angst warranted today, even after nearly 100 years of their utterances by both – especially given the technological inventions and innovations and a growing population, changing from an essentially rural group of 1.7 billion people to about 7.7 billion today split between 4.3bn in urban and 3.4bn in rural'?

The glaring answer, nevertheless, is a firm 'Yes'; in fact, such analysis is more relevant today than decades earlier. The number of countries, protectorates and colonies were less than 100 in 1919 and we have 197 countries today. After two 'World-Wars' and twenty-seven regional wars causing destruction and devastation of unimaginable proportions, most of the world nations are spending about 5% of their respective GDP in military expenditure to 'protect' themselves from 'others' when 11% of the global population is painfully below-poverty-line. In terms of actual figures, the most powerful nation, the United States, is spending about \$630 billion per annum 'protecting' itself and other vulnerable nations from 'aggressors'!



Gandhi and Tagore, followed by MLK, Mandela, Aung San Suu Kyi, Petra Kelly, Albert Einstein and Barack Obama and hundreds of intellectuals, humanists, philosophers and patriots from around the world have agonized, fought, pleaded and sacrificed; they continue to agonize over the glaring disparities which trigger violence in every form in every part of the world. Gandhi and Tagore reiterated that poverty is the biggest disease that every nation should address as its priority. At least 80% of humanity lives on less than \$10-a-day. More than 80 percent of the world's population lives in countries where income-differentials are irreversibly widening. The poorest 40% of the world's population accounts for 5% of global income. The richest 20 percent sit on three-quarters of the world income. MLK agonized over this malaise even while addressing the Nobel audience<sup>27</sup> on December 11, 1964.

Gandhi's and MLK's tireless work in that direction and sacrifices were not without result. However, even after 70 years since Gandhi's assassination, despite massive developments competing with the rest of the world, a socialist India still grapples with 5% of its 1.3 billion people in abject poverty! Comparatively, however, even after 50 years since MLK's assassination, the US Census bureau officially acknowledges that 40 million people are "poor" - representing 12% of the US population. Gandhi's fear of 'highly competitive, materialistic and violence-prone civilization where most of everyone rushing to abandon the 75% rural havens in search of Utopia in urban slums and ghettos' was not unfounded and is not a 'phobia'. Gandhi was not an economist, nor did he claim to be one. But, his fear of uncontrolled and insatiable wants, 'unplanned growth and crowding of urban areas' and 'exodus to urban life with grand expectations of 'comfortable life' without education and individual planning were not unfounded. India has, by some unofficial estimates, a burgeoning 48% of the population deemed middle class today as opposed to only about 8% when Gandhi and Tagore spoke against the 'moha' towards unfettered materialistic civilization and in search of money, 'their God'. Like Gandhi, Tagore was extremely suspicious of Centralized State Power. Tagore's agenda for national reconstruction, like Gandhi's, emphasized the rural unit rather than the grand edifice of the State. Tagore discussed at great length and repeatedly concurred with the assimilative power of Indian civilization, the belief first projected

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27 "The time has come for an all-out world war against poverty. The rich nations must use their vast resources of wealth to develop the underdeveloped, school the unschooled, and feed the unfed. Ultimately a great nation is a compassionate nation" - *The Quest for Peace and Justice, Nobel Lecture*

**'...as someone who stands here as a direct consequence of Dr. King's life's work, I am living testimony to the moral force of non-violence. I know there is nothing weak -nothing passive -nothing naïve - in the creed and lives of Gandhi and King...'**

**- Barack Obama**

by Orientalists that it represented a grand synthesis, a pattern of unity in diversity. It had not rejected any of the numerous cultures which had come to its shores. 'Come, Oh! Aryans, non-Aryans, come Hindu and Muslims. Come, come, Oh! Englishmen, come Christians, come Brahmins, purify your heart, hold the hands of downtrodden and out-castes. Remove all ills and disrespect. Come quickly for the coronation of Mother, where the "Mangal Ghat" must be filled with sacred water which become consecrated by the touch of the great souls who have come together on the seashore to pay reverence. The Scythians, the Huns, the Pathans and the Mughals had all merged into one single body', thus declared Tagore in his most famous poems – "Bharata teertha"<sup>28</sup>

Despite their differences, Tagore was the first notable contemporary to acknowledge "... Mahatma Gandhi came and stood at the door of India's destitute millions...who else has so unreservedly accepted the vast masses of the Indian people as his flesh and blood...Truth awakened Truth," he said.

Mahatma Gandhi became the strongest symbol of non-violence in the 20th century inspiring and influencing a dozen statesmen around the world who were fighting for Freedom and/or Civil Liberties to their peoples from oppressive regimes. I can understand and appreciate my father's bitterness about the ungrateful way Gandhi was treated by many Indians who did/could not understand the lofty stature of the Mahatma who, not only achieved a dream-like freedom for his own nation of 330 million people in 1947 but also paved the way for another 40 nations to break away from multi colonial repressive regimes. It is widely held – in retrospect – that the greatest Indian (national) leader should have been the first to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize since the 1930s! Gandhi was nominated five times beginning

<sup>28</sup> *Bharata-tirtha (The Indian Pilgrimage)* - In this poem, Tagore envisioned an India imbued with the noblest of her ideals: that of tolerance, acceptance, exchange. The poem depicts the soul of both Indian philosophy, culture and tradition. The poem is the string of garland around which the flowers of poesy is imitated and established successfully. Tagore calls for universal brotherhood and spiritual awakening from bondage and tyranny.

in 1937 but was never awarded the prize, making the fair-minded people of the world wonder about the 'neutrality' of the Nobel Prize selection process! When Dalai Lama was awarded the peace prize in 1989, he announced that he was accepting the award, in part, as a tribute to Gandhi! When Martin Luther King, Jr accepted the Nobel Prize in 1964, he credited Mahatma "for how he was inspired and influenced"<sup>29</sup> by Gandhi's life, achievements and his message'.

### **South Africa, Gandhi and Mandela**

Another great freedom fighter who came on my radar in early 1984, accidentally, was Nelson 'Rolihlahla'<sup>30</sup> Mandela, the 'Father of the Nation of South Africa'. At the (Johannesburg) John Smuts airport<sup>31</sup>, I had an occasion to personally experience "apartheid", like the one experienced by Gandhi when he was kicked off the train in Pietermaritzburg in 1893 for being a non-white passenger, despite holding a first-class ticket. My plane from London landed several hours late in very bad weather, turning my hosts away from Mbabane, the capital of Swaziland<sup>32</sup> (now known as Eswatini), my final destination. Holding a first-class ticket from the airline that brought me so late and having to wait for the charter flight to pick me up within an hour of scheduled arrival, my only mistake (that I could think of) was 'holding an Indian Passport which did not allow me to land in South Africa'. Only when I experienced segregation and humiliation for more than 36 hours in

<sup>29</sup> MLK said "...This approach to the problem of racial injustice is not at all without successful precedent. It was used in a magnificent way by Mohandas K. Gandhi to challenge the might of the British Empire and free his people from the political domination and economic exploitation inflicted upon them for centuries. He struggled only with the weapons of truth, soul force, non-injury, and courage

<sup>30</sup> Mandela's father named the young boy 'Rolihlaha' in isiXhosa language

<sup>31</sup> Jan Smuts Airport was renamed Johannesburg International in 1994 by ANC in post-apartheid regime.

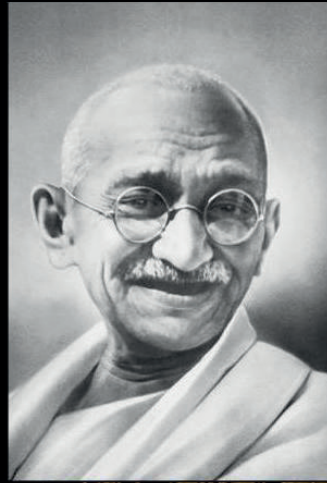
<sup>32</sup> Eswatini (Swazi: eSwatini) officially the Kingdom of Eswatini and also known as Swaziland, is a landlocked country bordered by Mozambique to its northeast and South Africa to its north, west and south. The country and the Swazi people take their names from Mswati II, the 19th-century king under whose rule Swazi territory was expanded and unified.

**President Barack H. Obama**  
August 4, 1961 – Present



**“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”**

**Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi**  
October 1869 – 30 January 1948



**“An error does not become truth by reason of multiplied propagation, nor does truth become error because nobody sees it.”**

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**  
January 15, 1961 – April 4, 1968



**“We have flown the air like birds and swum the sea like fish, but we have yet to learn the simple act of walking the earth like brothers.”**

the ‘colored section waiting area’, I could understand the indignation of Gandhi in 1893 which, nevertheless, created history in South Africa and later in India! Nelson Mandela had, just then, rejected President Botha’s offer of his freedom, instead, asking Botha to dismantle apartheid. Over the next 10 years, Nelson Mandela worked patiently to gather international support for his call for abolition of apartheid. In 1990, racial segregation was abolished by F.W. De Klerk, the new president of South Africa and Nelson Mandela was released from the prison, unthinkable events celebrated by the civilized world. In 1993, both Mandela and De-Klerk jointly received the Nobel Peace prize and were credited with accomplishing a political miracle - the transformation of their country into a multi-racial democracy without a civil war!

Mandela, an iron-willed and rarely emotional leader, often cited Mahatma Gandhi as one of his greatest teachers, “Gandhi’s ideas have played a vital role in South Africa’s transformation and with the help of Gandhi’s teaching, ‘apartheid’ has been overcome”. Today, Mandela is remembered around the world as a symbol of peace and freedom (Jonathan Wiggs of “Time” magazine). Mandela had a habit of saying that he was not a saint. He had his share of bitterness; he famously said, “the struggle is my life” but “his life was also a struggle”. The man who loved children could not spend time with his son nor could he be father or husband

he wanted to be; despite being the recipient of the Nobel Peace prize (1993) and numerous international awards including the US Congressional Medal of honor (1998) and US Presidential Medal of Freedom (2002), he remained on the “U.S Terrorists watch list till 2008. Yet, he found it in his heart to say “No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”, another Gandhian principle.

Barrack Obama, the 44th President of the US said in his acceptance speech to the Nobel Peace Prize, ‘...as someone who stands here as a direct consequence of Dr. King’s life’s work, I am living testimony to the moral force of non-violence. I know there is nothing weak -nothing passive - nothing naïve - in the creed and lives of Gandhi and King...’. The high esteem President Obama had for the Mahatma is evident in his response to a question by a ninth grader, when he referred to Gandhi “as a hero of mine<sup>33</sup>”

Three months before Obama acknowledged the “creed

<sup>33</sup> In 2009, when Barack Obama was visiting Wakefield High School, Arlington, VA, a ninth grader asked the would-be President: “If you could have dinner with anyone, dead or alive, who would it be?” Obama chuckled but answered: “Well, dead or alive, that’s a pretty big list. You know, I think that it might be Gandhi, who is a real hero of mine.”



and life” of Gandhi, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and First Lady Rosalynn Carter were named recipients of the 2009 Mahatma Gandhi Global Nonviolence Award in recognition of the couple's humanitarian efforts worldwide. President Carter commenced his speech<sup>34</sup> with the following statement, “President Rose, Director Mittal, and the distinguished guests who share the honor of associating ourselves with Mahatma Gandhi, a quiet but courageous champion of peace”.



Aung San Suu Kyi, First State Counsellor of Myanmar (like a Prime Minister) speaking to a packed hall in Oslo, Norway in 2012 (after spending 15 years in house-arrest and waiting for 21 years since she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991), reminded the world as to why her name was/is spoken in the same breath as Mahatma Gandhi's. In a speech by turns personal and universal, she spelled out her philosophy of non-violent political change, rooted in her Buddhist faith and in the footsteps of the Great Mahatma: how the value of kindness<sup>35</sup>, she said, can conquer suffering and isolation. While addressing students at Columbia University in New York in 2012, Aung San said Gandhi had been one of the major influences in her life and she urged the students to read his works.

Albert Einstein and Gandhi were big admirers of each

<sup>34</sup> ‘Carter, during the presentation ceremony at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Va.’

<sup>35</sup> Aung San Suu Kye – ‘there can never be enough kindness in the world’

other and exchanged letters frequently. Einstein called Gandhi “a role model for the generations to come” in a letter, writing about him. “I believe that Gandhi’s views were the most enlightened of all the political men in our time,” he said. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan<sup>36</sup>, also known as the ‘Frontier Gandhi’, was a political and spiritual leader known for his belief in non-violence and the methods of opposition to the British adopted by Mahatma Gandhi. The two remained close friends and worked with each other right up to 1947. Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant<sup>37</sup> said in his keynote address to the world: “Many of his (Gandhi’s) principles have universal application and eternal validity, and I hope the passing years will show that his faith in the efficacy of nonviolent pressure as an agent for peaceful change is as justified today all over the world as it was in his time in India.”

“Jesus Christ gave us the goals and Mahatma Gandhi the tactics,” said Martin Luther King Jr. and it was one of MLK’s oft repeated encomiums on Gandhi. Former US Vice-President and one of the greatest environmentalists, Al Gore<sup>38</sup>, acknowledges Gandhi’s influence on him, especially in his fight against global warming: “Mahatma Gandhi’s philosophy of Satyagraha can be translated to mean ‘truth force’. It is this truth force which can help us to fight this battle (to protect our environment) honestly and with people’s participation.” Gandhi had a profound effect on Mexican-American labor movement and civil rights leader Cesar Chavez<sup>39</sup> and his advocacy for Latino farm workers. Chavez modeled many of his tactics, like boycotts and hunger strikes, on Gandhi’s methods. “Not only did he talk about non-violence, he showed how non-violence works for justice and liberation,” said Chavez.

When Steve Jobs<sup>40</sup> started his second innings at Apple in the year 1997, he stood before a giant portrait of Mahatma Gandhi and said before a packed audience: “Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers...because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.” It is widely believed that Mahatma Gandhi inspired Steve whenever he was in doubt.

Famous Jewish-American journalist Louis Fischer who

<sup>36</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bacha\\_Khan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bacha_Khan)

<sup>37</sup> U Thant was a Burmese diplomat and the 3rd Secretary-General of the United Nations from 1961 to 1971, the first non-European to hold the position.

<sup>38</sup> After his term as vice-president ended in 2001, Gore remained prominent as an author and environmental activist, whose work in climate change activism earned him (jointly with the IPCC) the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007.

<sup>39</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cesar\\_Chavez](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cesar_Chavez)

<sup>40</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve\\_Jobs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve_Jobs)

**'Resist to the very end', he said, 'but without violence'.**

**Of violence the world is sick.**

**Oh, India, dare to be worthy of your Gandhi.**

**-Pearl S Buck**

penned *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*, inspiration for Attenborough's award-winning film *Gandhi*, said on Gandhi's assassination: "Just an old man in a loin cloth in distant India. Yet when he died, humanity wept." Film director and producer Lord Richard Attenborough's<sup>41</sup> film *Gandhi* swept the Oscars in 1983. Speaking of his inspiration, he said: "When asked what attribute he most admired in human nature, Mahatma Gandhi replied, simply and immediately, 'Courage'. 'Nonviolence', he said, 'is not to be used ever as the shield of the coward. It is the weapon of the brave.'"

Noted American writer and novelist, Pearl S. Buck<sup>42</sup>, had this to say after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi:



"He was right, he knew he was right, we all knew he

<sup>41</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Attenborough](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Attenborough)

<sup>42</sup> Pearl Sydenstricker Buck (1892-1973); also known by her Chinese name Sai Zhenzhu; was an American writer and novelist. As the daughter of missionaries, Buck spent most of her life before 1934 in Zhenjiang, China. Her novel *The Good Earth* was the best-selling fiction book in the United States in 1931 and 1932 and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1932. In 1938, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for her rich and truly epic descriptions of peasant life in China and for her biographical masterpieces". She was the first American woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

was right. The man who killed him knew he was right. However long the follies of the violent continue, they but prove that Gandhi was right. 'Resist to the very end', he said, 'but without violence'. Of violence, the world is sick. Oh, India, dare to be worthy of your Gandhi."

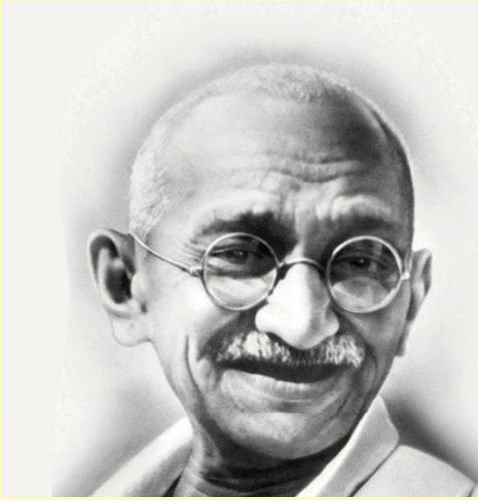
And finally, no one of course could say it better than Nobel-prize-winning Irish playwright and passionate socialist, George Bernard Shaw<sup>43</sup>: "Impressions of Gandhi? You might well ask for someone's impression of the Himalayas."

I was once asked, or should I say 'confronted' with a question on 'Pragmatic Spirituality'. I studied in my collegiate years 'Psychology' as an ancillary subject; I felt that my attempt to address Psychology as taught in India seemed to contradict Pragmatic Spirituality espoused by great saints and seers including my paramaguru Kanchi Sankaracharya<sup>44</sup>. I was too naïve, some 56 years ago, to distinguish the subtleties, even differences! But, almost a dozen years ago, the question posed in a forum poked my search or research! Psychology as taught and practiced in India is mostly "western" and not Indian psychology. Indian psychology should be an emerging system of psychology with its roots in classical Indian thought. According to Mahatma Gandhi, human beings are instinctively brute, but inherently spiritual. A human being is, on one hand, naturally attracted to sensory gratification and indulgence, selfish desires and craving, but on the other hand, aspires for self-realization<sup>45</sup>. Human development is a dialectical process where people seek to find a workable synthesis between sensory indulgence and spiritual aspirations, between egotistic selfishness and altruistic urges. Gandhi's life provides an excellent case study of the ways of spiritual development that any human can attempt or experiment. The techniques Gandhi crafted like Satyagraha and the strategies he followed in his public

<sup>43</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Bernard\\_Shaw](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw)

<sup>44</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chandrashekarendra\\_Saraswati](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chandrashekarendra_Saraswati)

<sup>45</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-realization>



**There are seven sins in the world:  
Wealth without work,  
Pleasure without conscience,  
Knowledge without character,  
Commerce without morality,  
Science without humanity,  
Worship without sacrifice and  
Politics without principle.**

**- Gandhi**

life give us insights into how spirituality can be applied to improve human psychology. The applications are not India-specific, but universal, as the foregoing analysis of the world leaders who followed the footsteps of the Mahatma demonstrated! Therefore, psychologists from the East as well as from the West can join in exploring Gandhian ideas and techniques of psycho-spiritual development and their relevance to today's troubled world with the US at the fore-front!

Gandhi never claimed nor acknowledged others' comments that he was a man of wisdom. But, the world followed his path as the words and lessons of Wisdom. His gentle approach to life is testament to the fact that 'strength does not equal physical capacity'. In the western world, we are taught, generally, that to be strong, we must be ferocious in attitude and vehemently go after what we want in life. Great philosophers' and wise leaders' wisdom believed/believe that approach is flawed. Gandhi's life story has proven that it is possible to remain gentle in spirit yet be strong and command respect. Mahatma reiterated, "In a gentle way, you can shake the world." In a world in which authority is valued over authentic leadership, I believe we have a lot to learn from the man who fought for a nation with just his mind. Gandhi's philosophy was not purely based on theory; instead he lived by rules of pragmatism. He practiced what he preached every day of his life.

Koneru Ramakrishna Rao (b:1932) is an Indian philosopher, psychologist, parapsychologist, educationist, teacher, researcher and administrator. Dr. Rao<sup>46</sup> is to Indian Psychology what Dr. S Radhakrishnan was to Indian Philosophy. Rao in his 1968 book titled 'Gandhi and Pragmatism' listed

several famous quotes from Mahatma. These inspiring quotes became the pearls of wisdom and motivational power for the world leaders, some of whom have been mentioned and quoted in this article elsewhere. Some of them are listed here.

- *"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."*
- *"A man is but a product of his thoughts. What he thinks he becomes."*
- *"Be the change that you want to see in the world."*
- *"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong."*
- *"I will not let anyone walk through my mind with their dirty feet."*
- *"Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will."*
- *"An ounce of patience is worth more than a ton of preaching."*
- *"Change yourself – you are in control."*
- *"See the good in people and help them."*
- *"Without action, you aren't going anywhere."*
- *"Take care of this moment."*
- *"Be congruent, be authentic, be your true self."*
- *"Continue to grow and evolve."*
- *"A 'No' uttered from the deepest conviction is better than a 'Yes' uttered merely to please, or worse, to avoid trouble."*

<sup>46</sup> The Government of India awarded him, albeit very late, the civilian honor of Padma Shri in 2011.

- *“Glory lies in the attempt to reach one’s goal and not in reaching it.”*
- *“An eye for an eye will make the entire world blind.”*
- *“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”*
- *“A coward is incapable of exhibiting love; it is the prerogative of the brave.”*
- *“Nobody can hurt me without my permission.”*
- *“In a gentle way, you can shake the world.”*

Gandhi, a Mahatma without a doubt, did not care for that very honorific title conferred on him more than a hundred years ago and he was beyond titles and defamations! A billion people of the world continue to revere him, and most follow his path and teachings like the hundreds of the great leaders, scholars, and philosophers who felt proud to dedicate most of their achievements and recognitions to Gandhi and salute the path he laid by his experiences and sacrifices. Unlike all other religions, which came in to existence in very recent human history, the great ancient Human Code of Ethics (aka SanAtana-dharma) despite being a subject of controversy mainly from ignorance, largely thanks to its built- in generosity of tolerance embedded surpasses all conceivable criticisms and controversies and remains lofty and universally relevant. If Lord Rama and Lord Krishna – worshipped by a billion peoples of the world – can be continually analyzed, dissected and criticized by a small number of non-believers and self-proclaimed scholars, Gandhi, the mortal, is no exception. He graciously acknowledged the controversies that surrounded him and tried to analyze and absorb the criticisms, but rarely changed the fundamentals of his goals or the clear paths of ‘Satyagraha’ and ‘ahimsa’. This is the loftiest road to realization that attracted a thousand leaders and scholars from around the troubled world, over a century, to look up to Gandhi and his proven path. Gandhi was a serious follower of Bhagavad-Gita, one of the greatest scriptures, eternally relevant, followed by billions including non-Hindus. His discourses on Gita have been published about 85 years ago in ‘Harijan’ and translated from Gujarati to English by Valji Govindji Desai. Navjivan publishing house has repeatedly reprinted the book as one of the most sought-after ‘Gandhi books’. Gandhi practiced what he preached from Gita and Chapter 2

was his favorite. Gandhi’s uncompromising attitude to some of his strongest convictions which earned the ire of leaders and scholars within India can be traced to his adherence to sloka 15 of *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*<sup>47</sup>

There are many in India from my as well as succeeding generations who still have the angst and who continue to wonder why the Indian Government (which conferred Bharat-Ratna on non-Indians such as Nelson Mandela and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and to many Indians posthumously) did not place Mahatma ahead of all of them but seemingly chose to ignore him! It is equally surprising that the Nobel Committee had the “recommendations” so many times but did not deem it fit to award the Peace Prize to the greatest peace maker of the free world in centuries. Gandhi would have laughed at such angst if he were alive, as he did not believe in ‘titles/awards’ nor was affected by honorific reverence bestowed on him. However, millions, including skeptics like me, remain confused as to the fairness of such awards conferred often seemingly on political considerations. We believe that Gandhi was spared of controversies like many deserving artists and musicians who have been ignored for timely recognitions by august organizations in India, by both Governmental and NGOs.

Like in his confession ‘The story of my experiments with Truth’, Gandhi was a genuine human being; we cannot say the same, without hesitation, about a million leaders of this world from any walk of life. It is his personality and message that gave me the courage to attempt this experiment with Mahatma despite my inadequacies and contradictions. This is also the reason that a thousand books and articles have been written on Mahatma and will continue to be written. He is no longer a person but a Message for humanity when the world faces more turbulence than when he lived in flesh and blood; Gandhi’s message is exponentially more relevant to this nation and to hundred more nations that need to look inward to cleanse the malaise of intolerance, hate and violence.

Jai Hind, let us Pray for Peace for everyone.

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

47 यं हि न व्यथयन्त्येते पुरुषं पुरुषर्षभ | समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते ॥ 15 ॥

*yaṁ hi na vyathayantyeṭe puruṣhaṁ puruṣarṣhabha - sama-duḥkha-sukhaṁ dhīraṁ so 'mṛitatvāya kalpate*  
*Krishna to Arjun: ‘O Arjun....., that person who is not affected by happiness and distress, and remains steady in both, becomes eligible for liberation.*

*By Sangita Acharya Thiruvaiyaru S R Krishnan*



March 29, 2019

### MESSAGE

My congratulations to the Indian Fine Arts Academy of San Diego (IFAASD) for putting together such an impressive array of performers for the Academy's twelfth annual Indian Music Festival. The weeklong festival this year is particularly special as it coincides with Mahatma Gandhi's 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary. The event also celebrates the birth centenary of the Carnatic music maestro D. K. Pattammal and the 99<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of the legendary Pandit Ravi Shankar.

With over seventy eminent Indian cultural personalities joining together for the April sonata, it qualifies as one of the largest Indian classical musical festivals the world over outside the shores of India. The diverse repertoire speaks volumes of the vast pool of musical talent available in India. The festival also recognizes the richness of the Indian classical musical tradition that has evolved over two millennium.

Music has no language. More so, Indian classical music, where the interplay of *Raga* and *Tala* creates a melodic magic that touches one's inner sensibilities. As the magic unfolds in San Diego, I wish the event all success.



**(Sanjay Panda)**  
Consul General