

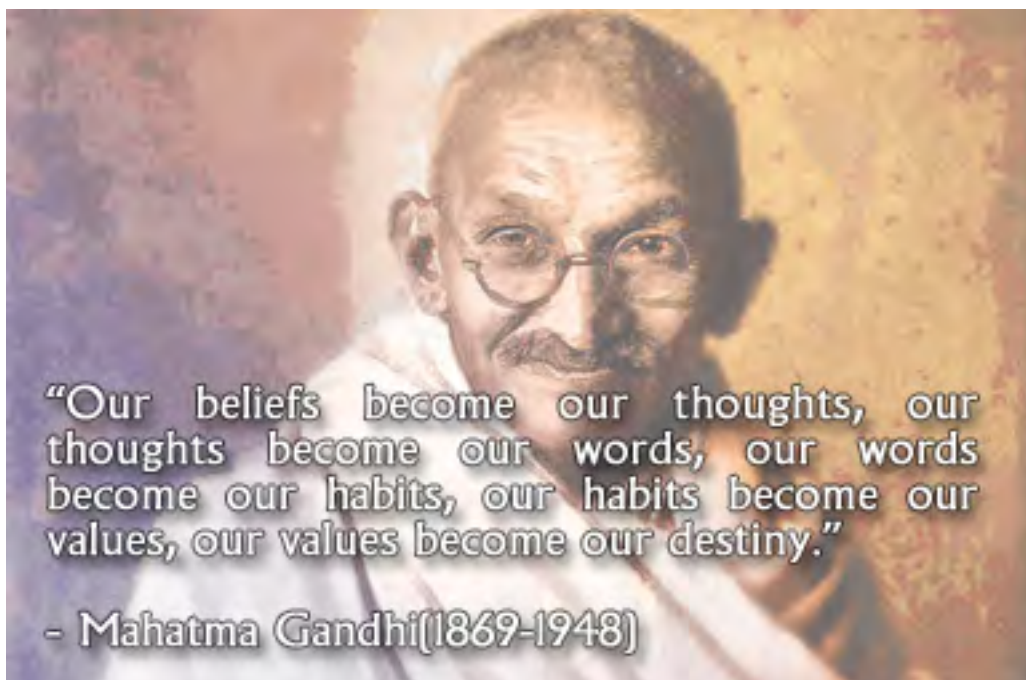
 **OCTOBER 2013**

Life Illustrated

LIFE | RELIGION | REALITY

Mahatma Gandhi

The Great Karma Yogi



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THOUGHT OF THE MONTH



Namaskar

As we enter into the new semester for the academies we must be conscious of the fact that we are also commencing a new season in our lives. The change in the color of the leaves and short days of sunshine are signs of major changes in the climatic conditions. We are entering the fall season, which for all Hindus ushers in some significant religious events. The period of Pitri Pakash, is the time for reflecting and remembering our ancestors and give charity in their names. During this period on October 2nd we reflect on the life and contributions of one of the greatest man of modern times Mahatma Gandhi. This is followed by Navratri, and Dasshera where we have an opportunity to worship the divine mother as Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati seeking her blessings in the form of purity of mind, self control and forgiveness. This is then followed by one day of celebration (Vijay Dashmi) The tenth day of Victory. Then in November we celebrate Diwali with special worship of the Divine mother in the form Lakshmi. I look forward to seeing all of you in Ram Mandir as we experience all of these divine moments.

As we travel through time and these events let us be thankful for the simple things that we enjoy daily. The rising sun each morning, the comfort of living in Canada and the opportunity to be the best we can be.

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Chief Executive Officer
Roopnauth Sharma

Editor-in-Chief
Dr. Sehdev Kumar

Associate Editor
Arvinda Patel

Marketing/Sales
Madhu Mistry

Graphic Design
Akshari Burugula
Jeydeep Patel

Digital Publishing
Akshari Burugula
Jeydeep Patel

Legal Advisor
Parmanand Prashad

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Premier of Ontario - Première ministre de l'Ontario



October 2, 2013

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

On behalf of the Government of Ontario, I am delighted to extended warm greetings to everyone attending the Symposium on Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy of Non-Violence and Truth, hosted by the Canada Hindu Heritage Centre.

In Ontario, we derive strength from our diversity - both culturally and spiritually. We Speak many languages, respect all faiths and have ties to every part of the world. Our differences define us, but never divide us. Multiculturalism is truly our strength.

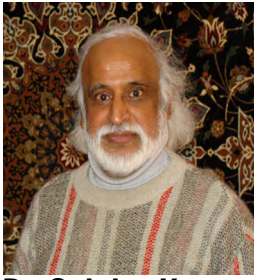
Our province is proud to be home to a dynamic Hindu community - whose faith embraces many rich traditions and enshrines the ideals service, pursuit of wisdom and respect for all regions. These values have contributed much to the strong and inclusive society that we have built through our collective efforts.

I would like to applaud Canada Hindu Heritage Centre for hosting this symposium, on Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, which seeks to discuss how his methods of non-violence are relevant today. I am confident all in attendance will learn, share and be inspired by this event. Please accept my best wishes for a memorable evening.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Kathleen Wynne'.

Kathleen Wynne
Premier

How Mahatma Gandhi Lives On



Dr. Sehdev Kumar

Generations to come,” said Albert Einstein, “will scarce believe, that such a one as [Gandhi] ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”

Sixty-five years after Gandhi’s assassination in 1948, we may wonder what was so special about this ‘half naked fakir’ who was hailed ‘Mahatma’ by the great poet Rabindranath Tagore, and by hundreds of millions of people all over the world. As the founder of a new kind of non-violent protest movement, Satyagraha, against a mighty empire, Gandhi was a political revolutionary, the like of which the world had never known before. “People described me as a saint trying to be politician”, he demurred, “but the truth is the other way around.”

In his meeting with the King at the Buckingham Palace in 1931, Gandhi refused to wear anything other than his usual dhoti and chappals. “How did it feel to be so dressed,” he was asked by a journalist. “The King was wearing enough clothes for both of us,” he said.

And “what do you think of Western Civilization, Mr. Gandhi?” asked a journalist. “Yes, that would be a very good idea,” he responded.

Even when India was the ‘Jewel in the Crown’ of the Raj, on his visit to England in 1931, everywhere he went, thousands of English men and women lined to see this ‘little man’ – The Mahatma.

Maria Montessori introduced him as ‘Noble Mas-



ter’. “Thought of world civilization and thought of the child,” said the revolutionary pioneer in education, “that is what links us.”

At the same time, the great actor and film-maker, Charlie Chaplin – ‘The Little Tramp’ - insisted on meeting Gandhi and to question his views on technology that he so condemned for dehumanizing workers. A few years later, Chaplin set out to create his masterpiece, *Modern Times* (1936), as a homage to this rebel.

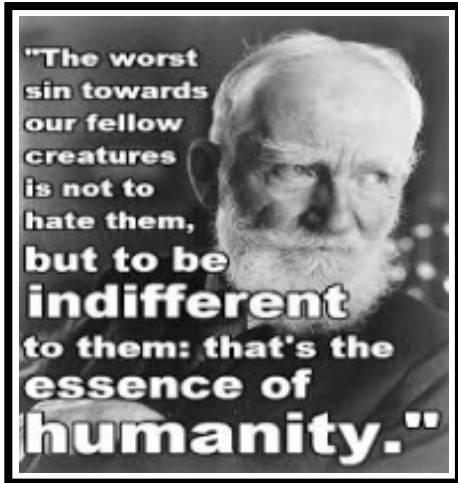
Gandhi’s vision of a new kind of struggle for freedom and justice had stirred writers and thinkers like George Bernard Shaw and Romain Rolland, and the labouring and oppressed people everywhere. And it had galvanized the Indian masses.

It is thus that at the end of 1999, as the century



Charlie Chaplin, ‘The Little Tramp’, with Mahatma Gandhi, London, 1931

was coming to an end and the new millennium was ushering, Time Magazine hailed Albert Einstein as the 'Man of the Century'; Gandhi was in the second place. But both Einstein and Tagore – two great visionaries of the twentieth century – hailed Gandhi as the greatest of all.



Playwright George Bernard Shaw was an ardent admirer of Gandhi

Gandhi was different and rebellious at every turn. At the sitting of the Round Table Conference on December 1, 1931, when the British Prime Minister, James Ramsay MacDonald, referred to Gandhi as a Hindu, he exclaimed "Not a Hindu."

In the eyes of his God and his faith, Gandhi was a Hindu, but in politics, and to the world at large, he was first and foremost an Indian.

Gandhi was a Hindu in the most universal sense; only he could declare to the world: "I am a Muslim and a Hindu and a Christian and a Jew and so are all of you."

In 1932, when Britain announced separate electorates in India for the Hindus and the Moslems, as well as for the 'Depressed Classes' – 'the untouchables', Gandhi threatened to fast unto death against it: "I have to resist your decision with my life," he wrote. "The only way I can do it is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death."

For many Gandhi was obstinate and impractical, a



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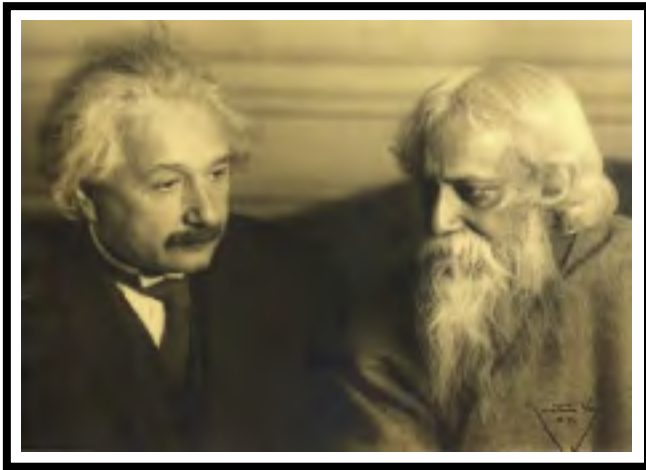
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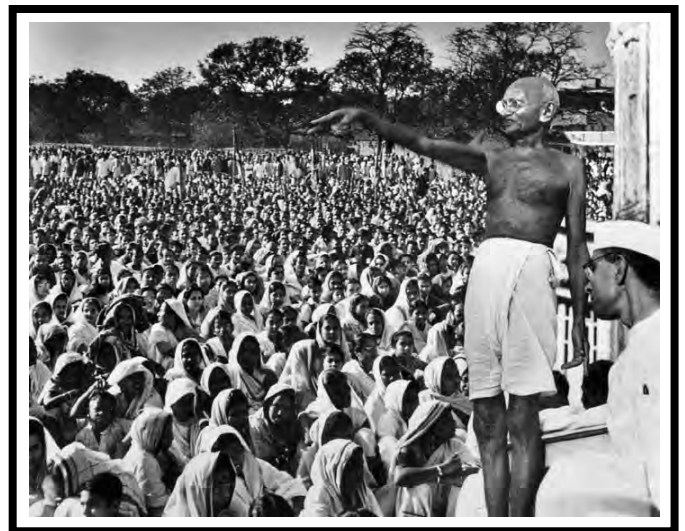
Gandhiji with Rabindranth Tagore

far too pure a figure in the muck and filth of politics. Perhaps that is what makes him so utterly unique in the tumultuous history of the world. In the days and weeks leading to India's partition and independence in 1947, and to Gandhi's assassination a few months later, a great nation had



Einstein and Tagore both hailed Gandhi a sage, a 'Mahatma'

been engulfed in the ferocity of communal frenzy, in which no political tactics or assurances, no religious gestures, no personal sacrifice carried any sway; blood and butchery had overwhelmed one and all. In the midst of this, Gandhi declared that he would go to the newly-minted Pakistan on a one-man goodwill mission:



For Gandhi any marginalization was unacceptable

Margaret Bourke-White: So you really are going to Pakistan then? You are a stubborn man.

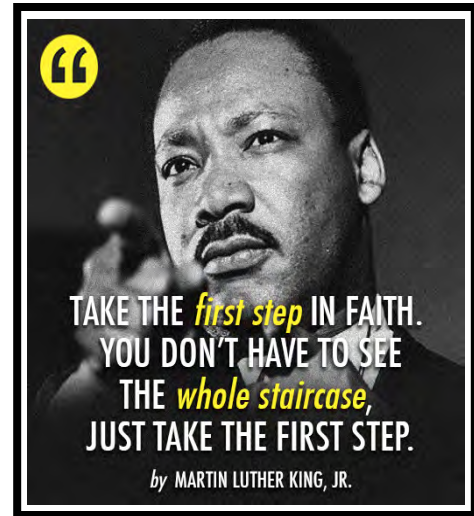
Gandhi: I'm simply going to prove to Hindus here and Muslims there that the only devils in the world are those running around in our own hearts. And that is where all our battles ought to be fought.

Margaret Bourke-White: So what kind of warrior have you been in that warfare?

Gandhi: Not a very good one. That's why I have so much tolerance for the other scoundrels of the world.



Photographer Margaret Bourke-White



Martin Luther King was inspired by Gandhi in his struggle for rights of the black people in USA

In the dense mist of history, as far back as one can gaze, where does one hear words of such fortitude!

In these past six decades wherever there have been any peaceful movements against forces of oppression or authority – Martin Luther King’s Civil Rights Movement in USA, the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, revolutions in Hungary, East Germany and Poland, the Arab Spring – Gandhi’s name is invoked as a source of inspiration. ‘Gandhian Way’ has come to mean peaceful protests, however ruthless the forces of oppression.

Gandhi’s struggles however extended far beyond political independence from the British. ‘Swaraj’ or independence, he wrote in *Young India* on May 25, 1921, “is a meaningless term if we desire to keep a fifth of India under perpetual subjugation... Inhuman ourselves, we may not plead before the Throne for deliverance from the inhumanity of others.”

Gandhi’s mission was to transform the ‘fifth of India’, the most marginalized and vulnerable outcastes of Hindu social structure, the so-called ‘Untouchables’. He dignified them by calling them ‘Harijans’ – “Children of God”. He called his weekly magazine, *Harijan*. He began by adopting a Harijan girl, Lakshmi, as his own daughter. At his ashram at Sabarmati, to the annoyance and consternation of

many orthodox Hindus, there was to be no distinction between any castes or non-castes.

Though deeply entrenched in the Hindu social and religious fabric for millennia, Gandhi insisted that untouchability was not part of early Hinduism, and it had no place in the free India of his dreams. And if a Harijan is condemned to be so born because of his karma, “I don’t want to be reborn,” he declared. “But if I have to be reborn I should be reborn as untouchable so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts levelled against them in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from their miserable condition.”

For Gandhi, the brutal indignities inflicted on the Harijans every day, in every corner of the country, in every village and town, in the fields, and for time immemorial, were far more degrading than political subjugation by the British. Every pore in Mahatma’s being rebelled against that degradation, so much so that he saw it reflected even in the face of nature.

On January 15, 1934, when a severe earthquake unleashed massive destruction on the state of Bihar, killing more than 30,000 people, Gandhi insisted on calling it as a sign of wrath of God. “A man like me,” he argued, “cannot but believe that

this earthquake is a divine chastisement sent by God for our sins” — in particular the sins of untouchability. “For me there is a vital connection between the Bihar calamity and the untouchability campaign.”

Gandhi’s message of compassion and ahimsa, and of Satyagraha against all forces of oppression – political, cultural and religious – for the dignity of man, in its most practical and exalted sense, has touched the hearts and minds of people everywhere.

Some may think of the Mahatma somewhat like Christ or Buddha, a prophet for our own harried times. But to be sure, neither Christ nor Buddha had to challenge the might of an empire, or the vicious ferocity of a religious and cultural orthodoxy against a vast section of its own people, all the while so courageously invoking the kingdom of God within. Yes, indeed it is difficult to believe that such a man walked amongst us in flesh and blood!

Dr. Sehdev Kumar, Professor Emeritus at the University of Waterloo, now lectures at the University of Toronto on Bioethics and Law, Science/Religion Dialogue, and Forgiveness in International & Community Relations.



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Gandhi's Dharma and the West



Rajiv Malhotra

Mahatma Gandhi articulated his sva-dharma (“my dharma”) using a few a few key Sanskrit words that do not have an exact English equivalent. One of these is satya, his practice of truth. Unlike truth in the Western sense, satya is not an intellectual proposition but a way of life which has to be actualized and embodied directly by each person. There is no place for the reification or codification of satya, because truth is not held in some book or set of laws; it lives in oneself, and cannot be separated from oneself. This philosophical distinction is at the heart of Gandhi’s dharma.

He insisted that satya-graha, or “truth-struggle,” is a civil disobedience method that has to be individually lived, as opposed to being theorized or institutionalized. Later, this method inspired the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.’s civil rights movement in the U.S. as well as revolutions in South Africa, Poland and elsewhere. He not only advocated a sustainable society, he lived sustainably. The Gandhi library in Delhi contains the sum total of all of his personal belongings: his glasses, a pair of sandals, a pen and a few dhotis.

Another fundamental component of his dharma is captured in the term ahimsa, which is translated too simply as “nonviolence” but is not the same as the common idea of “pacifism.” It is much larger. Himsa means harming, and ahimsa means non-harming. Harming the environment is himsa, as per the very deep dharmic idea that all nature is

sacred. Harming animals is also himsa, and so vegetarianism is an important quality of ahimsa. Gandhi argued that vegetarianism has a lower impact on the environment than a meat diet, and hence a vegetarian society is more eco-sustainable than a carnivorous one. The modern eco-feminism movement was galvanized by Gandhi’s ideals brought to America in the 1960s.

To achieve ahimsa requires enormous activity, including confrontation, such as he used while challenging the mighty British Empire that caused himsa on a large scale. Paradoxically, it takes a fighter to actualize ahimsa. Gandhi was such a fighter. He is falsely depicted as “passive” and non-threatening. In fact, he was audacious, outspoken (what we today call “politically incorrect”), and refused to be appropriated by anyone.

Ahimsa also applies to cultures taken as a whole. Cultural genocide is the systematic and complete elimination or suppression of the native religion, language, dress, way of life, customs and/or symbols of one people by another. Even though the people in question might be given material benefits through humanitarian aid, education and medical facilities, it is still himsa if there is systematic destruction of their identity, sense of history, ideas of ancestry and relationship with nature. This kind of himsa goes on today under the name of “development.” In the United Nations laws of genocide, the phrase “cultural genocide” was dropped from the earlier drafts.

Gandhi fully understood cultural violence and often talked about it. He believed that cultural difference is not to be erased but celebrated, another old dharmic idea. The universe is built on diversity. In fact, that is what the word “uni-verse” means: the many-in-one. Every species has sub species and sub-sub species and this nesting of diversity goes on and on. Cultural homogeneity is therefore unnatural and unfeasible. There should not be one

single religion or way of life. Everyone should have his or her own sva-dharma depending on personal circumstances and tendencies.

Gandhi fought against cultural colonization as much as against its material and political manifestations. Although he was not against Christianity (and in fact often quoted Jesus), he opposed Christian missionaries in India. He said they should only do selfless work and not convert people. If they desired to run a school or hospital, or give the poor food, these things should not become a tool for conversion.

Embodying the principle of diversity, he wore a traditional dhoti, went barefoot and bare-chested and felt comfortable sitting on the floor. Even when he

went to England in 1931 and King George V held a reception in his honor at Buckingham Palace, he wore the same frayed sandals that carried him on his famous march of civil disobedience to defy the British law banning Indians from making salt. He spoke in simple village language and lived with the poorest people, accentuating his different aesthetics from the elites.

Yet another Sanskrit term that Gandhi emphasized was svadesi, meaning “from the soil,” a native product, similar to the “buy local” movement which is now fashionable in the West. The preference for local production and seasonal eating was based on the ideal of ahimsa. Svadesi is better for the environment and for the health of individuals because they are acclimatized to local things and

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have a relationship with the natural setting in which they live. Svadesi entails eating locally grown food, wearing locally made clothes and, where possible, buying locally made goods. He produced his own cloth, milked his own goat, etc.

He advocated a dharmic society based on traditional decentralized governance built from the bottom-up at the village level. This conflicted directly with the top-down British system. Western approaches to human rights also operate in a top-down power structure in which the political activists, aid workers and NGOs with access to global media and funding are positioned as agents, and take “the burden” and responsibility of others’ agency upon themselves. This approach is incompatible with the ideal of empowering the people for their own truth-struggle.

Ahimsa is not something merely to be talked about or legislated; it must be lived by every individual. This requires bottom-up social activism whereby the people themselves embody the change they want to see in the world. Hence, one must have a functional, sustainable society in which the people at the bottom are free to embody their satya. It was for this reason, and not just as an end in itself, that he demanded swaraj or self-rule from the British.

Self-rule is thus much more than mere political independence and involves both “freedom to” and “freedom from.” In the West, freedom is conceived as freedom to own a car, to travel, to shop, to speak. In other words, it is extroverted. But such a pursuit does not produce freedom from anger, or from desire, jealousy, habits and compulsions. In the latter notion, one is free from the conditioned self or ego. Gandhi always worked toward personally embodying this state of freedom from internal and external dependencies.

He frequently explained that there was indeed a deep ideological clash of civilizations between Britain and India. The unsustainability of British in-

dustrialization was prominent among his concerns, making him arguably the first modern proponent of sustainability. He was troubled that the ever-increasing consumption in an industrial economy depletes the natural resources and destroys the self-sustaining villages which comprise India’s social fabric.

When he turned his attention to the British way of life, criticizing its exploitative practices, hierarchies and industrial consumerism, he was “reversing the gaze” – quite provocatively – on another civilization. In the dharma traditions, this kind of informed analysis of another worldview is called purva-paksha. His short book *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Self-Rule), published a century ago, is a magnificent example of purva-paksha directed toward the British Empire. It examines colonialism from an Indian perspective, including criticism of those Indian elites who had joined hands with the British.

He took the Bhagavad Gita’s notion of kurukshetra (battlefield) and lived his dharma in terms of the battles to be fought. Unfortunately, after his death, many of his ideas were translated so completely as to lose their original nuance of meaning. In this way, Gandhi has been domesticated, replaced with “Gandhism.” Many so-called “Gandhians” do not embody the truth-struggle and are part of centralized power structures. This is himsa to Gandhi.

Rajiv Malhotra is Founder of Infinity Foundation in Princeton, USA.

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3 Simple Rules to Survive your Freshman Year



Tarisha A. Beniprashad

I know how you feel- anxious, nervous, excited, scared, and you probably miss your family. But don't worry things will get better. You're about to begin a new chapter in your life, and it's completely normal to be afraid of what lies ahead. You're on your own now, with almost (if not all) the freedom you could ask for. This can be a scary concept but you can handle it; I promise. Here are a few tips and some advice from someone who was in your shoes a very short time ago.

This may be your first time away from home, which can be uncomfortable if you're living in a dorm, and even more so if you have a roommate you aren't yet acquainted with. Just take a deep breath and take things one step at a time. Get acquainted with your new living space (no matter how cramped it may be) and get to know your roommate. You want to have a solid relationship with them, especially if you're going to be living in such close quarters. It's important to establish a rapport with them in order to communicate with them effectively when you really need to, like when they decide to have a 'sleepover' with their significant other and expect you to find somewhere else to sleep. Don't be afraid to voice your opinion and tell them when you're not content with something they do; if you don't, you'll start to harbour feelings of anger and annoyance which, trust me, will NOT be good for either of you. So, rule #1: Keep calm and communicate with your roommate.

Now, you may be a little socially anxious and be a little nervous about that first unofficial week of school with tons of parties, mixers, and activities to get to know your new peers. If socializing and meeting new people just isn't your thing, don't worry. This week will end and you won't be forced to hold hands in a circle and memorize everyone's name for the rest of the year. That being said, I strongly recommend putting yourself out there, and trying to make some new friends. How often is it that you get a totally new start, where you can reinvent yourself to

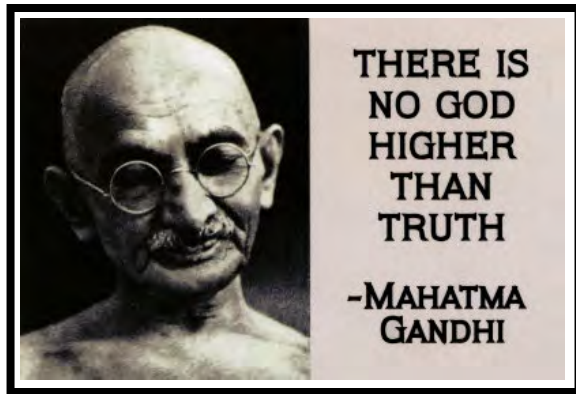
be anyone you want? Chances are you won't see anyone from high school, so be who YOU want to be, not whom they THINK you are. No one's going to judge you; everyone is in the same boat as you are! And we move onto rule #2: Put yourself out there and don't be afraid to meet new people.

So, Frosh week is over and classes are about to commence. You've been taught in the same format essentially since Kindergarten, and now things are about to change. Don't worry; you're in university for a reason; if you couldn't handle it you wouldn't have gotten accepted. Many first year professors understand that this is all a new experience to you and do the best they can to help you adjust. Lectures aren't as scary as they seem; get to class early and grab a seat in the front, it will help you pay attention and won't give you the opportunity to gaze at the 499 other students or slip out the back door when (and if) things get boring. Remember it's your very first year in university, and this is all a learning experience. It goes without saying that you should try your hardest in all your classes, you are after all paying thousands of dollars to learn, but don't be too hard on yourself. If you mess up your first paper don't get upset about it: learn from it, and grow from your mistakes. It pains me to see students stress out and cry over marks that they can't change; don't worry, try harder on your next assignment and use your professor's comments to make your weaknesses your strengths. That being said, do not be too easy on yourself either, you are here to learn. Learning to manage your time wisely is a key part of university; you need to set boundaries for yourself and know when to study and when to have fun. Finally, we've reached rule #3: Try your hardest, and don't beat yourself up when you miss the target; it's okay to make mistakes as long as you learn from them.

As a very recent first year student, these rules are my advice to you. They're very simple and hopefully they'll help you find your way as you begin your four-year journey. There's no doubt that first year is challenging, but with the help of your friends and family and as long as you believe in yourself and have faith in your abilities, you will succeed.

Good luck and have fun!

Gandhi: The Conscience of Mankind



Edward R. Murrow: [at Gandhi's funeral]

The object of this massive tribute died as he had always lived - a private man without wealth, without property, without official title or office. Mahatma Gandhi was not a commander of great armies or ruler of vast lands.

He could boast no scientific achievements or artistic gift. Yet men, governments and dignitaries from all over the world have joined hands today to pay homage to this little brown man in the loin-cloth who led his country to freedom.

Pope Pius, the Archbishop of Canterbury, President Truman, Chiang Kai-shek, The Foreign Minister of Russia and the President of France... are among the millions here and abroad who have lamented his passing.

In the words of General George C. Marshall, the American Secretary of State, "Mahatma Gandhi had become the spokesman for the conscience of mankind, a man who made humility and simple truth more powerful than empires."

And Albert Einstein added, "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth."

Gandhi: If you are a minority of one, the truth is the truth.

Gandhi: Whenever I despair, I remember that the way of truth and love has always won. There may be tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they may seem invincible, but in the end, they always fail. Think of it: always.

Nehru: Bapuji, the whole country is moving.

Gandhi: Yes, but in what direction?

Gandhi: An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.

Nahari: I'm going to Hell! I killed a child! I smashed his head against a wall.

Gandhi: Why?

Nahari: Because they killed my son! The Muslims killed my son!

Gandhi: I know a way out of Hell. Find a child, a child whose mother and father have been killed and raise him as your own.

Gandhi: Only be sure that he is a Muslim and that you raise him as one.

Gandhi: They may torture my body, break my bones, even kill me, and then they will have my dead body. NOT MY OBEDIENCE!

Gandhi: We think it is time that you recognized that you are masters in someone else's home. Despite the best intentions of the best of you, you must, in the nature of things, humiliate us to control us. General Dyer is but an extreme example of the principle... it is time you left.

Kinnoch: With respect, Mr. Gandhi, without British administration, this country would be reduced to chaos.

Gandhi: Mr. Kinnoch, I beg you to accept that there is no people on Earth who would not prefer their own bad government to the good government of an alien power.

Brigadier: My dear sir! India **is** British. We're hardly an alien power!

[silence]

Gandhi: I am a Muslim and a Hindu and a Christian and a Jew and so are all of you.

Gandhi: The function of a civil resistance is to provoke response and we will continue to provoke until they respond or change the law. They are not in control; we are.

Brigadier: You don't think we're just going to walk out of India!

Gandhi: Yes. In the end, you will walk out. Because 100,000 Englishmen simply cannot control 350 million Indians, if those Indians refuse to cooper-

ate.

Hindu: Babu! Babu! Babu, please don't do it!

Gandhi: What do you want me not to do? Not to meet with Mr. Jinnah? I am a Muslim, and a Hindu, and a Christian, and a Jew, and so are all of you. When you wave those flags and shout, you send fear into the hearts of your brothers. That is not the India I want! Stop it! For God's sake stop it!

Margaret Bourke-White: So you really are going to Pakistan then? You are a stubborn man.

Gandhi: I'm simply going to prove to Hindus here and Muslims there that the only devils in the world are those running around in our own hearts. And that is where all our battles ought to be fought.

Margaret Bourke-White: So what kind of warrior have you been in that warfare?

Gandhi: Not a very good one. That's why I have so much tolerance for the other scoundrels of the world.

Gandhi: I, for one, have never advocated passive anything. We must never submit to such laws. And I think our resistance must be 'active' and provocative!

Gandhi: Where there's injustice, I always believed in fighting. The question is, do you fight to change things or to punish? For myself, I've found we're all such sinners; we should leave punishment to God. And if we really want to change things, there are better things than derailing trains or slashing someone with a sword.

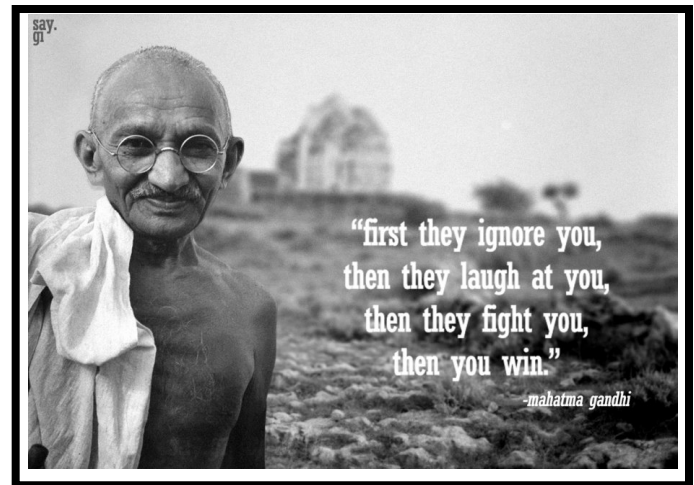
Kasturba Gandhi: I say with Gandhiji: There is no beauty in the finest cloth if it makes hunger and unhappiness.

Gandhi: No Indian must be treated as the English treat us. We must remove untouchability from our hearts and from our lives.

Gandhi: We must defy the British... Not with violence that will inflame their will but with a firmness that will open their eyes. English factories make the cloth that makes our poverty. All those who wish to make the English see bring me the cloth from Manchester and Leeds that you wear today and we will light a fire that will be seen in Delhi, and in London! Gandhi's voice: When I despair, I remember that the way of truth and love has always won. There

may be tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it: always.

Gandhi: I want to change their minds. Not kill them for weaknesses we all possess.



Soldier: Mr. Gandhi, sir. I have been instructed to inquire the subject of your speech tonight.

Gandhi: The value of goat's milk in daily diet. But you can be sure that I will also speak against war.

Gandhi: I have friends who keep telling me how much it costs them to keep me in poverty.

Gandhi: Poverty is the worst form of violence.

Judge Broomfield: [At Gandhi's 1922 trial] It is impossible for me to ignore that you're in a different category from any person I have tried or am likely ever to try. Nevertheless, it is my duty to sentence you to six years in prison. If however His Majesty's government should at a later date see fit to reduce the term... no one will be better pleased than I.

Gandhi: [to a group of South African bigots] You'll find there's room for all of us here.



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Diwali: The Festival of Lights

Varadaraja V. Raman



In the midst of all the darkness of anger and hate, conflict and confrontation, injustice and sufferings that envelope the world, what sustains us is the hope that these somber sides of humanity will eventually pass. This historical optimism is symbolized in Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights which affirms that good will ultimately triumph over evil, knowledge over ignorance, and light over darkness. We are strengthened by the idea that ultimately truth and justice, knowledge and harmony will prevail. There are anecdotes in Hindu sacred history, which are rooted in the festival, but the essence of them all is this deep conviction of the ultimate victory of the Light over Darkness. This certainty, which transcends reason, illumines us when we are plunged in the darkness of fears and concerns that crass reality provokes.

Diwali reassures that there is shining effulgence at the end of a lightless tunnel of the world around. That is the significance of this joyous pan-Hindu festival. When we pray, *tamaso ma jyotir gamaya*: 'From Darkness lead me unto Light,' we are invoking the positive potential in human existence, even while recognizing its negative sides.

It is light that informs us of the world around us and within us. But our life-experience must include enjoyment also. Light is not only vibration of varying intensities, but of varying durations as well. This causes colours to arise. Colour adds splendor to the world. But without colours the world would be a drab gray of changing shades. However colour is not intrinsic to light, but a result of interactions between vibrations and optical systems. It is the human brain that transforms mere undulations into chromatic magnificence. There is a lesson in this:

We have the potential to convert uninteresting and uninspiring surroundings into something splendid and spectacular.

Light is also a life-sustaining principle. It is sunlight that cleverly collaborates with the green of the earth to produce the food that sustains and nourishes life on our planet. If we look for miracles, this is where we find one. As a Vedic rishi declared,

agnir jyotir, jyotir agnir:
Fire is light, light is Fire.

In Vedic symbolism, Agni is the eternal life-giving principle. There is nothing more universal than light. Light spans every nook and corner of the physical universe, and it has been there since the first Big Bang of cosmic creation. Its power is like that of the Vedic Indra, which is why a Vedic sage declared:

indro jyotir, jyotir indrah:
Indra is Light, Light is Indra.

In the symbolism of the Vedic sage-poets, Indra was the omnipotent principle.

There is nothing we know of that is as omniscient or as omnipresent as light. If anything is worthy of universal worship, it is light. That is why light is taken to represent all that is joyful and glorious in the human experience. That is why light stands for knowledge, as darkness for ignorance; why light stands for justice, as darkness for injustice; why light stands for truth and darkness for untruth.

There is also the spiritual dimension of light. *Jyoti* refers not only to the physical phenomenon of light but also to its ecstatic and mystical aspect. It states in the Rigveda:

ayam rochayād arucho rochano
Shining, He caused to shine what shone not.

In other words, when that supreme light enters the human spirit, we become light ourselves. In the truly enlightened state, even as light encompasses the entire universe, we begin to see the oneness behind the many, and we embrace every race and creed, every religion and ritual as our own. Such insights and historical optimism elevate and ennoble us. They are implicit in the celebration of Diwali.

In that spirit all of us Hindus must celebrate Diwali, the great festival of lights.



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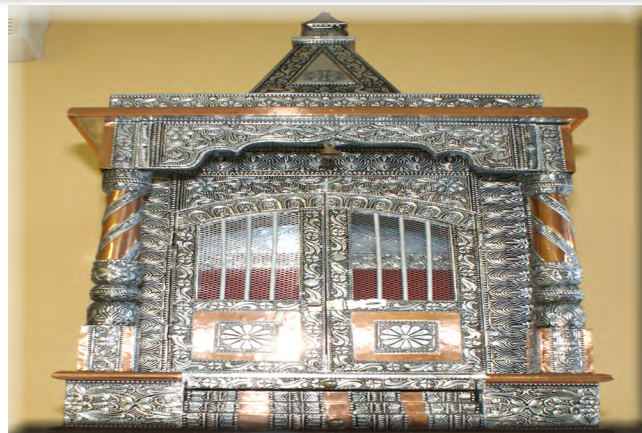
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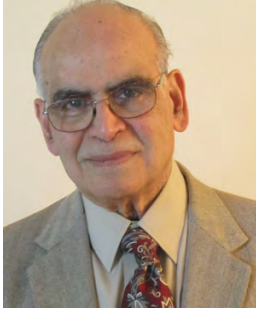
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Homage to Gandhi



Varadaraja V. Raman

Gandhi fought for human dignity in South Africa long before he was called a mahatma. He spoke out and fought against the scourge of caste hierarchy and untouchability in Hindu society. He played a charismatic role in the Indian National Congress, sometimes subtly disarming those who called for violent approaches for achieving their goal. He was the power behind the party that led to India's re-birth as a modern nation with an enlightened constitution, a unifying national anthem and a waving tricolor with the wheel of justice, and a motto that proclaims that Truth alone will ultimately triumph.

The paradox in the life and appraisal of this hero of history – some adoring him and others literally hating him – is symbolic of the tension between ideals and reality that have always tormented the human spirit. It reflects the arduous path on the road to perfection.

It has been said that a Utopian is a poet who has gone astray. I would rather say that a Utopian is a thinker who tries to pull humanity uphill along a nobler path. It was Utopians that brought, and are still striving to bring, more value and merit to the human condition.

There are, no doubt, a hundred obstacles on the way. Gandhian principles would work wonderfully well if enlightened and broad-minded people alone populated the world.

Gandhi wrote a letter to Hitler, pleading with him not to start a world war, but to no avail. Some of the unhappy consequences that have arisen from Gandhi's idealism are due, not to the average human heart which longs for peace and love and caring, but from religious and political leaders who are blind to other modes of solving our problems, and who stir up dark and destructive forces in the hearts and minds of their followers.

That is why Gandhi became a most remarkable personage of the twentieth century: indeed, he was second only to Einstein in being named by Time Magazine the Man of the Century. The United Nations Organization, the voice of humanity, has declared his birth-date to be the International Day of Non-Violence. This is a matter for rejoicing for, notwithstanding all the animosities and rivalries that tarnish international interactions the world still recognizes Gandhian ahimsa as supremely civilized behavior.

Long after the dust and debris of hate and hurt settle down and the Gandhi-bashers of today will be laid to rest, the visions of the likes of Gandhi will be celebrated by humanity as worthy symbols of whatever is noble and enlightened in the human spirit, and Gandhi's message will shine bright in the firmament of human ideals. For then we would have realized a state in which planetary peace will not be simply the silence of guns, but will mean the embrace of all with love, caring, and compassion, and harmony among the peoples of the world will be based on social justice and mutual respect.

Varadaraja V. Raman, Emeritus Professor of Physics and Humanity at the Rochester Institute of Technology, is a philosopher, writer, and a physicist.

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Poems by Sukrita



Sukrita Paul Kumar

Out of the Box

That this world has worlds
beyond the stars
I did not know

The blue of the skies I had never pierced

Nor trekked on the purple rocks above
the tree-line

Never had I dived into the orphan's eyes
To feel the grains of sand there
To feel her loveless childhood

Where was the scent that led to the
valley of flowers

Why did I not hear the silence
resounding in the hollow of the shell

Yet, I thought I had told and
heard them all
-the stories of pain and pleasure
of thirst and desire-

Till you came out to me, my friend

You told it all, the story of your love
Of its revelation,
First and foremost
You found the courage to tell it
to your own self

With that nervous glint of conviction
You told it all
The shiver of brutal resolute
mixed with fear

You a woman
in love
with another woman

Crossing the Line of Control
Unlocking the prisons of thought
Like birds flying across sealed borders
Risking prosecution and even life

Bits of truth buried
in the graveyard of words
rose as if from the vaults

in the bottom of the sea
like fireflies
lighting the dark shores of life.

DEAR DEPARTED

Your glance through the gap
between the clouds
over Mukteshwar
lights up the mountain,
the red of the rhododendrons
spills over the cliffs

I recall the passion
Flowing out of your
Discourses on
The freedom of the soul

Your dancing shadow
In the oak forest
The tall upright trees
standing like
soldiers in attention
in symmetrical rows.

Now behind the tree,
Now there on top of the tallest one
My eye runs ahead of you

Hadn't I learnt to
Anticipate the road you
Might take?

...
Visible
in the green sound
of the bird not in view

Somewhere from the top of the tall pine

I listened to you
Syllable by syllable
Word after word
Staccato sounds
From the other side of life
Partitioned by the thin line
Of death

...
The dive into the valley
Gliding through blue breeze
The click of your camera
Capturing the tranquil float

Stillness of rapid movement
The offering of meditations
Picking the sparkle
Off the stars
Lighting dark clouds
To get a day of awakening
Or
for perhaps an eternal sleep
In the cosmos

Sukrita Paul Kumar is a well-known poet in India.
She teaches literature at Delhi University.

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Steamed Spinach and Methi Muthia (Dumplings)

(Healthy Appetizer)



Ingredients for the Dumplings

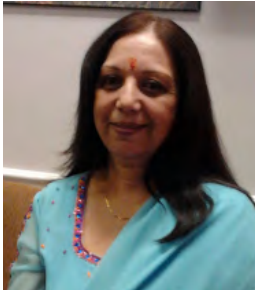
*2 cups of Spinach leaves
1 cup fresh green methi leaves (optional)
1/2 cup fresh coriander leaves
1 cup Besan (Chana or gram flour)
1/2 cup rice flour
1/2 cup Juwar or millet flour
1 cup Yogurt/curd
1/2 tsp. Turmeric powder
1 tsp. fresh ginger-garlic minced
2 tsp. Fresh Green Chillies minced
1/2 tsp. roasted cumin powder
Salt as desired
Water as required*

Method:

Wash and shred the spinach leaves thoroughly. Shred the methi leaves and fresh coriander leaves finely, add minced Green Chillies, Ginger and Garlic to it and mix well with spoon. Take a large vessel and add the Besan (Chana flour), Rice flour and all the dry ingredients into it. Add the shredded spinach & the yogurt into the dry ingredients and mix well. Make a solid dough, add extra teaspoon of water if you are not able to bind all ingredients into a dough.

Make medium size delicate spinach logs, ready for a steam, use a little oil on your hands so the dough doesn't stick so much to your hands. Steamed in a rice cooker or any steamer and sliced spinach rolls for 15 minutes. Take out the steamed rolls and let them cool. Cut the spinach rolls into half inch slices and keep them separately.

Steamed Spinach and Methi Muthia (Dumplings) ***(Healthy Appetizer)***



Madhu Mistry

Seasoning the Muthia (Spinach & Methi) appetizers

Ingredients

*2 tsp. sesame seeds
1 tsp. mustard seeds
2 tsp. grated coconut
1 green chilly
2 tsp. of oil
a few curry leaves
1 tsp. of lemon juice*

Method:

Heat oil in a wok and add crackle the mustard seeds. Add the sesame and curry leaves fry for a minute. Add split green chilly.

Seasoned spinach appetizers!

Arrange the steamed spinach slices in serving dish and pour the hot seasoning over it. Garnish with freshly grated coconut, serve and eat while hot, and enjoy.(serves 4 or more).



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