

Gandhi Foundation AGM and Workshop

Saturday 21 May 2011 at 2pm

Kingsley Hall, Powis Road, Bromley-by-Bow, London E3 3HJ
Following a short AGM there will be a screening of a brief film of Gandhi's time in Noakhali, Bengal in 1946, and an accompanying exhibition looking at the aesthetics of Gandhi's persona and the spaces Gandhi occupied in London and South Asia.

The artwork will be a continuous process, forming part of a larger programme culminating in an exhibition in mid-September for the Open House weekend.

By Spacial Designer: Saif Osmani, 07915 234404, s.osmani@ymail.com

Gandhi Foundation Summer Gathering

Saturday 23 - Saturday 30 July 2011

St Christopher School, Letchworth, Herts SG6 3JZ

Further details and booking from:

Trevor Lewis Tel: 01932 841135 lewiscolony@gmail.com

Exhibition

A Disappearing World: Ancient Traditions Under Threat in Tribal India

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Who Was Fritz Schumacher?

Diana Schumacher

E F Schumacher, the economist-philosopher, was born 100 years ago this year. The following article is edited from a longer paper written for the Schumacher Society in 2008.

Ernst Friedrich (Fritz) Schumacher was an unlikely pioneer of the Green Movement. He was born in Bonn in 1911, studied at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar and returned to England before the Second World War to avoid living under Nazism. He died prematurely on a visit to Caux, Switzerland, in September 1977.

Although from a distinguished intellectual background, and having himself experienced a short but meteoric academic career in Germany, England and America, Schumacher always believed that “*an ounce of practice is worth a tonne of theory*”. Like Gandhi in both his outer and inner life he was a searcher of truth and dedicated to peace. Unlike so many of his contemporary academics, however, he needed to see these ideals translated into practical actions.

Fritz observed that throughout his own school and university careers he had given “maps of life and knowledge” on which “*there was hardly a trace of many of the things I most cared about and that seemed to me of the greatest possible importance to the conduct of my life*”. He saw the need to provide his colleagues and audiences with philosophical ‘maps’ and guidelines which related to actual reality. In the process, his life was one of constant questioning, including challenging most of the basic assumptions on which Western economic and academic theory have been based. What are the ‘laws’ that govern the ‘science’ of economics ? What is the true value of money ? What is the relationship between time and money ? What is the real worth of work ? And of development ? These were the everyday questions which interested him as an economist.

In 1937, owing to Hitler’s frenzied ascendancy and his own feeling of the intellectual and political betrayal of Germany and its heritage by his nationalistic compatriots, he decided to abandon all social, family and business ties and to bring his young wife and son to London.

During the war, the family faced the hostility of being regarded as German aliens. They had to give up their home, and after being briefly interned, Fritz was hidden away with his family in Northamptonshire working as a farm labourer and was referred to by the very English name of James. At the same time (with the support of J M Keynes) he was seconded to do government research at the Oxford Institute of Statistics whilst at the same time working on his own ‘world improvement scheme’. Sometimes his ideas were appropriated by others, such as his contribution to the Beveridge Report in the early 1940s and to the Marshall Plan of 1947. Although he never

received official recognition for his input to such prestigious schemes because of his German background, this did not disquiet him.

Although the expanding family was again domiciled in England from 1950 onwards, his quest for patterns of sustainability took him all over the world. He had experienced poverty, social injustice and alienation first hand, and felt that with his uniquely varied and practical background, he had something useful to contribute. As an economist he was derided by his peers for pointing out the fallacy of continuous growth in a finite world dependent on limited fossil fuel resources, but at the same time he became a champion of the poor, the marginalised and those who felt misgivings over the shallowness of contemporary values.

Philosophy and Religion

From his youth Fritz had always read prolifically. At one stage or another during his life, Fritz questioned all the main traditions, whether intellectual, national, economic or religious. As a young man he claimed to be a dedicated atheist, lecturing that religion and morality were mere products of history; they did not stand up to scientific examination and could be modified if regarded as inappropriate. Politically he was a person-loving socialist, the antithesis to Hitler's fascism and an idealist with a restless mind. His values were very modern, based on the speed, measurement, efficiency and logic of the industrialised Western world which he inhabited. It was only later that he understood that such criteria were too inflexible, and totally incompatible with the more subtle 'unconscious' rhythms of the natural world. As a commuter from suburban Caterham (where he finally lived), to the National Coal Board headquarters in London's Victoria (where he worked from 1950 to 1970), he used the train travelling time to study comparative religions and was greatly influenced by the French philosopher Fritjof Schuon's *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*.

This 'commuting' period proved a most fruitful turning point in his inner life. He first studied notably those religions from the East, attending meetings and lectures on the spirituality of other faiths and began to practice meditation. Gradually he came to relinquish the atheism of his youth and to admit to the possibility of a 'higher order of Being'. His changing economic and metaphysical views (which sometimes seemed contradictory) chronologically mirrored his own spiritual struggles and development.

There was, after all, a transcendent 'vertical perspective' to life: a hierarchy of orders from inanimate matter, through different levels of consciousness to a supreme consciousness or Being. After years of searching and inner struggles he had realised a way of bringing his lifelong paths of study and social concerns to a point of convergence and had reached his own spiritual homecoming. Finally, to the astonishment of Schumacher's Marxist and Buddhist friends alike, he was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1971, six years before he died. It was a formal renouncement of his previously cherished views of the supremacy of the intellect and reason over

the Christian virtues of compassion, forgiveness, unconditional love, the acknowledgment of a Divine Creator, and the integrity of all creation.

Buddhist Economics

In 1955, whilst working at the National Coal Board, Schumacher accepted a three-month assignment as Economic Development Adviser to the Government of the Union of Burma, where he immediately attached himself to a Buddhist monastery. He soon concluded that the last thing the Burmese people needed was economic development along Western lines. They needed an economics suited to their own culture and lifestyle – a ‘middle way’ between the Western model which sought to increase material wants and consumption to be satisfied through mechanised production and the Buddhist model which was to satisfy basic human needs through dignified work which also purified one’s character and was a spiritual offering. The tools of economics therefore had to be adapted to people’s needs and values and not vice versa. Unsurprisingly, his report was not well received in official quarters, but the experience proved yet another turning in Fritz’s spiritual and intellectual development. He was later to coin the term ‘Buddhist Economics’ which, like Marxism, implies a complete rejection of the greed and materialism on which so much of modern economics is based and a respect for the value and dignity of meaningful work.

Sustainable Development

In tandem with his job at the Coal Board, Schumacher also undertook an intensive programme of international travel, initially to give substance to his proposals to save the collapsing British coal industry, and to encourage independence from the Western world’s industrial reliance on cheap oil imports from the Middle East. Alas – and to our cost today – he was successful in neither.

His aim was also to promote sustainable development strategies in the First and Third World alike. Food and fuel he saw as the two basic necessities for survival and sustainability. All communities and regions should strive to be self-sufficient in these as far as possible – otherwise they become economically and politically vulnerable. In this respect he was an early proponent of harnessing renewable energy in all its different forms and upgrading the existing traditional technologies.

Unfortunately Fritz was many years ahead of his time, and few took much notice. Putting his own self-sufficiency theories into practice, his was one of the first UK houses to have solar panels installed on its roof. He also personally became involved in sustainable agriculture; an enthusiasm which he claimed had its seeds in his work as a farm labourer. He spent much time on his organic garden, was President of the UK Soil Association, ardently supporting Richard St Barbe Baker and his Men of the Trees, and was an unflagging advocate of tree planting and forrest farming schemes wherever he went.

India and Intermediate Technology

It was during an official visit to India in 1970 to advise the Indian Government on a Five Year Development Plan, that Fritz became deeply moved by the hopeless poverty and deprivation of countless thousands of people. He encountered a despair such as he had not met in other poor countries and realised that all the official government and other Western aid schemes proposed so far were completely inadequate. As a heartfelt response, in 1966 with a small group of committed colleagues including George McRobie from the National Coal Board, he founded the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG), a London-based charity concerned with technology transfer. The aim was to give practical 'tool aid', skills and education to poor rural communities in developing countries rather than expensive highly mechanised equipment which was not appropriate to the understanding and needs of the illiterate majority and which put them out of work. What was needed was 'production by the masses and not mass production' using 'technologies with a human face'. With Indian colleagues, he helped to set up in Lucknow the Appropriate Technology Development Association (ATDA), working very much along the same lines and supported financially by the UK India Development Group of which Fritz was Chair.

Schumacher also understood that Western aid to poor communities frequently simply served to increase their cultural and economic dependence, and to increase the gulf between rich and poor, educated and illiterate, young and old, even within their own societies. This still holds true. On the other hand, by respecting communities' own indigenous and cultural traditions, providing them with skills and upgraded tools and recognising that each individual could play their part the communities would be enabled to achieve long term sustainability and security. This 'middle way' has gained increasing acceptance over the past forty years, particularly among the poor countries themselves. The 'development' charities which Fritz founded continue to flourish today, although ATDA has become the Schumacher Centre Delhi. The India Development Group became the Jeevika Trust; and the ITDG has been renamed Practical Action.

In 1950 Schumacher accepted the post of Economic Adviser to the National Coal Board, partly because of his socialist conviction that true economic sustainability would most readily come about through proper organisation and use of energy resources. He was also an early advocate of the principle of subsidiarity and realised that the workers themselves needed to operate within 'human scale' structures even within large organisations. The National Coal Board he hoped would be an excellent springboard for testing his ideas in practice.

Small is Beautiful

Despite growing recognition of Schumacher's numerous projects, broadcasts, writings, and public lectures, the real breakthrough only came with the

publication in 1973 of his first book *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. This was written in layman's terms, since it was mainly based on previous lectures and articles, but somehow caught the spirit of the times. *Small is Beautiful* was not just about appropriate size. It articulated what millions of 'little people' worldwide subconsciously believed: that unlike any previous culture or civilisation, twentieth century Western society, whether agricultural or industrial, was living artificially off the Earth's capital rather than off its income. Its lifeblood was the ever-increasing use of non-renewable resources primarily by the rich countries at the expense of the poor. The world could not continue sustainably on the increasing curve of production and consumption without material or moral restraint.

A Guide for the Perplexed followed in 1977; other publications such as *Good Work* and *This I Believe* were produced posthumously and were based on his earlier writings in different publications. Over thirty years after Schumacher's death, the wisdom, warnings and predictions contained in these controversial writings, are seen to be more relevant than ever. Many organisations worldwide have since developed one or other aspect of his work. Nevertheless the trend towards gigantism, the vast growth of mega cities, mass unemployment, unsustainable patterns of energy use, rampaging environmental degradation and social violence demonstrate that none of Schumacher's simple, human-scale solutions have been interpreted correctly by those in a position to change policies. There is now an even more urgent need to revisit some of these fundamental prerequisites for sustainability. These include, above all, the transcendence of moral values; the equality and dignity of all people; the integrity of human work as the resource base of any economy; the value of local communities; and the need for decentralised decision-making and regional self-sufficiency wherever practicable, particularly with respect to food and fuel.

There is always a great danger to freeze a human icon such as Schumacher in the situation of their time, and not to allow for the fact that their own ideas would be constantly changing and moving on with changed circumstances. The revolutions in information technology, virtual reality and genetic engineering would have occupied Schumacher's attention insofar as they affect our overall human condition. It is now up to a new generation to arm itself with the necessary knowledge and moral courage to find its own solutions to the contemporary interrelated crises and to build peace with all levels of Creation. As Fritz Schumacher said in *Good Work*:

"I certainly never feel discouraged. I can't myself raise the winds which might blow us, or this ship, into a better world. But I can at least put up the sail, so that when the wind comes I can catch it."

Diana Schumacher is a Patron of the Gandhi Foundation. Active in the environmental field Diana was a founder of the Schumacher Society, founded its Annual Schumacher Award, and co-founded the Environmental Law Foundation.

Gandhi on the Human Rights of Prisoners

Anupma Kaushik

Mahatma Gandhi spent approximately seven years in various prisons in South Africa and India in order to attain equality and liberty for his countrymen and country. He liked life in prison as it gave him ample time for prayers, reading, writing and spinning the wheel. He regarded time spent in prison as a pilgrimage if it is done for a noble cause. To him prison was a place where he could submit to all kinds of restraints and test his belief in nonviolence in the face of violence and wickedness.

Gandhi himself faced hardships in the prisons and successfully worked for the betterment of prison conditions both in South Africa and India. Although as he became famous the authorities treated him better than other satyagrahi prisoners he was aware of hardships faced by other satyagrahi prisoners and used his newspaper to inform the public about them. He also wrote to authorities about the need of better conditions. He identified the basic problems as lack of space, clean food, clean clothes, clean bedding, hygiene, basic facilities and the humane touch from officials. He was also aware of the deliberate torture of prisoners. He advocated humane treatment and human rights of prisoners at a time when the concept of human rights of prisoners was unheard of. He argued that the government must play a positive role in ensuring human rights of prisoners by providing necessary facilities and sensitization of prison officials who hold awesome power over prisoners.

Although ideally Gandhi was against the concept of prisons he realized that in reality governments cannot do away with prisons. However he stressed that detention should in itself be the punishment with a reformist objective. He considered criminals to be mentally ill people who needed help. He believed that prisoners should remain disciplined but must resist insanitary conditions and humiliation and if need be prefer to go bare bodied but reject filthy blankets and clothes; go without food but must refuse unclean and indigestible food; go without bathing rather than bathe in foul water; refuse to crawl and sit in a crouching position. The satyagrahi prisoner must be ready to bear with patience any torture that despotic and irresponsible officials inflict on them with a positive outlook as good evokes good and evil evokes evil.

Ref: M K Gandhi, *Stonewalls Do Not a Prison Make*, Navjivan Publishing, Ahmedabad, 1964.

Dr Kaushik is Associate Professor, Banasthali University, Rajasthan University, India.

Stepping Forward from Jaipur

Christine Booth

It was one of the happiest days of my life. Rather bizarrely, I was dancing away to a Bollywood film track in a tiny little house next to the railway tracks in a run-down suburb of Mumbai, and feeling utterly blessed. I'd come to visit ten-year old Roshni Gupta and her family and, when Roshni decided she wanted to dance with her sisters and pals and put on some Telugu music, I got completely caught up in their infectious sense of fun. This family had welcomed me – a middle-aged, English writer and documentary film-maker – into their home and made me feel loved. Little Roshni and her sister squealed with joy as they performed all the Bollywood moves, while siblings, friends, mothers and aunts cheered them on or joined in themselves.

But here's the thing: the Guptas' house is barely two yards from the railway track and, when she was just a toddler, Roshni had both her legs cut off below the knee by a passing train. She was dancing now thanks to a wonderful invention called the Jaipur Foot and the dedicated work of the Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti (the BMVSS).



Roshni Gupta

The Jaipur Foot is a unique prosthetic foot, made of rubber, that was invented forty years ago in Rajasthan, India, by an uneducated master craftsman, Ram

Chandra, and Dr. P.K. Sethi, an orthopaedic surgeon. It is flexible and robust, enabling its wearers to walk, run, climb, ride a bicycle, drive a rickshaw, work in wet fields, squat to eat and, yes, even to dance ! It is quick, cheap and easy to make and can be fitted in a day, requiring little after-care. It looks like a natural foot and can be worn without a shoe. This means that, in places like India and Africa, where most people go barefoot, the wearer looks 'normal' – and can also enter a temple or mosque barefoot to pray.



In the workshop: on the right is Mr Todarmal who has 2 artificial legs

The BMVSS (Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti) is the charitable organization that makes the Jaipur Foot and provides it, along with an entire custom-made prosthetic limb, completely free of charge, to anyone who needs it, particularly poor people. Named after the Jain saint, Lord Mahaveer, who is known for his compassion and kindness to all, it was founded in 1975 by Mr D R Mehta, a Jain former government official who, some years earlier, had met with a serious accident. After skilled surgeons managed to save his badly injured leg, he vowed to help others who were not so fortunate as he. Since then, the BMVSS has helped to transform the lives of countless poor people in India and the developing world, enabling them to regain their livelihoods, their dignity and their self-esteem and, for children like Roshni, a future full of possibilities.

I first heard about the Jaipur Foot a few years ago on a wonderful web site called *Good News India!* and, determined to see it for myself, last year I went to Jaipur to visit the headquarters of the BMVSS (known as the Jaipur Foot Centre), where I spent three weeks watching miracles happen all day long. Every morning, countless people arrive at the Centre, many of whom have made arduous journeys of hundreds of miles, travelling by any means they can. They arrive on crutches (if they're lucky enough to have them), on little carts – even on the shoulders of their family – because they have heard that this is where they can get free new legs. Often, they don't even have five rupees in their pocket, but as well as providing them with new limbs, the BMVSS ensures that everyone gets fed and, if necessary, has a bed for the night. It even pays the fares for everyone to get back home to their villages. No one is ever turned away. Although it was founded by a Jain, the BMVSS is totally secular and welcomes everyone, regardless of religion, region or caste. Indeed, along with a large mural of Lord Mahaveer, the walls of the main waiting room in Jaipur are adorned with pictures of Jesus Christ, Gandhi, Lord Ganesh and Mecca.



Recipients of new legs going home by bus

As well as the main headquarters in Jaipur, there are now Jaipur Foot centres in several Indian cities, including Mumbai (where I first met Roshni) but, for people who can't travel at all, the BMVSS has mobile teams that travel to rural areas and set up temporary fitment camps. These teams also travel to war

zones and disaster areas in other countries – wherever and whenever they are needed.



D R Mehta founder and chief patron of the BMVSS



Ram Chandra inventor of the Jaipur foot 40 years ago, now 92

I came back to England determined to tell people about this amazing organization and how it is helping to restore hope, dignity and self-esteem to the lives of millions of people. As well as writing articles, I am now returning to India to start shooting a documentary film that will raise awareness of, and funds for, the work of the BMVSS. The BMVSS doesn't advertise, most of its costs are met by donations and, although a new limb can be made for as little as twenty-five pounds, its work is increasing all the time. In Mumbai and Jaipur, I met so many young people who had lost limbs in railway and road accidents and, with more and more people moving to ever-more-crowded cities, this is only going to get worse. As it is, over half of all amputations in India are caused by train accidents alone. The rest are caused by road accidents, agricultural and industrial injuries, cancer and other diseases, including diabetes, which is much more prevalent amongst Asian people.



Christine Booth with recipients and technicians

In addition, there are huge numbers of people in other countries whom the BMVSS is trying to help. Sadly, war is creating more amputees every day. When I was at the centre in April last year, I talked to some of the team who had just returned from Iraq: they had worked day and night for several weeks helping local Iraqis who had lost limbs in land mine explosions. There are also natural disasters, which tend to strike without warning. Many people in Haiti lost limbs in the earthquake in January and the BMVSS is still trying to

find enough money to enable it to send teams out there. It also needs funds for training. The organisation's ethos of self-reliance, dignity and self-esteem, which underpins everything it does, means that an important part of its policy is to train local people to continue its work after its teams have left and, where possible, to set up a permanent centre. To make donations directly to the BMVSS, visit its web site at: www.jaipurfoot.org

The film project itself also needs funding. I am making it completely independently and, although I am hoping to find a broadcaster once it's finished, I'm currently using my own money to make it, so, if anyone is interested in making a donation, however small, to help me with the costs, I would greatly appreciate it! I am not looking for any money for myself: to see little Roshni laughing and dancing, to observe her carefree and sunny demeanour, to hear her talk about her plans to be a doctor – to see how such a simple, low-tech and inexpensive piece of kit can make such a big difference to someone's life is, to me, nothing short of miraculous – and is more than enough for me.

You can see more photographs and read a bit about me and about my Jaipur Foot project on my web page at the London Photographic Association: [www.lpa-folios.com/Christine Booth](http://www.lpa-folios.com/Christine_Booth) and you can contact me by e-mail on: christine.pacifica@gmail.com

For fascinating information about other good things happening in India, visit www.goodnewsindia.org

Christine Booth is a Friend of the Gandhi Foundation and a professional photographer and film maker.

Raj, Rubies & Rickshaws

An Indian Evening at the Landmark Arts Centre, Ferry Road, Teddington TW11 9NN on **Friday 25 March**.

Illustrated Lecture: *The Faces of Raj*, and an Indian Bazaar in aid of Jeevika Trust. Bazaar 9-10pm, Lecture 7-8pm. Tickets £15.

Tickets from Lesley Bossine at the Landmark Arts Centre with cheque made out to 'Landmark Arts Centre', or phone 020 8977 7558.

www.jeevika.org.uk/landmarklecture2011

Cut Trident, not jobs, health, education ...

March for the Alternative: Jobs, Growth, Justice by joining the CND contingent on the TUC demonstration on **Saturday 26 March** assembling 11am at the Victoria Embankment, London, to march to a rally in Hyde Park. CND 020 7700 2393; www.cnduk.org

Egypt and Nonviolent Revolution

Gene Sharp has for decades been the world's principal advocate of nonviolent action to bring about political change. It has been claimed that his ideas have had an influence on the recent events in Egypt.

The journalist **Ruaridh Arrow** has directed a film about this to be released in spring 2011 and called *Gene Sharp: How to Start a Revolution*. The following article by Ruaridh Arrow appeared on the BBC website. It has been slightly edited.

In an old townhouse in East Boston an elderly stooped man is tending rare orchids in his shabby office. His Labrador Sally lies on the floor between stacks of academic papers watching him as he shuffles past. This is Dr Gene Sharp the man now credited with the strategy behind the toppling of the Egyptian Government. Gene sharp is world's foremost expert on nonviolent revolution. His work has been translated into more than 30 languages, his books slipped across borders and hidden from secret policemen all over the world.

Key steps on the path to revolution

Develop a strategy for winning freedom and a vision of the society you want.

Overcome fear by small acts of resistance.

Use colours and symbols to demonstrate unity of resistance.

Learn from historical examples of the successes of nonviolent movements.

Use nonviolent 'weapons'.

Identify the dictatorship's pillars of support and develop a strategy for undermining each.

Use oppressive or brutal acts by the regime as a recruiting tool for your movement.

Isolate or remove from the movement people who use or advocate violence.

As Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia and Victor Yanukovych in Ukraine fell to the colour revolutions which swept across Eastern Europe, each of the democratic movements paid tribute to Sharp's contribution, yet he remained largely unknown to the public. Despite these successes and a Nobel Peace Prize nomination in 2009 he has faced almost constant financial hardship and wild accusations of being a CIA front organisation. The Albert Einstein Institution based on the ground floor of his home is kept running by sheer force of personality and his fiercely loyal Executive Director, Jamila Raqib.

In 2009 I began filming a documentary following the impact of Sharp's work from his tranquil rooftop orchid house, across four continents and eventually to Tahrir Square where I slept alongside protesters who read his work by torchlight in the shadow of tanks.

Gene Sharp is no Che Guevara but he may have had more influence than any other political theorist of his generation. His central message is that the power of dictatorships comes from the willing obedience of the people

they govern – and that if the people can develop techniques of withholding their consent, a regime will crumble.

For decades now, people living under authoritarian regimes have made a pilgrimage to Gene Sharp for advice. His writing has helped millions around the world achieve their freedom without violence. “As soon as you choose to fight with violence you’re choosing to fight against your opponents best weapons and you have to be smarter than that,” he insists. “People might be a little surprised when they come here, I don’t tell them what to do. They’ve got to learn how this nonviolent struggle works so they can do it for themselves.”

To do this Sharp provides in his books a list of 198 “nonviolent weapons”, ranging from the use of colours and symbols to mock funerals and boycotts. Designed to be the direct equivalent of military weapons, they are techniques collated from a forensic study of defiance to tyranny throughout history. “These nonviolent weapons are very important because they give people an alternative,” he says. “If people don’t have these, if they can’t see that they are very powerful, they will go back to violence and war every time.”

After the Green uprising in Iran in 2009 many of the protesters were accused at their trials of using more than 100 of Sharp’s 198 methods. His most translated and distributed work, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, was written for the Burmese democratic movement in 1993 after the imprisonment of Aung Suu Kyi.

From Burma word of mouth spread through Thailand to Indonesia where it was used against the military dictatorship there. Its success in helping to bring down Milosevic in Serbia in 2000 propelled it into use across Eastern Europe, South America and the Middle East. When it reached Russia the intelligence services raided the print shop and the shops selling it mysteriously burned to the ground.

The Serbs who had used his books as a theoretical base for their activities founded their own organisation called the Centre for Applied Non Violence (CANVAS), and alongside their own materials have carried out workshops using Sharp’s work in dozens of other countries. When I met Srdja Popovic, the director of CANVAS in Belgrade, in November he confirmed that they had been working with Egyptians. “That’s the power of Sharp’s work and this nonviolent struggle,” he says. “It doesn’t matter who you are – black, white, Muslim, Christian, gay, straight or oppressed minority – it’s useable. If they study it, anybody can do this.”

Egypt

By the time I arrived in Tahrir Square on 2 February many of those trained in Sharp’s work were in detention. Others were under close observation by the intelligence services and journalists who visited them were detained for hours by the secret police. My own camera equipment was seized as soon as I landed. When I finally reached one of the organisers he refused to talk about Sharp on camera. He feared that wider knowledge of a

US influence would destabilise the movement but confirmed that the work had been widely distributed in Arabic. “One of the main points which we used was Sharp’s idea of identifying a regime’s pillars of support,” he said. “If we could build a relationship with the army, Mubarak’s biggest pillar of support, to get them on our side, then we knew he would quickly be finished.”

That night as I settled down to sleep in a corner of Tahrir square some of the protesters came to show me text messages they said were from the army telling them that they wouldn’t shoot. “We know them and we know they are on our side now,” they said. One of the protesters, Mahmoud, had been given photocopies of a handout containing the list of 198 methods but he was unaware of their origins. He proudly described how many of them had been used in Egypt but he had never heard of Gene Sharp. When I pointed out that these nonviolent weapons were the writings of an American academic he protested strongly. “This is an Egyptian revolution”, he said. “We are not being told what to do by the Americans.”

And of course that is exactly what Sharp would want.

News in brief

Bill Palethorpe has informed us that the 2011 census data gathering contract has been awarded to Lockheed Martin Corporation of Maryland USA. This company is the world's second largest weapons manufacturer.

An application for an American style mega-dairy farm in Lincolnshire has been withdrawn. The plan was for nearly 4,000 cows, smaller than an earlier plan for more than 8,000 cows. It follows a widespread campaign by animal welfare and environmental organisations.

India has enjoyed unprecedented economic growth in the past decade and yet the gap between the rich and the poor has increased, and it is now home to 25% of the world’s poor. 170 million people still lack access to safe drinking water yet the Indian Government spent \$36 billion on ‘defence’ in 2009 (UK spent \$58 billion, 4th in the world). UK arms companies have benefitted from this through Government targeting of India as a key market for weapon sales.

Religion is a certain relation established by a human being between her/his separate personality and the infinite universe or its Source. And morality is the ever-present guide to life, which results from that relation.

Leo Tolstoy Religion and Morality 1894

Letter

Israel/Palestine and the Peace Award

On 3rd November last, I was fortunate to be amongst those present at the House of Lords on the occasion of the Peace Award for 2010 to the Parents Circle Family Forum. The Forum comprises a community of Palestinians and Israelis who have lost close family members at the hands of each other, but who in spite of such losses, promote reconciliation and meaningful dialogue, one with the other. It was started by Dr Yitzhak Frankenthal in 1995 following the death of his 19-year-old son, killed at the hands of a suicide bomber. Dr Frankenthal sought out the family of the bomber and shared with them the terrible loss each had suffered. A quite remarkable and moving act in itself, and all a testimony to the Gandhian ethos. A very well merited award.

What was disappointing, however, was the paucity in numbers of the Gandhi membership present on the occasion itself. The Award is on behalf of us all and I would think that a greater effort is warranted by our membership to be present on such occasions.

There were four patrons present, apart from myself, Diana Schumacher and Eirwen Harbottle, together with Denis Halliday. What I found disturbing was, in following the warm and intimate presentations by the Israeli grandmother Robi Damelin and by the Palestinian Ali Abu Awwad, we were then treated by Mr Halliday to something of a tirade against Israel and in every sense a wholly negative contribution to what otherwise was a totally positive event. There is a distressing and complex situation in that region, where fault can be found with all parties. What to my mind was totally inappropriate was for the particular occasion to be tainted by a partisan intervention. In the spirit in which I first became involved with the Foundation at the time of its creation, I would not want to see it become a vehicle for promoting antagonism rather than harmony.

Martin Polden OBE, 29 Manor House Drive, London NW6 7DE

Omar Hayat responds:

Regarding Denis Halliday's talk I believe Martin did not understand that there were, in fact, two events occurring. The first was the Peace Award and the second the Annual Lecture. The Annual Lecture was on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict but should not have been confused as being part of the Peace Award. The Lecture is meant to raise contentious issues and have these discussed. Unfortunately, there were people in the audience who objected strongly and impolitely to what Denis was saying. I think they were wrong in their criticism and it would have been better if a fair and balanced discussion had arisen from it. I believe the whole event was in the Gandhian spirit of transparency and truth and am only saddened that Martin has seen fit to raise this issue again.

Denis Halliday fully supported the award being given to PCF.

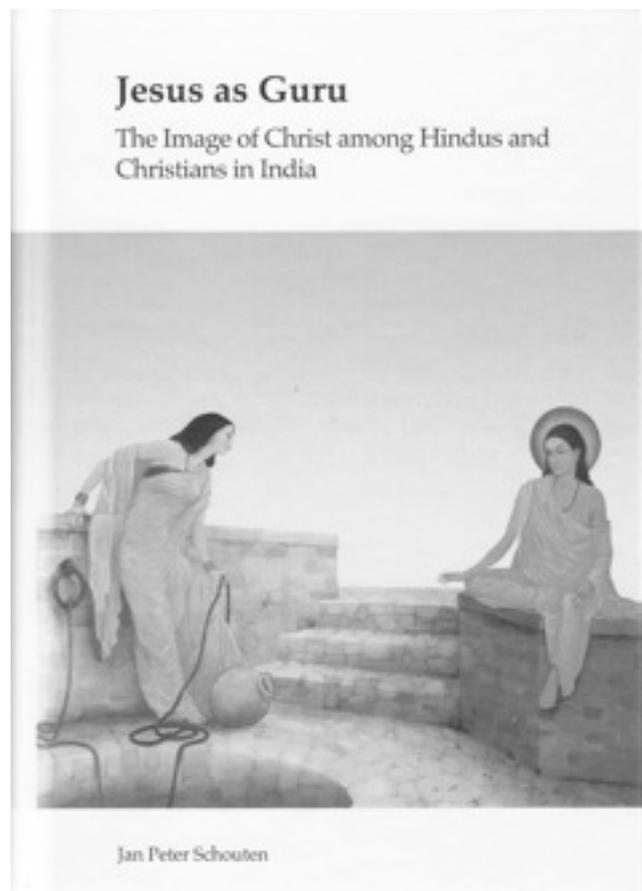
Book Reviews

Jesus as Guru: The Image of Christ among Hindus and Christians in India
Jan Peter Schouten Rodopi 2008 HB ISBN: 978 90 420 2443 4

The sub-title of this book 'The Image of Christ among Hindus and Christians in India', although less eye-catching than the main title gives us a better idea of its wide range. Although Indian Christianity has a very long history, about as long as the Christian movement itself, Jan Peter Schouten deals with the modern period beginning with Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), an extremely erudite Hindu who also studied Islam and Christianity. He was both a religious reformer – founding the Brahma Samaj – and a social reformer, opposing sati (widow sacrifice) among other practices. His image of Jesus was that of the ethical teacher or guru. His rational approach led him to reject both the miracles of the Bible and the complex theology built around the figure of Jesus. Gandhi's approach to Christianity was very similar and both held the Sermon on the Mount to be the core text.

Another great Hindu attracted by Christianity but one with a very different understanding was Ramakrishna (1836-1886). Ramakrishna was a humble priest with a strong mystical personality. He had the ability to enter into a mystical state whereby he could experience the essence of another religious tradition than his own. One day being strongly attracted to a picture of Mary and the baby Jesus he began to have a vision in which he saw scenes of a Christian character. This continued until the figure of Christ embraced him and he fell into a trance. He emerged from this believing in the divinity of Christ. Nevertheless for him Jesus is not the only route to God-realisation. For Ramakrishna Jesus is a master-yogi.

Another image of Jesus acceptable to Hindus is that of avatara, that is an incarnation of God in human form. Rama and Krishna were earlier avatars, as was the Buddha, but Jesus (and Ramakrishna himself) can be



accepted by Hindus as others. Their purpose is to call people back to the true way.

The development of Indian ashrams, often centred around a single individual, who might be of the Catholic tradition or the Protestant, has been a 20th century development. Among them Jesus is often thought of as a sadhu or wandering holy man who turned away from conventional society. From some of these ashrams has emerged the elevated concept of the Cosmic Christ seen as a personal aspect of the supreme Brahman.

The religious influences on Mohandas Gandhi were quite diverse and they included prominently the figure of Jesus. Gandhi's background included Jainism which must have contributed to his acceptance of nonviolence (ahimsa) and also his tolerance of different viewpoints. The Hindu Pranami sect which his mother adhered to was also unusually open to other religious communities including Islam. (The book gives a useful description of this community.) However Christianity did not feature until he was studying in the UK and later working in South Africa. The doctrines such as the Incarnation and Redemption never appealed to him. It was the life and teaching of Jesus the man that captivated him. The Sermon on the Mount appealed to him above all, although as Schouten points out its ethics were familiar to him from his Hindu background. Jesus' practice of nonviolence and his willingness to suffer the consequence of his words and deeds deeply impressed him. The willingness to suffer in a cause became part of Gandhi's being and philosophy. He believed it was a creative element in nonviolent action (satyagraha) as it melted the heart of the opponent. Another absolutely constant aspect of Gandhi's personality was his concern for people who were poor and oppressed, something which he also shared with Jesus of Nazareth.

An interesting development of the last 20-30 years concerns the dalits (formerly untouchables). In earlier periods dalits sometimes became Christians in the hope of escaping their inferior status, but they were often disappointed in this. With the development of Christian Liberation Theology a change occurred. It was easy for the Jesus depicted in the Gospels to be seen as a critic of the wealthy and powerful and a defender of the weak and poor. This very human Jesus was in extreme contrast to the Cosmic Christ.

There are many more 'images' of Jesus in the book seen through the eyes of both Christians and Hindus. There are also what the author calls intermezzos dealing with artistic images of Jesus seen from an Indian perspective. The book is a valuable reminder that whatever image we personally have of Jesus it is an interpretation of the evidence of his life available to us. But 'Jesus' continues to inspire huge numbers of human beings.

This study giving an 'Eastern' perspective on Jesus is an invaluable balance to the thousands of European perspectives.

George Paxton

Timeless Inspirator: Reliving Gandhi Edited by Raghunath Mashelkar
Sakal Publications 2010 HB pp369 ISBN 978 93 80571 48 5

This is a book on Gandhi that looks much more to the future than to the past. It takes the form of 45 short essays by 'superachievers' (almost all Indian). The idea came from the editor who is a distinguished scientist himself. While some of the authors are from outside the fields of science, engineering, IT, economics and business, that is where the emphasis lies. Raghunath Mashelkar says that engineers and industrialists always strive for 'more from less', but he had the idea of 'Gandhian Engineering' which would produce more (performance) from less (resource) for more (people) not just for more (profit). This would be a form of development that would fit with Gandhian philosophy.

I think the question that many of the authors are posing is, can a (basically) free market economic system with advanced technology solve the problem of inequality and poverty? And the answer they give is – if done in the right way – it can.

Many of the authors correctly point out that Gandhi was not against technology as such but only if it did not benefit those at the bottom of the economic ladder. As some of the writers acknowledge explicitly there is a huge gulf between the increasingly affluent sections of the Indian population and the majority, living mainly in the villages, who remain desperately poor. India is by no means unique in that respect but it does have the largest number of the poorest of any country.

Kiran Karnik sees great potential for the Gandhian ideal of decentralisation in the new communication technology. Where there is electronic connectivity – and 100,000 Community Service Centres are planned in India – there is access to information from the web and so there is potential for outsourcing of some services and manufacture. Various costs are lower in small towns and rural areas so that gives them an advantage over city locations. Other uses of modern technology are suggested by Ashok Jhunjhunwala: in education, since the quality of village teaching is often poor, communication technology could provide tuition to village students to improve the level of education; health services in rural areas are deficient but untrained medical practitioners could be helped by voice or video link to qualified urban medical practitioners. In agriculture, 'sophisticated call-centres' are beginning to be developed and they could provide information to farmers on crops, weather, fertilisers, etc. Other provisions needed are small-scale agro-industry, microfinance, decentralised energy production eg solar power, biomass. Such development, the author suggests, could involve less consumption of goods than we in the West expect and the villages could resemble in essence those that Gandhi envisioned.

Other areas covered by the essays are innovative architecture, developing cheap medicines and low technology medical treatments, local

governance (Panchayati Raj), community forests, multiculturalism, integrity in public life, gender politics, global warming.

One of the authors is Friend of the Gandhi Foundation and neuropsychologist, Dr Narinder Kapur, who looks at Gandhian values in science and suggests that scientists should take a form of the Hippocratic Oath such as medical doctors have taken on graduation.

There is one major area that is largely absent from the book and that is nonviolence. I could only see one reference to India's substantial armaments and that is by one of the few women who contribute an essay, Anu Aga, who says "[Gandhi's] own India exploded a nuclear device in 1974 euphemistically calling it a peaceful nuclear explosion. The second explosion happened in 1998 and almost every Indian applauded. By joining the nuclear weapons race, we have turned our backs on the concept of Ahimsa and have further diverted our country's scarce resources that could have been used for taking care of the poor." But I wonder how many of the authors would agree with that statement. Nor are the negative effects that often accompany development tackled.

Nevertheless, there is much stimulating material in these essays and the idea that inspired it has been fulfilled to a considerable extent. The book is also an attractive hardback publication enhanced by line drawings of all the authors to accompany the short biographies.

The book can be ordered through a website www.timelessinspirator.com although the price in £ is not given. Or contact Prof Narinder Kapur at narinder.kapur1@gmail.com

George Paxton



A Disappearing World: Ancient Traditions Under Threat in Tribal India Tradition, continuity and conflict in Jharkhand State

An exhibition of photography by Robert Wallis and artwork by members of the Tribal Women's Artist Collective from Jharkhand, North-Central India.

Brunei Gallery, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.
13 April - 25 June, 2011

Open Tuesday - Saturday 10.30am - 5pm Free admission

In the early 21st century India is experiencing unprecedented economic growth. The middle class is becoming more prosperous and numerous, the cities are rapidly expanding. But to fuel this economic boom, raw materials are being extracted by mining corporations at an ever-increasing rate from mineral-rich states in north central India inhabited by people who can claim to be the oldest dwellers in the land. These non-Hindu tribal groups, known as Adivasis, have traditionally worshipped nature and maintained spiritual connections to ancestral territory where they have lived for thousands of years. Yet few Adivasi hold paper deeds to their land. As mining spreads, Adivasi are being displaced into resettlement camps or urban slums, dispossessed of their heritage and surviving as scavengers on the periphery of mines where they once hunted or farmed.

A growing economic gap between urban and rural India, and the so-called 'resource curse' of a rich land but poor people, is leading to militant insurgency in the countryside and prompting debate within the Indian Government and beyond. Should India continue on its centralised model of development? Can the rights of Adivasi to continue according to their ancient traditions be accommodated in the new era?

Free Public Seminars

Thursday 14th April (Room B102) 3:00-5:00 pm: Art, Ancestry and Tribal Identity. Adivasi art and religious beliefs connected to their ancestors and the natural world, introduced by Bulu Imam, Director of the Tribal Women's Artist Collective.

6:30-8:30 pm: **Mining, Displacement and Resistance in India's Tribal Lands.** The impact of mining on tribals and on the environment, the growing resistance to mining from various sectors, and the Indian Government's response to the resistance.

On Thursday 14th the exhibition remains open until 9pm. The exhibition is supported by the Gandhi Foundation.

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/disappearingworld/>

