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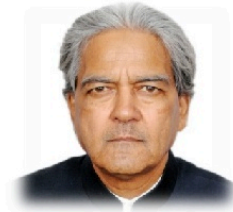
International Webinar on

'Thoughts and Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi'

on 22 August 2020 Time: 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Keynote Speaker

Prof. Ramesh C.
Bharadwaj
Director, Gandhi
Bhawan, DU



Chair

Prof. Kuldip Chand
Agnihotri
Vice Chancellor
Central University of
Himachal Pradesh



Speakers



Prof. Douglas Allen
Department of Philosophy
University of Maine
Orono, USA



Prof. Mark
Juergensmeyer
Professor of Sociology &
Founding Director,
Orfalea Center for
Global & Int'l Studies,
UCLA, USA



Dr. Alka Dunpath
Professor of Hindi,
Mahatma Gandhi Institute,
Mauritius



Mr. Christian Bartolf
President
Gandhi Information
Center, Berlin, Germany

through Zoom App – online mode

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International Webinar on 'Thoughts and Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi'

(August 22, 2020)

(iii) Speaker - Mr. Christian Bartolf (Gandhi Information Center, Berlin, Germany)

Mahatma Gandhi wanted us to follow respectively the inner voice of conscience on the nonviolent pathway to truth – conscience as the collected wisdom of the sages in past and present – compassion, empathy, mutual aid, solidarity.

Let us begin by highlighting the fact that it was the eminent 1935 Nobel Peace Laureate, Carl von Ossietzky, Hitler's concentration camp prisoner then, who had already comprehended the global challenge of Mahatma Gandhi when he wrote in his weekly magazine *Die Weltbühne* [The World Stage] in the year 1929, a few weeks before the Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression:

"Gandhi is no political human being in the European sense. He is more. He is the secret force without office and party, yet dominating everyone. He is a defender of the Old and a guide to the Unknown, at the same time teacher of wisdom and an elementary school headmaster, thinker and practitioner, dreamer and organizer of American format.

But in everything exemplary; whether he stood up for sanitary reforms or whether he fought the ancient prejudice against the Pariahs or whether he silently entered the British prison.

[...] India can be considered fortunate enough that her new law is not imposed on her by a dictator, does not boast in the relentless command of an Asian Napoleon, but is proclaimed by the gentle voice of Mahatma Gandhi."

(Carl von Ossietzky (1889-1938) about Mahatma Gandhi, in: *Die Weltbühne* [The World Stage], vol. 25 (II), no. 41, October 8, 1929 – German original:

„Gandhi ist kein politischer Mensch im europäischen Sinne. Er ist mehr. Er ist die geheime Gewalt, die ohne Amt und Partei doch alle beherrscht. Er ist Verteidiger des Alten und Führer ins Unbekannte, Weisheitslehrer und Elementarschulmeister zugleich, Denker und Praktiker, Träumer und Organisator von amerikanischem Format.

In allem aber beispielhaft, ob er für sanitäre Reformen eintritt oder das uralte Vorurteil gegen die Parias bekämpft oder schweigend in das Gefängnis der Engländer geht.

[...] Indien ist glücklich zu schätzen, dass ihm sein neues Gesetz nicht von einem Diktator auferlegt wird, nicht in dem unerbittlichen Kommando eines asiatischen Napoleon dröhnt, sondern von der sanften Stimme Mahatma Gandhis verkündet wird.“)

Carl von Ossietzky's statement is a historical example of how cross-cultural understanding could have prevented the worst from happening: the rise of fascism. Cultural mediation, as exemplified by Ossietzky, that aims at overcoming antisemitism, colonialism, imperialism, nationalism and racism, strengthens our fundamental roots and values: human dignity and rights and mutual respect for each other, transcultural and transnational.

Why did Gandhi become so significant for his contemporaries? Because his political program meant cultural, economic and social regeneration through constructive work, conviviality - and hospitality instead of hostility - instead of brute force: soul force!

“Jesus Christ, Daniel and Socrates represented the purest form of passive resistance or soul force. All these teachers counted their bodies as nothing in comparison to their souls. Tolstoy was the best and brightest exponent of the doctrine. He not only expounded it, but lived according to it.”

(M.K. Gandhi in *Indian Opinion*, 12-6-1909, in: CWMG 9, pp. 243)

When Gandhi discovered his ‘master-key’ of nonviolent resistance, and named it as *Satyagraha*, he publicly expressed his cultural autonomy and independence by redefining not only *Satyagraha*, but also *Sarvodaya Swadeshi* and *Swaraj*, heading towards his first political program for ‘*Hind Swaraj* or Indian Home Rule’ in 1909.

“The moderns make a key which will open many kinds of locks. They call it the “master-key”. Likewise, satyagraha is the master-key to our innumerable hardships. How much could be achieved if only all the Indians would use that key! Satyagraha is not a difficult term to understand. It only means adherence to truth. Whatever else the ethical life may mean, it cannot be ethical if it is not based on truth. Truth is easy enough to follow once we know its meaning.”

(M. K. Gandhi in *Indian Opinion*, 28-10-1911, in: CWMG, vol. 11, p. 175)

Gandhi learned from Socrates, Thoreau, Ruskin, Tolstoy, in his search for emancipation from slavery, civil war, war and genocide.

As world citizens of a world federation, let us now jointly recollect the United Nations International Days today and tomorrow.

22 August

“The General Assembly decided to designate 22 August as the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief.

The Day comes right after the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, 21 August.

Human Rights Related to Freedom of Religion or Belief

Freedom of religion or belief, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of association are interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing. They are enshrined in articles 18, 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Upholding these rights plays an important role in the fight against all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief.

The open, constructive and respectful debate of ideas, as well as interreligious, interfaith and intercultural dialogue, at the local, national, regional and international levels, can play a positive role in combating religious hatred, incitement and violence.

Furthermore, the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and full respect for the freedom to seek, receive and impart information can play a positive role in strengthening democracy and combating religious intolerance.

Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief

There are continuing acts of intolerance and violence based on religion or belief against individuals, including against persons belonging to religious communities and religious minorities around the world, and the number and intensity of such incidents, which are often of a criminal nature and may have international characteristics, are increasing.

That is why the General Assembly adopted the resolution A/RES/73/296, titled “International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief” strongly condemning continuing violence and acts of terrorism targeting individuals, including persons belonging to religious minorities, on the basis of or in the name of religion or belief.

The Member States reaffirmed their unequivocal condemnation of all acts, methods and practices of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, wherever and by whomsoever committed, regardless of their motivation, and reiterated that terrorism and violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group.

Background

The General Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/73/296, designated 22 August as the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief recognizing the importance of providing victims of acts of violence based on religion or belief and members of their families with appropriate support and assistance in accordance with applicable law.

It strongly deplored all acts of violence against persons on the basis of their religion or belief, as well as any such acts directed against their homes, businesses, properties, schools, cultural centres or places of worship, as well as all attacks on and in religious places, sites and shrines that are in violation of international law.

A previous resolution establishing the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism (A/RES/72/165) also recognized that working together to enhance the implementation of existing legal regimes that protect individuals against discrimination and hate crimes, increasing interreligious, interfaith and intercultural efforts and expanding human rights education are important first steps in combating incidents of intolerance, discrimination and violence against individuals on the basis of religion or belief.

By proclaiming an International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, the General Assembly recalled that States have the primary responsibility to promote and protect human rights, including the human rights of persons belonging to religious minorities, including their right to exercise their religion or belief freely.”

(source: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/religious-based-violence-victims-day>)

Mahatma Gandhi learned from the abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison („Declaration of Sentiments“) and Henry David Thoreau – in his fight against slavery and „semi-slavery“, as he called the system of indentured labour.

23 August

“The night of 22 to 23 August 1791, in Santo Domingo (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic) saw the beginning of the uprising that would play a crucial role in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade.

It is against this background that the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition is commemorated on 23 August each year.

This International Day is intended to inscribe the tragedy of the slave trade in the memory of all peoples. In accordance with the goals of the intercultural project "The Slave Route", it should offer an opportunity for collective consideration of the historic causes, the methods and the consequences of this tragedy, and for an analysis of the interactions to which it has given rise between Africa, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean.

The Director-General of UNESCO invites the Ministers of Culture of all Member States to organize events every year on that date, involving the entire population of their country and in particular young people, educators, artists and intellectuals. The International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition was first celebrated in a number of countries, in particular in Haiti (23 August 1998) and Goree in Senegal (23 August 1999).”

Audrey Azoulay, Director General, Message on the occasion of the International Day for Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition, in her message of 2019:

"This 23 August, we honour the memory of the men and women who, in Saint-Domingue in 1791, revolted and paved the way for the end of slavery and dehumanization. We honour their memory and that of all the other victims of slavery, for whom they stand. (...) To draw lessons from this history, we must lay this system bare, deconstruct the rhetorical and pseudoscientific mechanisms used to justify it; we must refuse to accept any concession or apologia which itself constitutes a compromising of principles. Such lucidity is the fundamental requirement for the reconciliation of memory and the fight against all present-day forms of enslavement, which continue to affect millions of people, particularly women and children."

(source: <https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/slavetraderemembranceday>)

"I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?

Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away."

(M. K. Gandhi: A Note [August 1947], CWMG, vol. 89, p. 125)