

Peace Education and Remembering Mahatma Gandhi (Christian Bartolf, 12 September 2020)

Let us first recollect a few ideas which we can find in the early essay on Peace Education written by Professor Johan Galtung for the Handbook on Peace Education, edited by Professor Christoph Wulf for the International Peace Research Association in the year 1974).

“For instance, a very important theme in peace research would be research on peace action in past and present: how slavery was abolished, how socialist revolutions improved the material conditions of the masses, how the anti - colonization movements came into being and ultimately became a success in a limited sense, how mobilization against structural violence in general is possible. There could be research programs in peace education, not only research on images people have, but on how and why they change, with or without peace action.” (p. 153)

“Both peace research and peace education will ultimately lead to peace action if they are of any value, and any peace action will have its obvious research and education benefits.” (p. 154)

“First a few general remarks about the form of peace education. It has to be compatible with the idea of peace, i.e. it has in itself to exclude not only direct violence, but also structural violence. Only rarely is education nowadays sold with direct violence; the days of colonialism and corporal punishment are more or less gone. But the structural violence is there, and it takes the usual forms: a highly vertical division of labour which in this case expresses itself in one-way communication; fragmentation of the receivers of that communication so that they cannot develop horizontal interaction and organize and eventually turn the communication flow the other way; absence of true multilaterality in the education endeavour. All this relates to form; and if in addition the content of education is included, the structural violence becomes even more apparent.

Peace education should be an attempt to do away with this. Any educational form suggested should be evaluated in terms of the structure it engenders; and the questions should always be asked: Does it permit a feedback? Does it bring people together in a joint endeavour rather than keeping them apart? Does it permit general participation, and is the total form of education capable of self-generated change? In short, is there dialogue, not only message in the education?” (p. 155)

“Many people have had the common experience that when they went to school it was always what they read themselves in their leisure time that was most interesting, most appetizing, and provoked the deepest insights and most gratifying experiences.” (p. 155)

“Let us then turn to the various forms of peace education that could be imagined ...” (p. 157)

1. Programme teaching – 2. Peace games – 3. Audio-visual means – 4. Tactile-visual means – 5. Open-air university – 6. Individual research – 7. Group research – 8. Drama – 9. Summer schools in peace research (International Peace Academy): “mixture of theoreticians and practitioners, and if possible also of theory and practice”(p. 163) – “the significance of combining the general and the specific” (p. 164) – “the significance of combining empirical, critical and constructive approaches” (p. 164) – 10. World universities and peace research.

Johan Galtung (Norway): On Peace Education, in: Wulf, Christoph [ed.]: Handbook on Peace Education, Frankfurt am Main; Oslo : International Peace Research Association, Education Committee 1974, pp. 153-172

Let us pick some thoughts about “Peace Education. Framework for Teacher Education” in the New Delhi 2005 UNESCO India publication:

“Peace education is an important innovative initiative. When the world is fragmented with competing nuclear armed commandos, peace education is probably the only hope for survival of life on the earth.” (p. 55)

“**Think Positive**: develops positive self-concept and also attitude of accepting others with respect, and appreciating them.

Be Compassionate and Do No Harm: develops qualities like love, kindness, sympathy and so on.

Discover Inner Peace: develops ability to control anger and build soothingness within.

Learning to Live Together: builds ability of sharing, mutual help, trust building and accepting group responsibility, including leading and following.

Respect Human Dignity: develops respects for human rights, duties and justice; ‘do unto others what you expect others do unto you’.

Be Your True Self: develops strength of character to be honest in expression of one's feelings and thoughts without letting down others.

Developing Critical Thinking: develops the essential skill for problem solving involving analysis and synthesis, looking at the issue from alternative standpoints.

Resolve Conflict Non-violently: develops skills of conflict analysis, negotiation, active listening, mediation, creative problem solving and seeking alternative solution.

Build Peace in Community: develops understanding of social realities and people’s problem and skills and attitudes to work with them.

Caring for the Planet: develops understanding of the immediate environment, the national and global environment, and need for protection of the mother (planet) earth.” (p. 19)

Let us now appreciate the reference to “Remembering Gandhi – Protagonist of Peace” on the Indian Government spotlight website: <https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/remembering-mahatma-gandhi-protagonist-peace> - with explicit references to the Gandhi Heritage Portal with the only thoroughly digitalised version of The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, his

journals "Indian Opinion", "Young India" and "Harijan" which should be complemented and his key works like his two autobiographies, his first political programme "Hind Swaraj (Indian Home Rule)", his "Ashram Observances in Action", his Gita interpretation and many more, with chronologies, photos, stamps which all should be freely available for archiving and downloading for the students of peace. There is one eminent feature which I discovered with great joy during the past months: ten virtual tours to commemoration sites of Gandhi, like Sabarmati and Sevagram Ashram, Mani Bhavan, Gandhi Smriti, Aga Khan Palace with impressions of Porbandar, Rajkot, Ahmedabad, Dandi, Mumbai, Wardha, Delhi, Chennai and some additional most impressive Gandhi ashrams in India.

I would suggest a high quality version of such virtual tours with representation of all the information panels and paintings in high quality for virtual visitors all over the world. This refers to all commemoration sites related to Gandhi in India and South Africa or Mauritius, but also London, Geneva, Rome and other places visited by Gandhi. Of course, the authentic places will become even more interesting for students of Gandhi – I recollect my own experience in the year 1985 and 1998 and between 2007 and 2010 when I was most impressed by Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, the permanent "My life is my message" museum at Rajghat.

In addition, we should find a proper representation of Gandhi's four concepts of "Satyagraha", "Sarvodaya", "Swadeshi" and "Swaraj" for the attention of global visitors – by digital museums, at real places like at Hyderabad, but mostly virtual.

That is why we, the Gandhi Information Center – Research and Education for Nonviolence – reg. association and society for peace education – have created 21 exhibitions on nonviolent resistance - <http://www.nonviolent-resistance.info/eng/exhibitions.htm> -

"Bread and Roses" - Voices against War (2019/20)

Aldous Huxley: Alphabet of Peace. Commitment against War (2019)

Henry David Thoreau: "... give me truth". Plea for Nonviolent Resistance (2017/18)

Étienne de La Boétie: Against Voluntary Servitude. Discourse on the fall of tyrants (2012)

Rabindranath Tagore: "Words from the Depth of Truth". Reflections against War and Nationalism (2011)

Leo Tolstoy and the Doukhobors: Conscientious Objection - commemorating the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy's death centenary (2010/2011)

John Ruskin - "Unto This Last". Reflections on Justice and Peace (2010)

Henry David Thoreau - "Civil Disobedience". Reflections against Slavery and War (2009)

Martin Luther King - "I HAVE A DREAM". Reflections on Nonviolence (2009)

Leo Nikolajevic Tolstoy: "I Cannot Be Silent!" Reflections against Violence and War (2008)

Gandhi's Path to Nonviolence. Autobiographical quotes, photos, original voice (2008)

You are invited to virtually visit this our exhibition:

"Gandhi's Path to Nonviolence -
Autobiographical quotes, photos, original voice" (2008)

<http://www.nonviolent-resistance.info/exhibitions/eng/gandhi/index.htm>

This Gandhi exhibition does not represent the biographical chronology of Gandhi's life or his nonviolent campaigns, but it quotes himself from both: from Gandhi's autobiographies and from the compilation of his texts "Sarvodaya". In addition you listen to original voice recordings of Gandhi and Einstein (audio files) while reading the text documents of the original voice recordings.

Let me suggest the following:

1. Let us listen to good MUSIC, the language of international understanding – I prefer short, simple and wise songs (e.g. "Imagine" by John Lennon or "From Way Up Here" by Malvina Reynolds and Pete Seeger) as Gandhi did when he highlighted the Christian hymns "Abide With Me" and "Lead, Kindly Light", in addition to "Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram" (Ram Dhun) which was performed by Pete Seeger during his world tours or "Vaishnava Jana To" with the most recent artists' interpretations from all over the world we are really grateful for. What a great ethical lesson to read the lyrics of Vaishnava Jana To, a Hindu bhajan, written in the 15th century by the poet Narsinh Mehta in the Gujarati language. The poem speaks about the life, ideals and mentality of a Vaishnava jana (a follower of Vaishnavism):

"Call those people Vaishnav who
Feel the pain of others,
Help those who are in misery,
But never let self-conceit enter their mind.

They respect the entire world,
Do not disparage anyone,
Keep their words, actions and thoughts pure,
The mother of such a soul is blessed.

They see all equally, renounce craving,
Respect other women as their own mother,
Their tongue never utters false words,

Their hands never touch the wealth of others.

They do not succumb to worldly attachments,
They are firmly detached from the mundane,
They are enticed by the name of Raam,
All places of pilgrimage are embodied in them.

They have forsaken greed and deceit,
They stay afar from desire and anger,
Narsi says: I'd be grateful to meet such a soul,
Whose virtue liberates their entire lineage."

Let me as a conclusion recall two messages of Gandhi:

1. "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." (1947)

2. "West today is in despair of multiplication of atom bombs, because a multiplication of atom bombs means utter destruction, not merely of the West, but it will be a destruction of the world, as if the prophecy of the Bible is going to be fulfilled and there is to be a perfect deluge. Heaven forbid that there be that deluge, and through men's wrongs against himself. It is up to you to deliver the whole world, not merely Asia but deliver the whole world from that wickedness, from that sin. That is the precious heritage your teachers, my teachers have left to us." (1947)