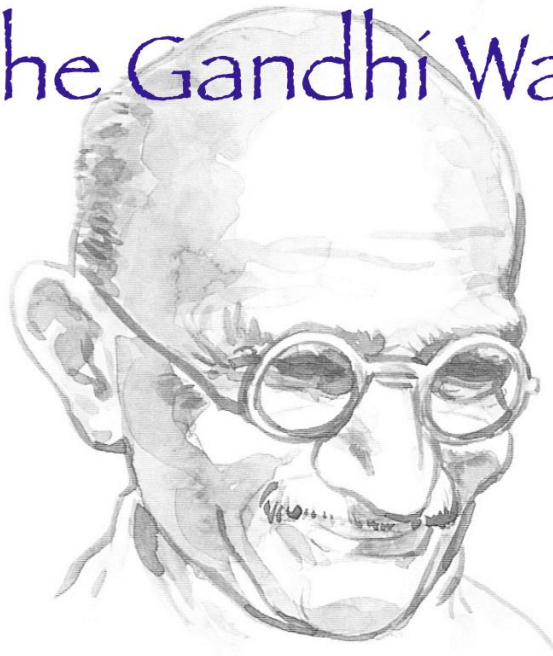


The dissent and fallout around the request to rename a street after Gandhi reveal huge divisions in a society that needs to heal. What seemed to have escaped many is the common ground that was brought to light from the media and other public opinions.

The Gandhi Way



Watercolour sketch by David Gudgeon

HISTORICAL AND CURRENT CONNECTIONS

To suggest that Gandhi has no connection with Guyana is to ignore the history and views of prominent world leaders. President Obama visited India in 2010 and made it clear in addressing Congress "...I may not be standing here today, as President of the USA, had it not been for Gandhi and the message he shared with America and the rest of the world".

Then there are the memorable words of Martin Luther King "Christ gave us the goals, Gandhi gave us the tactics...he influenced my life in terms of action more than anybody..."

Gandhi was invited to the USA and many other countries by leaders of numerous religious and political groups but chose not to leave the struggle that demanded his presence in India. However his emissary Rev. Andrews was hosted by the British Guiana East Indian Association in 1929 to study the conditions of Indentured servants as he had done in Fiji and Natal. Details can be found in his 1930 report ***Impressions of British Guiana*** which was shared with Gandhi and Congress. It influenced the decision to end the system that was filled with horrendous examples of exploitation and even death. (See Gandhi's Influence in British Guiana, Guyana Times September 28, 2020).

COMMON GROUNDS

One of the better suggestions still to be realized was made in 2012 when the Mayor of Georgetown attended the annual birthday event and paid homage to Gandhi. However he further recommended to the Indian high commission that they should collaborate with the University of Peace Studies, and the Universal Peace Foundation so the minds of the young people can be inculcated with the value of non-violence and future generations can live in a world that is kinder and more loving. (See K.N.October 3, 2012)

The only issue with such a call is to ask why the IHC should be the only agency to take this initiative of a global icon. One answer is that others do not see it as their duty even though the entire society and the world benefit when there is peace.

INFLUENCE OF THE GITA

It is a quite refreshing to read in the words of Dr. Roshan Khan and others referring to the Gita as a book that is meant for all irrespective of religious beliefs and practices.

Despite the many tragedies in Gandhi's life these left no visible or indelible scars on him, a fact that credits entirely to the Gita. This universal philosophy was the source of both inspiration and consolation when disappointments stared him in the face. It was the initiative of his Secretary Mahadev Desai. The British provided both of them the leisure time for this product of love as they were in prison when the original was conceived in 1933-34.

Hajji Khan was one of the rare knowledge seekers who was seen reading and studying the Gita on a flight from Guyana to Toronto a few years ago.

Sanatan Dharma Educational Foundation saw the need to promote this knowledge and initiated a project A GITA FOR EACH HOME several years ago in Canada. Thousands of this summary of the Vedas and Upanishads were distributed in North America, the Caribbean and Guyana. The many positive comments made about its message since Gandhi's birthday this year caused them to renew their efforts. The Apostle of peace himself may have implored us to do this instead of being involved in conflict about his name on a street. Consequently more prints of hardcopies have been ordered from India and should be available for distribution in the New Year. A free PDF copy can be made available to organisations interested in printing and distributing to their members from Ramjihindu@rogers.com.

Guyana, like India, lives in the villages and it is a limitation on human imagination to ignore what the countryside from Charity to Crabwood Creek can do to make his teachings come alive.

President Ali also recognised that Gandhi's philosophy was meant to create change from the bottom up. Every religious and social organisation across the country can organise an event on October 2 each year and invite speakers to share the life and message of the apostle of truth and non-violence. The Diaspora is overflowing with knowledgeable lecturers willing to participate.

For those who want any structure to carry his name there are countless ways to make this happen quietly without being involved in the noise of divisive politics. Who can stop private companies from using his name on their buildings, roads, Ashrams, schools (or even a classroom) hospitals (or even a wing) sports stadiums, bridges, pets, etc, after him, if this will help future generations to avoid anger and violence. It may not be too late to consider a street or even a pathway around the memorial to Jahajis at Palmyra in region six.

Who can stop the generous Ramroop Foundation from immortalizing him in some way when the crematorium at Leguan is completed?

Then there is the new SILICA city which can test the courage of any government by naming it GANDHI NAGAR and better yet make it a NON-ALCOHOLIC ZONE. This can also be the location of the first Department of Peace. The idea is not novel. According to the April 2021 newsletter from the UNITING FOR PEACE organisation in UK several countries have one and the UN supports the building of such Ministries. It also states that 22 countries have no army leaving more for health, education and social services. One of them Costa Rica, requires Peace Education to be taught in all schools.

If we on earth cannot use the lessons of his life to unite a tiny country of less than a million people we may have to wait until we are invaded by extraterrestrial beings. Alternatively we have to experience the few minutes excursion to outer space from where we can see the entire earth as one living entity envisioned by the Mahatma. Shanti, Shanti, Shanti

Ramnarine Sahadeo

Editor of the pocket sized Gita by Gandhi, with quotes and comments

Author: Mohandas K. Gandhi: Thoughts, Words, Deeds: His Source of Inspiration: Bhagavad - Gita

