

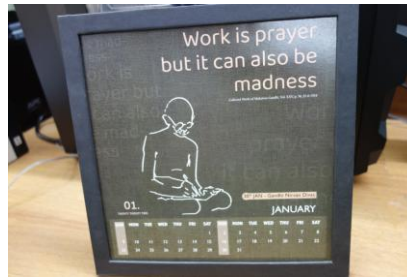
SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter:
Edition XXXXVI; Spring 2024, India



To my dear friend, Hemant. You are such a glorious Light. You did everything to ensure the success of this trip for me, for Radiance, and for SSAAP. We owe it all to you! Whether it was your assistance months before we left Zambia in booking our rail tickets, calling hosts to organize our stay, or providing me emotional support with every fear, concern, or detail of the trip, you did it all with kindness, compassion, and integrity. I have learned so much from you and appreciate the opportunity to continue learning from you. As always, India has been the time of our lives. It is one of my favorite homes on Mother Earth. We won't wait so long to come back again next time. Thank you for your lifelong friendship.



Photo courtesy of Sofia Kutishcheva, Moscow, The Russian Federation



India is one of the most incredible lands on planet Earth, which I would highly recommend to anyone seeking a mystical journey both internally and externally; it will challenge you to your limits and stir you to the deepest reaches of your being. India has never treated me otherwise.

As many of you know, I went to India to take time off; I came here to take a Sabbatical. I wanted to rest and have time off from SSAAP, which if I were to calculate, I probably spend 80+ hours per week working on. And the irony of life would have it that here, I ended up busier with SSAAP than I am when we are in Africa!

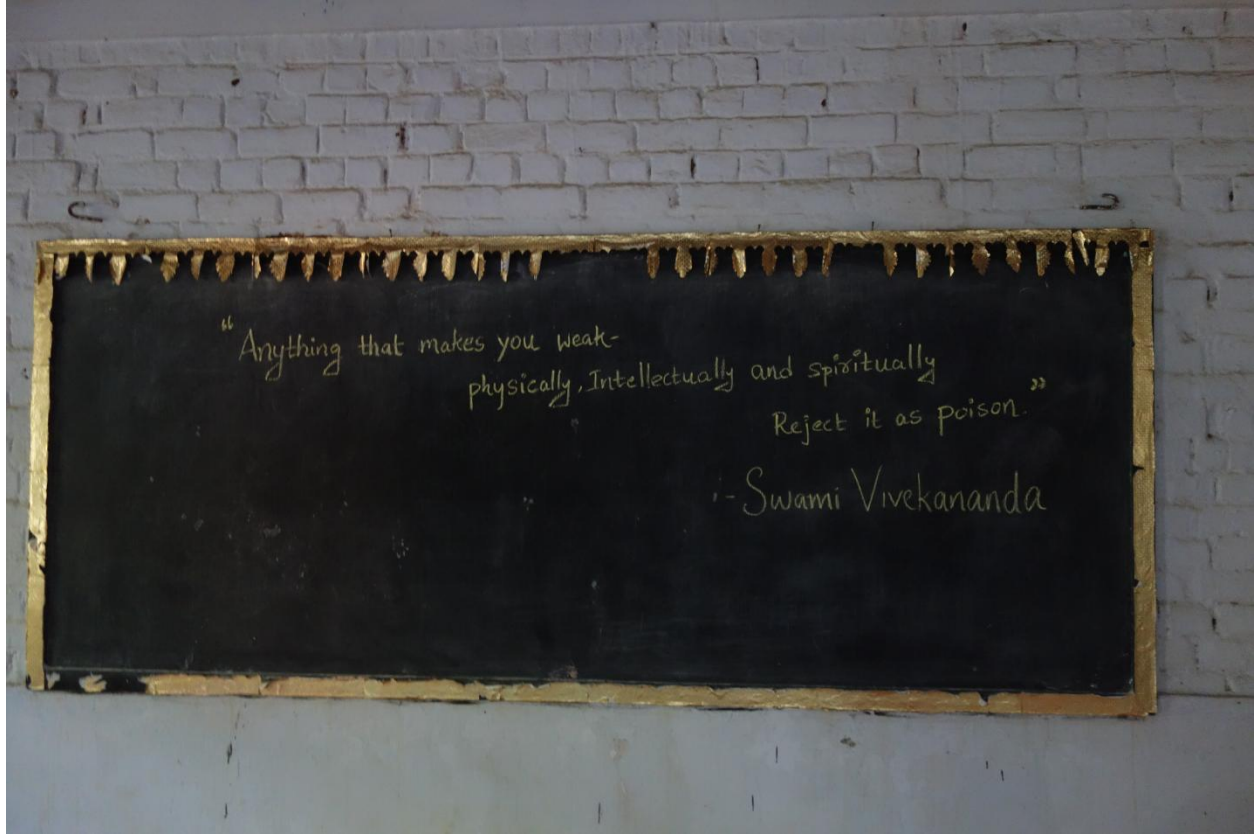
I always enter India with the mission of: *I need help!* And usually, I need help in every way: new ideas for SSAAP, people to help implement ideas, forging new partnerships, technologies that might enhance the work we are doing in our villages in Zambia and Sierra Leone, typhoid shots for Radiance and I, food to take back to Africa with us, books to plump up both our personal and our project libraries.

In India, my work in Africa is deeply honored and valued, thus I am asked to give presentations and workshops which are very thought-provoking; quite similarly to being in my homeland (U.S.A.), people value my work in Africa and ask me to share, which I Love to do! India is a place that I can travel – like going home to U.S.A. – that recharges my internal battery, allowing me to see the broader scope of SSAAP-Africa, and being among people who appreciate my hard work inspire and ignite my passion for the project. India is restorative for both Radiance and I, as is being in U.S.A.

India is itself a *mela*: a festival of colors, flowers, food, prayer, opportunities, conferences, literacy, new ideas, innovative thought, creativity, and beauty. I do not know how many times I have been to India; Radiance says nine times, but I believe this is my seventh trip here. This is Radiance's third trip to India. I brought her here when she was six years old, again when she was seven/turning eight years old, and to-date, she is fourteen years old.

India:

- *Research*
- *Contacts*
- *Partnerships*
- *Resources*
- *Food*
- *Prayer/Meditation/Yoga/Solitude/Writing time/Silence/Quiet*
- *Clothing/Household materials to take back to Africa*
- *Books / Education / Opportunities for Mastery over Specialty Topics / Literacy materials*



Gandhi

It is safe to say I stumbled upon Gandhi by accident – as though anything in life is an accident. ;)

Most everyone has heard of Mahatma Gandhi (though I always hesitate to call him “Mahatma”, as he abhorred the title and did not feel worthy of it. *Mahatma* means “the Great One” or a person to be revered for wisdom, selflessness, and high-mindedness; in understanding Gandhi’s humility, it is no wonder why he disliked the title, so out of respect for him I try never to refer to him as “Mahatma”). I am no exception. Gandhi’s face is etched into every Rupee note we use in India, and his glasses are an iconic symbol of India. But I had never studied Gandhi intimately until Radiance’s first trip to India in 2016. We went to stay at Gandhi’s University for alternative education, called *Gujarat Vidyapith*, at the Guest House on the campus; this was a suggestion given to me by an Indian friend, as the guest house is safe and inexpensive: the two requirements I had for anywhere my six year old daughter and I were staying in India.



Photo courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India

Gujarat Vidyapith is located in Ahmedabad, in the western state of Gujarat, India; it is near the Income Tax office and Radiance (my daughter) and I always feel it is our home in India; it is the place we feel safest and most comfortable. Radiance calls Gujarat Vidyapith a “walled city” (she first became familiar with that term when we were in Ethiopia, and visited Harar, which is a walled city and the third-holiest centre for Islam in the world) because the Vidyapith is located deep inside the city, but has walls around it, and a few gates. The inside of the campus is peaceful, with trees, and quiet. The outside city is loud, and crowded; if you are Radiance and I, you even have to wear earplugs when you go out on the streets. She and I are both extremely sensitive to loud noise.

Ahmedabad is what I call “Gandhi Central”. On one side of Ashram Road, which parallels the Sabarmati River, there is Kochrab Ashram, which was Gandhi’s first ashram that was rented to him by his barrister friend, Jivanlal Desai, in May 1915. At that time, it was a bungalow near Kochrab Village. Under Gandhi, it became a center for him, his wife Kasterbai, and those who adhered to his philosophies to practice self-sufficiency, empowerment and upliftment of the destitute, and *Satyagraha*: Soul force as I have also heard it called, or “Truth force”. Kochrab Ashram was also a place that human equality was practiced, and ideas of alternative education, including education on health and sanitation. Kochrab Ashram is famous for many reasons, one reason being that it was at Kochrab Ashram that Gandhi admitted a *Dalit* (“Untouchable”) family, which outraged many of the ashramites at the time, as well as those living outside the ashram. Donations for Kochrab Ashram dwindled away. Gandhi remained steadfast, not compromising in his decision to support the family he had admitted and was prepared to close down his ashram as a result. A supporter of his cause, Ambalal Sarabhai then made a donation of 13,000 Rs. (Indian Rupees) and saved the ashram from closing down. The ashram eventually was shifted farther down the Sabarmati River in 1917 when The Plague broke out in Kochrab Village.



Photo courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India

Gandhi’s second ashram, from 1917 until he left on July 31, 1933, was Sabarmati Ashram, which is approximately six kilometers from Kochrab Ashram, which is now a museum. Gandhi left the ashram in 1933, stating he would not return until India won its Independence. Independence was won on August 15, 1947, but as Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948, he never returned.

Gujarat Vidyapith was established on October 18, 1920, and lies between Kochrab and Sabarmati Ashrams. In those days, of course, there was no Ashram Road to connect all three sites, and they were in walking distance of each other; the area was undeveloped and rural, and all three: Kochrab

Ashram, Gujarat Vidyapith, and Sabarmati Ashram were located more or less in village areas. Gujarat Vidyapith was started in a bungalow as well; it was started in Dahyabhai Mehta's bungalow, and its purpose was to promote alternative thought as well as Nonviolent action; the institution also worked to initiate *Satyagraha*, which literally means: "holding firmly to Truth", and is nonviolent resistance and/or civil resistance. Gandhi also described Satyagraha as: "the law of self-suffering" in his magazine publication called *Young India*.

In 1929, Gandhi founded the Navajivan Trust which is a publishing house located just behind a short walk's away from Gujarat Vidyapith. The publishing house has published more than 800 titles in Gujarati (local language of the state of Gujarat, India), Hindi, and English. Navajivan Publishing House has also donated many books to SSAAP's Nonviolence Libraries in both Sierra Leone and in Zambia.



Photo courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India

Gandhi's ashram, called *Sevagram* (meaning: "a town for/of service") in Maharashtra state, India. He resided here from 1936 until he was assassinated in 1948. This village in central India was his headquarters and he was originally invited to stay by his friend, Jinnalal Bajaj, at this bungalow (*Bajajwadi*) in Wardha, which is the district in Maharashtra where Sevagram is located.

My introduction to Mohandas K. Gandhi was in May 2016 when we "accidentally" stumbled into the Guest House on Gujarat Vidyapith's campus, and my awakening into the space of feeling that I had myself an ally. The more I researched Gandhi's life, read his publications and his books, spoke to Gandhian scholars regarding the details in his life, his philosophies, his work, his beliefs, the more I felt the parallels between his work and his life and my own. It felt reassuring to me, more than anything else. I always say: "*Gandhi stole my ideas again!*", in jest, because so many of his thoughts and ideas on many things parallel mine.

I am not an academic and I have no real qualification of anything other than sheer, hands-on, life experience which includes tremendous joy and suffering, alike; I have learned not to discern between the two, or to promote one over the other as in the end they balance one another out. I have various degrees and certifications and qualifications from U.S.A., Europe, Africa, and India, but in the end I am not qualified in anything other than in being true to myself, and in being Truth itself.

I figure I will achieve more in my lifetime if I am a small, unimportant person rather than a big person who is always demanded and therefore always too busy. I am always busy; I am always free. I am always busy and I am always free.



Photo courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India
Opening of one of Gandhi's water wells in a village in Nagpur

And though I Love learning more than anything else, and am always looking for enlightening educational opportunities of many genres, I am not a Gandhian academic nor am I part of any Gandhian community. I am connected with many people associated with Gandhi here in India and all over the world, but I am not part of their communities. Many of them have not welcomed me, either. Like all things, I prefer to think and be on my own and of my own. No community, no tribe, no family, no nation can claim me, as I belong only to myself in that Divine space. My relationship to Gandhi is very personal. I share it only with my daughter. I think of him as my friend. I think of him as one of the only people who could understand me or could have understood my work, why I am doing what I am doing, and why I will never stop. My no-compromise way of dealing with all things that I feel are unjust I believe was also his own.

I study Gandhi's ideas, but I think of him as my friend and certainly my ally. I think of him as a spiritualist and a writer. I have a personal relationship to him; I Love him! I feel his support for my work from his heartbeat a hundred years ago and fifty-six years now into his grave: he is now the dust he always wished to humble himself to. I feel his support of the [very unpopular] education experiential models I adhere to and am raising my daughter by, as well the [very, very unpopular!] parenting model I use with my daughter whereby I must teach her manners and respect but not squash her inherent and authentic spirit; I have always refused to condition her to live in a world

society that has collectively lost its own Truth, is void of both manners and respect at-large, and has sold its authentic spirit to Capitalism. Many of my practices I was doing before I even studied Gandhi. So I don't know whose ideas these are: his, or mine. ;) Gandhi is part of my deepest heart and Soul. I Love him like a long-lost friend I will meet in another life, that I have already met, or that I will carry on the traditions of though he is no longer with us in material form, he is with us very much still in spirit. And his spirit of fighting opposition with the Love-based weapon of the heart is also my own.

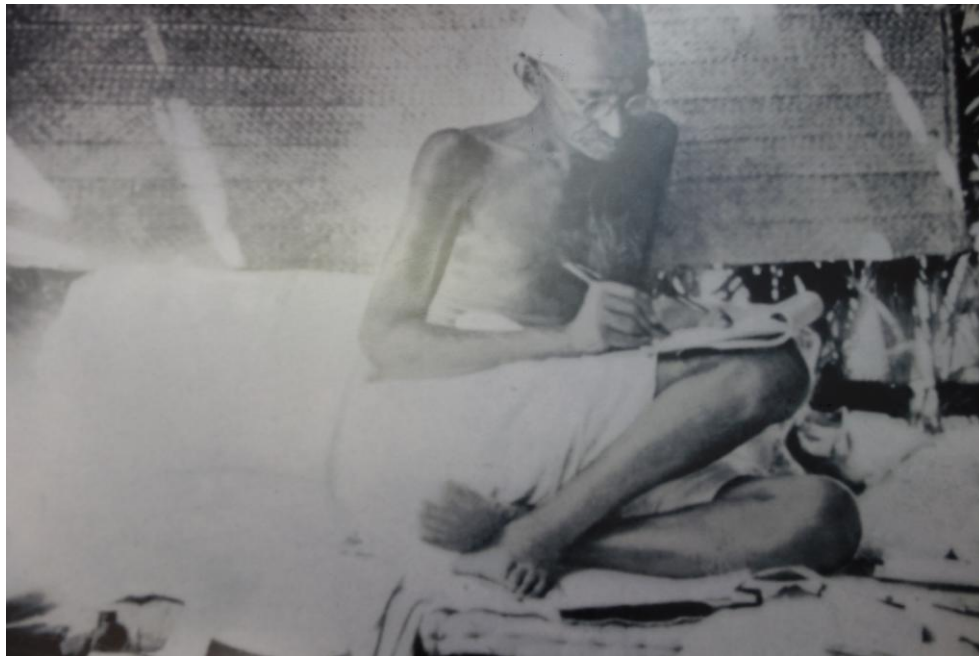


Photo courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India

Gandhi worked extensively with healthcare, knew much about allopathic versus homeopathic medicine, strictly believed that one's food is also his medicine, saved his son's life when his son was on his deathbed, and worked with village healthcare. He was a lawyer by profession, and had many strong views on education: both formal and nonformal, and he educated his children through his homeschool. His heart was in the village, and his work was largely oriented towards not only promoting the worth of the village to the nation, but also empowering the undervalued people who live in the village, grow the food for the nation, and are humble. Gandhi said that one must humble himself to dust. I think of this every day of my life.

Many people believe that Nonviolence is the absence of fighting and conflict. And, while Nonviolence may be, at least superficially, a lack of fighting or conflict, in its purest essence, this is not Nonviolence. Avoiding conflict in the name of Nonviolence is a misunderstanding of what spiritual Nonviolence truly is.

A friend of mine says: "Nothing can be imposed or articulated theoretically without actually passing through the emotions. And it can be maturely handled only after that."

My observant daughter says that people are naturally drawn to drama, and conflict. She says that if there is a street fight (she is thinking of her nation: Sierra Leone!, where street fights are quite common), or a verbal fight, or two people shouting or screaming at each other, this naturally attracts the attention of others. It is a natural human response to drama: *intrigue*. Such is also the essence of Art: film, documentaries, Shakespearean stage drama, movies, novels, paintings, music. Radiance believes that without conflict, we would have no human experience; she believes that conflict itself is healthy and natural, but the way that human beings deal with conflict is the essential element that causes conflict to be violent; conflict, in itself, is Nonviolent.

People don't want conflict but this is also because they don't want to change, not understanding that within conflict lies change: if we are motivated to be Truthful to ourselves, and to honour our SoulTruth (versus our egos).

Thus, my new motto is: *Passive-aggressiveness is abuse; not dealing with conflict is abuse.*

Conflict is healthy and necessary to our innermost, innate beings. Most people are conflicted within themselves, so naturally will cause external conflict. People who are not of Love and light will conflict with those who are. So conflict arises no matter how hard you try to prevent it, and if you feel conflict within you and do nothing in the name of Nonviolence, still the conflict does not go away. Instead it stews inside, a volcano waiting to erupt, and manifests itself in the external realm as passive-aggressive behaviour: also very unhealthy for the person and her/his spirit.

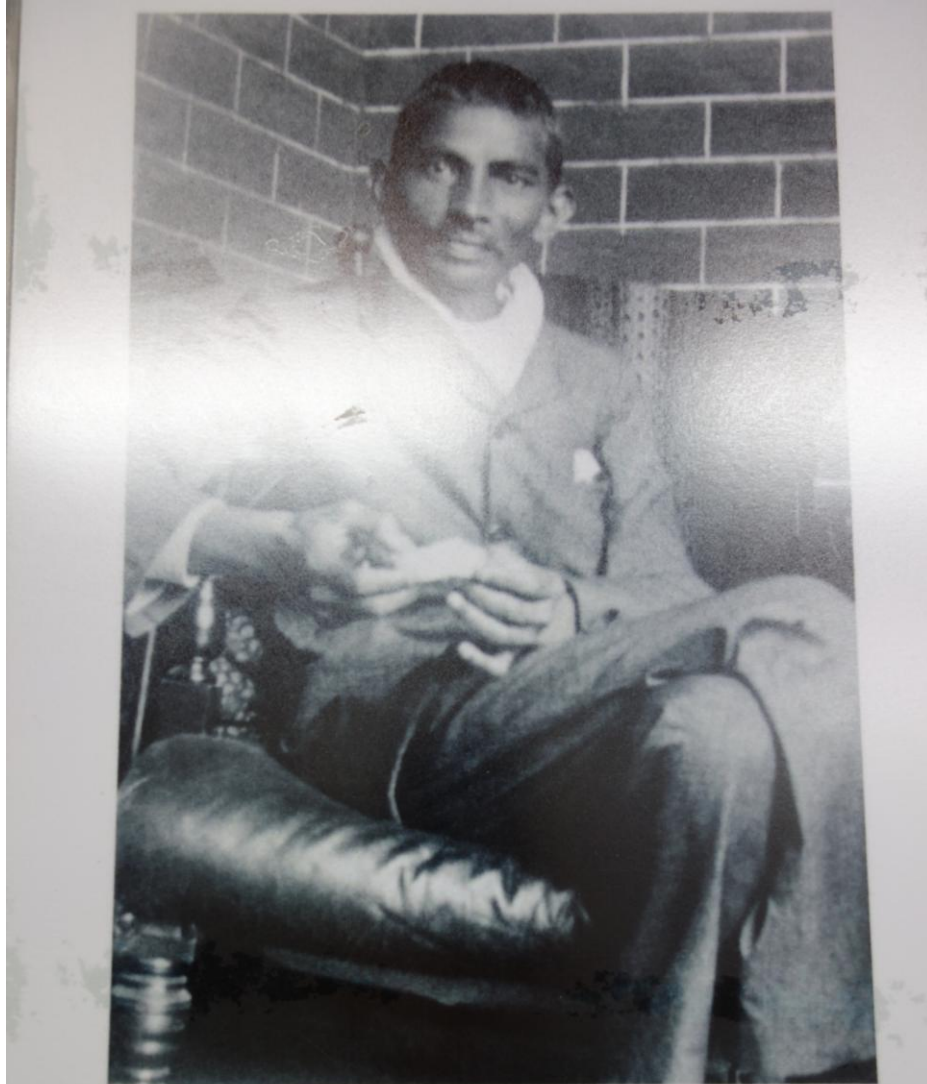
Nonviolence for me is the Soulforce that vows that after the conflict there will be a stronger version of Love, called unconditional Love. Conditional love is there first, but it is superficial, before going through conflict with someone. Unconditional Love is bravery; conditional love is slavery.

The efforts of Nonviolence should not be of prevention of conflict. Rather, they should be placed upon resolution by achieving a mutual, agreeable, enlightened (!) stage of acceptance and Love.

Duality, of course, is the fiber of existence on planet Earth. Duality is the essence of beauty as well. Duality creates new life from yin and yang, from egg and sperm; duality is the very essence from which Art is made. We who cower in the face of conflict are half-alive, which also means we are half-dead. Conflict keeps us alive, though we do not consciously know it. Gandhi was a warrior of dealing with conflict through Love, which I always aim to do, do not always succeed, learn as much as I can, and do it differently (or the same!) the next time all over again.



Gandhi's Dandi March (Salt March) of 1930, depicted by a creative artist through tiles on the outside of a building across the street from Gandhi's Sabarmati ashram in Ahmedabad.



रेव. डोकना घरे हुमला भाद सारवार दरमियान. जेहानिसबर्ग, 1908
रेव. डोक के घर हमले के बाद सारवार के दौरान। जोहानिसबर्ग, 1908
Recuperating after assault, at Rev. J. J. Doke's home.
Johannesburg, 1908

Photo courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India

The international students at Gujarat Vidyapith roared with laughter during their External Evaluations on January 23, 2024 when I said that I thought Gandhi, in his youth, was very good looking. This photo, of him at age 32, is my testament to that. He was strikingly good-looking: thoughtful, wise, insightful, and introverted. This photo, taken in 1908 when he was assaulted by his fellow Indian in South Africa, Mir Alam, who was also his client, when Gandhi began working for the rights of Indians in South Africa. Though the white South Africans were against him, Mir Alam assaulted Gandhi as he was furious with the settlement that Gandhi had made with the British government. At age 32, Gandhi was already stirring the blood of those he encountered.

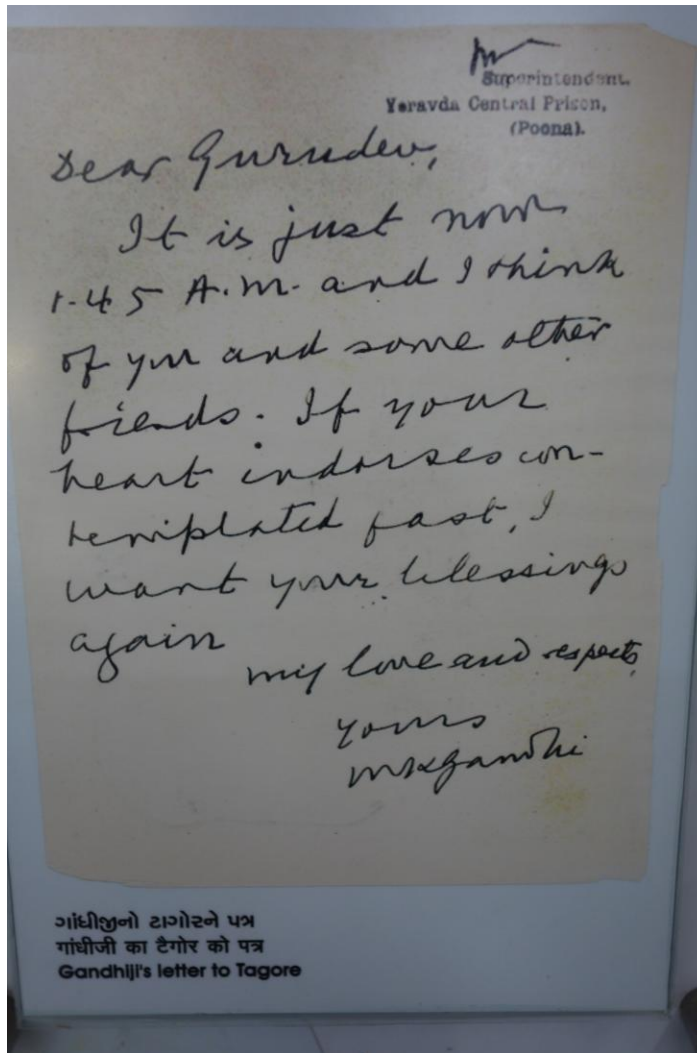


Photo courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India

One of the main reasons I feel so connected to Gandhi is because he was a prolific writer, and wrote letters to people, books while he was in prison, and articles that he published in his *Young India* and *Harijan* series. Many of his speeches were also recorded. Most of Gandhi's writings that have been compiled into books are that of letters he wrote to other people, and short articles he wrote for both his publications: *Young India* and *Harijan*. Indeed, he used writing as one of his main Nonviolent tools and wrote to many who opposed him.

In the case of the letter, above, he wrote to Rabindranath Tagore, a Bengali poet, writer, playwright, composer, philosopher, social reformer, educationalist, and painter, and was also one of Gandhi's dear friends, though he and Tagore differed greatly on a wide range of issues. Gandhi did not allow disagreements and conflicts with others to taint his Love for them. This particular letter was written from Yeravda ("Yerwada") Prison, where many of Gandhi's correspondences originated. I also like that he wrote it at 1:45 a.m.: a Night Owl, like I! Please note his sloppy handwriting, which he shamed himself for, regretting that in his formative years he did not learn to write neatly. I used Gandhi as an example to my daughter when she was learning cursive, telling her not to make the same mistake Gandhi did, as she wrote very sloppily when she was young. *Handwriting is so important, I told her, don't undervalue the traditional art of handwriting! And you never know when we will need it again to replace keyboards and computers when they become obsolete one day.*

The next few pages of this newsletter are photos, not in any particular order, of Gandhi's writings or timelines of his life that I feel are pertinent in understanding him as an activist as well a spiritualist. I have always felt Gandhi to be very much alone. He had a massive following, but few could relate to him and fewer still: understand him. The time he spent alone: in his ashrams, in solitude, in prison, in silence (every Monday he was silent), deepened his being and his capacity for external change as he did the inner work for internal change throughout his life. Thus, his growth was more rapid than those surrounding him. He spent time within himself; he spent time in solitude, working through his own personal demons (we all have them). Through his writings, and Gandhian scholars can disagree with me on this until the cows come home (!!!), I feel a deep sense that he felt very much alone in his life, and that at times he felt the whole world against him. I too have known this feeling, quite well in fact. The Gandhi that is personified today: "Mahatma" and "...beLoved to all" is a falsified notion of how Indians – during Gandhi's time and still today – felt about him; there were five assassination attempts on his life. The first four failed, and in 1948, a year after India got its Independence, the fifth assassination attempt was successful. I have met more Indians in India who do not agree with/Love/support Gandhi than the Indians who do.

Since satyagraha is one of the most powerful methods of direct action, a satyagrahi exhausts all other means before he resorts to satyagraha. He will therefore constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody who wants to listen to him, and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to satyagraha. But when he has found the impelling call of the inner voice within him and launches out upon satyagraha he has burnt his boats and there is no receding.

[Speech at Nagercoil 08-10-1927]

... I want to declare to the world that, whatever may be said to the contrary, and although I might have forfeited the regard and even the trust of many friends in the West, and I bow my head low, but even for their friendship or their love, I must not suppress the voice within, call it 'conscience', call it the 'prompting of my inner basic nature'. There is something within me impelling me to cry out my agony. I have known humanity. I have studied something of psychology though I have not read many books on it. Such a man knows exactly what it is. That something in me which never deceives me tells me now: 'You have to stand against the whole world although you may have to stand alone. You have to stare the world in the face although the world may look at you with bloodshot eyes. Do not fear. Trust that little thing which resides in the heart'. It says, 'Forsake friends, wife, and all; but testify to that for which you have lived, and for which you have to die'.

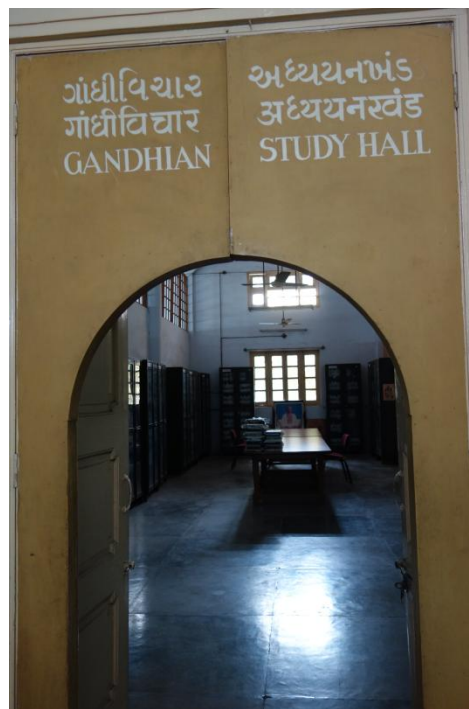
[Speech at AICC Meeting 08-08-1942]

Photo courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India

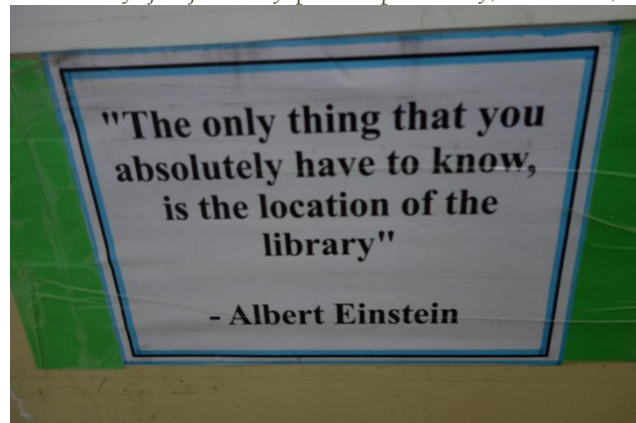
By and large, I feel Gandhi was one of the most misunderstood human beings ever to have walked the planet. Truly conscious, awakened, light-bearing, Love-being, connected-to-Source-energy-people will never be understood by the masses; it takes centuries, if not millinea, for a genius to be unraveled, if ever then.

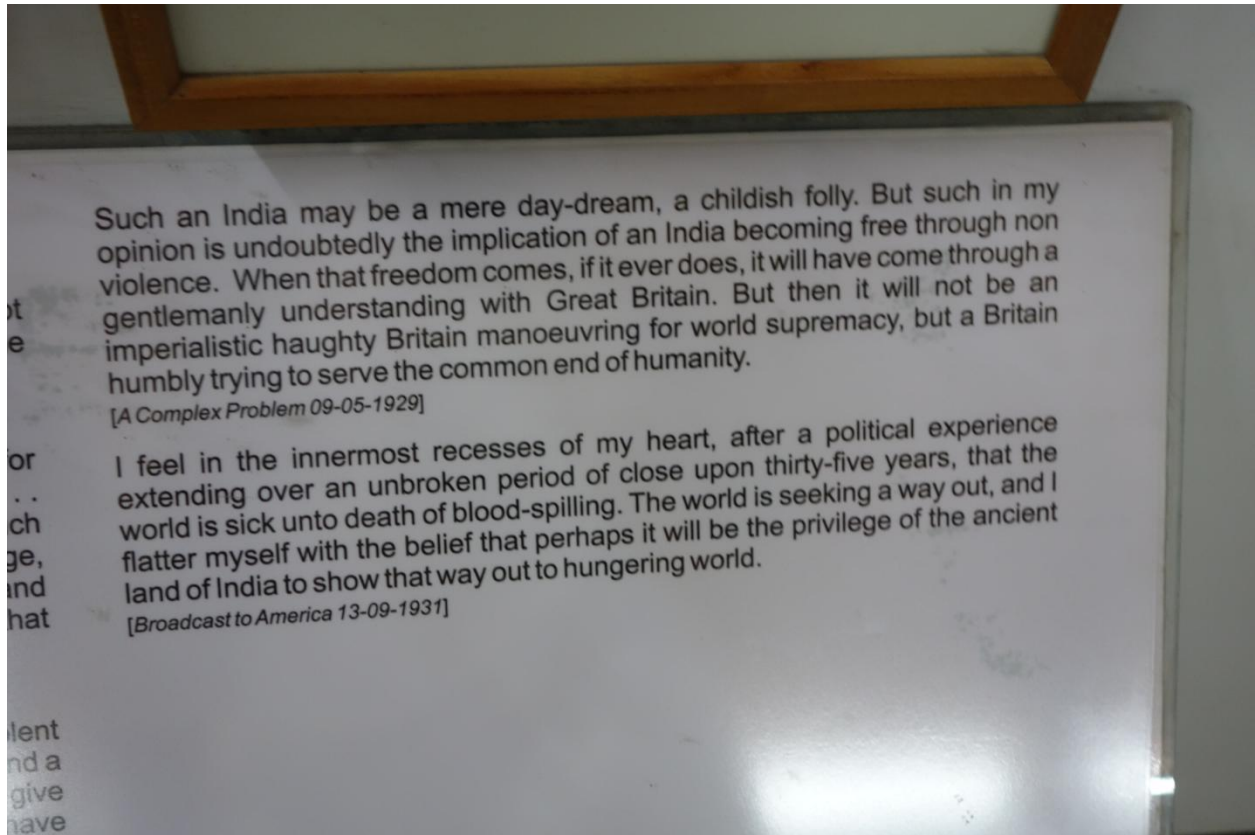
I do not identify with the Mahatma. I don't relate to any *mahatma*; I identify with the Gandhi who was human, who doubted himself, who wrote and spent time in solitude in a jail cell, who was silent on Mondays and who probably felt himself very much alone very much of the time; he was so thankful to Kasturba for being his lifelong ally. That is the Gandhi I relate to – not the saint, "the Great One", the Mahatma that the world knows. I am connected to the humanness of his being. To

be truly connected to the Divine, one must be truly human. I feel the same about Mother Teresa; I relate to her in Kolkata, India, sweating in the intensely burning heat of West Bengal, with more work than she knew what to do with, more people to help than she could ever begin to manage, and doubting herself and whether she had made the most of this life, or if she was helping, in the end, at all. A human being cannot be called a saint; within himself he will always feel doubt – and this is his very greatness. Within our humanness, our ability to find peace within the Truth of ourselves, lies our humanity and our ability to Love others. This is greatness. Saints do not exist. People connected to the metaphysical realm – the cosmos greater than just planet Earth, who honor themselves and therefore cannot help but Love humanity, henceforth they want to serve it with their entire being – this is greatness. These people are called “saints”: misnamed human beings, misunderstood by the masses who call them this in the first place.

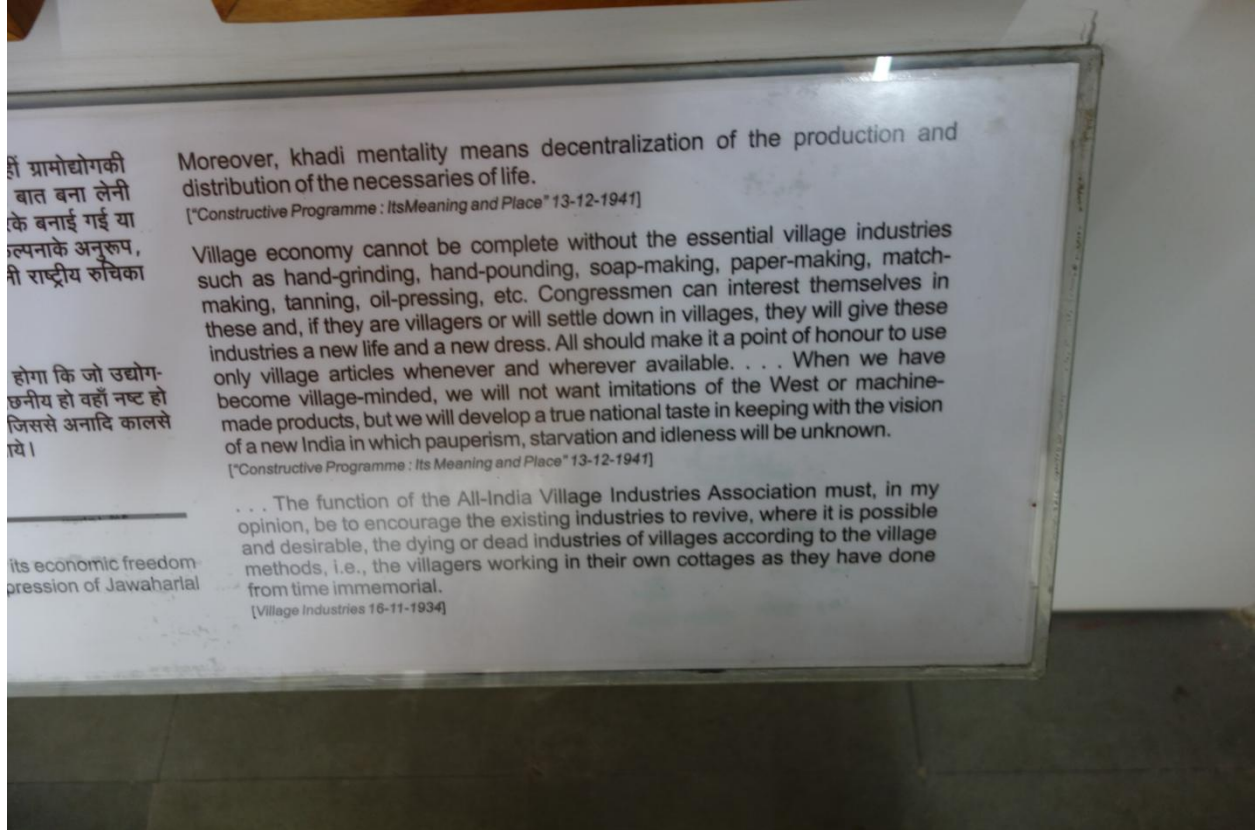


Photos courtesy of Gujarat Vidyapith Campus Library, Ahmedabad, India





Photos (above and below) courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India



There are certain activities which are meant only for women. Prohibition and boycott of foreign cloth are such activities; which if you do not take up, will never be accomplished. In 1921 I compelled men to take up these tasks and they did so out of fear, but how long could it last?... I would not have had to do so had I entrusted the work to women.

[Speech at Gujarati Women's Conference, Dandi 13-04-1930]

On bended knees I asked for bread and I have received stone instead. . . . In spite of the forest of books containing rules and regulations, the only law the nation knows is the will of the British administrators, the only public peace the nation knows is the peace of a public prison. India is one vast prison house.

[Begging the Question 12-03-1930]

Let me, moreover, make one thing clear. Either we shall win the goal for which we are marching or die in the attempt to win it. There can be no turning back for us hereafter. We will keep on our fight till swaraj is established in India. This will be our last fight.

[Speech at Prayer Meeting, Sabarmati Ashram 11-03-1930]

People have conferred on me the title of salt thief as a substitute for Mahatma. I like it. But it is no easy thing to be a salt thief, while it is easy to be a Mahatma. ... You may call me a salt thief but only when we take possession of the salt-beds of Dharasana.

[Speech at Chharwada 26-04-1930]

Photos (above and below) courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India

17 सितम्बर 1924

कोहाट में हिन्दु-मुस्लिम दंगों के प्रायश्चित और प्रार्थना के लिए 21 दिन के उपवास।

26 दिसम्बर 1924

बेलगाँव में भारतीय राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस के 39वें अधिवेशन में अध्यक्षी भाषण।

8 February 1922

Decision to suspend Satyagraha due to violence in Chauri Chaura.

12 February 1922

Commenced 5 day fast as penance for Chauri Chaura incident.

10 March 1922

Arrested on charges of sedition for articles published in *Young India*, and taken to Sabarmati Jail.

18 March 1922

Trial at Circuit House in Ahmedabad. Sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment by Judge Broomfield.

21 March 1922

Shifted to Yeravda Jail in Poona. In jail till 5 February 1924. Wrote *Satyagraha in South Africa* while in jail.

17 September 1924

Commenced 21-day fast as penance and prayer following Hindu-Muslim riots in Kohat.

26 December 1924

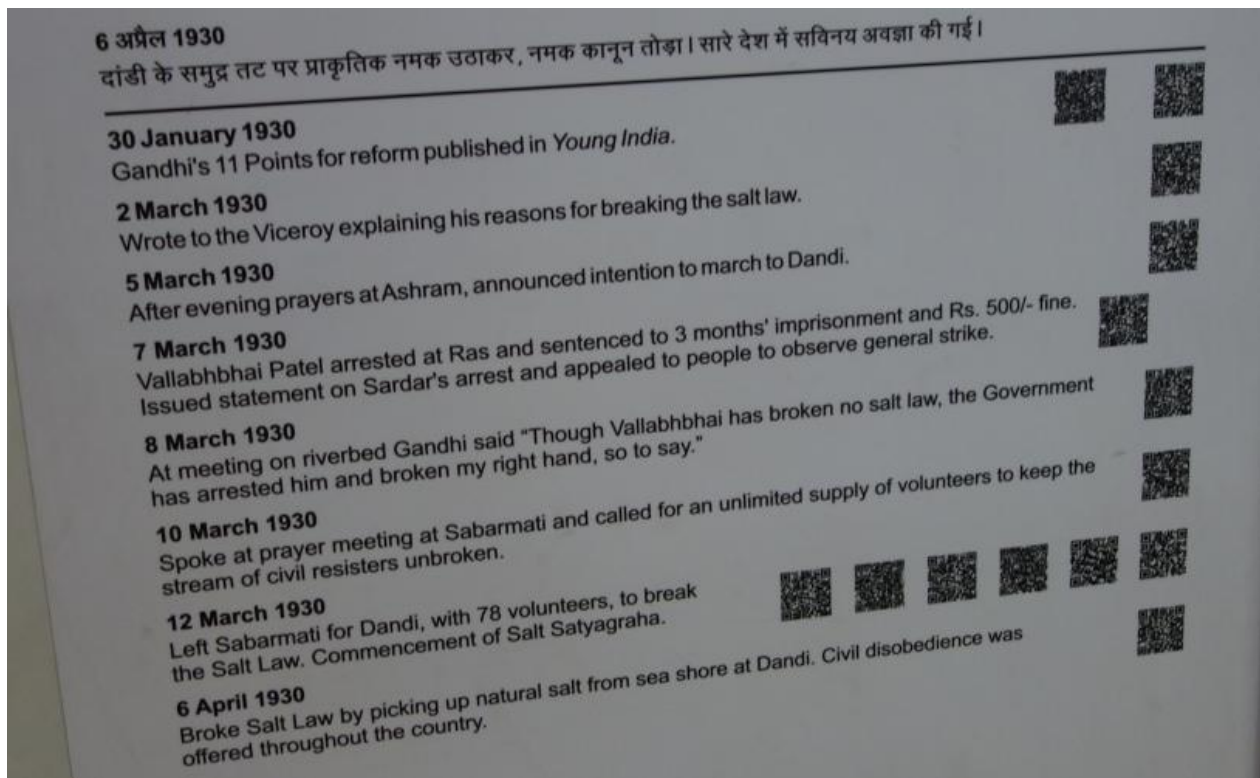
Presidential address at 39th session of Indian National Congress in Belgaum.



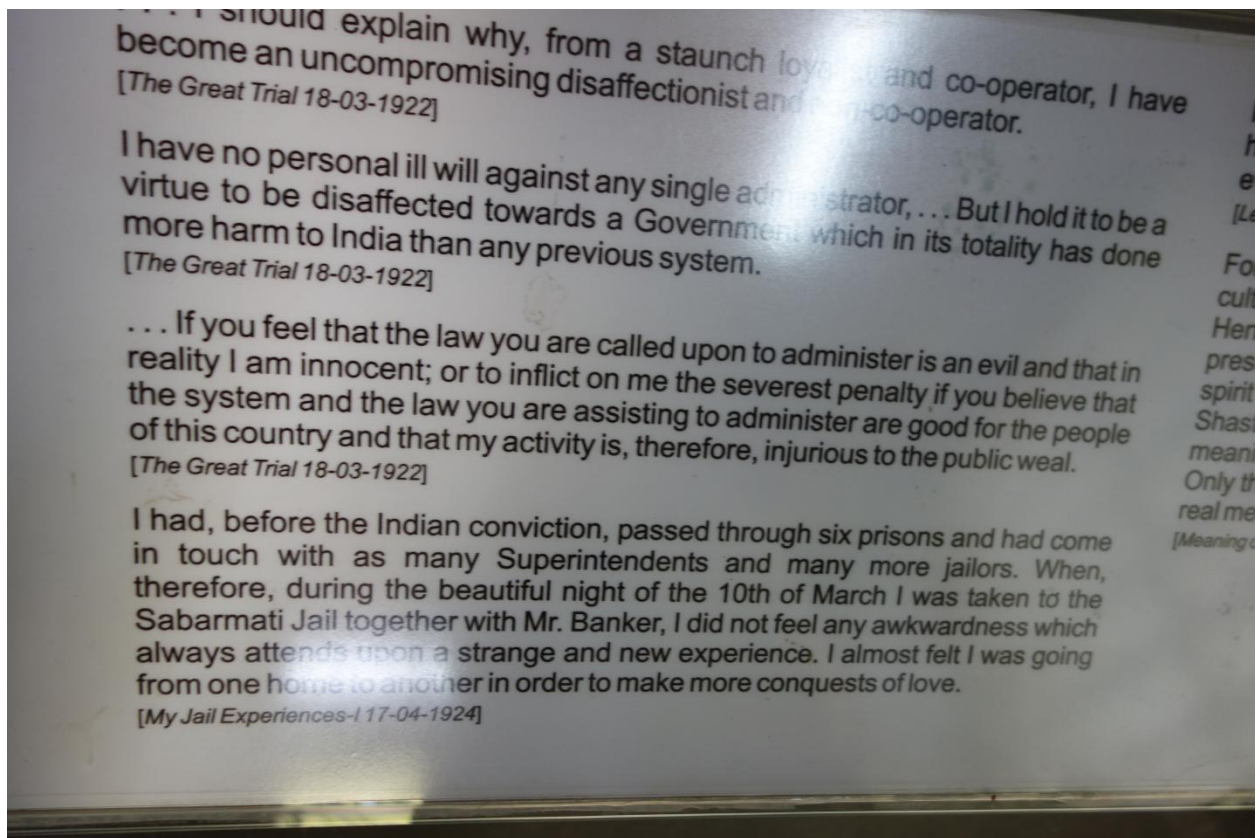
Sabarmati Ashram is a free museum, which means Radiance and I have visited it more times than I could count. The people working there know me on a first-name basis. ;) Radi Loves the gardens with the peacocks (her favorite bird and the national bird of India) and often says to me, whenever we are in Ahmedabad: “Mom! The Gandhi ashram *again*?! You’re obsessed with Gandhi! Can’t we ever just sit around doing nothing all day? Aren’t you getting tired of the Gandhi museum? We have been there so many times! I have spent half my childhood there!” The way I deal with this: ice cream on the riverfront along Sabarmati River while we walk to/from the ashram from Gujarat Vidyapith.







Photos (above and below) courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India



गुजराता आवृत्त जनवरा 1910 म प्राप्त हुइ, आर अगजा आवृत्त इण्डियन हामरुल क शाषक स प्राप्त हुइ माच 1910 म जा 1क गांधीजी ने कैलेनबैक से लिखवाया था।

24 मार्च 1910

बम्बई के सरकारी गज़ट में विज्ञप्ति निकली कि हिन्द स्वराज्य देशद्रोह की भावना फैलानेवाली सामग्री होने के कारण जप्त हुई।

10 January 1909

Kasturba, seriously ill for 3 months, operated upon by Dr. Nanji, in Durban. Gandhi attended on her.

25 February 1909

Sentenced to 3 months jail.

3 March 1909

Transferred to Pretoria Jail. Kept in solitary confinement.

10 July 1909

Reached London as part of the Natal Indian deputation to plead for Natal Indians interests under the Union Bill.

1 October 1909

Wrote to Tolstoy regarding passive resistance movement in Transvaal and Tolstoy's *Letter to a Hindoo*. Tolstoy wrote back immediately.

13-22 November 1909

Wrote *Hind Swaraj* in Gujarati on board s. s. *Kildonan Castle*. Used both right and left hand to write. The Gujarati edition of *Hind Swaraj* published in January 1910. The English version, dictated by Gandhi to Kallenbach, published in March 1910, titled *Indian Home Rule*.

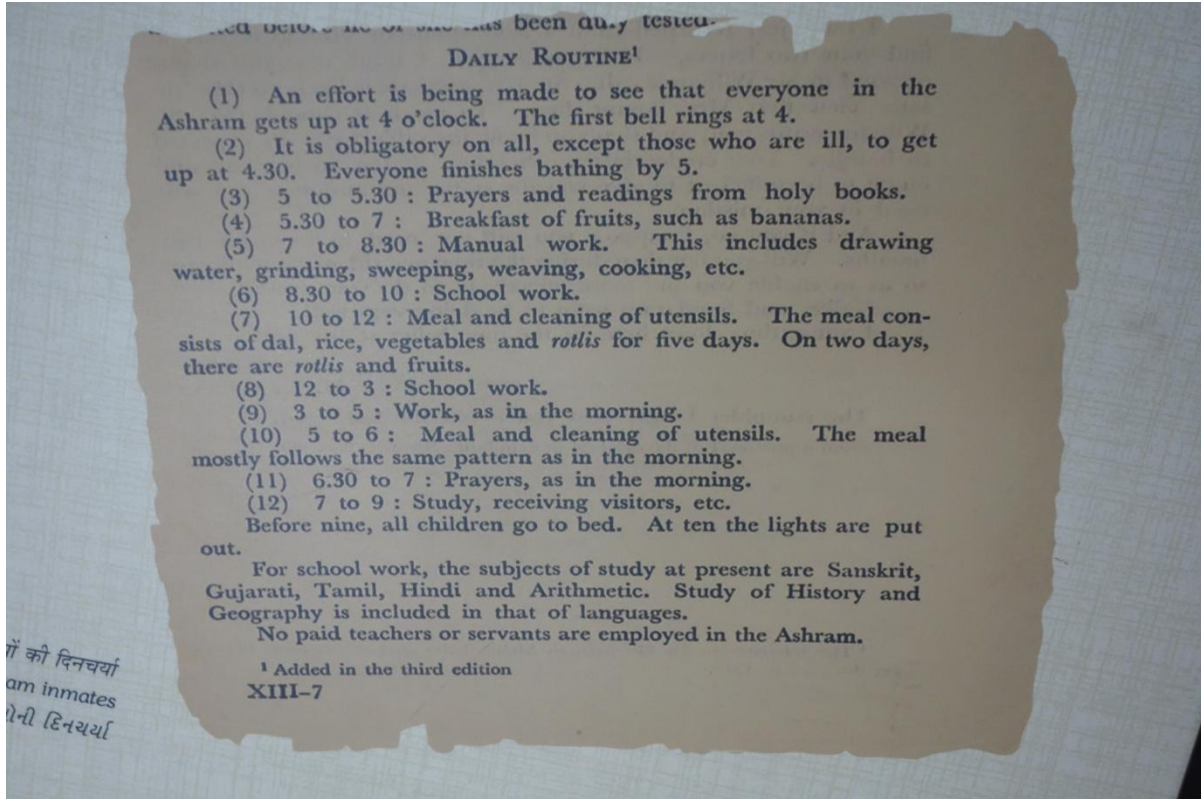


24 March 1910

Bombay Government Gazette notified that *Hind Swaraj* had been forfeited as it "contained matter declared to be seditious".

Photo courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India

Below: Gandhi's Ashram Routine at Sabarmati Ashram



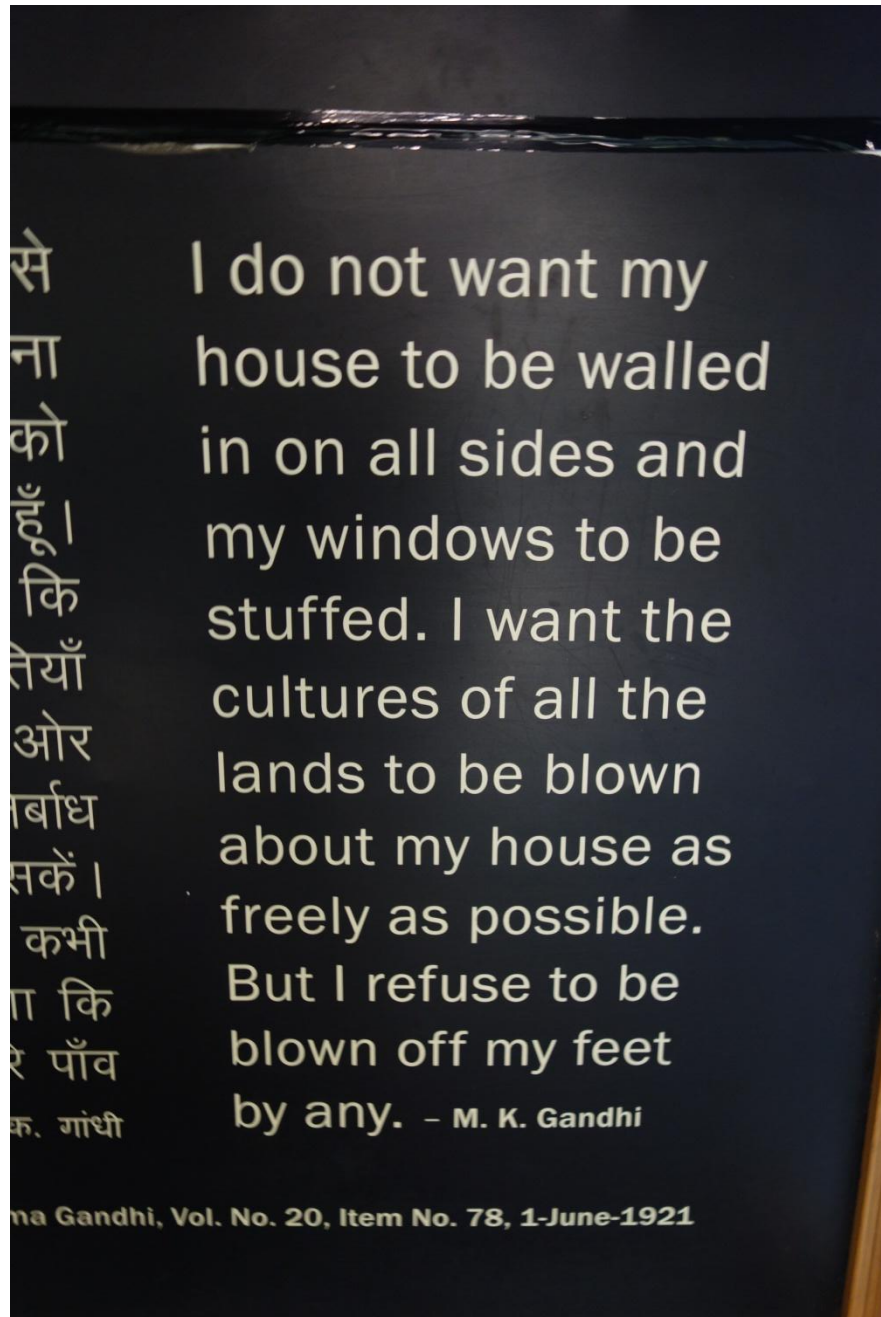
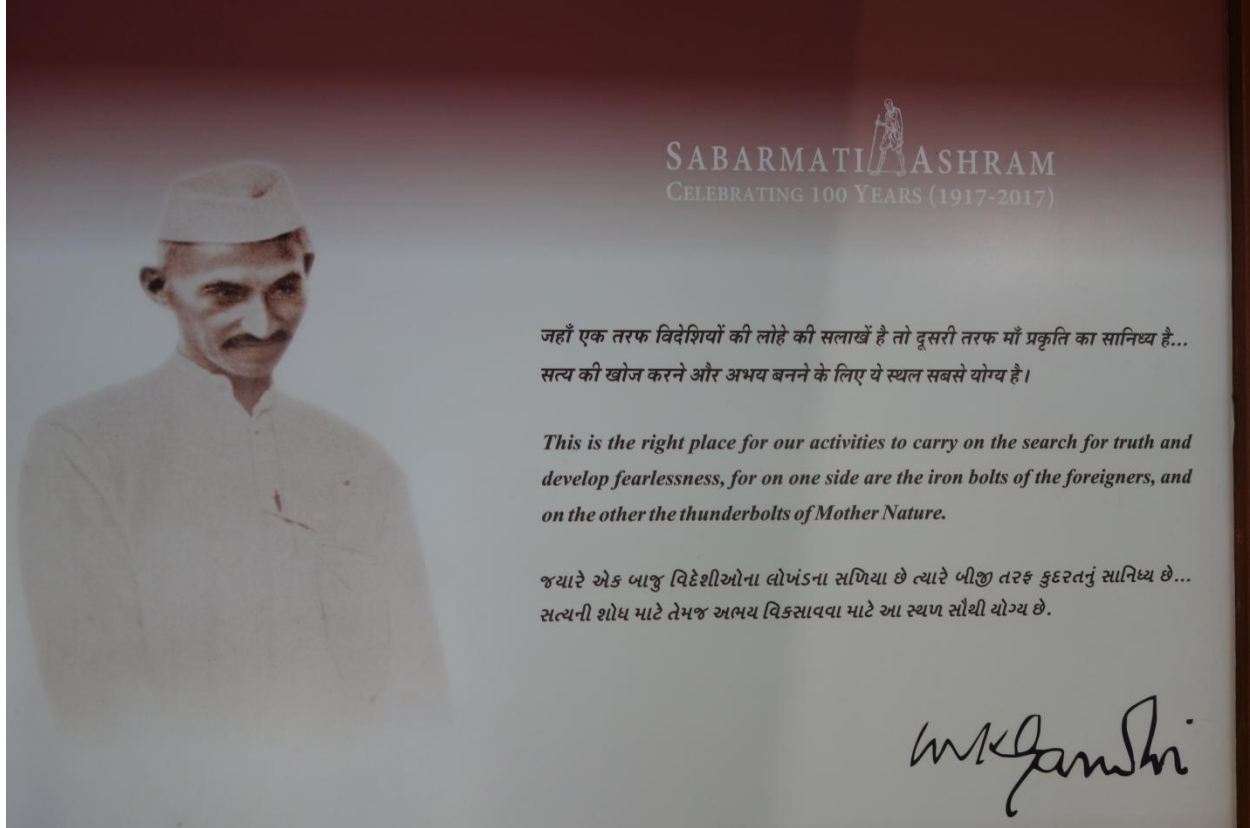
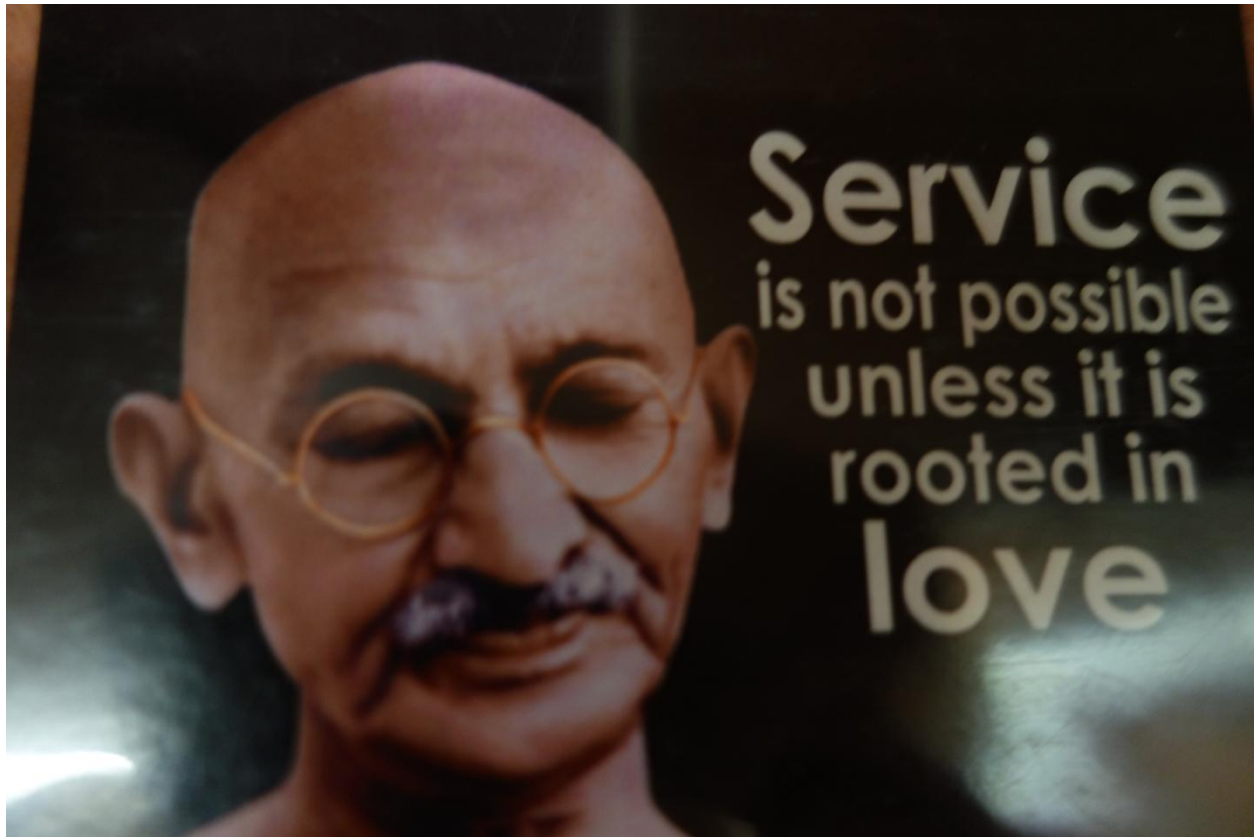


Photo courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India

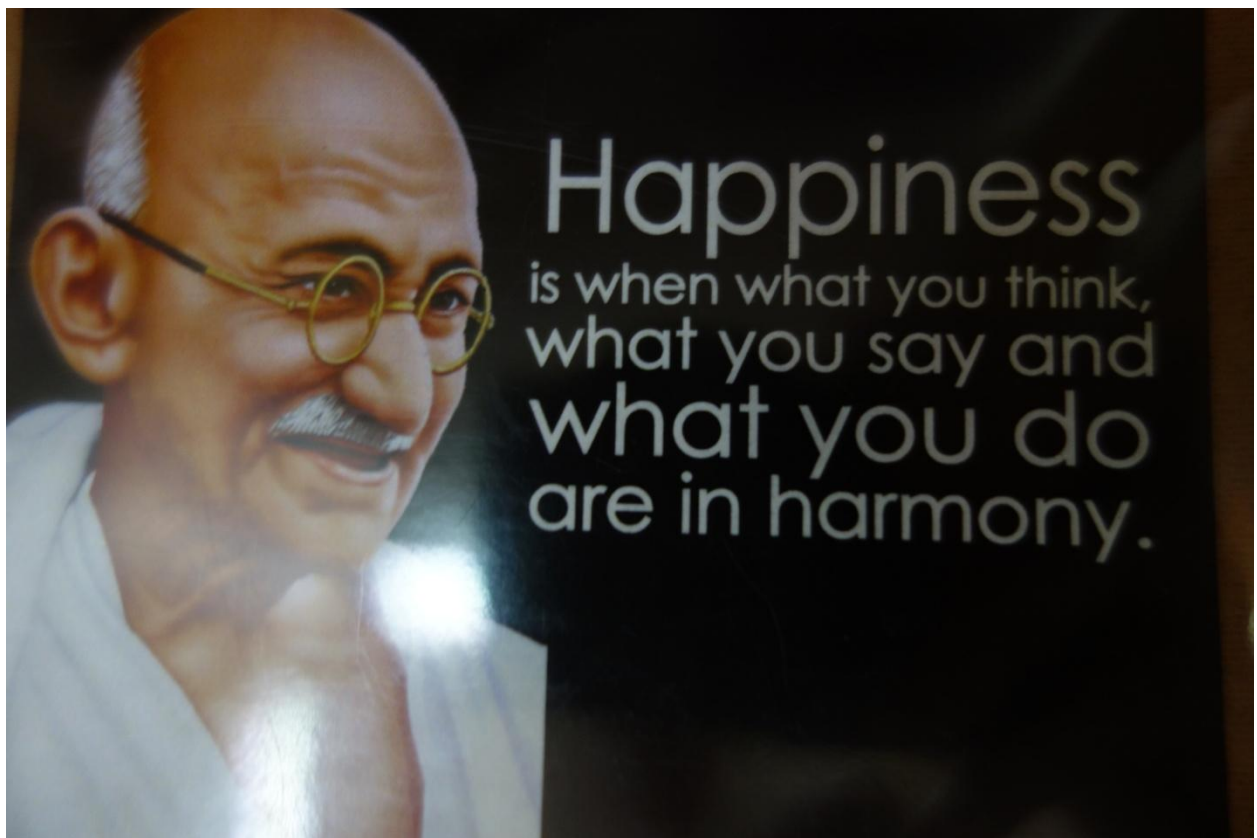


Photos (above and below) courtesy of Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, India
 Below: Gandhi and Kasturbai's home at Sabarmati Ashram





Service
is not possible
unless it is
rooted in
love



Happiness
is when what you think,
what you say and
what you do
are in harmony.

Gujarat Vidyapith: International Conference on Transformation of Rural Awareness

Prof. Nimisha Shukla
Head
Department of Rural Economics,
Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad-09.

30 September 2023

Dear Heather Corinne Cumming,

Greetings from the Gujarat Vidyapith, a deemed to be University founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920.

It is with great pleasure that Department of Rural Economics, Gujarat Vidyapith with collaboration of Gandhi Research Foundation (GRF), Jalgaon, Maharashtra is going to organise an International Seminar.

I extend this formal invitation to you to participate as a Delegates/Chief Guest/Expert/Speaker at the upcoming seminar titled as **An Alternative Paradigm for Contemporary Rural Livelihood Issues**. The event is scheduled to take place from **11th January to 13th January 2024** at Department of Rural Economics, Gujarat Vidyapith, located in Ahmedabad-380009, Gujarat (India).

The event is going to be a productive academic gathering of experts, scholars, and professionals from around the world, dedicated to the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and experiences in the field of experiments/experiences regarding **alternatives to resolve contemporary issues in rural livelihood**.

We believe that your expertise and insight would greatly enrich the seminar and contribute to its success.

As a speaker/expert/presenter, you would have the opportunity to address a diverse and engaged audience, share your expertise, and get engaged in meaningful discussions with fellow participants. Your contribution to the seminar would be a valuable addition, and we are confident that your involvement will enhance the overall quality of the event.

In addition to your presentation, we would be delighted to facilitate your accommodation arrangements during your stay in Gujarat Vidyapith. Our team will work closely with you to ensure your needs and preferences are met, making your experience as seamless and comfortable as possible.

To confirm your participation and discuss further details, including the topic and format of your presentation, as well as any logistical considerations, please contact us at your earliest convenience. You can reach our organizing committee.

We sincerely hope that you will accept our invitation to be a part of them seminar. Thank you for considering our invitation, and we look forward to your positive response. We eagerly await your confirmation and the opportunity to welcome you to Gujarat Vidyapith, for the event.

Sincerely, Prof. Nimisha Shukla

**Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi Sponsored
International Seminar**

**on
Alternative Paradigm for Sustainable Rural Transformation**

Day-1 (11th January 2024)

Day-1 (11th January 2024)			
Time	Venue	Details	Person
8:00 to 9:15	Mayur	Breakfast (Special case on the Spot Registration)	Dr. Hashmukh Desai
9:15 to 10:50	(Inauguration ceremony)		
9:15 to 9:30	Dimond Jubilee hall	Prayer	Students
9:30 to 9:45		Welcome address by Vice Chancellor, Gujarat Vidyapith	Prof. Bharat Joshi Vice chancellor (I/C), Gujarat Vidyapith.
9:45 to 10:00		Overall perspective of the seminar	Prof. Sudarshan Iyengar Formal Vice Chancellor, Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad
10:00 to 10:30 10:30 to 10:45		Inauguration address	Guest of Honor: Chancellor Gujarat Vidyapith & Governor of Gujarat state Chief Guest: Prof. Geeta Dharampal
10:45 to 10:50		Vote of Thanks	Prof. Nimisha Shukla Seminar Convener (HoD Dept. of Economics, Gujarat Vidyapith)
10:45 to 11:00 Tea Break (Venue: Dimond jubilee)			

Plenary discussion on Sustainable Rural Livelihood - (I) (11:00 AM to 2:15 PM) on (Each panelist with 20 minutes of presentation following by 20 minutes of discussion at the end of panel discussion)			
Venue	Time	Panelist	Will Speak on
Dimond jubilee	11:00 to 11:15	Panel Introduction	Dr. Nasheman Bandoorkwala
	11:15 to 11:35	Prof. Devendra Sharma (Acceptance awaited)	Issues and Challenges toward the agriculture sector in developing economies
	11:35 to 12:50	Dr. Anamika Dey CEO (Gujarat Grass route Innovation Augmentations Network-:GIAN-Foundation)	The role of Government to promote appropriate technology and local wisdom
	12:50 to 1:10	Prof. Mirai Chatterjee	Emerging demand and mitigation of rural services: challenges and solutions
	1:10 to 1:30	Prof. M.P Mathai	"Sarvodaya as an alternative paradigm for Rural Transformation"
	1:30 to 1:50	Dr. Nisha Pandey (Director, GIDR, Ahmedabad)	Progress of SDGs in various developing countries.
	1:50 to 2:05	Questioning & Discussion	Respective Person
2:05 to 3:00 Lunch Break (Venue: Mayur Garden)			

We arrived in Ahmedabad, off the train from Mumbai, where we had flown in from Lusaka, then Nairobi, on less than three hours of sleep, to this conference at Gujarat Vidyapith midday on January 11, 2024. Talk about hitting the ground running! And our whole trip to India has been this way; with little to no rest, just trying to make as much progress for SSAAP as we can while we are here. India is such a resource to us, and we want to make the most of it!

Parallel session: (A) 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM		
With key note address following by selected five papers in each parallel session		
Venue	Sub them of Seminar	Chair and Keynote by
Hall-I (Dimond jubilee Hall)	1. Rural Development and SDGs	Dr. Krishna Chudasma Registrar (I/C) & Associate Professor, M.S.Uni.
Hall-II (M.D Sankul Upasana hall)	2. Agriculture and Allied sectors/activities	Dr. Atman Shah (Faculty, St. Xaviers' Uni, Ahmedabad)
Hall-III (M.D Sankul Seminar Hall)	3. Rural industries and technology	Dr. Himani Joshi (Faculty PDEU, Gandhinagar)
Hall-IV (TRTI-Seminar hall)	4. Economic Services like Health, Education, Internet, banking and finance etc.	Dr. Heena Sidhu Faculty Department of Economics, Gujarat Uni.
Hall-V (Auditorium)	5. Rural Infrastructure	Dr. Sanjay Pardesi Associate Professor Economics Dept., Gujarat University, Ahmedabad.
Tea Break -4:30 PM to 4:45 PM		

Parallel session: (B) 4:45 PM to 5:45 PM		
Selected Ten papers presentation in each parallel session		
Venue	Parallel session on Sub them of Seminar	Chair Person
Hall-I (Hirak Mohotsaw Hall)	1. Rural Development and SDGs	Dr. Kishor Bhanusali Faculty & Director of Research, Karnavati Uni., Ahmedabad.
Hall-II (M.D Sankul Upasana hall)	2. Agriculture and Allied sectors/activities	Dr. Vijay Jarivawala Faculty SP. Uni., V. Vnagar, Anand.
Hall-III (M.D Sankul Seminar Hall)	3. Rural industries and Technology	Dr. Samir Mahajan Faculty Nirma University
Hall-IV (TRTI-Seminar hall)	4. Economic Services like Health, Education, Internet, banking and finance etc.	Dr. Vachaspati Shukla Faculty (SPIESR, Ahmedabad)
Hall-V (Auditorium)	5. Rural Infrastructure	Dr. Gurpreet sing Arora (St. Kabir University)
Tea Break -5:45 PM to 6:00 PM		

Time	Details
6:00 to 7:30	Visit Kocharab Ashram (Fondued by Mahatma Gandhi)
7:30 to 9:30	Dinner at Kocharab Asharam Performance of "Voice of Voiceless communities"

Day-2 (12th January 2024)

Day-2 (12 th January 2024)			
Time	Venue	Details	Person
8:00 to 9:15	Mayur Garden	Break Fast	Dr. Hashmukh Desai
9:15 to 10:15	Visits Heritage sites of Gujarat Vidyapith. Different Locations	Pranjivan Bhavan (Founded by Gandhiji) Visit of Museum	Dr. Manjula Dabhi and Dr.Nasheman Bandukwala

Panel discussion- (II) on Sustainable Rural Livelihood (10:20 AM to 12:45 PM)			
(Each panelist with 20Minutes of presentation following by 20 minutes of discussion at the end of panel discussion)			
Venue	Time	Panelist	Will Speak on
Dimond jubilee Hall	10:20 to 10:40	Prof. Binoy Acharya Member Secretary UNNATI	Social Inclusion and Empowerment
	10:40 to 11:00	Dr.Niti Meheta Director: SPIESR, Ahmedabad	Issues and Challenges toward the Rural Economic Transformation
	11:00 to 11:20	Prof. Rasanandan Panda MICA, Ahmedabad.	Labour issues for transforming rural economy
	11:20 to 11:40	Prof. Kishore Joshi Head, Department of Economics, MKSB University, Bhavnagar.	Revisiting higher education and its growth land scape for rural transformation
	11:40 to 12:00	Prof. N. Lalitha Formal Director, GIDR, Ahmedabad.	Medicinal Plants: Linking Farm Produce to final products
	12:00 to 12:20	Prof. R.Parthsarthy National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, Uttara Khand	Experience of Economic Unbalancing in Developing Countries
	12:20 to 12:45	Respective Person	Questioning & Discussion
Mayur Garden	12:45 to 2:30	Lunch Break	

Parallel session: (C) 2:30 PM to 4:00 PM		
Selected Ten papers presentation in each parallel session		
Venue	Parallel session on Sub them of Seminar	Chair Person
Hall-I (Dimond jubilee Hall)	1. Rural Development and SDGs	Dr. Yogesh Vanshiya (Faculty, VNSGU, Surat.
Hall-II (M.D Sankul Upasana hall)	2.Agriculture and Allied sectors/activities	Dr. Gavrang Rami (HoD, VNSGU, Surat.)
Hall-III (M.D Sankul Seminar Hall)	3. Rural industries and technology	Dr. Sonal Bhatt (Faculty S.P.Uni, V.V Nagar,Anand.)
Hall-IV (TRTI-Seminar hall)	4. Economic Services like Health, Education, Internet, banking and finance etc.	Dr. Kinjal Aahir (HoD S.P.Uni, V.V nagar,Anand.)

Hall-V (Auditorium)	5. Rural Infrastructure	Dr. Satyajeet Deshpandey (Faculty Central University of Gujarta)
4:00 PM to 4:15 PM Tea Break		

Please see my presentation on SSAAP bolded in **RED** below!

Panel discussion –(III) on Sustainable Rural livelihood: Practitioner Approaches (EXPERIMENTS) 4:15 PM to 6:15 PM		
Venue	Person with Subject	Panel Coordinator
Dimond Jubilee Hall)	1. Neelima Khetan 2. Story of “Sampurna Kranti”: Sustainable life style Presented by Dr.Amrendra Pandey 3. Experiments of local wisdoms by SRUSTI foundation: Rural product marketing Ramesh Patel 4. Rural Issues and Solutions by Heather C. Cumming Executive Director, S.S.A.A.P. Simwatachela Sustainable Agricultural and Arts Program Rural Zambia and Rural Sierra Leone 5. Nilam Khoba	Prof: Vidyut Joshi Formal Vice chancellor, Bhavnagar University.
6:15 PM to 6:30 PM Tea Break		

Time	Details
6:30 to 7:30	Visit Sabarmati Ashram
7:30 to 9:30	Dinner with Cultural Progrmme at Pranjivan Bhavan

Day-3 (13th January 2024)

Day-3 (13 th January 2024)		
Time	Details	Person
8:00 to 9:15	Break Fast	

Parallel session (D) by Sub them (9:30 AM to 11:15 AM)		
Venue	Details	Chair Person
Hall-I (Dimond Jubilee Hall)	1. Rural Development and SDGs	Dr.Subrata Dutta (Faculty, SPIESR, Ahmedabad)
Hall-II (M.D Sankul Upasana hall)	2.Agriculture and Allied sectors/activities	Dr.Pinky Desai HoD Economics, St. Xaviers' Uni, Ahmedabad)
Hall-III (M.D Sankul Seminar Hall)	3. Rural industries and technology	Dr. Rudra Narayan Mishra (Faculty, GIDR, Ahmedabad)
Hall-IV (TRTI-Seminar hall)	4. Economic Services like Health, Education, Internet, banking and finance etc.	Dr. Zarna Pathak (Faculty, GIDR, Ahmedabad)
Hall-V (Auditorium)	5. Rural Infrastructure	Dr. Gagan Sahu, Director CSS, Surat
11:15 to 11:30	Tea Break	

Venue	Details	Person
11:30 to 12:30	Summary session and Feed back	Dr. Prem anand Mishra
12:30 to 1:45	Valedictory Session Speech by Neelimaji Kheta	Awaiting confirmation
1:45 to 2:00	Vote of Thanks and National Anthem	
02:00 to 3:30	Lunch Break at Mayur Garden	



Heather presenting on SSAAP on January 12, 2024.

Working with International Students' Course, Gujarat Vidyapith, January 13-30, 2024



Perhaps one of the greatest honors of my life was the privilege of working with the International Students' Course at Gujarat Vidyapith in January 2024. Pictured above: Commencement Day, January 24, 2024. Represented through the 2023-2024 students are the following nations: Nepal, Mauritius, Spain, Portugal, Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico, France, Germany, U.S.A., Russia, India, Afghanistan, Israel, and counting Radiance and I: Zambia and Sierra Leone. The Department Head for the Ahimsa (*Peace Studies*) Department, a mentor and a friend, works so hard every year to make this course an integral part of Gujarat Vidyapith. I have told him that if Gandhi were alive today, he would be elated with this course. Gandhi, being an international person who was ahead of his time (in those days, overseas travel was done by ships) and had lived abroad in both England and South Africa, attributed much of the foundation for his belief system in the gift of travel. It enabled him to have intimacy on many levels with people of many creeds, races, nations, religions, economic and social classes, and an overall Love of humanity. Travel has also given me this gift.



**Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad.
Department of Gandhian Studies and
Peace Research Centre**

VISION

To spread Gandhian values among different sections of the society to build non-violent and non-exploitative society.

MISSION

1. Preparing students devoted to the Gandhian values.
2. Preparing students to serve the society through Constructive work.
3. Preparing students for Non-violent action against injustice.

Photo courtesy of Gujarat Vidyapith Ahimsa Department, Ahmedabad, India

This sign hangs proudly and boldly in the Ahimsa Department of Gujarat Vidyapith.

I never ceased in my communication with Gujarat Vidyapith from the time I left the International Students Course 2017-2018 in January 2018, and even left a few of our bags in the storage room at the Guest House there. I make myself at home wherever I go! To many people's discomfort and dismay, this has always been my tradition. When I feel at Home, I can do my best work, and then everyone benefits. This has always been my ideal.

SSAAP, as well, has an MOU (*Memorandum of Understanding*) with Gujarat Vidyapith that we formally established in January 2018, creating a conducive channel for constructive partnership to benefit both Africa and India at-large. The Head of the Ahimsa Department, Dr. Prem Mishra, knew I would be coming to Ahmedabad, India in 2024, so he insisted I come in January to help with the international students. I told him I would be there the last week of January, and he told me it would be too late, and that I must come sooner so that I could participate with the students. I did as he told me to, and when I arrived, he told me that Radiance and I would be living in the international dormitory with the female students (students separated by gender), just as we did in 2017-2018, on campus.

He gave me the responsibility of reading the students' Internal Evaluations (papers and summary of the course, as well as feedback from the course) as well as conducting their External Evaluations (open-ended questions to review their absorption of the course) on January 23, 2024. I was not prepared for such a prestigious role, and tried my best to rise to the occasion!



We were given, at Gujarat Vidyapith International Students' Female Dormitory, the room just beside the one we lived in in 2017-2018. Our old room, occupied in 2023-2024 by two French ladies, still housed the paintings Radiance had done on the walls in 2017: flags for both our African countries, and of course, peacocks! (above, left and right). Tradition has it that each year, the international students add a handprint (or a footprint) to our Family Tree (below).



Internal Evaluations, January 20-27, 2024: I wouldn't be able to express what meant more to me: being able to sit in my dorm room, set the alarm for 04:00 a.m., and read through each student's paper, being able to get to know each and every one of them through their writing, or interviewing them all through their External Evaluations on January 23, 2024. Most of their papers made me cry, they were so touching. Some students ended up writing a short autobiography about their lives, and how they came to the course, and how incessant violence has brought them to a place where only Nonviolence can heal them. Their insights, profound realisations, and discoveries led me to suggest to Dr. Mishra, Head of the Department, that perhaps he should consider compiling the students' reports into published volumes based upon intake group (the course dates, every year, are from October 2nd [Gandhi's birthday] to January 30th [Gandhi's deathday] each year), and share with Gandhian scholars the insights of international students, encouraging Indian scholars as well to see that Gandhi was for the whole world; he is not just India's. Having the ability and the opportunity to read each student's paper was both mind- and heart-opening, and filled me with a sense of deep Love for each and every one of them. Eager to speak to each student regarding his/her paper, I wrote them notes or sent them text messages on their phones, asking them for individual time that we could sit and discuss her/his paper. Unfortunately, the time ran out before I could meet with each student individually, but many of them I did get a chance to meet with personally.



My idea is that the international students' research papers should be organized into a book or a publication, with the students' permission, of course; this compilation of their ideas would be instrumental in the field of Gandhian research not only in India, but also worldwide. Their perspectives as non-academic Ph.D. holders but rather experiential wisdom-keepers after having lived on Gujarat Vidyapith's campus for four months are greatly valued, at least, in my book. They

should be honoured; their thoughts and ideas valued, this will cause international thriving of Nonviolence theory, application, and practice.



If my homeschool hasn't already taught me that education (of oneself and of others, as both parties learn simultaneously during the educational process) embodies Love, then this experience has.



External Evaluations, January 23, 2024: I was responsible for asking each student a question in front of the other students, who were split into three groups throughout the course of the day. My aim was that each student would teach the others, and so the Nature of the questions I posed were thought-provoking such that others too could learn from each other: a circular discourse, if you will.



The questions I posed were some of the following:

- *What were some of the striking differences between old Gandhi and young Gandhi? How did his age and life experience humble him, as he said in his own words, to dust?*
- *Is Gandhi part of people's world and/or realm in your nation? In what ways, if so? And if not, how could you strive to integrate his teachings/philosophies into your nation?*
- *In the Sabarmati Ashram, there is a sign that says: "From Mohandas to Mahatma", which chronicles Gandhi's life as a timeline and shows his development from childhood into the last years of his life. What is the meaning of this phrase: "From Mohandas to Mahatma", and do you feel that there were any pivotal moments in his life that he embraced in order to change himself such that he could try to change the world?*

- *How did not eating meat and his vegetarianism impact his work? What were the implications of Gandhi being born into a non-meat-eating family and stealing meat and consuming it with his 'bad' childhood friend later in his life?*
- *What were the implications of Gandhi's militant Nonviolence? On both himself, the ashramites, and the impact on his society?*
- *Were there any particular Satyagrahas (Nonviolent boycotts) that you believe stood out from the others in terms of their significance? Do you believe there was one that stood out from the others in importance? If so, why?*
- *Can human beings ever be Nonviolent? My daughter Radiance believes they cannot be, and that violence (through actions, thought, interaction with one another, even so much as a gesture or exclusivity/rejection of one another) is part of our human Nature [unfortunately]. What do you believe?*
- *Gandhi's term: "harijan", which one of his publications was called, and which literally translated means: "people of the Divine", was highly criticized by many. Why do you think that would be?*
- *Were there any vows that Gandhi took that you feel were more important than the others? What were the meaning of his vows to you? I believe that Gandhi believed that if he damaged another person, he was indirectly damaging himself. How did his vows help him to achieve his goals of never harming another person intentionally?*
- *Do you believe that Gandhi's life was something he planned, something that happened accidentally (though I don't personally believe in "accidents"), or a Divine role that he accepted before he was born onto this Earth?*
- *How did Gandhi's child marriage at age 13 affect his relationship with his wife, Kasturba?*
- *Do you believe that Gandhi thought he could have achieved all that he did in his life without his wife by his side? There are many quotes around his ashram stating that he felt that without her, his efforts would have been in vain, but do you believe he considered her to be his equal?*
- *What parts of this course will travel home with you?*
- *How did Gandhi's shyness in his childhood affect his work as an adult and then as an elder?*
- *How did Gandhi's introversion affect his work?*
- *How did the rejection that Gandhi felt by many in his life impact him? Do you believe he felt rejected? Through reading his autobiography, my interpretation was that he did, but this is my interpretation.*
- *Through your personal research, your experience, and your heart, as well as everything you have learned in this course, what do you believe were the driving forces of inspiration in Gandhi's life and work that made him such a relentless leader and Satyagrahi?*
- *What is the significance of Gandhi's charkha, or spinning wheel? Could he have done the rest of his work without it? Was it his practical tool of mediation? The blue, 24-spoke wheel, known as the Ashoka Charkha, rests in the center of the Indian flag. Was the symbol placed on the Indian flag to honor Gandhi, as a tribute to the Father of India, as he is called?*
- *The International Students' Course is intended to be an ashram setup, just as Gandhi's ashrams at Kochrab, Sabarmati, and Sevagram were. What have you learned by sharing space with other students on this course? Is your private space more important to you than the community? Is one space more important to you than the other? Which space is more powerful*

to you? Can you live without private/personal space? Can you live without community/human interactive space?

- *How do you Love someone who has caused damage to you?*
- *Do you believe Gandhi was “good at” suffering? Are some people better than others at suffering? Why?*
- *If you Love someone, do you expect that person to Love you in return? Why? Can you stop Loving someone if that person does not Love you back, or is Love a natural force that fuels itself that a human being is not powerful enough to control?*
- *Define “passion”. My definition of the word is: “the fire that feeds and fuels you”. Is all Love passion? Is passion Love? My daughter believes that passion is not the same thing as Love. I disagree with her. I believe that all Love has elements of passion in it and that it has to; because I am a passionate person by Nature, every person I Love, I Love passionately. Be it different forms of Love, as certainly the passion I have for my daughter is different than the passion I had for her father, or the passion I have for my parents is different than the passion I have for all of you and for being your teacher as well as your student in this moment. Do you believe that Love can exist without passion? Bear in mind that romantic passion is one form only; passion itself has infinite faces. For example, every water well our project has ever dug or drilled I feel passion towards. How did Gandhi’s passion give him energy to go on, despite numerous challenges and obstacles?*
- *Gandhi’s work was largely to legitimize the knowledge, potential, capabilities, and resourcefulness of the village, and to empower local people living in villages, giving them recognition in Indian society as the mightiest sect of the society itself. Why do you believe that Gandhi’s tradition of honoring the rural village, its potential, and its people, is not still practiced today in modern-day Indian society?*
- *Does pure Love, meaning unconditional Love not tainted by ego, require responsibility towards both ourselves and others? What is meant by the word “responsibility” in this context? Is there any way that we are not responsible within the framework of Love? How?*



These sorts of roundtable discussions are the way that I dialogue with my student (Radiance, my daughter!) on a daily basis. It is important to have a free-flow of teaching/learning (*horizontal*), so that we don't remain stuck in hierarachial roles (*vertical*) which are infested with violence, thus not conducive to true learning.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Prem Anand Mishra and Bindi Chauhan



Photo courtesy of Dr. Prem Anand Mishra and Bindi Chauhan



Photo courtesy of Dr. Prem Anand Mishra and Bindi Chauhan



The night of their Commencement, the students invited us to dinner with them at a Tibetan restaurant to celebrate. It was such a wonderful way to end the life-changing time we had had together. I warned them when I accepted their invitation that I would take their papers along with me to the meal, in case they wanted to talk about their Internal Evaluations. ☺ I am used to lugging school around with me wherever I go; you never know when you will have an opportunity to talk to your student, and you want to take any opportunity you can get!





Saying goodbye to the students proved to be transcendently painful, yet beautiful, and most of us cried good tears. A few of the students I planned to visit in Nepal, and hopefully Mexico, and invited all of them to our home in Zambia. It was an honor to get to spend time and learn so much from all of them in India.



SSAAP Presentation, Virtual: January 19, 2024

Sevagram Ashram Pratishtan Wardha, MS, India in association with Gandhi International, France Academic University College for Non-violence and Human Rights- AUNOHR, Lebanon, MGM University, Chh. Sambhajinagar, Aurangabad, MS, India invites you to participate in the

International Online Fellowship Program on

NONVIOLENCE & PEACE - II (IFPNP - II)

Google Meet joining info
Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/zrq-hana-aad> Or
Dial: (US) +1 628-888-1710, PIN: 370 978 277
More phone numbers: <https://tel.meet/zrq-hana-aad?pin=7938805361784>

International Dialogue on

SECURING SUSTAINABLE WATER SOURCES AND GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AFRICA

On January 19, 2024 at 4 pm IST



Keynote Address :

Ms. Heather C. Cumming
Executive Director and Founder
S.S.A.A.P. Simwatachela Sustainable Agricultural and Arts Program
Zambia and Sierra Leone



Welcome:
Dr. Siby K Joseph
Director, IFPNP,
Sevagram Ashram Pratishtan

Moderator :
Prof. Prem Anand Mishra
Dean, Faculty of Gandhian
Studies, Gujarat Vidyapith

Dialogue with
Participants
and Fellows

Concluding Remark:
Prof D John Chelladurai
Dean, Interdisciplinary Studies
and HOD Gandhian Studies,
MGM University

This presentation was organized by the Head of the Ahimsa Department, Dr. Prem Mishra, and its recorded link offered for your viewing purposes generously by Dr. John Chelladurai. I am quite thankful to Dr. Chelladurai for that! The Fellows Program at Sevagram Ashram (Gandhi's final ashram and home up until his death) is a successful program involving students from all over the world to meet and dialogue about Nonviolent solutions to real issues in our world.

Please feel free to watch the recorded presentation:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/16szAw9rcMsII2NumJzn18fq_k6WtaUni/view?usp=sharing

or

https://drive.google.com/file/d/16szAw9rcMsII2NumJzn18fq_k6WtaUni/view?usp=drive_link

SSAAP Presentation to Economics Students,

Gujarat Vidyapith: January 24, 2024



I was asked to present to the Economics Department of Gujarat Vidyapith about my work in Africa the morning of the Commencement Day for the International Students.

I Love presenting to groups about my work. I have not always been someone who enjoyed public speaking; this skill has come over time, and because of my work, whereby in Africa I might call a meeting in the village and a few hundred people end up showing up for the gathering... and I have to use *ciTonga*, not even English! After the presentation, Radiance said to me: “Mom, those students really liked your presentation! You did such a good job, and they were really happy, and asked great questions. How do you do it? How did you get so good at presenting?”

“Do you know what I do? I assess the group that is in front of me. Children are the easiest to present to, because they have a sense of humor. Teenagers and young adults are even more fun, and students too, because you can ask them questions, and tell them stories, and most times: they have a sense of humor. The hardest groups to present to are the people who are too stiff to laugh, or are bored, or playing on their phones the whole times. Try presenting to an audience that doesn’t care, and you won’t get very far. Groups of people who are naturally interested are easy to talk to, like the students today. They were intelligent, funny, asked great questions, and interested. Presenting is just assessing your audience. That’s all. And if they know you are having fun presenting, they relax, too.”



India Republic Day: January 26, 2024: Gujarat Institute of Development Research



Photo courtesy of Gujarat Institute of Development Research, Ahmedabad, India

Radiance and I were invited to an event at the Gujarat Institute of Development Research on India Republic Day; the Director of the Gujarat Institute of Development Research is a friend of mine, and asked me if I wanted to present a short speech about my project in Africa.





The Director of the Gujarat Institute of Development Research, Dr. Nisha Pandey, is a friend to me and someone I respect deeply; her work is impressive and she is interested to work in having a research relationship with SSAAP.

My speech on India Republic Day was very short; however, I have been using a longer framework for some of the public speaking engagements I have had here in India, talking to people and giving speeches regarding water and food, speaking along these lines:

The water crisis on planet Earth affects only those human beings who drink water. It also concerns those who drink juice, tea, coffee, soda pop, wine, or beer. Additionally, those who bathe, wear clean clothes, clean their home or surrounding area, cook, swim, or eat should be concerned. Everyone else need not burden themselves with overwhelming, heavy, burdensome thoughts of the weight of water on planet Earth and the gravity of its existence in our lives, or that 60% of our bodies alone are water itself; humanity, in all of our resource-wasting and over-populating, has reached a point that now we can no longer afford not to care, and have no other option than to commit ourselves to thinking about the weight of water; because we cannot go backwards, we must change our ways of being in moving forward, with consideration of how we can move forward with the spirit of Mother Earth in our veins rather than considering our own individual welfares.

*

The food issue on planet Earth affects only those who eat. Everyone else can afford not to think, energize, care, or act towards positive change regarding this issue. As most of our food grown worldwide is being grown with chemicals rather than through materials which put nutrients back into the crop itself as well as the sacred soil of Mother Earth, this issue affects only the tribes, clans, communities, and nations of people on this planet who eat. The United States of America wastes 40% of our food; it is thrown in landfills. This is a statistic given to us by the United States Department of Agriculture. In the U.S.A., we can help this situation by visiting local food banks and consuming food that, now unsellable on the shelves of the grocery stores due to strict regulations on sellable food, will be taken to either the soup kitchens or the local jail or the prison: the last stop before its plunge into the landfill. Food bank food in the United States, meant for indigents, soup kitchens, homeless people and prisoners, when consumed by the masses, will decrease this 40% wasted food statistic.

The blunt Truth is that we cannot afford, materially or spiritually, to keep wasting our lifeblood: food, and the new buzz word is "hunger". We who have wasted now will become hungry later. Sustainable hunger, in my experience, is one of the most painful physical conditions a human being can experience,

and affects the physical, emotional, mental, psychological, and metaphysical realms of her/his innermost being.

*

It is becoming more and more difficult for me to speak softly; the lion within me is roaring.

Some things should not be put politely, nor should they be, even if they could be. The time to wake up is now. The time to wake up was yesterday, but it seems that all of humanity has slept in. So, better late than never, and now is the time to wake up.

I am of the belief system that intention is everything. If we aim to hurt with our words, this is an act of violence. If we aim to speak Truth with our words, and that Truth is rooted in Love, then the reactions of others is not our responsibility. I will share about myself: I know that in hurting others, I crucify myself exponentially; therefore, I aim only to give a voice to many of the voiceless beings on the planet: local people in villages in Africa that don't use technology and are purified as a result, birds, butterflies, animals, trees, rivers, streams, seas, and the ocean Herself.

I have been criticized heavily for putting my message too harshly, but my tongue is Mother Earth's. I feel Her rage; I feel her pain. All She has given us, and we have given nothing back: not even acknowledgment of Her. We breathe clean air without thanking the trees; we eat food grown from Her precious soil without thanking local people in the village who grew the same food with their bare hands, or the engineer wizards who designed the *John Deere* tractors to farm in parts of the world that have modernized agricultural equipment. We eat fruits without regard for their tree; we eat vegetables without regard for their seed. We kill animals because they taste good, but not because our bodies need them; rather, because we don't want to give up our pleasure, or our comfort. If anything, research has shown that eating meat is more hazardous to the human body than it is medicinal, healthy, or nutritious.

We are cautioned not to shoot the messenger, but my role as a shot messenger has a certain charm to it. I am able to separate myself from my message; I realize that people's reaction to what I say has more to do with them than it has to do with me. It doesn't have to do with me at all; I am simply a messenger. I have lived in the villages in Africa. I know the wasteless lifestyle that exists there. In 2024, it is still possible to live without electricity and running water and a Smartphone, and not only to be happy, but also to live an existence in harmony with Mother Earth. The people of rural Africa have taught me everything I know, and for this, I am deeply indebted to them, and in the end, would stop at nothing to do whatever I can to help them, be it clean drinking water or agricultural assistance, I will do whatever it takes.

I have been accused of being so passionate that it overwhelms people, or that people do not know how to interpret me because I am so passionate. But what I can do about this is exactly what I will do about: realize that people misunderstand me, recognize that my freedom comes with a heavy tax which is the misinterpretation from others, and use my passion to fuel my fire; an activist who is not passionate is a hollow shell who looks good only on paper because s/he doesn't offend anyone. The strength of an activist lies within his/her essential message. And passion itself takes great bravery, because passion is always a risk. If you follow it, you never know where it will lead you.

Visit to Navajivan Publishing House: January 27, 2024 / SSAAP Nonviolence Libraries in Sierra Leone and Zambia



Photo courtesy of Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, India

SSAAP has had an ongoing relationship with Navajivan Publishing House since I was a student at Gujarat Vidyapith in 2017, and since books from the publishing house were donated to SSAAP in 2019.



It wouldn't be a visit to Navajivan Publishing House without our traditional cheesy photo outside in the lawn next to Gandhi's statue. 😊

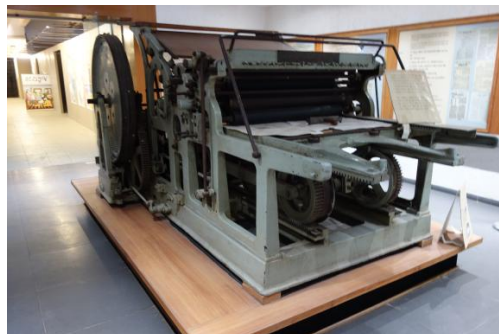


Photo courtesy of Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, India

I have always been so impressed with Navajivan Publishing House. It is both a publishing house as well: a museum. Radiance and I have visited Navajivan frequently during our time in Ahmedabad.

Navajivan publishes all of Gandhi's works (his speeches, letters to friends during his time, articles, and books), as well as other materials from third parties relating to Nonviolence and Gandhian principles. Also on display in the museum are two publications of Gandhi's printed articles, compiled into many volumes: *Harijan* (weekly magazine founded by Gandhi from 1933 to 1955, excepting during the *Quit India [Bharat Chodo]* Movement in 1942 which was a response to Gandhi's national call for Satyagraha) and *Young India* (weekly magazine published by Gandhi from 1919 to 1931).



Photos (above left, above right) courtesy of Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, India



Photo courtesy of Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, India

I was fortunate enough to have a meeting with an incredible man named Soham Patel on January 27, 2024 when we visited the publishing house. Navajivan is represented by Trustees as well, such as Kapil Raval, who helped me the first time I had visited the Publishing House. Kapil Raval is a Trustee for Navajivan Publishing House.



Not only did Soham Patel hear me out on my request for books for our Nonviolence Library in rural Port Loko Sierra Leone, as well as my idea to begin a new Nonviolence Library in the small town of Livingstone, Zambia, but he was also exceedingly kind and gave me over an hour and a half of his time!



Soham offered brilliant suggestions as to how to organize the library, and which topics and sections should be present in any functional Nonviolence Library. He also offered titles and suggested various publications that would be vital resources for our Nonviolence Library, as well he promised to save books to donate for the library when he came across them. There were some specific books he had earmarked in his mind that he wanted for our Nonviolence Library and said he would work to find them to donate to the library.



My original idea for SSAAP's partnership was that all the books be donated from Navajivan Printing Press/Publishing House (the only condition being that they are printed in English, versus Gujarati or Hindi) that were unsellable: books missing a page, or printed backwards, or with the ink shorting on some of the pages. I did not want their sellable content, just materials that they would not be able to sell and were going to throw away. Reusing other people's/company's/establishment's trash is my idea of recycling. I offered to carry the books in our luggage back to Africa so that postal costs would be covered within my air tickets to/from India and back to Africa. Moreover, I know how much the Nonviolence Libraries will mean to both the Sierra Leoneans and the Zambians and it is my long-term vision/goal/dream/mission to offer courses in Nonviolence to local students *for free*, have the courses be accredited for a degree certificate with the Ministry of Education, and ask students of Nonviolence in Africa and internationally to come teach *for free*, though SSAAP could assist them with their air tickets, vaccines, etc. to come visit us. As a tourist visa to Zambia is now *free* (!), entry to Zambia should be easy for all to access.



We are in the process of purchasing land in Livingstone, Zambia (small town which hosts one of the seven Wonders of the World: *Victoria Falls*), which will be a small plot that we will build our Nonviolence Library on. The plot we are purchasing had a house on it that was burned down.



We are also looking forward to hiring artisans to paint for our Nonviolence Libraries, in both Zambia and Sierra Leone. We want to feature the talent of artisans on the walls of our Libraries, artisans from all over the world as well as local artisans.

On the following page is a painting of Mohandas Gandhi, painted by one of the international students from the Gujarat Vidyapith course, named Sofia Kutishcheva. She has become a dear friend to me; we have much in common, so this too is a gift to me. Please see her work on the following page, and I intend to hang her brilliant piece in the center of the Nonviolence Library in Zambia. Her ability to work with shadows, gradients of black and white, and even the veins in Gandhi's forehead (!) is astounding to me. She is a beautiful person, inside and out. We Love you, Sofia!



Photo courtesy of Sofia Kutishcheva, Moscow, The Russian Federation

SSAAP wishes to dedicate the Nonviolence Library in Zambia to its donors in Colorado, U.S.A., as well as Navajivan Publishing House in Ahmedabad, India. Navajivan Publishing House has asked instead that we dedicate the Nonviolence Library to Mohandas K. Gandhi, alternatively. We can do that! We can do anything!

Your suggestions on the Nonviolence Library in Zambia (as well as the one in Sierra Leone) are greatly cherished as well as welcomed. If you would like to participate in any way, please also let us know. Your input, energy, thought, and manifestation of pure intention means everything to us. ☺

Visit to IFFCO Fertilizer Factory; Ahmedabad, India: January 30, 2024



Photo courtesy of IFFCO Team

Our dear friend invited us to a visit to a fertilizer production plant on January 30, 2024.

We visited the IFFCO (Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative) and were pleased to learn more about their initiatives. Their objective is to develop products, services, and support systems that ensure equality, transparency, and sustainable practices. Their nonprofit initiatives include Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative, Cooperative Rural Development Trust, and IFFCO Kisan Sewa Trust, which give back to local farmers and communities. Please see their website for more information about their work: <https://www.iffco.in>.

Many of the fertilizer and agricultural companies have deep-rooted origins, originating during the Green Revolution in India: starvation was experienced in the nation, and wheat and rice farmed were farmed in response to this.

The intention of our visit to IFFCO was to learn more about organic fertilizers and to see if IFFCO would want to work in partnership with SSAAP. India is a profound resource for our work in Africa, as Indians have specialized knowledge in village programs, subsistence farming, and sustainable programs since the heart of India, like Africa, is in the village. However, India has resources, skills, training, products, knowledge, and technology not available to us in Africa; therefore, I take every opportunity (literally: *every!*) to help SSAAP while we are in India.

When I mentioned to our dear friend that I suspicion in our SSAAP villages in Africa that people's outdated farming methods are making them suffer and starve, he suggested a trip to the fertilizer plant. He is friends with the director of the unit and they welcomed us more wholeheartedly than anywhere I believe, in my entire life, I have been welcomed!

What I believe, just from my observation and through living in the remote areas of both Sierra Leone (10 years) and Zambia (20 years), is that the chemical seeds they are using every year are not good: for the Earth, for their bodies, for the environment, for the animals. In the end, there is no need to purchase seeds; one-tenth of each farmer's production from the harvest prior should be set aside as seeds for the following year's harvest. There is no need to purchase seeds, firstly. Secondly, using purchased *chemically-manufactured* seeds is just adding salt to the wound. Our agricultural techniques in rural Africa are sincerely out-of-date, and while I am old-fashioned myself and do not believe that any **new way** is by default better than any **old way**, I do believe that this issue is worth looking into further, as most of the outdated farming methods in Africa (which include hand-planting, slashing and burning the land after the harvest such that the following year the crops are grown on the same burned land which will then lack significant nutrients essential for healthy crop growth, and purchase of expensive chemical-based fertilizers) are aggravating the already desperate situation of not enough water in remote areas of Southern Province, Zambia, or too much corruption in remote areas of Sierra Leone. From my research, my experience, my observation, my heart, and my mind, I feel that with improved farming methods (nothing drastic! Change must happen slowly in Africa if it is to be sustained) such as less-toxic fertilizer applied to the roots of the crop (versus the soil; water-taking roots are 2" deep only, and what is the sustainable aspect of the crop is its root. Much water is wasted in current-day agriculture, and an excess of bio-chemical matter spoils the crop. Functional fertilizer should be applied to the roots of the crop, and the fertilizer should go into the root of the crop, not the soil surrounding it). What is necessary are: organically-based fertilizers, improved seed variety, rotation of land used each harvest (such that the slash-and-burn method of farming disappears, as it is hazardous to the soil as well the Earth), farmers' trainings that train farmers not only on sustainable agricultural practices, but also on irrigation of crops and how to apply fertilizer at the root of the crop versus scattering the fertilizer onto the soil around each crop). Simple irrigation systems using a rubber pipe that could be utilized from any of our SSAAP boreholes in Zambia and our hand-dug wells in Sierra Leone is also a resource for farmers.

Dr. Vidyut Joshi, who is a Professor at Gujarat Vidyapith, my mentor in sustainable rural agriculture, and an expert in the field of ecological, sustainable agriculture, has shared with me all his wisdom which I have just shared with you. These are his ideas, and so I want to give him credit where credit is due!

We are, as we say in Africa, behind time. We are using systems that are new to us, post-Independence, for only sixty years (give or take, depending on the African nation), versus in the West these systems have been around for decades, if not centuries. We must modernize in Africa according to our own customs, cultures, and concepts – not the West's. The West has its own customs, cultures, and concepts, which may or may not parallel Africa's. In most cases, they do not. The open access to raw, unbridled, untamed Nature that one has in Africa, alone, separates Africa from the West, as does Africa's lack of infrastructure and government. These factors are paramount in considering why Africa's development has quite a different trajectory than the West's has had.

India is an abundant resource, not only for SSAAP, but for Africa at-large. Why? Because India's heart, like Africa's, rests in the village; the village is not far from anyone's mind here. India therefore

has developed research, systems, resources, and structures for rural agriculture that are not yet in place in Africa, due to our lack of technology and organized systems in Africa. India has the capacity to promote the rural village, traditional setup in a dignified, honorable manner that is deeply lacking in Africa, whereby the village is disrespected far and wide. India has given me courage to speak up for rural Africa, and helped me through much of its resources in doing so.

Our visit to IFFCO was both informative, indulgent (we ate the best food we have ever had in India for lunch, were given nuts and biscuits to take away with us, and a bouquet of roses – each!), and introspective. It was enjoyable on every level, and left a great impression on me.



All photos above courtesy of IFFCO Team



All photos above courtesy of IFFCO Team

IFFCO makes a fertilizer called a “Nano Fertilizer” which is the liquid form of urea fertilizer, which goes directly into the leaves of the crop (versus wasted into the soil, which contaminates both the soil and animals which graze upon it). The fertilizer acts as a biodigester, which is applied using a “knapsack” sprayer (the same sprayer we use to spray our house roofs in Simwatachela, Zambia). Each bottle, 500 mLs each, costs approximately \$5-\$6 USD, and can be used on 1 acre of land. The whole bottle will last a harvest season or more, and each bottle has a 2-year expiration date. IFFCO sells the bottles in 24-bottle boxes. I am hoping to work in partnership between SSAAP and IFFCO.



All photos above and below courtesy of IFFCO Team



Meeting with Indian Father Chander and Indian Mother Suganthi, Chennai: February 1, 2024



All photos above courtesy of Murugesan Chander

We met Father Chander and Mother Suganthi in 2018 in Chennai, through The Gandhi Peace Foundation, Madras. Father Chander took the time to make this precious collage of our visit together in March 2018 (blue background) contrasted with our visit at Chennai Egmore Rail Station in February 2024 (train background) while we were in Chennai on a layover between train journeys at Chennai Central station at 5 a.m., leaving Chennai Egmore station at 9 a.m. Father Chander and Mother Suganthi came to the rail station and spoiled us rotten with gifts: books, clothing, jewelry, superglue (!), breakfast, and *penda*: Radi's favorite Indian sweets, made with milk, sugar, saffron, and cardamom. Father Chander is a Gandhian activist, like I am, and we always have such a wonderful time whenever we meet. These photos also show the growth of Radiance from the time she was eight years old (in 2018) and now, at age 14 (in 2024). And as usual, I am smiling too hard in the photos; I just cannot contain my joy and sometimes my smile looks sloppy as a result. ☺

Zambia-based social activist Heather Corinne Cumming's desire to spread Gandhi's word led her to Gujarat. Currently on a visit to the city, she is spreading the Mahatma's teachings through workshops



TAKING GANDHIAN PRINCIPLES, TEACHINGS TO AFRICA

■ MERIN JAMES

She visits India quite often to learn about the country's culture and history. But it was her trip in 2016 that changed Heather's perception about Mahatma Gandhi. She was stuck in Rajkot, Gujarat, for a couple of days with her daughter Radiance Cumming. "I knew who Mahatma Gandhi was. But I didn't know about his teachings and principles. During my stay in Rajkot, I decided to learn Gandhian philosophies and ideologies. My daughter and I toured in and around Gujarat. We visited Gandhi ashram in Porbandar and got to know about the great leader the country has ever produced," Heather starts the conversation.

Heather, who has been running a charity service organisation, Simwatachela Sustainable Agricultural and Arts Program (SSAAP), in Africa, is currently in the city to work with the Gandhian Peace Foundation. In a candid chat with *DTNext*, the social worker talks about her idea of Gandhi and how Gandhian principles are still relevant in today's world.

The essence of Gandhism is timelessness

"Gandhi doesn't belong to an era, he is an infinity. He said that his ideas are not new — 'I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could.'

I think it is important to recognise that Gandhi was not an intellectual by any means. Intellectualism and intellectualising life is like finding the easy way out of being alive. It keeps the heart as distant as possible, protecting one from feeling too much and going deeper within. Gandhi was against this. He was a man of the hands, the heart, and finally, the head. He believed in inner truth and self-realisation, with the insight that if one works with his

a four-month course at Gujarat Vidyapith in Gandhian non-violence. "I wanted not only to spread Gandhi's words through the world but specifically to Africa, where concepts of non-violence are very much needed," she explains.

Introducing children to Gandhi

During her stay in India, she noticed that Gandhian studies focus only on the academic/ intellectual sphere, giving no regard to children and their

Peace. It is one of the only child-oriented educational materials I had discovered in my quest of making Gandhi not only for adults but also for children," she explains.

Heather also believes that in this age, Gandhi's principles are more relevant and every child should be taught about them. "In India, children are taught about spirituality and religion from a very young age. Though India is the birthplace of Gandhi, there are no teachings about the great leader. It should be a part of their upbringing and shouldn't be something that they learn while at college," quips Heather.

The road ahead

"I want to start Gandhian educational programs and Gandhian libraries in Africa (Sierra Leone, Zambia and Ethiopia). I wish to give Africans a new idea about leading a better life. Sustainable love is the spirit of the work we do in Africa and the mission of our projects there. Africa is our life and everything we do everywhere else in the world always leads us back to Africa," she mentions.

What she has found during her stay in Africa is that the locals are very strong and intelligent. "They are perfect *satyagrahis* and can start a movement that will lead to a great political change. And most importantly, they can do it non-violently. But what they are lacking is information. And my mission is to guide and support them," sums up the activist.

Gandhi believed in inner truth and self-realisation, with the insight that if one works with his hands and heart first, then what will emerge from the mind will be more potently profound than the limited intellect

Heather Corinne Cumming, Social activist



Heather taking class at the KBJ Gurukulam School at Kolathur

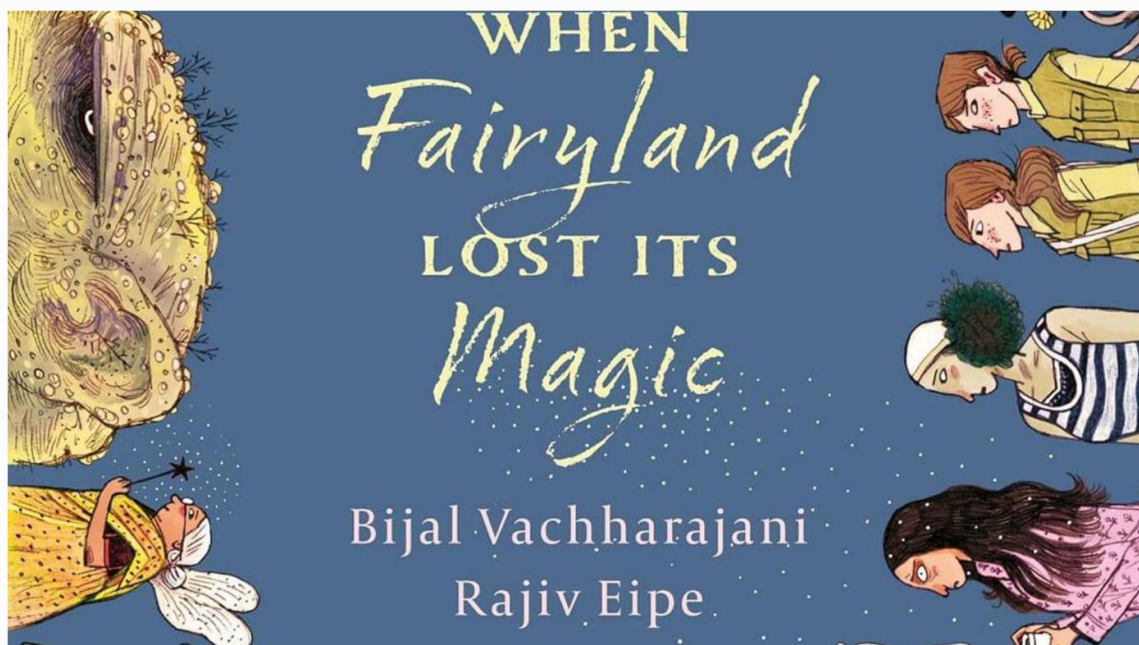
hands and heart first, then what will emerge from the mind will be more potently profound than the limited intellect. What comes from the mind will then be wisdom."

Following in Gandhi's footsteps

After getting to know about the revolutionary leader, Heather took

potential in practising Gandhian non-violence. "I was looking for a book about Gandhi for my daughter Radiance Gaia Amara Cumming. But I realised that there aren't any child-oriented education materials. And that's when I got in touch with Dr. S. Kulandaisamy, who wrote the publication: *Gandhian Way to*

Father Chander was instrumental in having this article published during my visit to Chennai in 2018.



Father Chander and I have so much in common; he did not tell me until our visit at Chennai Egmore Rail Station on February 1, 2024 that he had helped to design the India Mark II handpump that we use on our boreholes in Zambia!

According to Father Chander: *“The India Mark II handpump was designed by my first company Richardson & Cruddas (1972) Ltd. Madras, UNICEF, and MERADO (Mechanical Engineering Research And Development Organization), Madras. All three were part of a design team. We, Richardson & Cruddas (1972) Ltd. (a Government of India undertaking), were manufacturers and suppliers to all over India and African countries.*

This drawing, the black and white photo, is in the Fairytale book authored by Bijal Vachharajani and Rajiv Eipe.”

The black and white drawing depicts a woman (who looks like Rapunzel with her long hair!) taking water from a water well, no less an India Mark II handpump!

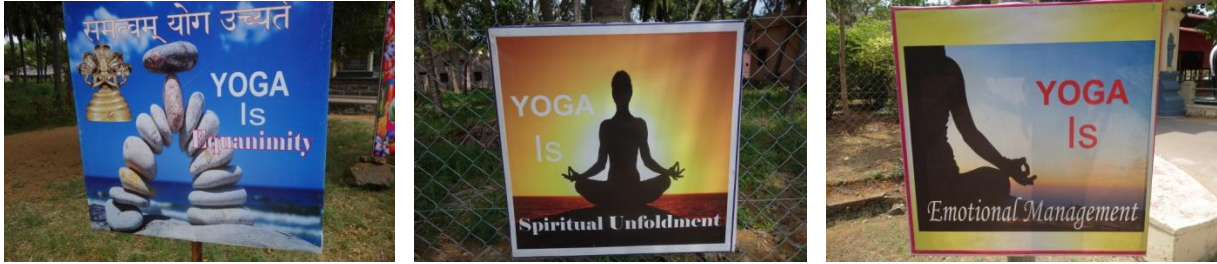
Yoga Shararara Conference, Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu: February 2-4, 2024



The greatest value in this conference was the friends that Radiance and I made from Africa.



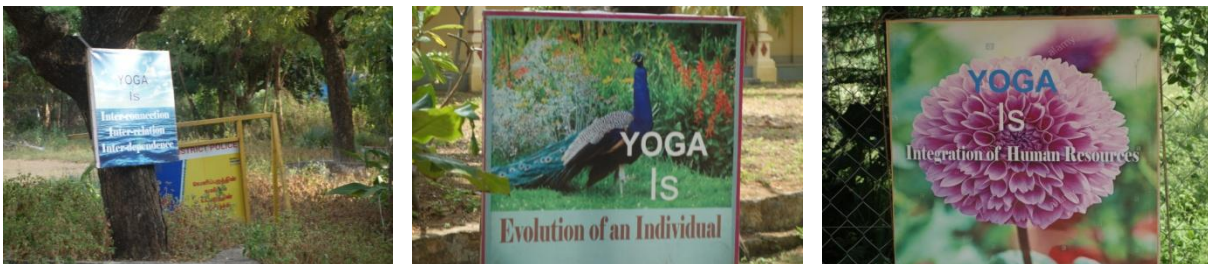
These beautiful, beLoved new friends taught me so much about Gandhi, as they are also students of Gandhian Thought, and Nonviolence. They represent, from left to right: Tanzania, Kenya, and Namibia. I have high hopes of working with them on the African Nonviolent with Conflict Resolution, Nonviolence, and Activism against much of the human rights injustices we encounter on a daily basis, therefore many Africans have an immunity to and have normalized, which should not be so. *We should never settle for less, especially as strong and mighty Africans*, says my 14-year old and proudly Sierra Leonean daughter.



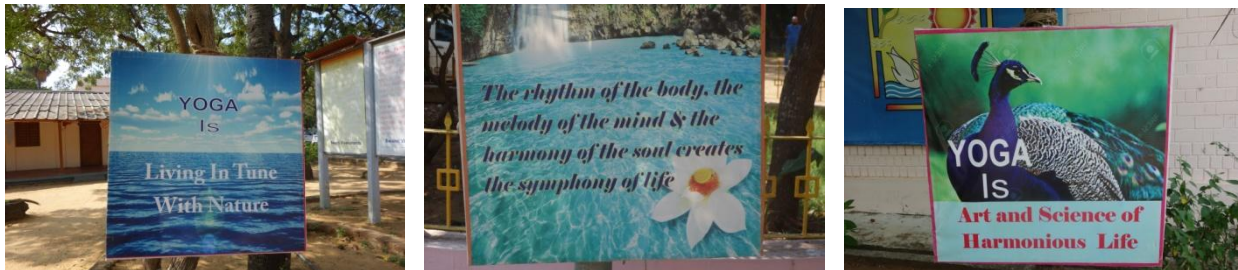
All photos above courtesy of Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, India



All photos above courtesy of Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, India



All photos above courtesy of Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, India



All photos above courtesy of Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, India



Radiance and I ate all of our meals at the Ashram outside, under this sacred *Ficus Religiosa Raavi* tree. We heard later that it has more oxygen surrounding it than in other areas of the campus.

Gandhigram Workers' House, Dindigul; Tamil Nadu: February 5-22, 2024



Photo courtesy of Gandhigram, Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, India

I feel incredibly privileged to have had the opportunity to stay at Gandhigram, in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, India. I have been communicating with the family that operates the Workers' House for the last four years, and feel incredibly grateful to be in their presence and to learn from them.

We were fortunate enough to stay in an isolated bungalow near to the mountains for the 2+ weeks we stayed at Gandhigram. I had asked for a secluded area as Radiance and I have been moving around so much and needed time to rest, process, decompress, and be alone. And what better place to be in a quiet space than with this beautiful backdrop!



Celebrating a birthday at Workers' House, Gandhigram on February 6, 2024.

And we were at Gandhigram in perfect time to attend the annual Sarvodaya Conference!



Photo courtesy of Gandhigram, Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, India

One of my mentors is from Washington state, and his name is David Albert. He put me in touch with the Gandhigram Workers' House in 2020, and he presented at the Sarvodaya Conference on February 10, 2024.

David is an outstanding presenter! He captivated the whole audience with his sense of humor and content material. David has given me permission to share his presentation, which is a Power Point Presentation, attached to this newsletter regarding his work in the DRC-Congo, and how Capitalism is killing parts of Africa whereby laws protecting human beings are not in place. All of our phones use coltan which is mined in inhumane manners throughout DRC-Congo, David explained; and the governments of these nations are not doing enough to protect their people while at the same time, we as the consumers are not, either. This is the same scenario I have explained in previous newsletters regarding the mining of bauxite in Sierra Leone. For more information on David's thought-provoking presentation, please see the Power Point Presentation. He stood on the stage and spoke out against Capitalism and cell phones/abusing technology/upgrading phones, laptops, devices in a room full of people that all have phones. I was so proud of him for speaking out and speaking up, and gave him a big hug after the presentation, telling him how much I Love him. He is one of my mentors, as I have said; he is my parents' age.

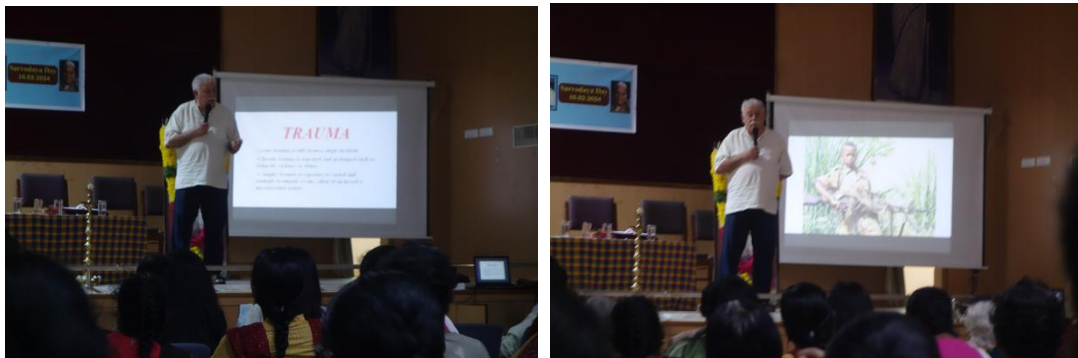
My solution(s) to this issue: (1.) Use only donated electronic devices, such as phones, laptops, tablets, etc. In this methodology, you are using other people's trash and you are recycling goods. No new devices have been produced for your sake, and you are saving Mother Earth from yet another device flung into the bowels of Her landfills. Every device (laptop, phone, etc.) for SSAAP has been used or donated to this project. (2.) Refuse to update your device. Refuse to buy into a consumer system designed to protect its own interests at the expense of violation and abuse to Mother Earth and some of the most sacred human beings who traverse Her. Refuse, refuse, refuse. This is known as Nonviolent Boycott. If all of us refused to update our devices, situations that are happening in parts of the world like DRC-Congo and Sierra Leone (mining bauxite and cobalt, slave-laboring children, men, and women in the process; 73% of global cobalt production is coming out of DRC-Congo, says Google, in 2022) could not go on, and within a month or half a year or even a year, these horrible dehumanizing practices would end. The devices are not worth what we are doing to

human life, and negative deeds done to others impact us exponentially. We are hurting ourselves when we hurt others. (3.) Refuse to work with parts of the world that do not allow their citizens to be slave labored, such as various nations in South America that have strict regulations and laws protecting their people. Until the governments of DRC-Congo and Sierra Leone decide to care about their citizens, as a global collective we must; we must also refuse to endanger fellow human beings, even if their own governments do not care about them.

The DRC-Congo situation, not unlike Sierra Leone whereby bauxite, diamonds, etc. are mined in a dehumanizing and lawless manner, is two-fold. It is a two-way street, like most conflict.

We, the consumers, are responsible to know where our products are coming from and the way that they are being created. We have the power to boycott inhumane practices that do not honor and promote local people. We have the power of our cash, and in a Capitalistic world, *money talks*. The power of Nonviolent, silent boycott is in our hands. We just have to be strong enough to choose humanity over our cell phones.

The governments of African nations have a responsibility to look after their people, so that they are not abused, exploited, enslaved, dehumanized, and degraded. If they are not willing to honor the very people who elect them into their positions of power, then we as the consumers can decide not to work with them in partnership, and refuse to mine from their nations, and refuse to allow the darkness of the Colonial Era as well the Slave Trade to repeat itself in modern-day life, and although the details are different, the abuse is the same.



And then, the following day, on February 11, 2024, David Albert awarded me with the Purple Umbrella Award. The Purple Umbrella Award, as he explained to the audience, is awarded to those who embrace and include the underprivileged, undervalued, underestimated, disempowered, destitute, and excluded people of our humanity. He told them that I work to help rural Africans to have the three essential things that no human being can live without: water, food, and Love.



Photo courtesy of Satish Kumar



Photo courtesy of Satish Kumar



Photo courtesy of Satish Kumar



Photo courtesy of Nirmal Vasudevan

The microphone was handed to me while I was crying. 😊 I gave a short, impromptu speech capturing relevant points such that I never planned my life. I did not choose this work; it chose me. I then went on to explain that I was born and raised in U.S.A., steeped in privilege. Everything I ever wanted, I had: every opportunity, every material thing, every dream. Africa taught me that the only way to keep the privilege that was handed to me on a silver platter was to give everything I have back to everyone else: every minute, every hour, every day, every week, month, year, decade, century of my existence. Whether giving back is writing a heartfelt email to a friend, helping a village with a water well in Africa, or taking time out for myself, all are acts of Love. I expressed that once I realized the only purpose in my life was in sharing it, giving it to others, and knowing that my life was never mine to begin with, I could do my work in Africa with a new resilience, with Soulforce, which is what Gandhi called “Satyagraha”. And then I said I felt shy to receive an award for doing work in this world that I Love with every fiber of my being, down to the molecules of the marrow of my bones. Everything I know, the Africans taught me: how to make a fire even with wet firewood, how to repair a hole in a bicycle tube with tree fibers (*lozi*) from the nearest tree, and how to starve not only in peace, but with style.

The man holding the purple umbrella above my head is Mr. Floribert Mubalama, CEO and Founder of Congolese Integration Network. Floribert is from DRC-Congo, but presently lives in Washington state, U.S.A.. He is an activist, an inspirational speaker, and a newfound friend. He asked me if I would come to DRC-Congo with SSAAP, and help in remote villages with water wells, and I told him I would be honored, but that I would have to wait four to five years until Radiance goes to college. 😊



Photo courtesy of Satish Kumar



Photo courtesy of Satish Kumar
Celebrating after the Award Ceremony, Gandhigram: February 11, 2024



Photo courtesy of David Albert

Visit to Muni Seva Ashram, April 2024

We had the pleasure, the honour, and the opportunity of visiting Muni Seva Ashram's Vocational Training Center in Vadodara, India most of the month of April 2024. We got to stay in the students' dormitory with all of the students!



We ate in the cafeteria with the faculty and the students; they provided mats to sit on on the floor.



Photos courtesy of Vocational Training Center, Muni Seva Ashram; Vadodara, India

The women running the students' dormitory and the kitchen treated us Lovingly like their children, and family. They made sure we ate three meals a day, and made it their mission to fatten us up!



The meals were delicious and healthy: vegetarian, offering daal (lentils), chipatis (flatbread) made with either flour or maize and flour, vegetables, rice, milk, pounded rice, and cowpeas: our favorite source of protein. Most of these products we buy in India and drag back to Africa with us to cook in the village; we buy spices and cowpeas and lentils and try to make our kitchen in Africa smell like India!

The Vocational Training Center was truly impressive; students choose a discipline after rotating around each discipline at the start of their certificate course period. Vocational training is offered for the following disciplines: welding, electrical, nursing, beauty, sewing/clothes design, and computer engineering. As well, job placement is a guarantee for them after they graduate.

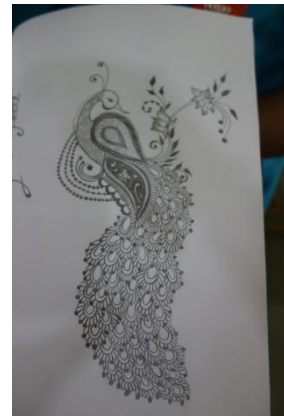


Photos courtesy of Vocational Training Center, Muni Seva Ashram; Vadodara, India



Photos courtesy of Vocational Training Center, Muni Seva Ashram; Vadodara, India

The Beauty School students were also incredible artists. They designed henna (*mehendi*) tattoos (impermanent) during their course.



Photos courtesy of Vocational Training Center, Muni Seva Ashram; Vadodara, India



Photos courtesy of Vocational Training Center, Muni Seva Ashram; Vadodara, India

The Electrician Program is very impressive (above), just as the Nursing Program (below) is.



Photos courtesy of Vocational Training Center, Muni Seva Ashram; Vadodara, India

One thing I appreciate so much about India is their culture of sitting on the floor (above left). Eating, learning, so many activities are floor-sitting activities; I first discovered this when Radiance and I attended Gujarat Vidyapith in 2017. We sat on the floor to learn, and the desks were designed this way: for students sitting on the floor to learn. It was explained to me that Gandhi believed that one could learn better sitting on the floor, as s/he would be closer to the Earth that way (versus higher up from the ground) and that there was a direct connection between the energy of the Earth and our ability to absorb and store information while we are trying to learn. I have found that once one is in the habit of sitting on the floor most of the time, it becomes difficult to sit in chairs or higher up from the ground. I was so happy to see a *neti pot* was part of the nursing curriculum (above right)! Neti pots are used in *neti kriya*: cleansing techniques which are an aspect of Hatha yoga intended to cleanse (part of the *shatkarmas* or breathing techniques); its primary purposes including cleansing of the sinuses, washing the sinus cavity, and purification of the nasal passages. Seen as alternative medicine in the States (though Neti pots can be found at *Walgreens*), they are an absolute part of everyday life in India. It always fascinates me how much of our educational systems are based upon culture – everywhere in the world.



Photos courtesy of Vocational Training Center, Muni Seva Ashram; Vadodara, India

The students also participate in daily yoga (above) and prayer (below).



Photos courtesy of Vocational Training Center, Muni Seva Ashram; Vadodara, India

Presentation Paragraph for Parul University, April 2024

Synopsis of Presentation by Heather C. Cumming, Parul University:

April 2024

I have lived and worked in Africa (Sierra Leone, South Sudan/Ethiopia, Zambia) since 2004, in the remote villages with no running water or electricity. My work has been designed around servicing people with drinking water (via water wells) and simple solutions to agricultural issues, which are innate to the areas that they serve. To be effective, the implementation of a water source or an agricultural technique must be created by the local people and committed to serving the needs of the local people. The systems must be indigenous if they are to be successful and sustainable. The work I am doing is practical and straightforward, though very complex issues surround implementation of rural development projects: village politics, lawlessness, and corruption.

I wish to present a brief background on my life and my work, as well discuss solutions and initiatives for sustainable success in remote areas of Africa; development is not urbanisation of a society, as urbanisation poses a threat to planet Earth and the health of human beings, as we require Nature and access to it in order to survive: clean air, trees, and the presence of Nature in our lives. How do we develop remote areas without construction which hurts the environment, or without people from remote areas losing their humility: which is one of the most powerful traits of those living in rural areas; most have not developed arrogant attitudes and are exquisitely humble. How do we nurture, encourage, and organically enable rural communities to develop without urbanising or Westernising them, in an effort to ensure that they maintain their purity, wisdom, simplicity, and humility while also committing to basic needs that must be provided in rural villages, the most imperative being: clean water, adequate food, sanitation and sanitation education, education that suits their needs, and basic healthcare such that people do not die of common illnesses such as flu, malaria, or diarrhea?

Presentation at SPIESR, Ahmedabad, India



Seminar on

**Rural Sustainable
Water and
Agriculture in Africa,
and Working for
Sustainable Change**

APRIL 30, 2024

Time: 3:30 pm onwards
Venue: Sardar Patel Institute of Economic
and Social Research, Ahmedabad.



Guest speaker

HEATHER C. CUMMING

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER
S.S.A.A.P.
SIMWATACHELA SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL
AND ARTS PROGRAM
SIERRA LEONE & ZAMBIA



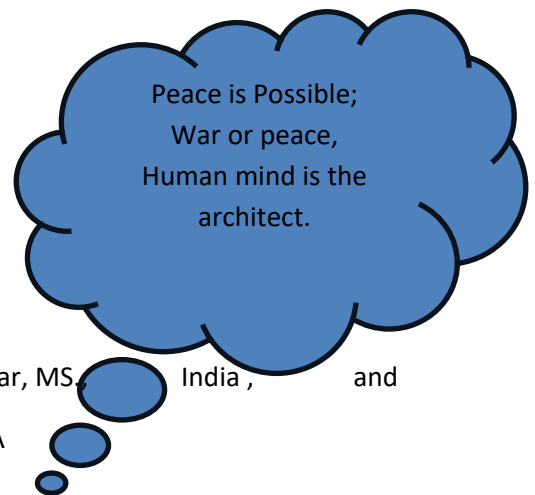
**Visit to MGM University for Peace-Building
Workshop, June 2024**

2024 Training Workshop on **Symbiotic Peace** Art of Peace Building

Peace and Life are convertible terms. A stable peace experience is a derivative of sustainable life style. This workshop would like to help the participants understand the concept of peace, methods of nurturing peace and tools for defending peace in life.

Course Summary

Name of the Training	: Symbiotic Peace
Date	: June, 2024
Duration	: Three Days
Organizer (proposed)	: MGM University
Facilitators	: D John Chelladurai, Chh.Sambhajnagar, MS, India, and Heather Cumming, Dayton, Ohio, USA
Venue (Probable)	: Mutually convenient Venue
Participants	: Those interested in individual, institutional and neighbourhood peace : 25 Participants
Methodology	: Interactive, Participatory, play-way method
Tools	: Games, Exercises, Group Discussion, PPT
Objective of the Course	: To orient the Participants with the context, conditions and constituents of Peace, through an Inclusive Peace Methodology : To generate Peace promoters in neighbourhood
Outcome	: 25 well trained Peace promoters in the neighborhood
Eligibility	: English spoken; ability to understand human mind and social dynamics; interest in group learning



Contact : Dr. D. John Chelladurai, Prof. and Head, Dept of Gandhian Studies, MGM University, Maharashtra

Course Content (General outline)

Content **1. Concept of Peace:** Introduction to Peace, Perspectives and Fundamentals; Indicators of Peace;

2. Context of Peace: To Exist / Live (purpose) in the context of Individual, Family, Society, Nation, Global state of Life; Issues and Challenges in the context of Society, Economics, Politics, Geography, Ecology, Spirituality...

3. Conditions for Peace: Basic need fulfillment (sustenance); Social / Neighbourhood relationship (Means); Values / Human Rights / Nonviolence (ethics governing the means); Creative conduct of Life/conflict (Productivity)

A. Physical Conditions: Need Fulfillment; B. Social Conditions: Neighbourhood Relations; C. Cognitive Conditions: knowledge, Consciousness Values/Human Rights; D. Ecological Conditions: Eco Consciousness, Conformity with larger life, Compatibility with Nature/Society; E. Structural Conditions: Infrastructures and Service providers

Constituents of Peace: Justice, Liberty, Equality, Opportunity, Identity, Mutuality and fraternity for / from every individual and in the performance of System and Practices of the State and Society

4. Approaches to Peace: individual / collective approaches; Political, Economic, Ecological approaches; Human Rights, Development, Struggle, Campaign, Lobby, Ethical and Inclusive Approaches; Systems, structures and culture...

5. Introduction to Values: Worth of self /other-self, Value Perspectives of relationship; Nonviolence as a way of life; non-violence as cause, effect, means and end; Passive & Dynamic NV

6. Individual and Society: Mutual indispensability, Concentric-relationship, multiple neighbourhoods

7. Social Web Social Fabric: Genetic Fabric; Biological Fabric, Cultural Fabric, Economic Fabric, Political Fabric, Ecological Fabric, Cosmic Fabric...

8. Introduction to Peace Processes

Peace Making: Confidence building, Reconciliation, Resolution, Restoration and other remedial actions...

Peace Keeping: Enhanced Consciousness, Peace Vigilance, social positioning...

Peace Building: Removal of structural negations, Trust building, positive energizer, building progressive social structures...

Peace Living : Emanating peace aspiration in everyday life activity...

Aunt Connie's Visit to Zambia, November 2023

Family, our deepest blood, can also be friends, though it is not a requirement. Friends, our deepest heart, can also be family, though it is not a requirement. Abundant are we when our family is also our dear, close, best friends. I have this intimacy with my daughter Radiance, my mother Gail, my twin/bestie Ian, my late grandmother Theis, and my aunt Connie. These family members, for better and for worse, know me to the depths, and somehow: Love me more so because of it! It is magical when we can experience the Truth of our authentic selves and others can support us in this inner and outer journey.

Aunt Connie came to Zambia from November 21-27, 2023, and we had a truly life-changing experience that I doubt Aunt Connie, Radiance, or I will ever forget. I asked her to write a short article on her experience(s) while on the trip, and she has generously contributed her account of her trip to Zambia. Thank you for this, Connie! We Love you infinitely! Thank you for braving Africa with us! It is, and never has been, easy, but “easy” doesn’t make us grow; “easy” is just a comfortable rock to sit and rest on between adventures as we hike both uphill and downhill.



Photo courtesy of Connie Shaw

I went to Zambia in November of last year for nine days, to meet up with Heather and Radiance, my first cousins once and twice removed, and bring them some things they needed, including replacements for items that had been stolen from their home in Sierra Leone. To them, I am Aunt Connie, which is just fine. Heather and I first got to know each other when she was a student at the University of Colorado in Boulder, which is where I live. When she graduated, joined the Peace Corps, and went to Zambia, I never imagined that twenty years later she would still be there! (And she probably didn't either.) To be able to go see her there, to see some of what she does and how she lives, was quite a privilege.

We met up in Livingstone, which is where Victoria Falls is located. We stayed for a couple of nights at a lodge within Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park. Mosi-oa-Tunya is the Zambian name for the falls, which are the biggest in the world, sitting on the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe (Zam and

Zim!) We took a couple of hikes to the falls, which are not at all far from the lodge, staying on the Zam side. We had a gorgeous sunset picnic from a perch across from the falls, looking down into the Zambezi River, the source of all the water. We also took a memorable hike down to the river, carefully skirting quite a few large and small monkeys who were hanging out on the trail.



Photo courtesy of Connie Shaw

The mighty Zambezi in all Her power purifies, cleanses, and heals all who immerse in Her

At the lodge, there was quite a lot of wildlife on the grounds. As we walked around, swam in the pool, and looked out the windows of our room, we were very close to zebras, impala, monkeys, and giraffes, who made their graceful appearance at different hours of the day, grazing on the lawn or nibbling on leaves. The giraffes were the most amazing—such elegant, yet enormous, creatures! I loved being right there among the beautiful wild animals.

After these initial couple of days in which I was able to recover from my jet lag, we took off for Heather and Radiance’s remote village home. A hired driver took us there, which was an all-day drive in very hot weather, much of the time over very bumpy roads. There were stops along the way to buy food, including at a colorful outdoor farmer’s market. We also stopped for a meeting with the chief who presides over the chiefdom in which their new home is located.

Our meeting with Chief Cooma was for working out details of SSAAP’s purchase of the land on which Heather and Radiance’s new home is being constructed. They have been living in it while construction is still ongoing. We negotiated with the chief and made some progress on the transaction, but there still needed to be a new site survey to proceed further. It was late and we were tired from the long day, but we managed to get at least some of what we were hoping for in the meeting.



Photo courtesy of Connie Shaw

Meeting with Chief Cooma at his Palace in Cooma Chiefdom: November 23, 2023

It was dark when we finally arrived at their home, so we unloaded the car and I soon got myself in bed for a restful sleep. My sleep schedule is early to bed and early to rise, while Radiance and Heather stay up and get up later, so my first daylight experience of where I was took place hanging out alone in their immensely quiet yard. My image of a village is a grouping of homes, but this remote village is very spread out. There are no neighbors one can see or hear, no airplane or car sounds, only birds singing. I loved spending time in the quiet, deeply peaceful, natural environment of their home.

Heather and Radiance made our meals on charcoal burning stoves in the outdoor kitchen, which has not been completed yet. We were there for Thanksgiving and had a very delicious and festive Indian homecooked meal that the two of them prepared. My main kitchen job was to peel the many tiny cloves of fresh garlic we had bought at the produce market on our way there. Not being used to cooking in this kind of kitchen, I was happy I could be of any assistance at all!

Life in a one-room thatched-roof, stone house with no running water, limited electricity (they had their solar panels, but the panels hadn't yet been installed), and outdoor amenities, was challenging at times. While it was not quite as hot as it had been in Livingstone, I was not accustomed to what was for me a lot of heat, so I stayed in the shade when I could. In the evenings it cooled off a bit, and Heather and Radiance heated up bath water, which made for a nice sponge bath in a designated area behind their storage shed. It felt very good!



Photo courtesy of Connie Shaw
SSAAP Headquarters, Cooma Chieftom

It is a lot of work to live in this way and Heather and Radiance were quite busy with preparing meals, keeping the charcoal stove going, doing cleaning tasks, washing clothes, and so on, on top of SSAAP work and Radiance's homeschool studies. They are both tireless workers and make a great team together.

There were photos of this new, as yet uncompleted home in the last newsletter, but being there and living in it let me see how beautifully constructed it is—it's a work of art. The stonework, the artful arrangement of the timbers that make up the roof, and the tight thatching are all quite sturdy and lovely.

After 5 days of village life, we were picked up on a dirt road a short distance from the house by our driver and started the long trip back to Livingstone. We had hoped to go on an excursion to look for potential well sites in the Livingstone area, but as often happened throughout this trip, arrangements fell through. So we went to a hotel in town, where for the last two days of my trip we continued to try to solve some of the problems with getting things done. There were more phone calls to Chief Cooma and a meeting with the borehole driller for SSAAP's current projects, who is quite far behind on his work.

Heather faces a lot of difficulties with SSAAP's work, and it was impressive to see her doggedly working on resolving them. She is nothing if not determined to see these projects through to completion, despite all the roadblocks in her way.



Photo courtesy of Connie Shaw



Photo courtesy of Connie Shaw

During my last couple of days we had some lovely meals in which I could try Zambian dishes like nshima, which is a ground maize preparation a bit like polenta, and bream, a freshwater fish. We visited a large craft market, where I met Shadreck, one of the artists that SSAAP buys art from to use for fundraising. What a delightful person! One of his beautiful paintings of a baobab tree was too much for me to resist, so I ordered one for myself. (Some of his work was in the last newsletter—you too can order something if you wish by just letting Heather know.)

It was enlightening to see firsthand a few of the obstacles that SSAAP must overcome in order to get projects completed—breach of contract on the part of contractors, people showing up very late or not at all for the job they’ve promised to do, and disregard for major prior agreements are just a few of the issues. That anything gets accomplished at all is quite a testament to the dogged persistence, the unwillingness to give up in the face of problem after problem, that both Heather and Radiance exhibit!

This was an incredible journey that will reverberate in me for the rest of my life.

By: Connie Lee Shaw, “Aunt Connie”: February 2024



Photo courtesy of Connie Shaw

Mosi-oa-Tunya, Zambia: i.e. Paradise on planet Earth

What India Means to SSAAP, to Africa, and to Me

Poetry~Riverbathed and Sunburned

I Love India as deeply as I Love Africa – just, differently. I don't want to be a tourist in India; I want to be a student and a researcher, maybe even a lecturer or a professor here. I want to contribute to their society with more than just the money as a tourist does. I Love India. I have always Loved this sacred Subcontinent. It is part of me, and I want to be part of it just the same.

My daughter's homeschool here is encapsulated through my chronic words to her: *"The deep poverty in India, where we have gone and what you have seen, on the overcrowded trains and the streets and everywhere we walk with our feet, juxtaposed with the abundance and wealth of India: this life I have given you – this introduction to a reality that isn't the one where you are steeped in privilege in the States – this was my gift to you. Being able to compare and contrast and assess and evaluate and come to the conclusion of humanity's oneness, this is my version of education: experiencing, and learning through the lens of yourself. As parents, all of us, we want better for our children than what we had ourselves. My version of 'better' is most people's version of a degradation. I wanted better for you than what I had for myself. And for me this is that you see the world, you see it in all its imbalances and impurities, you see it in all its tragic beauty, and you see it! Home is in your heart, so everywhere you go you will be Home. And then you can Love the world in Truth; you Love it not with the safety behind the cold bauxite of your laptop screen, or in the pages of a literary journal or a newspaper or an academic paper or an expensive popular magazine. You Love it with fearlessness; you Love it with your whole being. Then you will know how to learn, and how to live, and this is your education. This is what I have given you: as essential as breastmilk and shelter, clothing and a sense of yourself. Your education is you learning who you are, and knowing yourself: the greatest education of all – then you can serve the world in ways you never even dreamed possible. You might not appreciate this now, but later in your life – you will see this value."*





So far as I am concerned, India is one of the best places on the planet to be a Vegan or a Vegetarian. India has fresh, organic vegetables (which rot easily, and don't keep long, which is a testament to their quality), some *daal* (lentils) and cowpeas: excellent source of protein, fresh fruit, rice, and *chipatis* (flat bread).



I thought India would be a fabulous place to take my daughter to celebrate her Vegetarianism; India is one of the only parts of the world whereby it is more common to find someone who doesn't eat meat than someone who does. It is a nice, stark contrast from Africa whereby many Africans think something is *wrong* with you if you do not eat meat, and don't understand why animal cruelty is wrong. Radiance has her work carved out for her in the world!



Radiance's *Radiant Street Beast Program* initiative is three-fold: (1.) protecting street animals by taking them home, vaccinating them, feeding them, and providing them a steadfast home; (2.) "livelihood animals": abused on a daily basis in Africa by the very people who need them to survive; such animals include: camels, donkeys, horses, goats, sheep, cows, chickens, pigs, turkeys, ducks; (3.) wild animals being hunted for their skins, furs, teeth, and tusks; Radiance wants to work to teach people that an animal's life is of just as much value, if not more value, than their own. In short, she wants to be a voice for animals on planet Earth who have suffered far too long under human dominion. Her scope is much larger than pets and her interest in veterinarian medicine is to understand animals anatomically so that she can treat sick animals and/or understand their ailments. She is sickened by animal cruelty as I am human violence.

Education

I share my mother's view on education, based on a Gandhian principle: *Don't have your children go to school until they are ready. They should start learning on their own time – not be forced.*

My mother says: "*Heather, you had to live a lot before you could learn a lot*"; meaning, I was a student that needed to be prodded; school did not come naturally to me, as most of the time and in most subjects, other than poetry and literature: I was not interested. It was only in my twenties, when I studied abroad in Norwich, England at age twenty-two, and began to travel the world alone: my next great trip abroad to India, when I was twenty-three, that I began to value learning and wanted to be a lifelong student and teacher, myself. Radiance's homeschool has taught me: *Children cannot and will refuse to learn sustainably until they are ready.*



"Yes, it is right. When you don't know how to read you have to use your intelligence, what else can you do? The moment you start reading... Those three dangerous R's, when you have become capable of them you need not be intelligent; the books will take care.

Have you seen it? When a person starts typing, his handwriting is lost, then his handwriting is no longer beautiful. There is no need, the typewriter takes care. If you carry a calculator in your pocket you will forget all the mathematics, there is no need. Sooner or later there will be small computers and everyone will be carrying them. They will have all the information of an *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and then there will be no need for you to be intelligent at all; the computer will take care.

Go to the primitive people, the uneducated people, the villagers, and you will find a subtle intelligence. Yes, they are not more informed, that is true; they are not knowledgeable, that is true – but they are tremendously intelligent. Their intelligence is like a flame with no smoke around it.

The society has done something wrong to man – for certain reasons. It wants you to be slaves, it wants you to be always afraid, it wants you to be always greedy, it wants you to be always ambitious, it wants you to be always competitive. It wants you to be unloving, it wants you to be full of anger and hatred, it wants you to remain weak, imitative – carbon copies. It does not want you to become original – no. That's why your intelligence has been destroyed. Meditation is needed only to undo what the society has done. Meditation is negative: it simply negates the damage, it destroys the illness. And once the illness has gone, your well-being asserts itself of its own accord.

And in this century, this has gone too far; universal education has become a calamity. Remember, I am not against education, I am against *this* education. There is a possibility of a different kind of education, which will be helpful in sharpening your intelligence, not destroying

it; which will not burden it with unnecessary facts, which will not burden it with useless rubbish – knowledge; which will not burden it at all, but rather will help it to become more radiant, fresh, young.

This education only makes you capable of memorising; that education will make you capable of more clarity. This education destroys your inventiveness; that education will help you to become more inventive.

For example, the education that I would like in the world will not require a child to answer in an old, stereotyped way. It will not encourage the answer that is written in the books, it will not encourage repetition, parroting. It will encourage inventiveness; even if the invented answer is not as right as the copied answer can be, still it will appreciate the boy who has brought a new answer to an old problem. Certainly his answer cannot be as right as Socrates' answer. Naturally, a small boy... His answer cannot be as exact as that of Albert Einstein, naturally. But to ask that his answer should be as right as that of Albert Einstein is foolish. If he is inventive he is in the right direction: one day he will become an Albert Einstein. If he is trying to create something new, naturally he has his limitations. But just his effort in trying to create something new should be appreciated, should be praised.

Education should not be competitive; people should not be judged against each other. Competitiveness is very violent and very destructive. Somebody is not good at mathematics and you call him mediocre. He may be good at carpentry, but nobody looks at that. Somebody is not good at literature and you call him stupid – and he will be good at music, at dance.

A real education will help people to find *their* life, where they can be fully alive. If a man is born to be a carpenter then that is the right thing for him to do, there is nobody to force anything else. This world can become such a great, intelligent world if a man is allowed to be himself, helped to be himself, supported in every way to be himself, and nobody comes in and interferes – in fact, nobody manipulates the child. If he wants to become a dancer, then that is good; dancers are needed, much dance is needed in the world. If he wants to become a poet, good; much poetry is needed, there is never enough. If he wants to become a partner or a fisherman, perfectly good. If he wants to become a woodcutter, perfectly good. There is no need for him to become a president or a prime minister; in fact if fewer people become interested in those targets it will be a blessing.

Right now everything is topsy-turvy. One who wanted to become a carpenter has become a doctor, one who wanted to become a doctor has become a carpenter: everybody is in somebody else's place. Hence so much unintelligence – everybody is doing somebody else's job. Once you start seeing it, you will feel why people are behaving unintelligently.

In India we have been meditating deeply and we have found a word – *swadharma, self-nature* – that carries the greatest implication for a future world... 'Swadharme nidhanam shreyah – it is good to die in your own self-nature, following your self-nature. *Para dharmo bhayavah baha* – somebody else's nature is very dangerous. Don't become imitators. Just be yourself.'

- by Osho: *Love Makes No Shadow*, from *Tantric Transformation: Talks on the Royal Song of Saraha*

Origin of SSAAP

When I am giving presentations in U.S.A., and in India, I always talk about how SSAAP began.

After my U.S. Peace Corps service (2004-2006), I came back to the States for some months before going back overseas, this time to teach English to young monks in a monastery in Dzong Village, Lower Mustang, Nepal. Dzong Village is approximately 3,800 meters high (12,467 feet) and the whole time I lived there, I wrote letters to my family in U.S.A. I never received any letters from my family, though both my mother and my older sister swore to me they had been writing me; what I did receive were letters from our village in Simwatachela, Zambia, from a little post office in the mountains at a village nearby to Dzong Village, called Jharkot Village. The letters were asking me to come back to Simwatachela, Zambia; in 2008, the villagers sold a few of their cattle and wired me money via *Western Union* for a round-trip air ticket from Colorado, U.S.A. to Lusaka, Zambia. This is the origin of SSAAP: how it began with letters to a post office high in the Himalayan mountains, and that the local village people of Simwatachela, Zambia invited me and funded my return to their village in 2008.

I decided to take Radiance to see the post office which, in its own way, is the origin of SSAAP itself: where all the letters from Zambia were arriving. I took her to stay in Lower Mustang, Nepal from March 12 – 25, 2024.





Dzong Village, Lower Mustang, Nepal. I am trying to coordinate with the Khenpo (who resides in Nepal) and the Lama (who stays in India) to see if there is any potential for partnership between SSAAP and their village.



“I would like you to become more and more serving, but I would not like you to become servants. Servants don’t serve; servants do their duty... They have to do it; there is no beauty in it, no joy in it. So be in service, but never be a servant; that is one thing. The second thing: when you become a servant you learn habits, but service is an ongoing process. A man in service is totally different. He will choose to respond each moment. Service is beautiful, but to be a servant is not good. Service is spontaneous. You say: ‘I am most in service of love when I am most myself and not intending to service.’ When you are yourself – utterly yourself – out of that being, love arises and you serve people. And there is no feeling that you are a servant... You simply serve because you have so much to give that you have to share. You flow in your sharing, in your love, in your compassion.”

- by Osho: *I Am Enough Alone*, from [Tantric Transformation: Talks on the Royal Song of Saraha](#)



Our life in India: passport photos, Ahmedabad, January 2024



*Our life in Sierra Leone, West Africa: Melekuli Junction, Port Loko,
Sierra Leone: June 2023*



Photos, above and below, courtesy of Connie Shaw



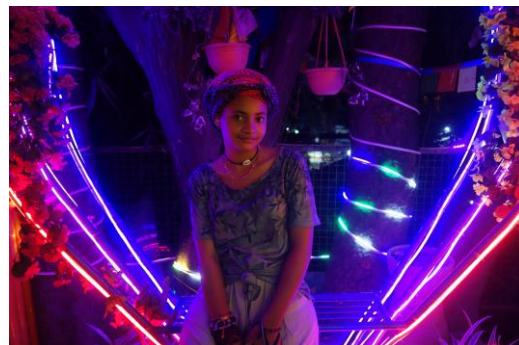
*Our life in Zambia, Southern Africa: Mosi-oa-Tunya, Livingstone,
Zambia: November 2023*

My work in India is Gandhian-based philosophy, Love-centric. I trust Gandhi. I Love Gandhi! I aim to give everyone I meet one-hundred percent of my trust; unfortunately, many people do not trust themselves either superficially or at the deep gutroot instinctive level (due to factors such as lack of consciousness, lack of inner awareness, too much conditioning and repression from the society, and too much emphasis on the intellect versus the heart), thus, they cannot handle the responsibility of holding another person's trust. Such is the reason why, when I encounter a trustworthy person – alive or dead! – I hold onto him/her with both hands and one heart. Such a person is a rare treasure, a gemstone; Gandhi is that mentor, that guide, that friend, and that ally to me.



Every interaction you have – every quarrel, every disagreement, every misunderstanding, every suffering – is not accidental, and it is a gift that in the end will lead you back to one core essential source, which is indeed the taproot of your essential being: *I would never want to be anyone but me.* This is the central theme of our lives; being “right” or “wrong” are both ephemeral and transitory; out of my “wrong” comes my lesson in becoming “right”. We are all “right” and we are all “wrong” in our own personal infinities and in multidimensional spaces, so in the end neither polarity of “right” or “wrong” can exist at all. Honesty with oneself, inner Truth, and knowing thyself are key.

And in the end, all experiences bleed and lead back to Love, inevitably. Love is our true human Nature. Anything otherwise is simply a transitory state that, eventually, will lead back to Love.





“The intelligent way is to bring intelligence into everything that you do. Walking, walk intelligently, with awareness; eating, eat intelligently, with awareness... If reverence does not arise out of Love, then intelligence is missing somewhere. Whatsoever you are doing, bring the quality of intelligence into it. Do it intelligently – that’s what meditation is: intelligence is meditation. An intelligent person will make his life in such a way that it will have a poetry of spontaneity, of love, of joy. It is your life and if you are not kind enough to yourself, who is going to be kind enough to you? Be responsible towards yourself. That is your first responsibility; everything else comes next – everything else!”

- by Osho: *Love Makes No Shadow*, from [Tantric Transformation: Talks on the Royal Song of Saraha](#)



Children are not just our future; they are also our past and our present: *the gift*. If we can honor their voices, and listen to what they have to say, their perspective will be quite unique, and progressive. They have inherited a humanity on the brink of extinction, and an Earth that has been abused since humanity's civilization came to be. They are our Teachers as much as we are theirs; their wisdom is profound. Their youth puts them in a position to listen, to absorb, and to learn without many of the limitations, biases, and conditioning that adults have. They are precious, and valuable; they are the change we wish to see in the world.



SSAAP is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit service organization registered in the state of Colorado, U.S.A., serving Zambia, Sierra Leone, and anywhere else in Africa the river of life flows and guides us. Thank you for your undying support, loyalty, and Love.