

A Few Introductory Words Dedicated to Mahatma, Joseph and the Readers

The idea for the present monograph was born in 2020 when the whole world was celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, the great Indian thinker, spiritual leader and activist. That same year, a symposium took place within the annual conference dedicated to Søren Kierkegaard and organised by the Central European Research Institute Søren Kierkegaard, Apokalipsa Cultural and Artistic Association, the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, the Institute of Monastic Studies and Contemplative Sciences, the Embassy of India in Slovenia and Her Excellency Ms Namrata S. Kumar, the Ambassador of India to the Republic of Slovenia. The successful delivery of this high-profile event led to the idea of bringing together the findings of some of the scholars whose work revolves around various segments of the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi and publishing them in a monograph, which has been eagerly anticipated and is now finally before you. The monograph sheds light on diverse aspects of Mahatma's life and work. In particular, his multifaceted confrontations, in theory and, above all, in practice, with complex dimensions of the Indian reality that were based on his concept of Truth, Religion and freedom. It also looks at his faith in the power of nonviolence, which he pursued for the common good and, through his global vision of peace, went beyond any then contemporary political agendas and thus, beyond India's struggle for independence.

The contributions to the monograph are available in Slovenian and in English and it is our hope that they will appeal to a broader public. They were written by four Slovenian and two foreign researchers. In September 2021, while the publication was written, one of the authors, Dr. Joseph Prabhu from California State University and Claremont Graduate University, a world-renowned expert on Mahatma Gandhi, a philosopher, peace activist, an insightful and inspiring conversational partner who worked tirelessly in the Gandhian spirit to make the world a better place, left us unexpectedly. With the greatest respect, it is to his memory that we dedicate every thought compiled into the present monograph, which begins with his paper "Gandhi's Religious Ethics as Touchstone". In 2005, it was published in the journal of *Studies in Indian Arts, Philosophy and Interreligious Dialogue (In Honour of Bettina Baumer)* (ed. Ernst Furlinger and Sadananda Das, New Delhi: D. K. Printworld) and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to its editor, Dr. Ernst Furlinger, from the Austrian University for Continuing Education Krems – Danube University Krems for his kind permission to republish the paper and have it translated into Slovenian.

The paper by Dr. Joseph Prabhu is followed by "Self and Its relation to the Others: Gandhian Thinking in the 21st Century", written by Dr. Prem Anand Mishra from the

Faculty of Gandhian Studies of the University Gujarat Vidyapith in Ahmedabad, the institution that was established in 1920 by Mahatma himself. The paper explores various aspects of understanding the relationship between self and the Other from a Gandhian worldview and is followed by a paper by Dr. Janez Krek from the Department of Fundamental Pedagogical Subjects, Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, titled “Gandhian *Satyagraha* as an Act”, which analyses the concept of Gandhian *satyagraha* from the perspective of the Symbolic and the Other and that of nonviolence as protest. The first section of discussions is followed by Readings and Album, i.e. Mahatma’s first-person accounts of his life, selected from his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, and photographic glimpses from various periods of his unwavering action in India and elsewhere in the world. The second section of the monograph begins with the paper “The Impact of Theosophical Society on India’s Social and Political Life and the Life and Work of Mahatma Karamchand Gandhi” by Anton Rozman from the Theosophical Society, Slovenia, which explores various impacts of theosophical thought on Mahatma. Dr. Andrej Ule, a retired professor of philosophy from the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, touches upon Gandhi’s concept of *satyagraha* from the perspective of nonviolence, Truth and radical humanity in his paper “The Spiritual Foundations of Gandhi’s Satyagraha”. The monograph concludes with a brief overview of some segments of Mahatma’s unique philosophical creed in terms of a diverse intertwinement of ideas and doctrines stemming from various traditions that he endlessly tested in the unpredictable area of the ever-changing social reality. It is summarised in the paper written by editor Dr. Nina Petek titled “Gandhi’s Philosophy as Truth Lived Experientially”.

As is the case with all the contributions to this monograph, Gandhi’s thought is foremost an experience that takes its most genuine expression beyond theory and gives it a dynamic, creative and inimitable character, while at the same time, and this is particularly remarkable, it is pervaded with the spirit of universality, immutability, timelessness and ever-lasting relevance and topicality that go beyond the borders of India. Therefore, it may be concluded that Gandhi’s assassin was no doubt mistaken when he thought he would silence Mahatma with three shots; he did manage to assassinate Gandhi as a flesh-and-blood man, but Mahatma as the irreplaceable model of humankind and humanity, still addresses the global audience and the challenges of contemporary time. He is an eternal source of inspiration. Gandhi remains very much alive in the pursuit of inner fulfilment and outer harmony, with many people in India and around the world still unwaveringly striving to put the values incarnated in Mahatma into action – values that are a guideline to a more humane world. In moments of disappointment, despair, collapse of the most fundamental values and violence in all its forms, Gandhi’s thought “in the midst of death, life persists, in the midst of untruth, truth persists, in the midst of darkness, light persists” is more and more resonant and is a constant reminder that

in a world full of diversity, life and death, peace in the midst of war, friendship and love in the midst of wrath and hatred, it is possible to find a unifying axis. This is a foundation through which Mahatma united not only inconsistencies and dichotomies in his theoretical thought and action, but also India as a whole. He is proof that harmonious Union *is* attainable, but it first requires a violent “shake-up”, a change in oneself followed by a change in everything else. However, as the Great Soul would say, in a gentle and benevolent way.

Editor
Reykjavik, 3rd April 2022