Mahatma Gandhi and World Peace
Santosh C. Verma

Our world is in turmoil. Islamic extremism is on the rise; we are witnessing ever-growing sectarian bloody killings, proliferations of nuclear technology and WMD’s are getting in the wrong hands. Greed, corruption, hunger, poverty, killer diseases, exploding world population and dwindling natural resources are troubling. It is said that over three billion people live on less than $2.00 a day. It appears that we are in the midst of the beginning of World War III. God save the world.

No one person or nation or an organization can bring peace in the world. India offers the best hope for world peace today. Our generation has to find ways how to live in peace. Gandhi did what was most suited at that time. We can take his teachings and apply to our world of today. We are living in an interdependent and interconnected world. Our world is a global village.

Mahatma Gandhi and His Life

British rule was well established in India when Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869. *Mahatma* means Great Soul. He was indeed a great soul. He was the architect of the Satyagraha movement – the firm resistance against tyranny through mass civil disobedience truly founded on *ahimsa* (total non violence). Truth (*Satya*) implies Love, and firmness (*Agraha*) implies force. When put together this describes a force that is born of truth with love or nonviolence. His nonviolence movement, the only revolution of its kind, ultimately succeeded in independence of India in 1947 from the British rule.

It will be difficult to explain in today’s world how this ordinary person was able to arouse the consciousness of millions of people to surrender themselves peacefully to beating and torture by their British rulers while simultaneously not hating their opponents or the people who were responsible for such actions – the British government. The millions of people who joined him and paralyzed the British came from all walks of life. Irrespective of religion, caste and creed, being rich or poor, every one loved him and willingly followed him for the maximum sacrifices. This was a remarkable phenomenon; it was indeed a miracle happening in the world. He was able to change the heart and will of the British Empire and succeeded in freeing India in 1947. There is no such example in the history of mankind like Mahatma Gandhi who pioneered a non-violence movement, mobilized millions, and raised the conscience of the oppressors (British government and Empire) to free India. Martin Luther King Jr., who was inspired by his teachings to lead the American Civil Rights movement, is also a great success story.

He was one of a kind, original, creative and a follower of truth. He loved the oppressors and he hated none in his struggle against injustice and sufferings and in his fight for freedom. His peaceful defiance of British rule in India, and his Civil Rights movement in South Africa (1893-1914)
were his great places to practice and master nonviolence ways. He challenged British arrogance and in resisting injustice, he harbored no hatred in his heart and was in fact ready to help his opponents when they were in distress. To understand his brilliant work for mankind would take many books and still we may not be able to fathom that such man truly did live in the twentieth century in India.

He inspired people through his practice of sufferings and simple living. He was an inspiring moral force. He appealed and touched the hearts of the people – appealed to the conscience of man and therefore his influence was universal. It is a million dollar question of how he did it – a fragile, and meek looking person indeed performed something miraculous.

We need to look into his life. He said that my life is my message. This would help to understand his pioneering ways of each and every action. The story of his miracle is also a story of his life. He was above creed, caste or race. He was a true human being and who believed and practiced universal brotherhood.

The following are a few quotations of him that can explain his moral force that made him an extraordinary person or a superhuman being:

Truth is my religion and ahimsa is the only way of its realization.

When in despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall—think of it, ALWAYS.

What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans, and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty and democracy?

An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.

There are many causes that I am prepared to die for but no cause that I am prepared to kill for. I do not envisage God other than truth and non-violence. Ahimsa calls for strength and courage to suffer without retaliation to receive blows without returning any.

Search for Truth is Search for God. Truth is God. God is because truth is.

Gandhi was aware of that a true and firm belief in non-violence, faith and courage was a must. He was aware that everyone couldn’t have such qualities. Non-violence is not for the cowards. He guarded against attracting to his Satyagraha movement those who feared to take up arms or felt themselves incapable of resistance. He said. “I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence.”

Gandhi and the Salt March

We can try to understand the significance and impact on the masses of Gandhi’s innovative idea of starting a Salt March as part of his ultimate journey to succeed in the freedom of India from the foreign rule. It is important to know why he was against foreign rule. At the age of 19, on
September 4, 1889, Gandhi went to University College London to train as barrister. He was appalled to see the economic differences in standard of living between Indians and British people, poverty of Indian people, oppressive British laws for Indians, discrimination and inhumane treatment, etc., etc. His conscience cajoled him and he emerged as Mahatma when he was in South Africa fighting for their cause in a nonviolent way.

The Indian Congress Party made the proclamation of the Declaration of Independence of India on January 26, 1930. However, India won independence from the British rule on August 15, 1947. After the Declaration of Independence, Gandhi started developing a clear vision of how to achieve independence of India. He did lots of thinking and soul searching. He was in search of an idea that can be transformed into a mass movement. He was at an impasse. He was in search of an issue that involved the masses and at the same time defied British laws in protest. He came up with a brilliant idea to develop a mass non-violent movement against British Salt tax. He listened to his inner voice. This was the way he used to create innovative ways to resist British laws and ignite the people to join his unique non-violence movement and become an expression of the will of the general community. The British Salt tax was such a unique idea that affected every one. British generated salt tax revenue to support their rule. The private sale and production of salt was a criminal offence punishable by law. However, salt was easily available in coastal zones of India. Laborers could easily produce it freely but they were forced to pay for it. This salt issue also met his criteria of that the movement must involve everyone irrespective of religion, or any other differences – it must involve masses and ignite them throughout India.

On March 2, 1930 Gandhi wrote a remarkable letter to Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India. He wrote, “Dear Friend, I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less fellow human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst, therefore, I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend to harm to a single Englishman or to any legitimate interest he may have in India…” He went on to inform Irwin, he intended to break the salt laws, a gesture that no doubt must have struck Irwin as bizarre. He further said in the same letter, “If my letter makes no appeal to your heart, on the eleventh day of this month I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take, to disregard the provisions of the Salt Laws. I regard this to be the most iniquitous of all from the poor man’s standpoint. As the Independence movement is essentially for the poorest in the land, the beginning will be with this evil.” The Viceroy, as expected wrote back to express his regret that Gandhi was again “contemplating a course of action which is clearly bound to involve violation of the law and danger to public peace.”

As he promised, on March 12, 1930, Gandhi of 61 years and approximately 78 other male satyagrahis marched from Sabarmati Ashram on foot for the coastal village of Dandi. This journey was about 240 miles from the starting point. The journey lasted 23 days. Virtually every resident of each city along this journey watched the great procession. The procession itself grew to about two miles long. He defied the law by making salt. To enforce the law of the land, the British had to arrest the satyagrahis (soldiers of civil disobedience), but the Indians courted arrest in millions.
There was panic in the administration and Indian freedom struggle finally gathered momentum and drew worldwide attention. This period was the climax of Gandhi’s appeal. Gandhi after release from the prison continued to work towards Indian Independence, which was achieved in August 1947. Gandhi’s Salt March was the key turning point for India’s struggle for independence.

Relevance of Gandhi’s Teachings to our Global Challenges

Gandhi was a miraculous man. Such super humans or great souls do not descend on earth frequently. Where can we find such a person who lived for the benefit of mankind? Where can we find a person of his qualities of moral force that no brute force could quell the spirit of man ready to defy and willing to suffer for the sake of humanity? Who can convert individual struggle to an organized mass struggle for the sake of humanity?

He was the writer, director and actor of nonviolence movement. He was assassinated on January 30, 1948. It was the darkest day in the history of India and mankind. In the words of Albert Einstein, “Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this, ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”

Gandhi is no more with us but his teachings are the guide for the humanity. We need his teachings more than at any time in history.

After World War II, United Nations was created. In World War II about 60 million people died and two atom bombs were dropped in Japan. Human beings witnessed the most horrifying sufferings and destruction. It was thought that human beings had gone through enough of sufferings and destruction; there was yearning for world peace.

The purpose of U.N. was to bring peace in the world – to create an environment of nonviolent civil societies and nations. It was great and the most sought after purpose and mission after World War II. However, U.N. has not been able to deliver world peace. Why? I ask again, why? Perhaps no one has the clue why U.N. has failed to achieve world peace and a safe place to live. There are many excuses but none would help us to understand why U.N. has failed to achieve peace. Had U.N. made Gandhi’s teachings as its primary mission, it is possible that our world would have been much safer, peaceful and prosperous.

India and its Relevance to World Peace

India has a unique chemistry that is most needed in these turbulent times. In spite of many challenges and problems, India still is a land of Gandhi. His philosophy and teachings are running deep in the veins of majority of Indians. India is a country, which is a multiethnic and multi-
religious country of over one billion people with several languages and food and living habits. It has a long history of tolerance and acceptance. Christopher Columbus sailed to discover India; instead he ended up discovering America. Today U.S.A. and our world are discovering the values of India most suited for world peace.

The following are the two quotations from the famous historians:

Dr. Arnold Joseph Toynee (1889-1975), a British Historian who said, “It is already becoming clear that chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending, if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race. At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the India way.”

Will Durant (1885-1981), American Historian, said,” India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe’s languages; she was the mother of our philosophy; mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother, through the Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity; mother, through the village community, of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all. Perhaps in return for conquest, arrogance and spoliation, India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the inquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit, and a unifying, a pacifying love for all living things.”

Ways to bring Peace to the Troubled World

U.N. needs to adopt Gandhi’s teachings. Education in human values is the necessity of our times. U.N. would only be effective if its expertise and resources are directed towards achieving human values. It is a challenge but there is no other alternative available to us to save the world from catastrophic consequences.

India, U.S.A. and other interested nations and people must join to spread the message of peace.

My book How to Achieve Worldwide Prosperity and Peace has the right vision plan in detail that can transform our world from hate to love and peace and bring prosperity around the world. We need to think outside the box. Trying new ideas would not hurt. My book has the new vision that certainly is worth giving a try. There is nothing to lose. If we have not achieved peace after World War II that human beings witnessed horrible sufferings and destruction; almost 60 million people lost their lives and dropping of two atom bombs have not made us as human beings worldwide to behave and be civilized, then there is definitely some thing wrong with our approach.

Last but not the least, it is an absolute truth that life begins and life ends. It is the good deeds that make us true human beings. We all are children of God. God loves us all. We must not differentiate among ourselves based on faith, caste, creed or any other differences.
Prepared by:
Santosh C. Verma

Founder and President of
International Foundation for the
Economic Development of India (IFEDI)
Author of How to Achieve Worldwide Prosperity and Peace.
Mr. Verma can be reached at: 1510 Tawny Ct.
Diamond Bar, CA 91765, USA
Tel. & fax: 909 861 4627
E-mail: verma105@hotmail.com

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