



"He stopped at the thresholds of the huts of the thousands of the dispossessed, dressed like one of their own. He spoke to them in their own language; here was living truth at last, and not quotations from books.

"So the name of "Mahatma" which is given to him, is his true name. Who else has felt so many men of India to be of his own flesh and blood? ... All honor to the Mahatma who made visible to us the power of truth. The Mahatma has won the heart of all India with his love; for that we have all acknowledged his sovereignty."

*Quote from Rabindranath Tagore
about Mahatma Gandhi*

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The Gandhi Message



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The Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Foundation, Inc.

THE FOUNDATION

The *Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Foundation, Incorporated*, was founded in the United States of America in 1959 by Swami Premananda of India. The purpose of the Foundation is to disseminate the philosophy, ideal, life, service and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. The Foundation is a legally independent, nonprofit cultural and educational organization.

GANDHI MEMORIAL CENTER

MAHATMA GANDHI MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Dedicated to the philosophy, life, service and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, the Library seeks to offer a broad representation of authors from many cultures and times, as well as displays, recordings, lectures and demonstrations of cultural and educational value.

Located on the main floor of the Gandhi Center, the Library contains over 2,000 volumes, magazines and pamphlets.

The staff of the Foundation and Gandhi Center are dedicated workers who serve without any remuneration throughout the year.

Your membership contribution to the Gandhi Memorial Library is an offering towards the services and activities of the Gandhi Center. Members receive all publications of the Center by mail.

Our Appeal

For the expansion of its ideals and activities the Foundation will gratefully receive donations of funds and contributions of books, other publications and memorabilia pertaining to Mahatma Gandhi and his associates. Please make checks payable to the *Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Foundation, Incorporated*.

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Excerpt From

“Mahatma Gandhi: An American Profile”

By *Srimati Kamala*

President, Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Foundation

Such universal idealists as Gandhi, Thoreau and Emerson may justly be claimed by any society. But I believe that Americans—especially teachers and professors—will rejoice to discover the parallels of life and thought that exist in the lives of the Concord “Brahmins” and the Mahatma.

Though surface conditions of culture and history shape different appearances, the same timeless and universal ideas have emerged to shape the common destinies of our two countries, India and America, crossing the oceans to commingle in the current of understanding.

I rejoice that a great deal of credit for Emerson’s and Thoreau’s perspectives goes to India—that these “Transcendentalists” were profoundly affected by oriental literature, feeding the minds of our New England forefathers with its nectars. I am proud, too, to know that Gandhi was influenced by the writings of Thoreau while in South Africa and adopted his ideas as a guide, even taking the name “Civil Disobedience” for his campaigns in India. But isn’t it curious that Gandhiji’s first imprisonment by the British upon his return to India was in part for his publication of Thoreau’s same treatise in violation of the Rowlatt Act!

Emerson championed the dignity of the common man; Thoreau sought the companionship and wisdom of the American Indian and cherished the life of rustic simplicity close to Nature and thereby close to God; Gandhi called the “poorest and the lowliest and lost” of India’s society “Harijans” (“Children of God”), and also had faith in the humblest expressions of life. By their expansive and charitable consciousness of the kinship of human evolution, all three men have been absorbed into the world thought that transcends national bounds.

We identify all three as philosophers, though none arranged a system of theories by structured logic. Each rather had a practical passion for wise living governed by self-knowledge, faith and intuition. They were all interested in conducting life with the belief that the whole or perfection of it can be realized by even this parcel of it—that in each of Nature’s limitations the intimation of the Cosmic dwells, and that therein resides the moral consequence of harmony of oneself with the cosmic principle (dharma).

From 1919 upon his return from South Africa until his martyrdom in 1948, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi occupied the center of the Indian stage and was the chief hero of a great historical drama that culminated in the independence of 400 million people. The intrepid strength of this frail little man changed the entire political character of the world

overnight: At independence India became the world's largest democracy; the population of the "free world" doubled. The world seeks to know: Who was the man?

Dressed in a loincloth, at home among scavengers, the Harijans, the villagers or the elite—from beggars, to the King emperor—Gandhi demonstrated a Yoga, or harmony, in the art of living. His ideal was that of man perfect and balanced, who remembers his Maker, who lives at peace with God and with his fellow creatures. However difficult it is to attain, it is the only life worth pursuing, Gandhiji would say, for the effort itself draws us to our maximum potential and teaches us to live harmoniously within ourselves and with the cosmos at all levels.

The basic themes that integrate Gandhi's life message into one yoga are virtually "The American Dream" as espoused and shaped by Emerson and Thoreau.

As did Emerson and Thoreau, Gandhi evolved his philosophy from life—as a composite of commitments, beliefs and aspirations voiced and acted upon. For him the transcendental must come to form and manifestation, and it must reach the hovel of the humblest of society:

"I am indeed a practical dreamer," he said. "My dreams are not airy things. I want to convert my dreams into realities as far as possible."

Indians refer to Gandhiji as the father of their country—as George Washington is called by Americans. By influence, but not by administration, Gandhi may be called so. Politics was never his first concern. At the crucial moment of organization of India's government, Gandhi relinquished interest in official position and proceeded directly and personally to the people. Furthermore, his concern was more for the causes of human strife and moral debility than for legislative platforms. Laws, he would say, are only patchwork remedies for universal and timeless needs of mankind.

His was the voice of conscience, not just of his country, but everyman's. Gandhi didn't just want Indians to be free of British yoke; he wanted all

humanity to be free of any yoke—especially the yoke of self-imposed limitations of greed, selfishness and untruth.

Many know and remember Gandhi as a complete humanitarian and as a social reformer. In his life of service he lived and worked and spoke for social and religious rights, for religious unity, for social equality, for village economy and for basic education for all. These are noble and idealistic goals, but they of themselves do not comprise what Gandhi essentially was—a man of God.

Emerson hailed from a long tradition of New England clergymen. Like Gandhi, his father died when he was yet a boy, and his



mother's courage, faith and religion left their mark on his personality. Like Gandhi, though he graduated in the upper half of his class, he did not distinguish himself in college.

The theme of self-reliance in Emerson's life ripened through his own experience as he taught school to earn for his own studies. As a young man he, too, was shy and modest—but likeable. As Emerson's personality developed, so did his conscience. He began to seek deeper laws and meaning from surface issues. He criticized the ministry and religious thought of his time, but wrote and lectured on the subjects of the spirit, the intellect and character. Because he felt that the formal ritual observance of sacraments was not as Christ intended, Emerson resigned from his first and only church pastorate. (Emerson, Thoreau and Gandhi were all criticized for their avowed departures from the rituals and dogmatic observances of their religious ancestors.)

Though Emerson's life in the bucolic and serene community of Concord cannot be compared to Gandhiji's in the turmoil of India's emergence to independence, there are parallels in their public service, and Emerson should not be typified as reclusive or scholarly. For years he lectured throughout the East and Midwest in times when travel was arduous and means of communication primitive. He crossed the Mississippi on ice, traveling at various times by carriage, sleigh, canal boat, steamboat or train—for meager offerings and out of a sense of duty and faith, "to cheer, to raise and to guide men by showing them facts among appearances." He actively served as a member of the Fire Brigade, and he opened his home as a library and reading room to generate philosophic intercourse among the townspeople of Concord.

Admittedly, while Gandhi emerged to be politically active, Emerson was deliberate in his reluctance to do so, preferring to plant the seeds of ideas and to stay apart from the practical fray of affairs. While Gandhi patiently pleaded and persuaded with even his adversaries, Emerson did not like to argue or speak out about contemporary social issues. He took no part in fighting the Civil War, though he advocated the abolition of slavery.

In contrast to Gandhi's countrymen, Americans had their own land—even new frontiers for expansion—in Emerson's time. Although political independence had been achieved twenty-four years before Emerson's birth, America, Emerson insisted, still took its culture from abroad. "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe," he said. "Look not to antiquity; do not depend on 'heritage'; you are accountable to the present, not to posterity."

In his bold address on "The American Scholar," delivered in 1837 to the graduating Phi Beta Kappas of his alma mater, Harvard, he enunciated what I call a "Swaraj of the Spirit" for Americans, urging us to live and think and worship like free men. Called by Oliver Wendell Holmes "our intellectual Declaration of Independence," Emerson's program of thought defined the spirit of self-reliance, individual dignity and courageous intellectual new-frontierism that so characterize "The American Dream" and his philosophy. The "scholar," he said, serves independence of the

spirit and must therefore look forward, not backward, through the exercise of creativity.

Wanting to see India free, independent and strong, Gandhi crusaded for the same spirit among Indians. He said:

“Swaraj is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint which ‘independence’ often means. Swaraj is the sum total of all activities that go to build up a free and vigorous nation conscious of the strength that comes from right doing.

“If we were not under the spell of hypnotism or if we were not being acted upon by that great force inertia, or want of self-confidence, we would find it the most natural thing to breathe the air of freedom which is ours to breathe.”

The poem for which Emerson is best remembered and which clearly reveals his comprehension of Hinduism is “Brahma:”

*If the red slayer thinks he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.
Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear:
And one to me are shame and fame.
They reckon ill who leave me out:
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.
The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.*

I cannot help thinking that Emerson, the first great American literary figure who read deeply and fully the available philosophic literature from India, may not have anticipated our discovery of what could be called his paraphrasing of these verses from the Bhagavad Gita of the Hindus.

Emerson and Thoreau were contemporaries and friends, though exactly when and how they met is unsubstantiated. Thoreau descended from a family of sea captains and merchants. His parents were vigorous-working, intelligent and principled people who instilled in young Henry sacrifice as duty and respect for personal honor. As did Emerson and Gandhi, Thoreau suffered the loss of his father when he was still in his formative years.

Much of Thoreau’s personality parallels Gandhiji’s. Like Gandhi, for example, Thoreau had a passion to explore the conduct of life through disciplined and pure means. In his own time he cautioned men to heed the means of commerce, business and invention consistent with the

desirable ends. Like Gandhi, he wanted to simplify living in order to enhance the experience of life’s greatest values. “I have three maxims for life,” Thoreau is supposed to have said, “Simplicity. Simplicity. Simplicity.”

In 1841, Thoreau was invited to live with Emerson’s family—his handiwork and carpentry in exchange for room and board.

Thoreau’s down-to-earth practicality complemented Emerson’s abstractness, while Emerson’s wider frame presented Thoreau with new acquaintances and awareness.

Thoreau chose to be rich by making his wants few. He was concerned not with how we eke out our living, but how we live. (“Beware of all new enterprises which require a new set of clothes and not a new wearer of clothes,” he said. “If there is not a new man, can the new clothes be made to fit?”) He preferred the company of a good Indian to the refinements of mannered society, declining invitations to dinner parties with the observation that the hosts “take their pride in making their dinner cost much; I take my pride in making my dinner cost little.”

Thoreau, a Naturalist, used neither trap nor gun; he ate no flesh, and he drank no wine. But whereas Thoreau’s personal conduct was just that—i.e., personal—Gandhi’s simplicity had an ulterior humanitarian motive: At home in his cottage at Wardha, Gandhi studiously kept for his use only those instruments and materials which would be accessible to any villager so as not to separate himself from the commonest of humanity. His practice was also instructive, an example: “Simplicity alone promotes real happiness and contentment and capacity for service.”

Thoreau’s intensity and depth of character were often misunderstood as eccentric. Too often his shyness and sensitivity were taken for rejection of or calloused indifference to the norm. However, it was, rather, that he, like Gandhi, wanted to strip away the artificiality, and he felt out-of-place in “social rites.” He spoke of Nature’s society first, with man a parcel of it. Like Gandhi, he felt the spirit’s presence in the ordinary and the humble, through the oneness of nature and man and God.

As Gandhi called his whole life an “Experiment with Truth,” believing that the experience of Truth is accessible to all, Thoreau, too, sought to find the One. His interests in yoga, though mystical, were not confined to the realm of contemplation. His sincerity allowed him to reject superstition, extreme practices or superficial mental devices in favor of direct apprehension.

Significantly and symbolically, on Independence Day, 1845, at age twenty-eight, Thoreau started an adventure that has become an American classic. To explore his philosophy of the simple life he built a one-room cottage and lived alone in the woods outside Concord for two years, two months and two days.

At Walden Pond Thoreau found a wise approach to life. Those who read WALDEN today will find not introverted, but expansive and penetrative observations of human character. Thoreau studied Nature because it is man’s background. His thirst for observing life yielded not vapid verses or whimsical appreciations from placid strolls. His was an exhausting

experiment; he wanted to drench himself in Nature's moods, knowing the extremes, examining the laws and facts of Nature as a scientist does.

Thoreau, the "Sage of Walden Pond," found Truth in Nature's cathedral; Gandhi took to the exhausting expanse of the human arena to discover God. Thoreau found man's moods in the turbulence of Nature; Gandhi found cosmic order in even the turbulent turns of human character and celestial beauty in the mined treasures of the human heart. Yet, the conviction of both men is the same: In the words of the Mandukya Upanishad of the Hindus, "The soul of man is of identical nature as the God of the Universe."

Contrary to the opinions of some, Thoreau was not reclusive by nature. As soon as he exhausted the advantages of solitude in the woods, he abandoned it. "I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there," he wrote. "Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one."

What he derived from his "experiment" committed his character henceforth:

"I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

Like Gandhi, Thoreau placed duty to God's law above duty to an unjust man-made law, refusing to pay his poll tax in 1846 as a protest against slavery. Though he was not the first man in Concord to go to jail for such refusal, and though he spent only one night in jail, the symbolic act inspired him to write what has become the most widely read of all his works, his essay on "Civil Disobedience."

Whereas the Concord newspaper *Freeman* reveals that while Thoreau spent his historic one night in prison, the townspeople had their minds on more frivolous matters, Gandhi's imprisonments, on the other hand, made international headlines. Gandhiji, who became acquainted with Thoreau's writings while fighting for the rights of Indians in South Africa in the early 1900s, adopted some of Thoreau's ideas and named his Indian movement "Civil Disobedience."

Thoreau took his causes public in earnest when John Brown defied the government at Harper's Ferry. He readily joined the action, but fate would not allow Thoreau the vocation of social activist as it did Gandhiji. His brief involvement took its toll on his frail health which deteriorated from that time to his death at age forty-five. He welcomed death with no regrets or fears. Satisfied that God would reveal Himself in measures Gandhiji would quote the favorite Christian hymn, "Lead Kindly Light, I do not hope to see the distant scene; one step enough for me." Thoreau would take life "one world at a time" rather than speculate on the hereafter. Asked on his deathbed whether he had made his peace with God, he responded simply, "We have never quarreled."



The Gandhi Memorial Center together with the Kuchipudi Kalanidhi shared a morning with DC public school children from Ludlow-Taylor Elementary School on May 2, 2008. The children's program was created as a joint program with CHIME (Children's Help in Music Education) and the DC Arts and Humanities Education Collaborative. The Gandhi Memorial Center became a member of the DC Collaborative in May 2008 in order to have more opportunities to invite DC public school students for programs related to Mahatma Gandhi's ideals and the Indian cultural heritage.

DC Collaborative members work with the DC initiative of "Arts for Every Student". These programs include performances, workshops and other interactive demonstrations of the arts in institutions such as the Freer and Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, the Corcoran Gallery, the Strathmore Hall and the Kennedy Center as well as other local arts initiatives.

AFES at Cultural Institutions provides the DC public and chartered schools with access to age-appropriate cultural opportunities throughout the Washington metropolitan area. The DC Collaborative's sponsorship ensures that underserved schools can benefit from the region's rich array of arts amenities. Excursions include storytelling presentations; music, dance, and theater experiences; plus trips to the museums and centers of art. These events connect to class curriculum and help students develop critical-thinking skills. Participating organizations supply teachers with study materials, adding further incentive to integrate the arts into their daily lessons. In the 2007-2008 school year, more than 33,000 students and teachers visited Cultural Institutions through AFES.

The Gandhi Memorial Center has prepared programs to introduce students to the life of Gandhiji and various expressions of the arts of India. In the coming year, new programs will be presented including activities centered around visual arts (Kolam, doll-making, and book-making) as well as various forms of Indian dance and music.

Art Exhibition by Shanthi Chandra-Sekar

April - June, 2008

Review by Rumjhum Sarkar, Ph.D. (Cantab)

Shanthi Chandra-Sekar's new and innovative exhibition was displayed at the Gandhi Center in Washington, DC from April 6 through May 31, 2008. The exhibition combines the artist's artistic and scientific sensibilities in ways that are both fascinating and thought-provoking. Ms. Chandra-Sekar's work encompasses a breathtaking amount of variety, media and imagination. The artist works in oils, acrylics, pen and ink, wood, clay, soapstone and other media.

Although the artist is self-taught, her background in Tanjore painting brings a certain discipline to her craft. For example, in *Vishnu's Dashavatharam*, the ten avatars (divine incarnations) of Lord Vishnu are depicted in a typical Tanjore style of stylized forms placed in the arches of what could be a Hindu temple. The forms, while familiar, are beautifully and authentically drawn. However, it is the actual composition of the painting that elicits a certain amount of awe.



The dashavataars are placed near the bottom of the painting drawing the eye downwards, but are contrasted with breathtaking open space filled with small stylized creatures of all sorts. The artist specifically draws on the evolutionary scheme of plants and animals organically growing from and connected to each other. However, by depicting all such creatures in the same size (whether a fox or a frog), the same

importance is given to each. Plus, the scientific element of the evolutionary background informs the religious significance of the painting where Vishnu is believed to be incarnated in various forms (e.g., fish, turtle, dwarf, Krishna). This scientific basis of evolution is not only reflected in the contrasting animal and plant motifs surrounding the ten avatars, but may also be seen to be echoed in the avatars themselves which move from animal to human forms. It is Ms. Chandra-Sekar's balance of science with divine belief that is so innovative. This artistic interlacing of both seamlessly captures both the viewer's eye and imagination.

Ms. Chandra-Sekar grew up in a "scientist's village" known as Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu, India. She majored in physics and decided to

dedicate some of her paintings to physics while in school. That science background combined with a Masters in Psychology has led to a fascinating merger of physics, psychology and Hindu scriptures where Sanskrit shlokas (stanzas) mirror the divine in thought, belief, and the physical universe created by God.

This convergence of physics and philosophy combined under the rubric of Hindu religious thought may be found in *Chidambara Rahasyam*. A nataraja of Shiva dances in cosmic deep space surrounded by subatomic particles and physics equations. The mélange of time and space is depicted in remarkable artistic form. Rather than being a purely religious icon, Shiva becomes a symbol of transcendent consciousness dancing eternally and hypnotically in hyperspace.



The same theme combining physics with abstract thought is found in her many ladders ascending and descending that show an elevation in consciousness.

Ms. Chandra-Sekar has also mastered the technique of creating small ceramic tiles that capture everyday symbols (kolams) often drawn by women on the doorsteps to their homes. Originally derived from tantric symbols of stylized art, the artist's depiction show an originality of composition, color and form. The vibrant hues of red, indigo and ochre are masterful in their contrast yet their underlying unity. The stylized images of elephants (Ganesha), peacocks, and cows are familiar motifs that are recast in very appealing fashion.

Overall, the true contribution of Ms. Chandra-Sekar lies in her originality in combining physics, philosophy and psychology with art. In so doing, she makes a startling new contribution to the local art scene in Washington, DC. Her paintings along with her sculptures and wood works demonstrate an impressive mastery of several different and highly challenging media. More importantly, her playful curiosity invites the viewer to seek and explore new, and heretofore hidden, dimensions underlying the meaning of art.





(Above) Participants from American University Summer Peacebuilding and Development Institute - June 11, 2008 (Below) Students from MOMIES' TLC Summer Camp - June 22, 2008



Students from MOMIES' TLC Summer Camp visit the Gandhi Memorial Center to learn about Mahatma Gandhi and Indian culture. The students began in the Library of the Gandhi Memorial Center with an introduction by Carrie Trybulec (Director) and Shanthi Chandra-Sekar (Artist). They participated in an interactive discussion and art activity. The 40 children, ranging in ages from five to twelve, then went to Puja Hall for an Indian snack before walking over to the Golden Lotus Temple. There they participated in an interactive demonstration of Kathak Dance by Pooja Bhatt. Pooja demonstrated the basic elements of the dance and taught the children the history and symbolism of Kathak. Some of the children joined her in attempting the fast foot work.





The Gundecha Brothers offer a presentation of Dhruwad Vocal Music in the Golden Lotus Temple on June 7, 2008

Dhrupad is the most ancient style of Hindustani classical music that has survived until today in its original form. The Dhrupad tradition is a major heritage of Indian culture. The nature of Dhrupad music is spiritual. Seeking not to entertain, but to induce feelings of peace and contemplation in the listener. The word Dhrupad is derived from DHRUVA the steadfast evening star that moves through our galaxy and PADA meaning poetry. It is a form of devotional music that traces its origin to the ancient text of Sam Veda. The SAM VEDA was chanted with the help of melody and rhythm called *Samgana*. Gradually this developed into other vocal style called '*Chhanda*' and '*Prabandha*' with introduction of verse and meter. The fusion of these two elements led to the emergence of Dhrupad. By the eleventh Century Dhrupad music had crystallised into a perfect form which has retained its original structure and purity through to the present day. One significant characteristic of Dhrupad is the emphasis on maintaining purity of the Ragas and the Swaras. According to some accounts, Dhrupad was sung in the temples, the singer facing the divinity. From this early chanting, Dhrupad evolved into a sophisticated classical form of music.

The language of Dhrupad changed from Sanskrit Brij Bhasha some time between the 12th and the 16th century. About six centuries ago, Dhrupad came to be patronised by the royal courts and its complex rendering became intended for highly sophisticated royal audiences. The compositions became more secular. Some were written in praise of the emperors; others elaborated on music itself. However the pristine nature of Dhrupad survived and even today we hear this majestic form of music performed like it was more than 500 years ago in the royal courts of the emperors and kings of India. For information about the Gundecha Brothers and their Dhrupad Institute: www.dhrupad.org



Odissi Performance by Meena Kumari Sahoo in the Golden Lotus Temple on June 22, 2008

Born in Cuttack, India, Meena Kumari Sahoo began dancing at the age of nine. A graduate from Utkal University, a Nritya Visarad from Prachine Kala Kendra, Chandigarh and Nritya Shastri (Purna) from Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi, Bhubaneswar, she has been groomed by Padmabhibhusan late Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra & Padmashree Guru Kumkum Mohanty, the Odissi maestro of international fame. She received the EZCC Gold Medal awarded by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India as 'Young Talented Artist' of the year 2003-4. She has been empanelled in the reference panel of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) for "Cultural Diplomacy" abroad. This is her first visit to the United States.



Mahatma Gandhi: Art of Life

"We have been taught to believe that what is beautiful need not be useful and what is useful cannot be beautiful. I want to show that what is useful can also be beautiful.

"People who claim to pursue 'art for art's sake' are unable to make good their claim. There is a place for art in life, apart from the question – What is art? But art can only be a means to the end which we must all of us achieve. If however, it becomes an end in itself, it enslaves and degrades humanity.

"There are two aspects of things – the outward and the inward. It is purely a matter of emphasis with me. The outward has no meaning except insofar as it helps the inward. All true art is thus the expression of the soul. The outward forms have value only insofar as they are the expression of the inner spirit in man. Art of that nature has the greatest possible appeal for me. But I know that many call themselves artists, and are recognized as such, and yet in their works there is absolutely no trace of the soul's upward urge and unrest.

"All true art must help the soul to realize its inner self. In my own case, I find that I can do entirely without external forms in my soul's realization. My room may have blank walls; and I may even dispense with the roof, so that I may gaze out upon the starry heavens overhead that stretch in an unending expanse of beauty. What conscious art of man can give me the panoramic scenes that open out before me, when I look up to the sky above with all its shining stars? This, however, does not mean that I refuse to accept the value of productions of art, generally accepted as such, but only that I personally feel how inadequate these are compared with the eternal symbols of beauty in Nature. These productions of man's art have their value only so far as they help the soul onward towards self-realization.

"I love music and all the other arts, but I do not attach such value to them as is generally done. I cannot, for example, recognize the value of those activities which require technical knowledge for their understanding... When I gaze at the star-sown heaven, and the infinite beauty it affords my eyes, that means to me more than all that human art can give me. That does not mean that I ignore the value of those works generally called artistic; but personally, in comparison with the infinite beauty of Nature, I feel their unreality too intensely... Life is greater than all art. I would go even further and declare that the man whose life comes nearest to perfection is the greatest artist; for what is art without the sure foundation and framework of a noble life?"

(Selections from *All Men Are Brothers: Life and Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi, As Told In His Own Words* - A UNESCO Publication, 1958.)



From the Gandhi Memorial Center Library

*A book review of
The Mahatma and the Poet*

National Book Trust., 1997.
Strangely enough, the book
does not read as much about the

differences between Tagore and Gandhi as one would expect. The relevance of the topics discussed, however, triggers much thinking about India and the state of the world in current times.

Yes, there were differences between these two great souls, both at the philosophical and political levels. Tagore was concerned that the Mahatma's ideals were being used strategically by various politicians. However, the intellectual level and respect both had for each other allowed them to reach a philosophical quality that would overcome any differences. Consequently, that philosophical discourse became part of numerous negotiations.

The book points at the remarkable impact that two self-made politicians had despite their respective idealistic disengagement from politics. And it is clear that the friendship that always prevailed amidst numerous visits and abundant correspondence was the foundation of the political results obtained.

The topics labored upon are surprisingly similar to current challenges over the continents: bilingualism; casteism (social class); the influence of western materialism; the role of science.

The Mahatma brought down a legendary empire with a genial strategy of non-violence. His own creativity was enhanced by decades of continuous philosophical friendship with the Poet Tagore. After Tagore's passing, the Mahatma said: "I started with a disposition to detect a conflict between Gurudev and myself but ended with the glorious discovery that there was none." (p. 35).

We can sum up the unique relationship between two equally revered historical figures as the three Rs: Relevance, Realism, and Respect. One would hope that this little book would reach the ones who still believe in the power of wisdom over that of argument.

The Mahatma and the Poet.

New Delhi, India, Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi, ed.

(Reviewed by Dr. Veronica Boutte)