



Temple of Understanding India Foundation

Dedicated to Interfaith Harmony through Education, Ecological Sustainability

In collaboration with Institute of Liver & Biliary Sciences (Deemed University),
McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada & Supported by
Shastri-Indo Canadian Institute, New Delhi, Dara Shikoh Centre For The Arts, Jammu

20th and 21st February, 2021

05:00 pm to 08:00 pm IST

**Two Days International Webinar “Conversation on Life Enhancing Values-
“No More Hate, No More Fear: Promoting Harmony and Compassion”.**

TEMPLE OF UNDERSTANDING INDIA FOUNDATION

A public charitable trust dedicated to promoting unity in diversity through ideals of inter-faith harmony, humanitarian services, peace and ecological sustainability. The trust is the initiative of founder Chairman, Dr. Karan Singh, philosopher-statesman who has been a pan global icon for networking and promoting inter-religious dialogue, conservation and protection of environment and ecology. The other founding trustees Dr. B. P. Singh, former Governor of Sikkim and Home Secretary, Government of India, Dr. Jyotsna Singh founder Chairperson of Dara Shikoh Centre for Arts, Jammu Kashmir, Dr. Khwaja Iftikhar Ahmed, educationist and social activist, Dr. A. K. Merchant, National Trustee & formerly Secretary-General, Bahá'í Community of India have been involved for 40 years or more in Cross Cultural dialogue and inter-faith Education. The Board of Trustees is supported by an Advisory Council comprising representatives of all the religions—Bahá'í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism.

The seed for the organization was sown in 1960 by Juliet Hollister, an American house-wife with a passion for promoting inter-faith harmony. Thus was born a movement for cross cultural dialogue and Inter-faith education activities, and an association with inter-faith organizations in India. The international affiliate of Temple of Understanding India Foundation is located in New York City, NY and has association with like-minded Interfaith Organizations in other parts of the world. It is registered under section 501(c) (3) as not-for-profit and Non-Governmental Organization with Consultative Status at the United Nation (ECOSOC). The activities are managed by an International Governing Board with Ms. Alison Van Dyk as its Executive Director and Ms. Grove Harris as its representative at the United Nations Office.

Juliet Hollister traveled the globe, bearing letters of introduction from the former First Lady of United States of America, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, in order to gather support from the world's religious and political leaders. In her letters of introduction, Ms. Roosevelt, wrote: "May this greatly needed Temple of Understanding come into realization soon, for our world surely needs the inspiration and leadership of such a 'Spiritual United Nations'." In the course of her travels Juliet met with luminaries such as Egyptian President Gamel Nasser, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Pope John XXIII, and Albert Schweitzer—who responded to her request for a meeting with, "Come at once and I will send a canoe." After their meeting, Dr. Schweitzer signed Juliet's travel log "My hopes and prayers are with you in the realization of the great Temple of Understanding, which has a profound significance ... The Spirit burns in many flames."

For many years in India the Temple of Understanding has supported and organized programs and carried out projects for promoting the relevance of inter-faith movement, providing humanitarian services, holding discourses on subjects of peace and ecological sustainability. Temple of Understanding programs emphasize experiential knowledge and dialogue as a means of connecting people across a spectrum of religious communities to create a more just and peaceful world. Temple of Understanding goals are: (i) to foster appreciation of religious and cultural diversity, (ii) expand public discourse on religion and spirituality, (iii) promote constructive social change, (iv) further education for global citizenship. Besides collaboration with the United Nations in India events have been organized at Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi and Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, the United Religious Initiative and Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala, and the Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi.

INSTITUTE OF LIVER & BILIARY SCIENCES (DEEMED UNIVERSITY)

The Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS), New Delhi is the youngest and the newest addition to the already existing network of Medical Universities in India. ILBS has the status of deemed to be a University as it imparts not only quality medical education but is also an international centre of excellence for the clinical care, advance training and research in liver and biliary diseases. ILBS has two parallel streams of training and research: (a) clinical medicine and (b) modern biology.

Through various specialized programmes, a major mandate of the Institute is to develop capacity building in specialized sectors of both medical (clinicians) and non-medical stream (scientists) to position India at par with international institutes. The Institute has extensively invested in creating a vibrant academic environment where both clinical science and modern biology streams merge together. Considerable efforts have been put by the Institute in recruiting and retaining expert faculties, providing set up for dedicated laboratory areas and employing skilled technical staff. Besides providing the basic infrastructure facility for running of the various departments the Institute has also invested in high end sophisticated Instruments both in the clinics and in the various laboratories together with trained manpower.

A major emphasis in ILBS is promoting basic research in frontier areas of Liver and Biliary Sciences. In view of this the Department of Molecular and Cellular medicine was established that fosters multidisciplinary scientific research activities in modern areas of biology with special focus on “hepatobiliary pancreatic highway”. The main aim of the department is to bridge the gap between the bench and bedside for which the three phases of research include: basic discovery, translational and application phase (Fig.1). The magnitude of liver and biliary ailments has posed tremendous research challenges for understanding the biology of disease process. The research activities are focused around areas of Liver Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Biology, Hepato- Immunology, Hepatocellular Cancers, “OMICS” including genomics and proteomics of liver injury and failure. The research in the department is funded solely by extramural grants from various national and international funding agencies.

McMASTER UNIVERSITY

McMaster University is a public university in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. It operates six academic faculties: the DeGroote School of Business, Engineering, Health Sciences, Humanities, Social Science, and Science. It is a member of the U15, a group of research-intensive universities in Canada.

The university bears the name of William McMaster, a prominent Canadian senator and banker who funded the establishment of the University.. It was incorporated under the terms of an act of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in 1887.

In 1965, with the support of the Ontario government, the university established a medical school and teaching hospital, graduating its first class of physicians in 1972. In 1968 the university was reorganized under an amended act of the McMaster Act into the Divisions of Arts, Science, and Health Sciences, each with its own vice-president, while the Divinity College continued under its existing arrangement. In 1974 the divisional structure of the university was dissolved and reorganized again under The McMaster University Act, 1976 and the vice-presidents were replaced by a single Vice-President (Academic). The Faculties of Business, Engineering, Health Sciences, Humanities, Science, and Social Sciences were retained, each under the leadership of a dean.

Today McMaster University has over 27,000 undergraduate and over 4,000 post-graduate students. Alumni and former students reside across Canada and in 139 countries. Its athletic teams are known as the Marauders, and are members of U Sports. Notable alumni include government officials, academics, business leaders, Rhodes Scholars, Gates Cambridge Scholars, and Nobel laureates.

Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute

SHASTRI INDO-CANADIAN INSTITUTE

Named after former Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute was created in 1968 through a joint announcement of the governments of Canada and India. It is a bi-national non-profit organization with registered charity status in Canada. The idea of forming an institute to promote scholarly activity between Canada and India was first conceived by Dr. Michael Brecher, a political science professor at McGill University, when he met Prime Minister Shastri who gave the convocation address at McGill University in June 1965. In his address, the Prime Minister suggested that there needed to be institutional understanding to promote scholarly exchange in the field of humanities and social sciences.

The Institute supports the creation of bi-national links between academia, government, the business community and civil society organizations by funding research and hosting seminars. It provides grants as well as internships and fellowships to provide opportunities for individuals to gain first-hand experience in India or Canada in their field of expertise. Furthermore, the Institute serves as a liaison between educational institutions and the Indian diaspora in Canada.

An eight-member bi-national Executive Council, which is elected by representatives of the member institutions, governs the Shastri Institute. The presidency of the Executive Council alternates annually between Canada and India. The Institute also operates with the guidance of the Indian Administrative Committee, as well as with advice from the Canadian Advisory Council and the Indian Advisory Council. In addition to the Executive Council, there are various committees within the Shastri Institute, which are filled by representatives of the member institutions. Staff members at the India and Canada offices, located in New Delhi and Calgary respectively, carry out all administrative responsibilities of the institution. The India Office is headed by its Director, Dr. Prachi Kaul.

DARA SHIKOH CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

Dara Shikoh Centre for the Arts, a cultural institution that celebrates and strives towards preserving the civilizational ethos of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. It offers fellowships to deserving candidates to bring together individuals across varied disciplines and backgrounds in a month-long immersive experience which allows them to interact with students, artists, craftsmen, writers, and theatre practitioners. Each Fellow brings to the program an independent project that creatively engages with the region, and has the opportunity to collaborate with experts in the field within Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh to build upon the project over the course of the program.

At the culmination of the program, Dara Shikoh Fellows are expected to produce a piece which best crystallises their experience such as a work of literature, a painting, a work of craft or any other creatively inspired piece that will feature in the Centre's annual publication. Their interaction with the program continues even after a particular program. All Fellows become members of the Dara Shikoh Centre for the Arts and have access to its resources for any projects linked to the region that they pursue in the future.

Led by Dr. Jyotsna Singh at the Almond Villa in Srinagar, the Centre is gradually expanding its mission to become a vehicle for sustained cultural and intellectual dialogue on the region. The Centre organises the annual Dara Shikoh Festival and works towards creating spaces for environmental, cultural, and social discussions. It has hosted photography workshops with Karam Puri, performances by MK Raina and Mukteshi, readings by Naseem Shifaie and Neerja Mattoo, environmental panels with Sayeeda Imam and Himalayan Wanderers, talks by Gopal Gandhi and Sameera Khan, and workshops with Wildlife SOS and the National School of Drama.

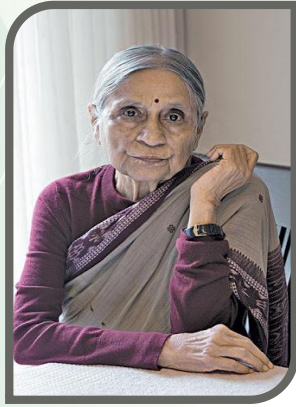
Virtual Conference Theme: “Conversation on Life Enhancing Values - No More Hate, No More Fear: Promoting Harmony & Compassion”

Abstract Title: Role of Higher Education in Building Life Enhancing Values and Promoting Peace and Development

Our common goal: To live in a world filled with peace, harmony among individuals and societies, and compassion for all. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., changed the world through their grassroots efforts for civil rights, equality and freedom. During periods of unrest, we continue to find comfort and hope in their words and actions. Building life-enhancing values and promoting peace and development is an essential role for universities; critical to our missions of providing strong educational programs, nurturing innovative research, and creating positive learning environments to advance the health and well-being of societies.

McMaster is committed to advancing evidence-based dialogue – a hallmark of our approach to teaching and research. We're home to evidence-based medicine and problem-based learning; models that have been adopted the world over. As Canada's most research-intensive university, we equally value fundamental and applied research, recognize the importance of partnerships, and the seamlessness among teaching, research and community service. We are guided by our core values and are committed to achieving institution-wide equity, diversity and inclusion. We have signed on to international principles established by the UN-Education Impact, Canada's national research agencies, the Magna Charta Universitatum and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, we rank among the top 20 universities in the world for our deep commitment to the UN's SDGs – working across faculties, countries and continents to ensure our knowledge has a real-world impact and advances the greater social good in our communities and around the world.

Recent global challenges have demonstrated the importance of pooling our talents and resources to meet these challenges head on. Covid-19 has exposed the world's vulnerabilities and the need to bring together our expertise in new ways. It is our moral imperative to ensure our individual and collective advancements benefit society as a whole. Canada's Global Nexus for Pandemics and Biological Threats, headquartered at McMaster, is allowing us to do just that.



Dr. Ela Bhatt,
Chancellor, Gandhi Vidyapeeth,
Ahmedabad

When Gandhi Meets SDGs

In so many ways Gandhiji's ideas of progress or development is about SDGs. And in so many ways SDGs take into account and take ahead Gandhiji's ideas of progress or development. And yet the two are not thought of as mutually nourishing each other in either of the two circles. And this is odd. Drawing from the experience of Gujarat Vidyapith, Gandhi Ashram, and SEWA's work an attempt is made to locate areas where two overlap, can collaborate, and move towards the final goal of removing poverty and the poor (and us all) lead our lives into what is called building economy of nurturance, where women and workers will be in lead.

Bani (Student): Good afternoon everyone, I am Bani, a final year student of political science at Miranda House and also a proud fellow of the SEWA Youth Connect, as Swadha has mentioned. So now before I start talking about how wonderful the book, Anubandh, is, if I may take the liberty, I want you to consider this: all 20--somethings here vision ourselves with a perceived security when asked 'where do you see yourself 2 decades from now'. And 2 decades from now, we definitely vision ourselves with a secure job, a comfortable household, and comfortable state of being. But when we are asked 'what we're doing about it' where we're trying to de-- jumble the tangled webs of our careers, relationships, etc. Now what I want you to think is that once you reach that state of security, would you have the courage to leave that state of security and step into the phase you're in right now again? Well, Elaben did. Now, take a moment to appreciate her courage. We have with us, Elaben, one of the 25 greatest living Indian legends.

Dr. Ela Bhatt



Hon'ble Shri Balmiki Prasad Singh former Governor of Sikkim and Home Secretary, Government of the Republic of India

Balmiki Prasad Singh is a distinguished scholar, thinker and public servant. He is the 14th Governor of Sikkim, India (2008-2013). B.P. Singh is a founder Trustee and Vice President of Temple of Understanding India Foundation.

Earlier, he was Culture Secretary and Home Secretary, Govt of India and executive Director and Ambassador at the World Bank , Washington, D.C. He received his education at the Universities of Patna and Oxford and has been the recipient of several awards and fellowships and delivered lectures at national and global congregations. He has been Additional secretary Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India, Asia's Representative on Ramsar Convention, a founder member of the Development Gateway Foundation and Member, Global Environment Facility, Washington, D.C. He is the author of many books, including Bahudha and the Post 9/11 World (OUP 2008 and latest edition in 2020) and Geopolitics, Democracy and Peace in the 21st Century (Routledge and second edition in 2020).

INTERNATIONAL WEBINAR ON 20 – 21 FEBRUARY 2021

Chair and Moderator – **Dr.Balmiki Prasad Singh**, former Governor of Sikkim; Founder Trustee & Vice-President, Temple of Understanding India Foundation, New Delhi

PANEL No. 1 -- ENVIRONMENT

Today, there is a credible threat to human survival from global warming and climate change with the potential to damage the lives and habitats of billions in different parts of the world. There is a need to contemplate and work towards building an ecological civilization that would outline the ways of living in harmony with nature. Dialogue and a belief in collective good mark the culture of Bahudha, an approach that celebrates diversity and harmonious living.

Fortunately the concern for safety of the planet earth is catching wide spread attention at various levels At the turn of the 20th century world leaders came together at the United Nations and pledged to pursue with vigour and determination the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for a period of 15 years from 2000-2015. Eight goals formed part of this programme which included “ensure environmental sustainability” and “develop a global partnership for development”.

One is painfully aware that the UN and its agencies are not effective agents of delivery of common public goods. In fact, the present political, economic, trade and cultural bodies have shown limited appetite for management of ecological and environment issues. In reality they are deeply deficient in managing their own basic charter of duty which primarily relate to security, trade and finances. At the same time there is no world government in sight as the nation states cannot subordinate their sovereignty.

The real threat to a habitable and sustainable world in the coming decades would arise from the continuing social turmoil associated with religious and ethnic differences among people. Political ambitions of nation states could always push a region towards wars and conflicts.

I strongly feel that strengthening of open societies where dialogue has primacy and where the spirit of understanding another's point of view is cultivated leads to a better world. Fundamentalism or that a particular view of the world must prevail is the worst of all ideologies and must be discarded. The Bahudha approach becomes crucial.

I believe that both institutions and individuals are important. Institutions mould character and individuals provide resilience and flexibility to institutions. Propagation of values central to ecological civilisation would require the support of farmers and the working class people as well as that of teachers and scholars, educational institutions and centres of excellence. The constructive role of media including social media cannot be overemphasised. This could help generate social movement. For to preserve and strengthen, hope calls upon our wisdom and our energy. Mahatma Gandhi had challenged us to “be the change we wish to see in the World.” Let us accept it. The need is to nurture the moral strength of men and women and their leaders to live with compassion and to spend their energies working for peace and inclusive development and respect for nature.



Dr. James S. Quinn,
PhD, Professor Biology Department McMaster University

Dr. James (Jim) S. Quinn is a professor in the Biology Department at McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada. He studies the behaviour of birds living in complex social groups and the effect of air pollution on DNA (inherited mutations) in birds and mice. On campus he is co-chair of MacGreenInvest, a faculty driven group seeking to have McMaster divest from fossil fuel companies and reinvest in green energy companies. Jim is a member of the Hamilton 350 Committee, a climate change NGO, and past director/chair of Environment Hamilton's board of directors. As well, he has been actively involved in local civil disobedience to discourage the transportation of tar sands bitumen and to try to stop construction of a highway through rare greenspace. He is an active member of several Hamilton Harbour wildlife related advisory committees and works with students to monitor and manage colonial nesting birds in Hamilton Harbour.

Abstract

The global human population along with our striking impacts on the biosphere are having an overwhelming impact. Our governments are faced with the devastating affects of climate change and seem to be doing their best to tread lightly on the problem, as they appear to be more concerned with being re-elected than making important changes. Additionally, the pandemic has revealed inequity throughout the world and there is talk, by some, of a "just recovery". Such a recovery will require seismic change in how our so-called democracies are run.

Canada continues to behave as a Petro-state rather than a real democracy. Petroleum companies have huge power when it comes to our governments, and as a result, the response of the Trudeau government on climate change action has been very weak. Globally, Trudeau has gained a reputation as a climate champion, however the truth is far from that.

I will discuss efforts by various groups in my home city that are seeking climate justice by various actions. I will point out how this effort to come out of the pandemic with a more equitable and green society is important to improving our social fabric.

Consumption of fossil fuels and the use of disposable plastics plays a role in causing climate change, and we can all do our part to reduce our carbon footprints, especially in some wealthy countries like Canada. However, recently Dr. Michael Mann (Pennsylvania State University climate change scientist) has pointed out that the corporations and the governments that are beholden to them would be happy to deflect the blame and have citizens pointing fingers at each other. The real solutions must involve braver governments.



Dr. Kavita Sharma,
formerly President, South Asia University, former Director,
India International Centre, New Delhi

Abstract

Inculcating Human Values in Education

The aim of education is twofold, collective and individual and both need to be satisfied. The individual must not only become a useful member of society but should also grow as a person. Society and systems of education influence each other. Since modern education is also a means of upward mobility, it leads to a race for marketable degrees in which real knowledge and wisdom are neglected. Since training of the mind is at the heart of educational institutions, they must make the mind capable of meeting the challenges of the times through adjustment, adaptation and accountability. Modern knowledge impacts our mental life, our ways of thinking, willing and feeling. It has given us the kind of power unimaginable before and made us capable of both great good and great bad. We can mold life on earth or put an end to it because science has vastly extended human power. Tyrants and bigots in the past have pursued horrifying objectives and if educational institutions do not work towards transforming the mind even worse consequences will follow. Education must retool our thinking, to bring about a paradigm shift so that we do not see ourselves as separate from the world but an integral part of the whole. This would widen our consciousness to understand that several interdependent multiple factors manifest in events happening around us. It would change our view from a hierarchical one to a system of interconnected networks and make us realize that in any given event, since so many interlinked factors are involved outcomes are always indeterminate and unpredictable.

Further, we are not living in a world that is given to us in its entirety but in a world being constantly created, emerging and evolving into something more integrated and complex here and now and not in some distant future. We cannot complacently ignore this as of no consequence to us. Therefore, systems in a learning institution have to be open rather than closed because the latter are bound to decay while the former have an inherent possibility of evolving into states of increasing complexity and order. Educational institutions develop competencies involving development of skills, critical thinking, ability to identify problems and suggest solutions. But competence itself is redefined continuously according to the changing conditions of the world, advances in science and technology and the general rise in human expectations. However, some skills are fundamental in spite of changing requirements of society like the ability to read and write, proficiency in mathematics, understanding of scientific thought and theory, and historical consciousness.

But even these get redefined with technological advances. Today knowledge can be accessed through sources not known before from simple classrooms to a thousand different sites on the computer screen. Therefore, the value of an education is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks.

Education much teach engagement with society. The usual aim is to use knowledge to improve the living standards of people. To this end, educational institutions produce specialists—technicians, scientists, educators and others. However, these specialists have not been able to meet the enormously complex challenges of life mainly because they are trained to respond to immediate problems; but a long view of the challenges has also to be taken. The function of education must necessarily be to bring about a mind that can go beyond the immediate. This can only happen when education concerns itself with the totality of life and not just with responses to immediate challenges.

Therefore, educational institutions must not only develop the technological proficiency but must also uncover the deeper layers of a student's mind. A human being whose inner development is neglected while making him a perfect professional becomes jealous, angry, frustrated, in despair over his unrealistic ambitions. Hence, there is always disorder in society. Such individuals may create an apparently orderly prosperous society but this may not necessarily be a good society. A good society implies order that is not merely external like trains running on time, but an inner order without which disorder lurks just below the surface. Therefore, both technology and the inner life of a human being have to be simultaneously and equally developed. There can be no separation between the two of the kind we have presently created.

Education must produce ethical persons who recognize the great potential for good in human life and try to cultivate it. It means having such profound respect for each individual that it leaves no room for racism, poverty and exploitation. It is also opposed to dogma and inflexible moral positions. It leads to the realization that sexual preferences, ethnic identity, gender, learning and physical differences have to be accommodated with dignity because when we reject them, we not only sacrifice the dignity of those rejected, but of all.



Sri M

Spiritual Teacher, Social Reformer, Educationist, Author and Global Speaker.

Sri M – spiritual teacher, social reformer, educationist, author and global speaker – was born Mumtaz Ali, into a Muslim family on November 6, 1949 in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. His transformational journey, from a young boy to a living yogi, is a story of single-minded discipline and dedication.

At the age of nineteen, irresistably drawn to the snow clad Himalayas, Sri M embarked on his journey to seek a true Master. Maheshwarnath Babaji, a senior disciple of Sri Guru Babaji, took Sri M under his tutelage and initiated him into the Nath tradition. For three and half years, Sri M lived and travelled extensively through the Himalayas with him. What he learnt from Maheshwarnath Babaji transformed his consciousness.

As instructed by his Guru, Sri M returned to the plains and lead a quiet, working family life while preparing to teach all that he had learnt and experienced. A few years after his Master's passing, Sri M received the signal to commence his teaching mission.

Sri M established The Satsang Foundation in twenty years ago, as a meeting point for spiritual seekers of all persuasions. Conversant with the teachings of most major religions, Sri M's teachings seek to transcend the outer-shell of all religions by exploring the core and nurturing the innate goodness in every human being. In his words: "Go to the core. Theories are of no use."

Under The Satsang Foundation, Sri M has initiated projects for social development in the areas of education, health, skill development and environment. It runs free schools and a skill development centre in Madanapalle in Andhra Pradesh and Lathira in U.P., India. It also has a community health centre where it facilitates quality free treatment for the community in Madanapalle. MyTree is an initiative which actively encourages planting of trees. Projects on the anvil are a hospital to provide quality health care in Madanapalle and a Centre for Exploring Consciousness in Chowdepalle.

The Foundation advocates that humanity is One — transcending religious, racial, geographical, cultural and ideological differences. To spread the message of Peace and Harmony, Sri M led the Walk of Hope in 2015-16 from Kanyakumari to Kashmir spanning 15 months and 7500 kms across 11 states of India.

Sri M's autobiography, "Apprenticed to a Himalayan Master – A Yogi's Autobiography" was published in 2011 and became an instant bestseller. A sequel, "The Journey Continues" was published in 2017. Sri M has also authored several texts on the Upanishads, on Meditation, and a novel "Shunya". His book 'On Meditation – Finding infinite bliss and power within,' was published by Penguin India. Two books were released in 2020 – 'Homecoming and Other Short Stories', a collection of short stories again by Penguin and a translation and commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras – titled 'Yoga also for the Godless' published by Westland Publications. All his books have been translated into many Indian languages.

As a key-note speaker, Sri M has been invited to many institutions like the World Health Organization, United Nations Office in Switzerland, World Bank in the United States of America and the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. He has addressed corporates in India and overseas. To name a few, Google and Yahoo in the US, respected business and technical education institutes like the Indian Institute of Managements in Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Kolkata and Mumbai, Indian Institute of Technology, in Delhi, etc.

Among the many awards and honours he has received for his contribution to society, Sri M was conferred with the Padma Bhushan in January 2020, one of the highest civilian awards of India, for distinguished service of high order in spirituality.

Sri M is married and has two children. Based in Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh, a three hour drive from Bangalore, he leads a simple life. Appreciative of music, he also paints in his leisure time.



Karen Mossman,
Ph.D., is a Professor in the Department of Medicine, former Chair of the Department of Biochemistry & Biomedical Sciences and current Vice President Research at McMaster University, Canada.

Karen Mossman, Ph.D., is a Professor in the Department of Medicine, former Chair of the Department of Biochemistry & Biomedical Sciences and current Vice President Research at McMaster University, Canada. She completed her undergraduate Honors BSc in Molecular Biology and Genetics from the University of Guelph in 1992, her Ph.D. in Biochemistry in 1997 and her Post-doctoral Fellowship in Molecular Microbiology and Immunology in 2001, both at the University of Alberta. Dr. Mossman is the recipient of the Milstein Young Investigator Award and Christina Fleischmann Award from the International Society for Interferon and Cytokine Research. Dr. Mossman has published over 150 peer-reviewed scientific publications and has contributed as author and editor to numerous books, including virology textbooks.

Dr. Mossman joined McMaster University in July of 2001, with a research focus on understanding the interactions between viruses and their hosts, both in normal healthy cells and in cancer cells, with the goal of developing novel therapy approaches for emerging viral infections and cancer. These studies of virus-host interactions led to the development of herpesvirus-based oncolytic viruses for cancer immunotherapy. She is currently working with industry to develop Bovine herpesvirus type I as a clinical oncolytic virus vector. More recently, her group helped isolate SARS-CoV-2 from Canadian patients and is actively working on COVID-related studies. To better understand future pandemics, Dr. Mossman's lab also studies bats and why bats are able to host a wide variety of viruses without getting sick.

Dr. Mossman currently serves on the Board of Mitacs, as co-chair of the Council of Ontario Universities COVID task force and the Canadian Neutron Initiative working group, and as Chair of the Board of McMaster Health Labs and McMaster Innovation Park.

Virtual Conference Theme: “Conversation on Life Enhancing Values—No More Hate, No More Fear: Promoting Harmony & Compassion”

Abstract Title: Role of Higher Education in Building Life Enhancing Values and Promoting Peace and Development

Our common goal: To live in a world filled with peace, harmony among individuals and societies, and compassion for all. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., changed the world through their grassroots efforts for civil rights, equality and freedom. During periods of unrest, we continue to find comfort and hope in their words and actions. Building life-enhancing values and promoting peace and development is an essential role for universities; critical to our missions of providing strong educational programs, nurturing innovative research, and creating positive learning environments to advance the health and well-being of societies.

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Anne M Pearson,
(PhD) taught for many years in the Department of Religious
Studies at McMaster University.

Abstract and bio-note for Anne M Pearson (International Webinar Feb. 20-21, 2021)

Bio-note:

Anne M Pearson (PhD) taught for many years in the Department of Religious Studies at McMaster University, including courses on Gandhi and nonviolence. She has authored a book on Hindu women's fasting rituals, and articles on various topics including on Hinduism in Canada. She has been involved with numerous non-profit organization, including currently as Chair of the Hamilton Interfaith Peace Group, President of the United Nations Association in Canada Hamilton Branch, Vice-Chair of the board of Empowerment Squared, and past Co-Chair of the interfaith advisory committee to the Hamilton School Board, Vice-Chair of the Toronto Board of the Parliament of the World's Religions (in 2018), and past member of the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Hamilton. In 2005 she received the world citizenship award from the City of Hamilton, and in 2020 the Order of Hamilton award.

Abstract:

“Promoting Inter-Religious Harmony: Lessons from M.K. Gandhi”

At a time when violence in the name of religion or violence targeted against people identified with particular religions continues to plague humanity, we can turn to the wisdom and experience of those who have championed interfaith dialogue and collaboration as a means to overcome division, antagonism, and fear. One such luminary, of course, was the founder of the Temple of Understanding, Juliet Hollister. Others include Swami Vivekananda, Desmond Tutu, the 14th Dalai Lama, Leonard Swidler, Karen Armstrong. Less often thought of is Mahatma Gandhi. Yet, he devoted considerable thought and action over several decades to address the scourge of communalism in India, and there is much in his writings and life that can guide and inspire us today as we struggle collectively to realize in practice vasudhaiva kutumbakam. This talk will identify and discuss five principles that informed Gandhi's views of religion and his efforts to promote inter-religious harmony.

Note: presentation should be 15 minutes. There will be Q&A for 10 minutes, with some pre-prepared questions.

Text of talk to be sent to AK Merchant (after Feb 21)



Professor Priyankar Upadhyaya, UNESCO Chair for Peace, Banaras Hindu University Global Fellow, Peace Research Institute (Oslo)

Professor Priyankar Upadhyaya has served Banaras Hindu University (BHU)

for over four decades in different teaching and research positions. Most remarkable has been his foundational contribution to envision and nurture the Malaviya Centre for Peace Research (MCPR) at BHU. He currently holds the UNESCO Chair for Peace and Intercultural Understanding and serves on the UNESCO/ UniTwin Executive Committee of Inter-religious Dialogue and Intercultural Understanding (IDIU). He is on the Governing Board of Centre for Studies in Social Sciences (CSSS), Institute of Asian Studies (MAKIAS) and Presidency University in Kolkata.

Professor Upadhyaya also holds the prestigious Global Fellowship of the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). The Jawaharlal Nehru University has recently designated him for the prestigious Rajiv Gandhi Chair for Peace and Disarmament.

Professor Upadhyaya has done post-doctoral studies at London University and holds a Ph.D. and M. Phil. of Jawaharlal Nehru University with specialization in peace and conflict studies. Recipient of many prestigious awards/fellowships including the Scholar-in-Residence Award of the Woodrow Wilson Centre of International Scholars, Wash DC, Faculty Research Award of the Canadian Government, Senior Fulbright Award and Australia-India Council Senior Fellowship and advanced international diploma from Uppsala University ; Professor Upadhyaya has served as Visiting Professor/ Senior Fellow at Henry L Stimson Center (Wash DC), UN University of Peace and US Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, Concordia University (Montreal) and more recently at the Dublin City University. He also lectures at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and National Defence College (NDC) in India and serves as a subject expert in Star News/BBC/Sahara.

Professor Upadhyaya led several transnational research projects with the European Union (FP 7), Norwegian Research Council /Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) /Alton John Foundation raising several million for research and development. He has led several MoU based institutional collaborations with foreign universities including UN Mandated University for Peace: Costa Rica (2008); Tony Blair Faith Foundation (2012), Peace Research Institute, Oslo, PRIO (2010)); Dublin City University (2016) and the Linnaeus-Palme Exchange with Karlstad University (2014-19).

Professor Upadhyaya has published in journals and books from Oxford University Press, Manchester University Press, Cambridge University Press, Sage, Ashgate and Routledge. His volume on 'Peace and Conflict: South Asian Experience' (Cambridge: 2015) and **“Long Walk of Peace, Towards a Culture of Prevention”** (UNESCO: 2018) have received international acclaim. He also serves on the editorial board of the Irish Journal of International Affairs, (Dublin City University) and Journal of Peace and Conflict (UN University of Peace: Costa Rica).

“Sustaining Peace, a corollary of SDG” - Foundational Gandhian Visions

Priyankar Upadhyaya

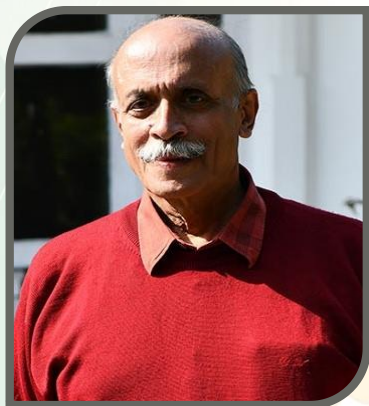
UNESCO Chair Professor of Peace & Intercultural Understanding

Banaras Hindu University

Global Fellow

Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

Gandhi's transformative ideas and pedagogies embedded in a synergetic vision of peace and sustainable development exemplify the core inspiration behind the UN Agenda 2030 especially the emerging trajectory of 'Sustaining Peace' as a corollary of Sustainable Development Goals. Peace for Gandhi is not just the absence of war or violence but also a pathway to expand human potential without harming others in the community as well as the larger ecosystem. Predicated on several mutually inclusive concepts such as Ahimsa (non-violence), Satyagraha (truth-force), Swadeshi (indigenous), Swaraj (self-rule, freedom from poverty, and the empowerment of an individual for self-rule), and Sarvodaya (development/welfare for all), Gandhi's visions of peace and sustainability aligns closely with the major aspirations of the 2030 Agenda so aptly reflected in the tagline “Leave No One Behind.” Gandhi's inveterate commitment to non-violence embedded in his understanding of poverty as the worst kind of violence and its follow up conceptualization of structural violence echoes well in the holistic template of SDG's and ‘sustaining peace’ as its corollary.



Madhavan K Palat,
Faculty of the Centre for Historical Studies Jawaharlal Nehru
University, Delhi, India

Madhavan K Palat (born 9 February 1947) is an Indian historian, specialized on Russian history of the 19th and 20th centuries, and is a scholar of the modern world, and a political commentator. His area of specialisation is rare in a country where few historians have ventured out of Indian History.

He took his B. A. (Honours) degree in history from the University of Delhi, India, in 1966, another B. A. from Cambridge University in 1968, and the D. Phil. degree from Oxford in 1974.

In 1974, Madhavan K. Palat was appointed to the faculty of the Centre for Historical Studies Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India, to teach Russian and European History, became Professor in 1987, and took voluntary retirement in 2004. He was also Dean, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University (2003–04). He was Visiting Professor of Imperial Russian history at the University of Chicago in 2006, National Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, and during 2021-2019, Editor of the Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, a project which he saw to completion after editing the final 42 volumes of the series.

He has also served on different Government committees on foreign relations, security matters, and culture.

Madhavan K Palat (born 9 February 1947) is an Indian historian, scholar of modern world, and political commentator. He is an expert on European and Russian history. In an academic career extending over nearly five decades, he has played a seminal role in promoting understanding of Russian history, culture, literature, and society in India.

After taking his B. A. (Honours) degree in history from the University of Delhi, India, in 1966.. He then pursued his studies at St. Antony's College, Oxford, in 1969, where he pursued his research on modern Russian history and was awarded the D.Phil. degree in 1974.

In 1974, Madhavan K. Palat joined the faculty of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India, where, in 1989, he was appointed Professor of Russian and European History at the Centre for Historical Studies, a position he held until his voluntary retirement from the university in 2004. He was also Dean, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University (2003–04).

His area of specialisation, Russian and European history, is rare in a country where few historians have ventured out of Indian History. From 1974 to 2004, he taught non-Indian history and carried out research in that area at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University .

Between 2001 and 2003, he was a member of Eminent Persons Group, Governments of India and Russia, to advise on India–Russia relations. He was also Member, Committee on Indo-Russian Relations, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi (2002). In 2002–03, Prof. Palat was Member, Committee on the National Defence University, Ministry of Defence, New Delhi. He has been Member, Council of the Association of Russian Philosophy, Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russia since 2001. Prof. Palat is also Associate Member, University of Chicago Centre for East European and Russian/Eurasian Studies (CEERES) University of Chicago

In recent years, he has written and lectured extensively on important historical figures, ideas, and trends.



Dr. Vandana Shiva, Physicist and did her Ph.D

BIOGRAPHY of Dr. Vandana Shiva

Dr. Vandana Shiva is trained as a Physicist and did her Ph.D. on the subject “Hidden Variables and Non-locality in Quantum Theory” from the University of Western Ontario in Canada. She later shifted to inter-disciplinary research in science, technology and environmental policy, which she carried out at the Indian Institute of Science and the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore. In 1982, she founded an independent institute, the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology in Dehra Dun dedicated to high quality and independent research to address the most significant ecological and social issues of our times, in close partnership with local communities and social movements. In 1991, she founded Navdanya, a national movement to protect the diversity and integrity of living resources, especially native seed, the promotion of organic farming and fair trade. In 2004 she started Bija Vidyapeeth, an international college for sustainable living in Doon Valley in collaboration with Schumacher College, U.K. Dr. Shiva combines the sharp intellectual enquiry with courageous activism. Time Magazine identified Dr. Shiva as an environmental “hero” in 2003 and Asia Week has called her one of the five most powerful communicators of Asia. Forbes magazine in November 2010 has identified Dr. Vandana Shiva as one of the top Seven most Powerful Women on the Globe. Dr. Shiva has received honorary Doctorates from University of Paris, University of Western Ontario, University of Oslo and Connecticut College, University of Guelph. Among her many awards are the Alternative Nobel Prize (Right Livelihood Award, 1993), Order of the Golden Ark, Global 500 Award of UN and Earth Day International Award. Lennon ONO grant for peace award by Yoko Ono in 2009, Sydney Peace Prize in 2010, Doshi Bridgebuilder Award, Calgary Peace Prize and Thomas Merton Award in the year 2011, the Fukuoka Award and The Prism of Reason Award in 2012, the Grifone d’Argento prize 2016 and The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity 2016, Veerangana Award 2018, The Sanctuary Wildlife Award 2018 and International Environment Summit & Award 2018.



Dr. A. K. Merchant,
General Secretary, Temple of Understanding India
Foundation, National Trustee, Lotus Temple & Bahá'í
Community of India.

Dr. A. K. Merchant is the General Secretary, Temple of Understanding India Foundation, National Trustee, Lotus Temple & Bahá'í Community of India. He also serves as National Trustee, Sarvodaya International Trust; Secretary, Parkash Foundation (Resource Centre for Differently-abled Children); Associate Secretary, Global Warming Reduction Centre; Visiting Faculty, Centre for Cultural Resources & Training, Ministry of Culture, Government of India. A subject expert for research scholars enrolled for “interfaith education and Indian culture” of the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund; a Naturopath and Counsellor for Positive Psychotherapy.

Dr. Merchant is the author of three monographs: (i) Communal Harmony—India's Greatest Challenge (1991), which has been quoted in one of the Supreme Court Judgments on “Babri Masjid—Ram Janambhoomi” dispute, and (ii) Hindu Dharma evam Bahá'í Dharma (1999), (iii) Five Basic Human Values & the Bahá'í Faith (2009), and over two hundred fifty articles and research papers that have been published in national and international dailies, journals and books.

Dr. Merchant has represented the Temple of Understanding as well as the Bahá'í Community of India at numerous international and national conferences, symposia and seminars in India and abroad since 1985. He represented the Indian Bahá'í Community at the 8th Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace, September 1990, held in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. He is an alumni of the United States' State Department International Exchange Program 2005 for the project on “religious diversity in America post 9/11”; he was invited by H. H. Pope Benedict XVI as National Trustee of the Bahá'í Community of India to the interfaith conference to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Assisi and the World Prayer Day for Justice and Peace held at the Vatican and Assisi, 26-28 October 2011. He has been actively involved with participating and contributing to the deliberations of the Parliament of the World's Religions held in Chicago (1993), Cape Town (1999), Barcelona (2004), Melbourne (2009), Salt Lake City (2015), Toronto (2018). On several occasions he was invited by the H. H. the Dalai Lama to address interfaith conferences and assist with organization of international conferences and seminars in India. He is an active promoter of gender justice and has spoken on numerous occasions for the implementation of Beijing Platform for Action, post 4th World Women Summit, September 1995, and written on the subject of Gender Equality; the Environment and Ecology; World Peace, Agenda 2030—U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, inter alia. He has served as Resource Person for the promotion of discourses on science, religion and development.



Rama Singh,
McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada

Abstract-TOU/SICI Conference. Delhi. Feb 20-21, 2021

Truth Matters: Why value-based education should become part of university culture for wellbeing of society

Rama Singh, McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada

The rapid development of new knowledge and its application in science and technology, there remains inequalities across gender, race, income, nationality leading to much of the unrest in our communities. Various groups have exasperated these inequities and fueling even greater division by fostering and spreading false and damaging narratives. Further threats from global issues, as articulated by the UN-Sustainable Development Goals have left mankind itself in question.

The education sector has historically proven to be a stable sector that strives to diminish inequalities, create new knowledge, cooperate among all sectors, develop and advance societies, jointly examine global threats find solutions. Among those in the sector, Universities are obliged to take a leadership role to ensure that programs, research, and community development are true based on facts, accessible, and impactful to the communities it serves. As the Magna Charta University points out, to create and maintain public trust, universities across the globe should engage in promoting living values with a view to promote a sense of world citizenship among our graduates.

Twentieth century's two most profound discoveries were Albert Einstein's theory of relativity and Mahatma Gandhi's Law of Ahimsa or Nonviolence. One relates to the outer world, the other to the inner world. Both were innovative thinkers who acted upon the new knowledge with great vision. Similarly, the education sector and specifically Universities can ensure that the building blocks to innovative thought based on true facts, have a strong foundation of values based on the principles of peace, mutual respect, and fairness for a common good. There is a great need for universities to become non-partisan, regain their intellectual integrity and autonomy, and engage their students in conversation on life enhancing values. Universities must fulfil their historic obligations of creating and sharing knowledge while building the foundation for well developed, compassionate and informed thought for the next generation.

Propagation of values central to ecological civilisation would require the support of farmers and the working class people as well as that of teachers and scholars, educational institutions and centres of excellence. The constructive role of media including social media cannot be overemphasised. This could help generate social movement. For to preserve and strengthen, hope calls upon our wisdom and our energy. Mahatma Gandhi had challenged us to "be the change we wish to see in the World." Let us accept it. The need is to nurture the moral strength of men and women and their leaders to live with compassion and to spend their energies working for peace and inclusive development and respect for nature.