

Meeting of Minds: Gandhi and Haydar in Today's World

Meeting across time and space, both Mahatma Gandhi, known for his leadership of the independence movement in the Indian sub-continent, and Jawdat Haydar, Lebanese poet/philosopher, evolved a similar philosophy and vision for the world, based on love, peace and tolerance as the foundation for the struggle for truth that both men espoused as their life's objective.

“Collectively, Haydar's poems do constitute a relatively consistent outlook on life, which may be summed up in fairly simple terms: Peace should be mankind's collective goal; love informed by reason should be its main aim. These were the qualities he most admired in Mahatma Gandhi, the man whom Haydar seems most to have sought to emulate.”

To quote Gandhi :

“If I am to die by the bullet of a mad man, I must do so smiling. There must be no anger within me. God must be in my heart and on my lips”

“I regard myself as a soldier, though a soldier of peace“

“Nonviolence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed”

“I hold that democracy cannot be evolved by forcible methods. The spirit of democracy cannot be imposed from without. It has to come from within.”

To quote Haydar :

“Peace but the glory of a real life/Keep it in your mind, live it in your strife

Tis the treasure of belief in your story/It is the vim of faith in your glory”

“Brothers why be like a moon on the wane/Ever beating the bolted door in vain

Hence why not unite again to stand 'gain

Prideful of your Lebanese cultured vein”

Today we are discussing whether the overarching message of these two men is relevant to our times and world where violence is seems to be prevailing. We will try to explore, with our panelists and with audience participation, questions such as the following:

1. • How is the world today different from the world in which Gandhi and Haydar lived?• Are the life experiences and ideas of Gandhi and Haydar relevant for the world as it is today?
2. • Can they be implemented and propagated today, and if so, how best to do so?
3. • Rhetorically speaking, is the concept of a “non-violent fight” or a “peaceful soldier” inherently contradictory, and if yes, how can this contradiction be resolved?
4. • How can we convince those who believe that ‘if you are not with us, you are against us’ that there is room in this world for all opinions and beliefs?

We hope, at the end of the discussion, to have a road-map for the promotion of a common vision, in memory of not only Gandhi and Haydar but of all those who have dreamed and are dreaming still, of a world where life is based on love and understanding between men, and on harmony with nature. We look forward to having you join us in this endeavor.