

April 26, 1993

URGENT

Professor George Gerbner (Dean Emeritus)
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Dear George,

Your comments really saved me!

SO, without pouring over all three pages. you will now find that

--I've tried to define the audience in the very first paragraph,

--Your pioneering work is referred to in the text. but not nearly as much as it will be in the book itself.

--the last paragraphs of p. 3 give the details on what I would be doing in the year of my proposed award (including Bert's participation in the project), and

--the entire book will be about communication in all its myriad aspects, although not in the usual form.

You may note that I'm trying to keep up with changes in the world. How do we do it? Isn't the whole world becoming almost as much complicated as the events reviewed in Triumph of the Myth?

And once again many thanks for your splendid comments in my class and your brilliant lecture in the evening. Would you consider coming again next January?

Bert joins me in sending our greetings and expressing our breathless anticipation for the birth of your Invisible Crises.

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your giving me this time in the midst of your heavy schedule.

With warm regards and deep appreciation,

As ever,

Kusum Singh



Biography attached

Kusum Singh proposal to NEH Fellowship Program for College Teachers and Independent Scholars--April 25, 1993 8 p.m.

LEARNING NONVIOLENT DEMOCRACY: The New Gandhian Activists

My aim is to complete a book on nonviolent activism as a way to help strengthen democracy. The book is designed both to document past successes and to suggest new experiments in participatory democracy. This should be particularly helpful to the general public as well as students, researchers and practitioners in communication, the humanities as whole and specialists in leadership, education, women's studies, human rights, and peace.

Under the new conditions of post-cold war disorder one might get the impression that the legacy of nonviolent leaders--Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. and others--has lost its legitimacy. One reason, in addition to "the romance of violence," is that this legacy is seen as having outlived its historical relevance.

Gene Sharp and other scholars on Gandhian-style activism use the term "nonviolence" as referring only to such forms of militant action as withdrawing support, demonstrations, civil disobedience, boycotts and non-violent sanctions. These are seen as techniques used when other democratic procedures are not available. In a broader sense, however, non-violence has always been the essence of democracy. Settling disputes without violence is the core of honest elections, political parties, adjudication, legislating, majority decision, minority rights and federalism. Like some of my interviewees, I place nonviolence (in the narrow sense) in the context of necessary relations with other democratic processes.

Some women and men in many parts of the world are adapting the Gandhi-King legacy to new challenges. Theirs is a creative process of reinvention that, if more widely communicated, might help combat violence. This idea is supported by many in-depth interviews (close to 200 in number) that I conducted with women and men--policy-makers, activists and scholars--in many parts of the world. Most of these were done in India (some in Hindi) and the U. S. Some riveting interviews and discussions took place in Japan, Russia, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands and Brazil. My tentative conclusions are also based on historical analysis and a wide-ranging literature review that includes the work of Indian authors rarely read outside of their own country and women authors that seem neglected everywhere.

My central hypothesis is that broader democracy requires leadership that can (1) endure failures on the long road to partial triumph, (2) hew to universal ethical standards, (3) work toward sexual equality, (4) disseminate the messages of nonviolent democracy through all channels of communication and (5) help people--from early childhood to old age--learn how to handle troublesome conflicts peacefully. Developing these themes can be an exercise in realistic analysis and pragmatic idealism.

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Many glorious triumphs have been achieved by nonviolent activists. In India, nonviolent activists achieved what had long been deemed impossible: liberation from the British empire. Other colonies followed suit. In the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the Philippines, the "impossible" happened again. In Greece, Spain, Portugal, Argentina, Chile and Brazil authoritarian regimes were displaced peacefully. While widespread euphoria was created by these bloodless displacements, the euphoria itself was soon displaced by the bloodshed that followed. Communal violence in India, violence in American streets and schools, ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia and the assassinations of Gandhi and King are grim reminders of the many roots of violence in the human condition. Yet throughout the world unsung heroines and heroes have pioneered in nonviolent struggles against racism, sexism, homophobia, poverty and pollution. Progress on these fronts, while not large in comparison with rising aspirations, is nonetheless encouraging. "Triumph and Tragedy" (Chapter 1)

Nonviolent activism has usually been invented to attain one or another basic human right. In 1948 human rights advocates won approval, against tremendous obstacles, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly. The soaring words of this comprehensive resolution and its follow-up treaties have been historic forward steps--despite insufficient attention to duties--in setting forth both high ideals and specific kinds of action needed for strengthening nonviolent democracy. Yet these ideals are flagrantly violated. Much more commitment and monitoring are needed, together with new institutions for monitored force, as Gandhi himself visualized, in preventing or stopping violence. "Human Rights: Ideals and Deeds" (Chapter 2)

For centuries men have used violence or threats of violence in denying women equal rights. Although all human beings share some female and male characteristics and body structures, male dominance has for centuries weighed like a nightmare on the human spirit. Submissiveness of women has long forced divisions of labor that deny their potentialities and, as Gandhi often asserted, inhibit the flowering of men's nurturing capacities. New family structures and relationships among family members will help human beings escape cultures of male and heterosexual superiority. "Sexual Equality" (Chapter 3)

A cultural environment of justified violence often dominates the world's mass media. George Gerbner and his associates have documented how real-life is overdramatized and reinforced by TV drama, films and news reports. Nonviolence is treated as less newsworthy and dramatic. The messages of equal human rights are best transmitted through personal example and face to face communication. This requires less reliance on, and much reform in, the mass media. Top-top and middle level discussions can be truly successful only if more "bottom-sideways" and "bottom-up" communication take place. This is most likely with the kind of

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democratic charismas that (unlike that described by Max Weber) encourage initiative rather than dependency by followers. "Democratic Communication" (Chapter 4)

Education on nonviolence and human rights can help people handle domestic, ethnic and international conflicts peacefully. The Universal Declaration's preamble urges that "every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms." No nation and no national or local education system has done much striving of this kind. More experiments are needed in channeling frustration and rage into constructive channels or in preventing them pro-actively. Moral vision and example by family members and teachers are essential. Equally important are educational programs on nonviolence in defence of human rights for all people at work, rest and play. "Education for Handling Conflict Peacefully" (Chapter 5)

For each of these five chapters (as well as a general introduction) I already have detailed notes, outlines and preliminary drafts. These contain many quotations from my interviews and ideas stimulated by them as a result of a 1990 one semester sabbatical and a 1991 one-semester as a Fulbright scholar in India. With a full year to complete each chapter, I intend to update my analysis by some reinterviewing and new interviewing--with special attention to new ideas about education for peaceful conflict resolution and human rights in school systems.

I also plan revisiting with the Albert Einstein Institution (Cambridge) and the Center for Creative Nonviolence and the Gandhi Memorial Center (Washington, DC.). Visiting for the first time with the Center for Negotiation (Cambridge), the U. S. Peace Institute and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Washington, D. C.), the Martin Luther King, Jr. and Carter Institute (Atlanta), and the Gandhi Center (Memphis) will also be instructive. I look forward to continuous discussions (mail, fax, telephone as well as personal visits) with colleagues elsewhere in the U. S. and abroad. Bertram Gross, a retired distinguished professor who has published widely on democracy and human rights will provide sustained assistance.

By completing a first draft in eight months, and with a few months for revisions, I hope to have a final manuscript within a year. The book will respond to the new challenges created by terrorism, violent cults, crime in the schools, obsolete power structures and out-of-touch leadership. It will offer a non-utopian appraisal of how more people might learn the arts of creative nonviolence in fortifying democracy in the public and private spheres of human life. Hopefully, this transdisciplinary effort will stimulate debate, action and research throughout the humanities on the ideals and deeds needed to move from current barbarisms to more civilized societies in the first years of the 21st century.

April 26, 1993 Selected Bibliography with Singh Proposal

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