

Dear NKARC members and friends,

Sometimes when we talk about Nonkilling Arts, we tend to miss out on its core essence. Nonkilling creative endeavor is beyond mere lamenting, mourning, or a celebration, it is about the work's power to hold mirror to us on what brings killing and nonkilling, and move us to contemplate on possibilities of transformation.

The material that you sent me last month made me think about the above.

Let me start with a note from our activist Nobel Peace Laureate colleague Mairead Maguire. It was written by her in reply to queries from young peace activists from Afghanistan Peace Volunteers. In her reply, she beautifully articulates what Nonkilling and Peace Activism mean to her:

"...I myself believe in nonkilling, nonviolence as a personal way of life and many years ago took a decision never to kill or hurt another human being and to commit my life in service of others and humanity in order to work for spiritual, social and political change and to work with others, to help bring about a more equal and happy world. I work to move beyond armies, militaries and war, and base my politics on reverence for life, human rights and international law.

I believe life is a great gift and we are given it freely and when we meditate on the gift of life and its wonder and awe, taking another person's life, or hurting them, is simply out of the question!! but we have a responsibility to work against injustice, being prepared to die but never kill a brother/sister. But we each have a choice -- As life is full of choices, and I choose to be a peace activist."

She goes on how we make this choice:

"Aung Sang Suu Kyi said recently in an interview - she is not a human rights activist but a politician. She has chosen to work as a politician and wishes to become President of Burma, and as the daughter of the late General Aung sang she comes from a military background. As you will know Suu is currently working to get the Burmese Constitution changed to allow her to be eligible to become president, if the people so choose.

There are other Presidents - such as president Oscar Arias of Costa Rica who abolished the military in his country. And when you read Prof. Paige's book you will see the great human history of people rejecting armies, militarism and solving problem through nonviolence and dialogue. Your own movement of dialogue and reconciliation and nonviolence I believe is part of a new consciousness amongst the human family that life is sacred and we can solve our problems. Without killing each other. We are challenged to find alternative structures and institutions, but when the heart changes and the mind put on the mantle of love, everything is possible.

Also if you read Alfred Nobel's will on google you will see he was a visionary over 100 years ago, and in his will stipulated. That his award should be for people working to abolish armies, working for fraternity amongst nations, peace conferences, etc."

I heard a wonderful interview last week and the American writer said that after writing 2 dozens books and a lifetime study he has come to the conclusion there are two movements in the world - one is kindness - one is cruelty. I was reminded of the Dalai Lama's life and belief that kindness is the greatest of virtues.

Hope this is helpful.

Love to you both and all our friends in the Afghan Peace Volunteers, you are great...

Mairead"

Mairead's letter is an important one as it provides insight into the commitment required to consider oneself a nonkilling peace activist or for that matter a nonkilling creative artist.

### **Plays:**

Last month I was in Montreal to attend re-mount of Rahul Varma's controversial play, *Bhopal*. It raised similar questions in my mind. Varma's play is about the tragic explosion at the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India in 1984 in which thousands of poor and innocent people were killed and maimed due to careless release of poisonous gasses in the air.

The event gave me an opportunity to speak with the upcoming Canadian playwright about his three recent plays which focus around big peace and justice themes. In *Bhopal* (2003, 2006, 2010,2011), the play deals with the unchecked corporate greed and economic globalization; in *Truth and Treason* (2009), his quest is about unveiling the lies told by those holding power during the Iraq War perpetuating violence and killings, and his recent play, *State of Denial* (2102) focuses on genocide and stories of Armenian, Turkish and Rwandan women struggling to survive the wars of ethnic cleansing.

In all three plays, the focus is on its protagonists' search of truth and uncovering lies which have brought horrendous killings of innocent. The plays are written from the point of view of victims impacted by actions of those wielding power. Varma's plays are not just about empathizing with weak and downtrodden, they point to an unethical system in which those in power have no scruples in exerting their authority despite human costs involved. Both oppressors and oppressed are shown as part of a system where they have little options to change the status quo, those who dare to stand up to expose the truth are ready to face consequences for their dare.

When I asked the playwright about contemporary anti-war plays, Varma was not happy with current crop of plays which he felt were mainly focussed on soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan wars. He provided some useful insights. These plays about physically and emotionally wounded returning soldiers instead of their politicization from their brutal war experience seem to focus on their neuroses assuming that following their recovery they will be

ready for the next venture abroad. Many important stories are left out from these narratives. For example, the central cause of having landed these soldiers in a situation without any accountability of those as a system (or as individuals) responsible for sending troops into action. Another missing element has been absence of parallel stories on what may be happening to ordinary people who must bear the brunt of violent attacks from both the sides. The conversation with Rahul Varma provided me a better understanding of what could be potentially described as a Nonkilling play. Without compromising the aesthetics of a play, an example for furthering such writing may be to explore inclusion in the journey of the traumatized return veteran rejection of further killing or getting into nonkilling action by wanting to become a community nonkilling peace soldier who works on building community or introduces nonkilling curricula in schools or writes nonkilling plays, poetry, songs etc. This is not as some may describe as "messaging" or "propoganda" writing. Such veteran nonkilling heros and heroines do exist in real life, their stories waiting to be told.

### **Poems:**

Defining a poem as nonkilling poetry has been an equally challenging task. An excellent example of a nonkilling poem came through a poem entitled, "False Religion" by Rabindra Nath Tagore who won the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature. It was sent by Glenn Paige.

#### False Religion

Those who in the name of Faith embrace illusion,  
Kill and are killed.  
Even the atheist gets God's blessings -  
Does not boast of his religion;  
With reverence he lights the lamp of Reason  
And pays his homage not to scriptures,  
But to the good in man.

The bigot insults his own religion  
When he slays a man of another faith.  
Conduct he judges not in the light of Reason;  
In the temple he raises the blood-stained banner  
And worships the devil in the name of God.

All that is shameful and barbarous through the Ages,  
Has found shelter in their temples -  
Those they turn into prisons;  
O, I hear the trumpet call of Destruction!

Time comes with her great broom  
Sweeping all refuse away.  
That which should make man free,  
They turn into fetters;  
That which should unite,

They turn into a sword;  
That which should bring love  
From the Fountain of the Eternal,  
They turn into prison  
And with its waters they flood the world.  
They try to cross the river in a bark riddled with holes;  
And yet, in their anguish, whom to they blame?

O Lord, breaking false religion,  
Save the blind!  
Break! O break the altar that is drowned in blood.

Let your thunder strike  
Into the prison of this religion  
And bring to this unhappy land  
The light of Knowledge.

[From Later Poems of Tagore, translated by Aurobindo Bose, foreword by Yehudi Menuhin,  
assessment by Herman Hesse (Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1974) pp. 38-39]

Glenn's comment below describes well the rationale behind why Tagore's this poem may be considered as Nonkilling poetry. Glenn writes: "Aside from ability to lift up the nonkilling soul, it seems a good example of nonkilling poetry combining Spirit and Science (Reason) with prescription action if "Lord" can be taken as human action and "Break" can be taken as nonkilling means."

Another poem in the form of rhymed reflection which the reader may find of interest is from CPI colleague Francisco Cardoso Gomes de matos entitled:

"Peace in Syria, Let's pray"

For Peace when in all religions people pray  
Basically the same Peace-supporting message they say

Let's do our best for global Peace today  
so the right to a killing-free Life will Always stay

For Peace when in all religions people pray  
Basically they share the same Peace-supporting way:

Learning to treat one another with dignity  
and also nurturing one's religious identity

A sustainable challenge is faced by Religions for Peace:  
to remind us that Global Peacebuilding is never to cease

For Peace in Syria, may people in all religions pray  
for Syrians to co-create harmony in what they do every day

Colleague Ada Aharoni writes beautifully. Her following poem A Bridge – Not Wall reflects spirit of peace work we are all engaged in – Violence Prevention and Reconciliation.,

“A BRIDGE - NOT A WALL”

by Ada Aharoni

I will inhale the Bridge  
And will exhale the wall.  
I sang you Bridge  
In every grain  
Of the Pomegranate of my life,  
I wrote you in all the languages  
In all the keys of a unique  
Immortal Symphony.

There are two additional timely poems on IFLAC blog on the anti-apartheid leader late Nelson Mandela by Ada whose life served us as a model of fearlessness and courage needed in bringing reconciliation in his native land of South Africa.

Ada warmly invites all Nonkilling friends and researchers to become Bloggers of IFLAC BLOG - THE INTERNATIONAL FROUM FOR THE LITERATURE AND CULTURE OF PEACE, at: [www.iflac.wordpress.com](http://www.iflac.wordpress.com)

### **Nonkilling Sculpture:**

There are two interesting pieces received from you:

#### **Mandela statue**

See below the photo of this experiential work of Nelson Mandela as a tribute to the great leader. It is a unique larger than life portrait of Nelson Mandela surrounded by prison bars who some time you see, and then not. Fifty rods of steel, symbolizing prison bars, so people will never forget the years Mandela was imprisoned. The remarkable thing about this artwork is that it is only when you stand at a certain place (which is marked) that you see him.

#### **Artist Transform Guns to Make Peace Sculpture**

Colleague Rick Panter sent the following link to a nonkilling peace sculpture from the NPR's Weekend edition. Click on:

<http://www.npr.org/2014/01/25/265794611/artist-transforms-guns-to-make-music>

Thank you Mairead, Rahul, Glenn, Ada, Francisco, and Rick for your contributions and thoughts.

We keep walking...

In Nonkilling Peace

Bill

ps. the letter is also attached as Word doc.

Bill (Balwant)Bhaneja  
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"Nonkilling is THE measure of human progress"

**From:** [Robert Miyake-Stoner](#)

**Sent:** Tuesday, January 14, 2014 10:26 PM

**To:** [Bob Miyake-Stoner](#)

**Subject:** Fwd: Fw: Fwd: Mandela Sculpture

Have you seen this? Very creative and moving.

Tribute to Nelson Mandela. Fifty rods of steel, symbolizing prison bars, so people will never forget the years Mandela was imprisoned. The remarkable thing about this artwork is that it is only when you stand at a certain place (which is marked) that you see him.











