

GandhiServe India: Mahatma Gandhi's Life in Color. Mumbai: Sonigraphics 2016, 692 S., ASIN: B01FRGX4ZY, Rs. 7500 (India) / US \$ 140 (International) / 132 € (Europe); Order via: www.mahatmabook.com

What a weighty book – and in many ways! When it is in your own hands, you get an idea of 6.6 kg! A first glance then falls on almost 700 pages of best photographic paper. A second step gives you an idea of how rich nearly 1300 images can be; taken with the possibilities of their time in black-and-white and which have been re-colored with the latest methods for the special edition. The historical Gandhi thus becomes tangible at present in its contemporary historical context and presented as an icon of the future. Some pictures have a very convincing quality. The epic salt march, which dates back almost 90 years, then becomes a concrete event. In addition, it is also the rare and hitherto rather unknown images, which allow an appreciative and exhilarating breath – e.g. to see an argumentative (1934) or a thoughtful Gandhi (p. 134) in 1930, which one would like to address. Or it is Gandhi on a chair in the water at Juhu Beach in Bombay in 1944, together with his son Devadas (p. 431); who knows the beach today knows how much traders and walkers are around. At the same time, the historical is a tangible view of the seashore, which is still possible today and so the viewers can sit next to the same among equals and together enjoy the vastness of the sea and the world. The viewer of the book are given an idea of the gesture and facial expressions of the Mahatma, who also sits lost in thoughts at his spinning wheel (p. 394f), and expresses animated life energy in interaction with children (p. 193; 248; 377) the next moment. The publication is enriched by cartoons, newspaper excerpts, selected letters and map material, as well as a focused selection of texts to document the Mahatma's key aspects. This mixture makes the publication a jewel of Gandhi documentation in the 21st century! The main messages are e.g. documented in an English-Hindi-illustration to explain Satyagraha (p. 159). Both the targeted selection of the texts as well as the loving systematization and the chronological classification of the images are based on the passion of its authors, who have done meticulous and interdisciplinary work for over three decades. In all this, some historical tilts of the Gandhi reception are once again brought up; e.g. that Gandhi is pushing the boy in front of him at Juhu Beach in Bombay and not that the boy pulls the Mahatma behind him, as is often asserted (p. 244f), although this has been known for at least several decades in the Gandhi-scene. In addition, it is highly topical issues that could be forgotten in black and white, but are very specific in the post-colored form – e.g. Gandhi's interest in modern medicine and the overcoming of diseases such as leprosy (pp. 338ff), or

cooperation with Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the great Pashtunian fighter for a non-violent Islam in today's Pakistan and Afghanistan (pp. 254ff; 501; 586ff), whose work is important as signal character for the peace process of South Asia and the world-project of a Shanti Sena ("non-violent peace army").

The book is also scientifically an important treasure trove of the central historical stations of Mohandas K. Gandhi, who himself never wanted to be an icon; and by his exemplary and selfless action became precisely this icon. Rabindranath Tagore gave him the honorary title of Mahatma ("great soul"), quasi on behalf of the Indian people. Gandhi struggled with this form of address lifetime, because he wanted to be the same among equals, who would not bring anything new to the world; as truth and non-violence were just as old as the mountains. And this may be a key to the understanding of Gandhi's work, which is still today a motivation for self-transformation and constant social change in the sense of justice and sustainability. As a holistic life-attitude, non-violence becomes an orientation function for the world in the 21st century, which seems to have fallen out of line.

The image-text volume is divided into 14 major biographical sections: Early Years, Apprenticeship in South Africa, Dawn of Nonviolent Resistance in India, The Great Trial, The epic salt march, The nation's representative, Call of the villages, Individual Satyagraha against Second World War, Quit India, Regaining Strength, Hour of Destiny, Pilgrim of Peace, India Liberated, The light goes out. The work is framed by a preface and an introduction as well as a coherent chronology and a biographical post-word by the sociologist and social reformer Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, who is still heavily involved in the field of sanitation in the sense of Gandhi. In his essay, he tells of his concrete experiences of "untouchability" in Bihar after independence, his growing commitment to Gandhi up to his activities in the cleanliness campaign (Swachh Bharat Abhiyan – Clean India!) by the current Prime Minister and his government until 2019. It is the inhumane situation of the latrine scavengers who in many places have still to clean the pit latrines with bare hands, which ultimately contributed to the foundation of the Sulabh sanitation movement in the 1970s. Sulabh means the availability and presence; it describes the commitment to the building of adapted toilets to the respective living conditions – with implications for the global South. It implies also the promotion of biogas plants, the establishment of a basic health care as well as schools for the Dalits ("Untouchables"). Engaging in this area is a weighty contribution in a country where there are more mobile phones than toilets!

The book has the potential to have a politically heavy impact as well. At least, it is highly praised politically and presented to the public by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Minister

of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Dr. Mahesh Sharma. Nevertheless, it is a tradition in India to use Gandhi for its own political purposes. The long-reigning congress party used the portrait of the Mahatma continuously in their election-campaigns. This is funny, because Gandhi had already left the Indian National Congress as a predecessor organization in 1934 and was passionately arguing with the later Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, on the development of the subcontinent after independence between village republics and the heavy industry.

For current government policy, it is crucial whether it succeeds – fully documented in the book – to implement holistic legacy of constructive democracy in the sense of Gandhi; that is to seriously work for world citizenship on the basis of sustainability and justice. To this end, a revised Constructive Program (1941) for today would include anchoring the well-being of the individual in the well-being of all, as well as promoting the unity and harmony of religions, realizing lifelong education for all, or striving for the economic equality of all subcontinent people. In this sense, it is important to ask whether a concentration on the theme of village cleanliness and the extensive provision of toilets is sufficient (point 6 of the Constructive Program), so that no one has to empty in fields in 2019. But this topic can't be separated from Communal Unity and Harmony in the sense of Gandhi (point 1 of the Constructive Program)! Overcoming the untouchability and other forms of social discrimination require a simultaneous radical reorientation of the economy in the sense of social justice and consideration of universal human rights! Environmental protection works only hand-in-hand with the respect for the human dignity of all, which also includes adivasi ("tribals"), who live in the constantly decreasing forests due to increasing industrialization. Gandhi's holistic understanding of grassroots democracy is a powerful signal to Indian and global politics when the survival of all people is at the core of interest.

Therefore, the book is a significant challenge to revisit Gandhi's multi-faceted pragmatic idealism of Sarvodaya and Satyagraha. So it is more or less a question of a constructive balance between the global North and the South. The current contribution to the creation of an adjustment in the world's best known democracy in the world as a whole, according to its own views, is decisive in the Indian and global perspective. And this requires a different policy in which one can learn a lot through sincere engagement with Gandhi. In this respect, the book makes it possible to get to know the offered legacy of the Mahatma with his own eyes, to remember some situations, or even to be pushed as a connoisseur to something new. The book claims, despite its proud price, a place in as much as every library in the world, in as many public places as possible and as present as possible in every household in which people want

to learn from Gandhi's exemplary life in images and texts; so that it can be opened on a daily basis in order to get new motivations for the implementation of a sustainable and just world.

Gregor Lang-Wojtasik