

Director statement

In total I spent about eight years in India – from 1983 till today - where I visited and still visit Gandhian projects, associates and relatives of the Mahatma systematically. By this I got a rare insight into the inner circle of the Mahatma and was able to develop a profound understanding of Gandhi and the context he lived in. I documented activities of institutions and recorded talks with eye witnesses. I was also able to safeguard precious material on and by Gandhi.

The most comprehensive photo collection of over 9,000 photographs was possessed by Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri, a Mumbai-based biographer of Gandhi. Some of these photographs Jhaveri used for his own exhibitions, films and publications in India, but the majority of images had never been exposed to the public. After Jhaveri's death in 1985, I visited his estate in Mumbai. Jhaveri's family agreed to give the photographs a preservation treatment and to catalogue them scientifically. They sent the photographs to me to Germany where I did the necessary works within five years.

Kanu Gandhi was a close associate of Gandhi who acted as his semi-official photographer, although Gandhi laid down three conditions: he would not pose, flash photography was forbidden, and Gandhi would not provide any financial assistance. By this Kanu was able to capture Gandhi in all his moods and moments. His collection forms the second largest photo collection on Mahatma Gandhi. In 1985 I met Kanu Gandhi at his home in Rajkot (Gujarat/India). Proudly he showed me his precious photographs. After Kanu Gandhi's death in the following year I paid a condolence visit to his widow Abha, who was known as one of the two 'living walking sticks' Gandhi used to lean on during the last years of his life, and in whose arms Gandhi died. An arrangement was found to preserve the photographs and negatives which document Gandhi's later life in the most remarkable way.

Initiated in 2010 by the Mumbai-based GandhiServe India Trust, in an interdisciplinary project, Gandhi scholars, historians, photo experts and graphic designers joined hands in order to turn those black and white photographs of the Vithalbhai Jhaveri, Kanu Gandhi and several other collections into color images, thus making them true documents of history.

After scanning, all photographs have been cleaned digitally and colorized by skilled Indian hands according to the historic settings. When the photographs were taken the actual colorful scenes were reduced to black and white photographs due to technical limitations of those days. Now, in a complex process, Indian experts added the missing colors.

Mahatma Gandhi's life story has been narrated by Partap Sharma and Neethi Ravindran, the leading voices in Indian TV, cinema and theatre. A special thanks go to Neethi and Partap for their dedication to the project!

This audio visual show has been dedicated to the conscience of humanity. May it contribute to a culture of peace and nonviolence which is so badly needed to save this planet!

More about Peter Ruehe: www.peterruehe.org