



Prof. Michael Nagler

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Promoting Gandhian Values outside India-2007

Born: 20th January, 1937

BA in English and Mixed Languages -New York University, M.A. in Comparative Literature University of California, Ph.D in Comparative Literature-University of California, Berkeley

Professor Emeritus of Languages at the University of California, Berkeley, and founder and former chairperson of the University's Peace and Conflict Studies Programme, Prof. Michael Nagler, who has devoted his life to exploring non-violence as an alternative to war, has become one of the world's most respected Peace scholars and activists. Prof. Nagler belongs to a rare category of peace activists who came to Gandhiji through the spiritual route. He knew something about Gandhiji, when he joined the Department of Classics and Comparative Literature of the University of California, Berkeley, in 1966 at the age of 29. But it was his contact with an Indian savant, Eknath Easwaran, and residence in the latter's Blue Mountain Centre of Meditation that was the turning point in his life. To quote him, "not until he began to see Gandhi through the eyes of Eknath Easwaran did he begin to understand Gandhi". In the mid 1970s, looking for a way to make his teaching more meaningful, he offered a course on non-violence and Gandhi. The course was successful with the students. Since there was no place for such a course in the University's curriculum, he brought together some like-minded colleagues and began the long process of establishing the 'Peace and Conflict Studies Programme'. He taught a major non-violence course in Peace and Conflict Studies for 25 years. His course on non-violence had about 70 students each semester and the programme has been one of the largest in North America and is now being used as a model for similar courses at some other colleges and universities.

During the last 15 years, Prof. Nagler has become increasingly involved in the peace movement. His concern all along has been that the principled non-violence, as practiced by Gandhiji, should be adopted in both constructive programmes suited to American conditions and in non-violent resistance to injustice and oppression. He is the founder of Metta Centre for Non-Violence Education and Educators for Non-Violence, together with the Dalai Lama Foundation, and is now its President. He has been the moving spirit behind the 'Shanti Sena' project (now called Non-violent Peace Force) of which the first pilot project is at present being tried in Sri Lanka.

Prof. Nagler has delivered numerous lectures and published articles on non-violence and conflict resolution, reviews of books by and on Gandhiji in the journals in America and Europe. He is the author of *America without Violence* (1972), *The Upanishads* (with Eknath Easwaran) (1987), *Is There No Other Way, Search for a Non-Violent Future* (2002), *Hope or Terror: Gandhi and the Other 9/11* (2006) and *Our Spiritual Crisis* (2006). In the last mentioned book, which is now being used for courses in the United States and other countries, he has interpreted Gandhi and non-violence in an idiom best suited to the western readers today; it is scholarly, but highly readable for intelligent lay readers. He is now engaged in the preparation of a feature film on Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, who was able to infuse the war like Pathans of North West Frontier Province in pre-partition India with the spirit of non-violence. Over 20,000 students have taken courses in Peace and Conflict Studies since it was founded by Prof. Nagler in the 1970's. In addition, his latest book has been adopted by about 50 courses in North America and two translations (Italian and Korean) are underway.

Prof. Nagler helped to found a Non-violent Peace force, which placed its first non-violent Intervention team in Sri Lanka in Summer 2003. He has been a frequent speaker and writer on world peace and related issues since 1972 for schools and colleges, church groups and many public and private venues.

Prof. Nagler's commitment to non-violence is total. This is explicitly reflected in his own outstanding work "The Search for a Non-violent Future". His unerring grasp and deep perception of the triumvirate of the Sarvodaya philosophy Gandhi, Vinoba and Jayaprakash Narayan is undoubtedly not only very significant but also amazing. This may be because of his identity with the Indian spirit and culture.

Prof. Nagler is now the President, Metta Center for Non-Violence Education, Berkeley, C.A., and the most significant recent development has been the expansion of Metta. This office has become a busy hub for student volunteers and a resource and consultation center, and reaches around the world with its new, professionally designed website that is rapidly becoming a significant resource for students, educators, journalists and activists.

To commemorate the "real" 9/11, the launching of Satyagraha in Johannesburg in 1906, Prof. Nagler wrote the booklet Hope or Terror: Gandhi and the Real 9/11 which Metta distributed worldwide. It was translated and distributed as well in Italy in time for the September 11, 2006 observances. Prof. Nagler has been propagating the message of non-violence through every available media, books, feature films, documentation, DVD, etc.

More and more students are absorbing Gandhiji's principles and incorporating them to one degree or another in their personal and active lives. Two of his students just returned from the conference, "Celebrating Nonviolent Resistance" in Bethlehem, Palestine, sponsored by Non-violence International at the Holy Land Trust. Others are doing human rights work in Lebanon and many other parts of the world; still others are actively involved in non-violence education. One enthusiastic group has organized a "Gandhi Walk" to raise funds for Gandhian study at Berkeley and another has initiated the development of a graduate-level program in Peace Studies.

Prof. Nagler's ground breaking work in promoting Gandhian values recommends itself. His contributions in the field of peace, non-violence, conflict resolution and development are widely considered unequalled among his scholarly peers in these disciplines. He can be counted among the most significant living scholars in the field of Peace Studies in the USA today.

