

From G. Ramachandran

27 December 1958
New Delhi, India

In a 12 January 1959 letter to King, Harishwar Dayal of the Indian embassy in Washington forwarded this letter from Ramachandran, the secretary of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi (Gandhi National Memorial Fund).¹ The Nidhi and the American Friends Service Committee co-sponsored the Kings' 1959 visit to India.

1. G. Ramachandran (1904–1995), born in Perumthanni, Kerala, India, graduated from the Visva-Bharati at Santiniketan in 1925. In 1947 Ramachandran, a disciple of Gandhi, founded the Gandhigram at Madurai, a rural college based on Gandhian principles.

Dr. Martin Luther King,
Montgomery, Alabama.
U.S.A.

27 Dec
1958

Dear Dr. King,

We in India have watched with sympathy and admiration the non-violent movements of the Negroes in America to achieve their full equality, in law and in spirit, with all others who constitute the citizenship of the United States and the valiant and personal leadership which you have given to some of them.

We are happy to know you are willing to consider a proposal for your visit to India early.

We are writing this on behalf of the Gandhi National Memorial Fund to give you and Mrs. King a very cordial invitation to visit India and to spend three to four weeks in this country.

It would be good if you could share with the Indian people your own experiences and thoughts and, at the same time, study how Mahatma Gandhi evolved the techniques of peaceful action to solve innumerable social and national problems in India. We expect you would be particularly interested to know how Gandhiji wrestled with the problem of untouchability in India and succeeded in showing the way out against the heaviest odds. We would wish you to visit places and institutions associated with the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi and also some of our leading Centres of academic learning. And then, certainly it would be good if you meet Acharya Vinoba Bhave and spend a little time with him quietly and find out for yourself how non-violence is being applied to solve the extremely difficult problem of the land-hunger of the poorer peasants in India.² It will also interest you to see something of the work of the Community Projects and National Extension Service Blocks which have already covered vast areas in the country.

If you agree to accept our invitation, will you please communicate to our Embassy in Washington the precise days you can give to a visit to India and any other detail you would wish to let us know in advance.

With best wishes and prayers for the Christmas and the New Year,

Yours sincerely,
[signed] G. Ramachandran
(G. Ramachandran)

TLS. MLKP-MBU: Box 1.

2. Vinoba Bhave was widely considered Gandhi's spiritual successor. During his 1959 visit to India, King met with Bhave.