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# GANDHI MARG

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## Editorial

IN THESE DAYS, cow protection has become a matter of heated controversy. Several States have passed legislation banning cow slaughter. Cow protection has been a cause close to most Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs. It was a cause equally dear to the Mahatma. But he sought to achieve it through persuasion and mutual understanding rather than by legislation or force. He chided the Hindus for maltreating the cattle without proper nourishment and rest and yet claiming to protect them. Although there is considerable discussion on starting new gausalas and pinjirapoles, including smart ones as Madhya Pradesh has claimed to do so, such claims are more rhetorical than sincere, leaving cows to wander about, scavenge urban waste including plastic and destroy crops to the chagrin of farmers. It would augur well for the country to ensure that cattle are not treated badly, and even in legally established abattoirs, they are covered and out of the view of the public. Food habits are certainly personal and this right should be exercised in such a manner that it does not hurt the feelings of non-eaters. Assertive claim making on this front such as public supply of meat as happened in Kerala some years ago is in bad taste. What we need is a compassionate society where people develop the habit of being mutually respectful of the religious sentiments of their fellow beings. When a non-Hindu decides to give up eating beef voluntarily in deference to the sentiments of his Hindu brethren, the real protection starts. Allowing the mob to take law into its hands by lynching people, often based on hearsay stories, certainly harks back to medieval times, and is a great disservice to the simple cow, a symbol of ecology and non-violence.

In this issue of the journal, we have seven articles, two short pieces in the notes and comments section, two tributes and a book review. The first article by Thomas Weber deals with the meeting of A. B. Piddington, Australia's shortest-serving High Court judge, with Gandhi in 1929, and its significance. The second article by Sujay Biswas revisits the Gandhi-Ambedkar debate on untouchability from a

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historical perspective. In the next article, Kunal Roy Chowdhuri discusses Gandhian perspectives on the theme of 'enemies and friends of the people' comparing him with Peter Lavrov, a Russian populist. The fourth article by N. Benjamin and Ganesh Narkulwad examines Gandhi's links with the city of Pune. In the fifth article Seema Rohmetra attempts to build a business model in a Gandhian vein. The next article by G. Palanithurai seeks to employ insights from Kumarappa to inform a new village movement. The last article by Siby K. Joseph and Surendra Kumar attempts to re-imagine Indian along Gandhian lines. The tribute section covers a well-known peace educationist, Robert Aspeslagh, who had contributed to *Gandhi Marg* in the special issue on peace education and eminent Gandhian, Justice Dharmadhikari, who passed away recently. We do hope that this line up of articles will enthuse the readers of the journal.

JOHN S. MOOLAKKATTU  
Editor



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# Gandhi, Piddington and Australia

*Thomas Weber*

## ABSTRACT

*Australia's shortest-serving High Court judge, A.B.Piddington, visited Gandhi at the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad in 1929. Rather than discussing politics, he wanted to let Gandhi know about Australia's system of providing a living wage and child endowment – issues which were barely of more than academic interest for a country such as India at the time. Had he discussed political issues with Gandhi, he would have realised that the important matters the Mahatma may have wanted to talk about with an Australian interlocutor were racism and the bigoted White Australia Policy. It seems that Gandhi was gracious enough to the well-intentioned but deluded judge to not bring up such a contentious topic.*

**Key words:** Mahatma Gandhi, White Australia Policy, A.B. Piddington, racism, child endowment.

## Introduction

WHAT IS A former Australian High Court judge doing visiting Mahatma Gandhi in 1929, writing a booklet about the encounter, and then titling the text *Bapu Gandhi* (*bapu* being an affectionate Hindi appellation, meaning “father,” used by Gandhi’s closest followers)? The plain cover of the book lists the author as A.B. Piddington, and in brackets below his name we are informed that this author has a title: “Mr. Justice Piddington.” A recent article about the legal and political life of the judge puts a possible dilemma encompassed in this meeting thus: “The visit itself highlights Piddington’s worldliness – one can hardly see many of his class acknowledging, still less visiting one of the exploders of the colonial world – alongside his naïve singlemindedness.”<sup>1</sup> What do we know about this person that would

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place him in Ahmedabad in early 1929? Does Piddington remember the meeting and its most important content the way that the Gandhi camp did? What may have been the significance of the meeting for both sides and what more could have been gained from their exchange if Gandhi had tackled Piddington about his country's racist policies?

### **Mr Justice Piddington: A Life**

While not many will be familiar with the name of Albert Bathurst Piddington, even those who have heard of him will possibly know little more than that he holds the distinction of being the shortest-serving High Court judge in Australia. A. B. Piddington was appointed to the Court in 1913, following the death of one of the justices and the expansion of the bench from five to seven members. Whether he was suitably qualified for the position was strongly debated at the time, however, it does seem clear that his elevation was a result of political manoeuvring by the Labor government of the day, to stack the court with judges sympathetic to its view of the way the constitution, in regard to the division of powers between the Centre and the States in the relatively recently formed Federation, was interpreted. The Bar Associations and the newspapers in the major States ran vigorous campaigns against his appointment. A month after his elevation, Piddington resigned, never having sat on the bench.

Of course, there was much more to Piddington than this inglorious episode. He was born in 1862, won the University of Sydney's medal in classics in 1883, lectured English at the University for some years while studying law, and was admitted to the New South Wales Bar in 1890. He was elected as an independent Liberal Member of Parliament for Tamworth in 1895. As a politician, he supported the Federation, but campaigned against its form. With great prescience, he believed that an upper house Senate would become dominated by political parties rather than serving State interests. As a social campaigner he championed radical causes such as free trade, the abolition of State Upper Houses and capital punishment, the right of women to vote and to retain teaching positions after marriage, the need of a merits based public service, and protested against mining on the foreshore of Sydney harbour. Unsurprisingly, his biography was titled, *A. B. Piddington: The Last Radical Liberal*.<sup>2</sup> He was elected to the Council of the University of Sydney in 1910, was appointed as a Royal Commissioner by the NSW government to investigate labour shortages, the working conditions of women and children, child endowment, apprenticeships, and industrial arbitration, all the while keeping up his legal practice, being appointed King's Counsel in 1913. In later years he headed several Royal Commissions (into the sugar

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industry and the basic wage), and, following the ending of the nation's trade and commerce-related Inter-State Commission that he chaired from 1913, in 1920 he spoke out ever more forcefully against the banks and their policies, called for higher taxes on the wealthy, castigated greedy capitalists for fomenting social conditions that would increase the likelihood of further wars; and undertook the publication of what for the day were radical articles in *Smith's Weekly*.

Although the biographical literature barely mentions his travels, Piddington also made several overseas trips during his life. He took absence from his teaching position in 1887 and travelled around Europe for a year visiting universities. In 1912, as a representative of the University of Sydney, he attended a Congress of the Universities of the Empire in London, and then an International Eugenics Congress. Following the stay in London, he visited Spain, recording his impressions in his book *Spanish Sketches*.<sup>3</sup> In 1927 he briefly visited New Zealand and in late 1928 he went to India to observe legal and constitutional developments in Calcutta (where he joined the Asiatic Society of Bengal as an ordinary member)<sup>4</sup> and Madras, as well as visiting Gandhi in Ahmedabad.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Piddington's India: Views of an Apologist**

In 1929, he published a memoir titled *Worshipful Masters* – a chatty name-dropping book detailing his encounters with, and hearsay anecdotes of, members of the political and legal fraternities.<sup>6</sup> The section of *Worshipful Masters* dealing with a visit to Mahatma Gandhi's ashram in India was published as a separate book in 1930. As with the rest of the original book, *Bapu Gandhi* is a chatty description of things that Piddington had seen on his India trip, with brief asides about customs and gossip stories about people he met or knew (again often associated with the legal profession, and often with little relevance to Gandhi or even India). In this short fifty-four page booklet, he finally gets to Gandhi on page thirty-two, and even then just in passing. It is only in the last few pages of the book that he records the conversations he had with the Mahatma.<sup>7</sup>

He notes that, "It seemed to me in India that the fundamental origin of dissatisfaction with British rule is not anything oppressive or partial as between two races, but the same economic cause – the struggle between the Haves and the Have-nots – which is found in every modern population."<sup>8</sup> But then, a little further on, discussing the deplorable living conditions of the masses, Piddington places all the blame on useless customs. The British Raj is not the cause of the "deplorable state of human life" but is "doing much to abolish it."<sup>9</sup> In short, although he might be termed a liberal, he is still, as would have

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been usual for members of his class, an apologist for British imperialism.

### **Piddington and Gandhi**

Gandhi and Piddington finally got to talk on the last day of January, 1929. Piddington tells us that the “talk was purely on labour questions”<sup>10</sup> and that he avoided “every political question.”<sup>11</sup> He informs the reader that Gandhi was particularly interested in the provision made in NSW for a living wage and the supplementary child endowment system. The meeting ended with Gandhi noting by way of a question that the erstwhile judge had “come all this way from Calcutta to tell me all this interesting news about the methods in the country?” Piddington explained that he would not have wasted such a great teacher’s time if he had not “thought there were some facts from our country worth his considering.”<sup>12</sup> Later that night, he had a final meeting with the Mahatma, where he informs his readers that Gandhi voiced his approval for the system of child endowment noting that in this regard they in India “must see what we can do.”<sup>13</sup>

His final greeting to Gandhi and his followers is recorded by Piddington as something of a humorous attempt at Hindustani. He had learned to recite the Beatitude from Mathew’s Gospel from a Bible Society translation of the text. As Gandhi’s white robed followers crowded around, Piddington proudly proclaimed the set piece. Gandhi asked him to repeat it, asking what language he was speaking. When he informed the Mahatma, Gandhi “laughed heartily” and repeated the sentence with a different pronunciation. “So heard,” Piddington informs us, “the sentence received a murmured tribute of deeply felt and reverent acceptance.”<sup>14</sup>

The Indian transcript of the conversation is somewhat different and more detailed than the one given by Piddington. In an article in Gandhi’s paper *Young India*, published on 28 March 1929, and headed “Some Foreign Visitors,” in a section sub-titled “Blessed are the Peacemakers,”<sup>15</sup> Pyarelal (of Gandhi’s secretariat) writes:

Lastly I come to a friend from Australia. He had been a judge there, and has served on a Government Labour Commission and played an important part in the introduction of the principle of compulsory arbitration and the minimum living wage in Australia. “We in Australia have ended the anarchy of the unchecked self-will of the employers that prevails in Europe by adopting Justice Higgins’s formula that no remuneration can be considered as reasonable so long as the employee cannot maintain himself and his family in a reasonable frugal degree of comfort,” he told Gandhiji. This led to Gandhiji’s asking him as to what their conception of the normal size of a family was and whether any

artificial methods were employed in Australia for restricting its size and if so with what effect. He admitted that the widespread prevalence of contraceptive methods had resulted in a deplorable loosening of the moral ties. "Once the thing obtains a foothold among the people," he observed, "it becomes absolutely impossible to check or control it; it smoulders, and spreads like an underground fire."<sup>16</sup>

This friend paid one more visit to Gandhiji late of an evening to bid him farewell. "I have a request to make to you," he said to Gandhiji at parting, "I want you to repeat after me what I am going to say." He had managed to pick up some Hindustani during his few months' stay in India and to Gandhiji's surprise, he began slowly to pronounce the words, *Mukarram hain jo sulah karte hain* – "Blessed are the peacemakers." "Amen," said Gandhiji much touched by this delicate tribute to India's great experiment in non-violence and the still greater delicacy of the friend in pronouncing it in Hindustani.

### **Piddington's India: More from the Apologist**

Piddington left India by ship from Bombay the day following his visit to Gandhi. He arrived back in Australia two weeks later. On his return, the Australian press informed its readership that he had been in India to observe the workings of the Statutory Commission under Sir John Simon in Calcutta, and that through the good offices of the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court he had the opportunity to observe village life and the conditions of the urban proletariat.<sup>17</sup> The *Adelaide Advertiser* gave a lengthy account of Piddington's views of the labour conditions in India: while they were deplorable he was not going to fault British rule. He noted that while it may have been natural to blame the Government for these conditions, in fact, to him, it was obvious that it was not due to seventy years of British Government but "to centuries during which most of the Indian people had been oppressed by one ruler after another." The British government could not remedy the situation "because of the existence of many religious doctrines, which were apt to stand across the path of social reform, to which Britain was pledged to pay respect."<sup>18</sup> He did, however, note that there was great interest in India in the Australian system of industrial arbitration and the issue of a living wage and the related issue of child endowment.<sup>19</sup> These matters of course were areas close to his heart, but one is left wondering if the audiences to which he spoke on these matters were as passionate about them as he was.

### **Gandhi's Australia**

Gandhi did have an interest in Australia, but the concerns the Mahatma

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had about Australia were not raised in the discussions with Piddington, who limited the conversation to issues concerning labour and avoiding those that crossed into the realm of the political. Given Gandhi's views on the matters of race, this was a sensible move by Piddington. Most mentions of Australia in Gandhi's own writings have to do with racism, especially the desire to keep out "Asiatics,"<sup>20</sup> with the butchery of Indian cows transported to Australia for that purpose,<sup>21</sup> and with questions relating to the status of dominions within the British Empire. Piddington was a staunch believer in a White Australia that needed to increase its population, and consequently had no place for birth control as it would result in "race suicide."<sup>22</sup>

While in India to publicise the plight of Indians in South Africa, on 14 August 1896, Gandhi published a document *The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa: An Appeal to the Indian Public*. The rationale for this text, commonly known as the "Green Pamphlet," Gandhi spelled out as "an appeal to the Indian public on behalf of the 100,000 Indians in South Africa. I have been commissioned by the leading members representing that community in South Africa to lay before the public in India the grievances that her Majesty's Indian subjects are labouring under in that country." This document contains Gandhi's first explicit political mention of Australia: "In Australia they are endeavouring to pass laws to restrict, the influx of Indians in those parts."<sup>23</sup>

Less than half a year later, on his way back to South Africa, in an interview to the *Natal Advertiser*, in answer to a question about whether Indians were currently admitted to all parts of the British Empire, Gandhi responded: "Australia has now been endeavouring to exclude them, but the Government Bill has been thrown out by the Legislative Council, and, even if the policy were adopted in Australia, it remains to be seen whether it will be sanctioned by the Home Government."<sup>24</sup>

Five years later, in a letter to the British MP, W.S. Caine, Gandhi compared the situation in Australia and Canada with the one in Natal: "In Natal, for instance, the Immigration Restriction Act, the Dealers' Licenses Act and such other Acts, of which copies have been supplied from time to time to the British Committee, are already in force. The Natal model is being followed both in Australia and Canada. Under the circumstances, it would be very difficult if not impossible to obtain repeal in Natal or altogether to frustrate the attempt of Australia and Canada to copy Natal."<sup>25</sup>

Gandhi read widely and took note of activities in other parts of the world that could be of used in his campaigns. For instance, writing about the evils of smoking, Gandhi points to an Australian example: "The Government of South Australia has noticed that smoking, besides

consuming a lot of money, badly undermines the health of the people. More harm is done by cigarettes than by cigars, for the former, being smaller and cheaper, are consumed in excess. The Government therefore propose to introduce a Bill prohibiting the manufacture and sale of cigarettes." He adds: "When the people in a country like South Australia have begun to realise the harm done by smoking, we also, we hope, will learn a lesson and come to some decision in the matter."<sup>26</sup>

However, as already noted, his observations concerning Australia are generally not so praiseworthy. He remains a keen observer of racist policies in parts of the Empire and notes the effect these can have on Indians. For example, writing about the relations between Japan (which had just defeated Russia in war), he wrote that, "The Government of Australia seem to have realized the strength of Japan. A Government communique recently issued says that students and traders from Japan, going on a tour of that country, will be freely admitted. They have also declared their intention so to amend their Immigration Law as not to hurt the feelings of Japan. This might benefit Indians too."<sup>27</sup> However, he also notes that not all of Australia is so accommodating:

In Western Australia, there are the same rigorous laws against Japanese subjects as against other Asiatic peoples. This has hurt Japan's feelings. The Japanese ambassador has sent a note, demanding repeal of these laws. The Colonial Secretary, Mr. Lyttelton, has written to the Australian Government that the laws should be changed. The West Australia Minister has replied saying that the laws would be so amended that they do not hurt Japan's dignity, but that in effect they would remain unaltered. This means that the same bitter pill will now be administered to Japan with a coating of sugar.<sup>28</sup>

Gandhi saw Australia as vast under-populated land mass where "The whites ... are jealous of any one landing on the island. They do not admit even men of their own race. Of coloured peoples they are sworn enemies. "This left the north of the country almost empty and so the land remained barren and "must be regarded as useless wealth." However, he noted that "the people of Australia are now waking up to reality" and, given that Asia and Australia are neighbours, "Asians should be allowed to settle in Australia. As such ideas spread, one may expect that Indians will eventually be able to settle in Australia."<sup>29</sup>

That, of course was a possibility for some future time. While he was in the middle of his battle for Indian rights in South Africa, Gandhi saw Australia's treatment of Asians not merely as racist<sup>30</sup> but as wicked:

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Australia has recently furnished a wicked instance of the extreme selfishness that I mentioned earlier. There, they are after the Chinese. Chinese sometimes manage to stow away to Australia. A ship is like a small settlement. It is often difficult to find a person [hiding] in the hold. To ensure that no one remains undetected, the Australian Government has ordered the hold of every steamer to be sulphurated so that the Chinese stow away is forced to come out or choke to death. Several persons have already died in this manner. The shameless and hard-hearted officials, blinded by selfishness, instead of being moved to pity by these things, gloat over them and pat themselves on the back for having so cleverly hunted out the Chinese. If anyone suggests that fumigation with sulphur be discontinued, it is not because they are anxious to save innocent lives, but because they are concerned at possible damage to the cargo. How can we accept these things about the West as civilized?<sup>31</sup>

Not long before Piddington's visit, Gandhi observed that racial prejudice in Australia was alive and well. He noted that even for those "Asiatics" who had been allowed to settle in the country there was discrimination that meant that even the well qualified could not obtain employment.<sup>32</sup>

### Conclusion

A.B.Piddington's worldliness may have taken him to India and Gandhi, but his singlemindedness did not alter his class biases or his view that the struggles for some form of social justice that he championed in Australia would also be a panacea in India. His biographer notes that his sermonising "points to the strength of Piddington's obsession with child endowment, but if he saw its application possible universally in poor, populous, non-unionised India he was obviously deluded."<sup>33</sup> Had he engaged Gandhi in political issues, he would have perhaps been made to feel rather uncomfortable when the Mahatma explained what he saw as the main issues that concerned him about Australia – and they were not about child endowment. But at least they could have agreed on the evils of contraception!

### Notes and References

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2. Morris Graham A. B. *Piddington: The Last Radical Liberal*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1995. Besides this book, further biographical information on Piddington can be found in

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- Ash, "Albert Bathurst Piddington;" Michael Roe, "Piddington, Albert Bathurst (1862-1945)," in Geoffrey Serle (gen. ed.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988, vol.11, pp. 224-226; and Michael Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought, 1890-1960*, St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1984, pp. 210-242.
3. A.B. Piddington, *Spanish Sketches*, London: Oxford University Press, 1916.
  4. He resigned his membership in April 1930. See *The Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1930, vol.27, p.clxx.
  5. There seems to be some confusion as to the dates of Piddington's visit to India. He was clearly there for some weeks before his meetings with Gandhi and he sailed for home from Bombay the day after the meetings (see *Bapu Gandhi*, p.48). The signed photograph the Mahatma gave to Piddington is dated 31 January 1929. The report of the visit was published in Gandhi's newspaper in March 1929. However, in a footnote on p.19 of *Bapu Gandhi*, Piddington states that his note that he was "in Calcutta a month ago" was "Written in June 1929," putting him in India in May even though we know that he arrived back in Australia in February. "June" must have been a typographical error, the month being January. Graham makes the point that while the photograph is dated 1929, "there is no other mention of a journey in that year" (Graham, *A.B.Piddington*, p.228).
  6. A.B. Piddington, *Worshipful Masters*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1929. The chapter on Gandhi, "Bapu Gandhi," which became the booklet *Bapu Gandhi*, is at pp. 160-199.
  7. A.B. Piddington, *Bapu Gandhi*, London: Williams & Norgate, 1930.
  8. Piddington, *Bapu Gandhi*, pp. 40-41.
  9. Piddington, *Bapu Gandhi*, p. 44.
  10. Piddington, *Bapu Gandhi*, p. 46.
  11. Piddington, *Bapu Gandhi*, p. 50.
  12. Piddington, *Bapu Gandhi*, p. 46.
  13. Piddington, *Bapu Gandhi*, p. 49.
  14. Piddington, *Bapu Gandhi*, p. 49.
  15. "Some Foreign Visitors", *Young India*, 28 March 1929.
  16. For Gandhi's views on birth control (celibacy even in marriage) see his debates with family planning advocate Margaret Sanger in Thomas Weber, *Going Native: Gandhi's Relationship with Western Women*, New Delhi: Roli, 2011, pp. 131-140.
  17. "India Visited: Mr. Justice Piddington: Some Observations," *The Daily News* (Perth), 13 February 1929, p. 6.
  18. "Mr. Justice Piddington: Visit to India," *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, 18 Feb 1929, p. 13.
  19. "India and Australia: Interest in Our System of Arbitration", *The Age*, 14 February 1929, p. 8.
  20. For a history of the erstwhile White Australia Policy, see Gwenda

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- Tavan, *The Long Slow Death of White Australia*, Melbourne: Scribe, 2005.
21. See, "Speech at Public Meeting, Kadi," *Prajabandhu*, 28 July 1929; "Ox v. Bullock," *Navajivan*, 22 September 1929; "The U.P. Tour – IX," *Young India*, 14 November 1929; "Speech at Dabhan," *Prajabandhu*, 16 March 1930, *Navajivan*, 30 March 1930, and *Gujarati*; 23-3-1930; M.K. Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan 1955, p. 96; and "Speech at Prayer Meeting, New Delhi," 25 July 1947.
  22. See Graham, A.B. *Piddington*, pp. 93-95.
  23. M.K. Gandhi, *The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa: An Appeal to the Indian Public*, Madras: Price Current Press, 1896, p. 20. See also Gandhi's letter to the leading Indian politician, G.K. Gokhale on 18 October 1896 where he states that "I have no doubt you have read the telegram about the Australian Colonies legislating to restrict the influx of Indian immigrants to that part of the world. It is quite possible that legislation might receive the Royal sanction," and Gandhi's speech at a meeting in Madras on 26 October 1896 where he makes a similar statement.
  24. *The Natal Advertiser*, 14 January 1897.
  25. Letter to W.S. Caine, 26 March 1902. See also, "The Transvaal," *Indian Opinion*, 10 September 1904.
  26. "The Evils of Smoking," *Indian Opinion*, 21 October 1905. See also, "Juvenile Smoking," where he notes that "in the Victorian Province of Australia" smoking for under sixteen-year-olds has been made illegal. *Indian Opinion*, 3 November 1906.
  27. "Australia and Japan," *Indian Opinion*, 28 October 1905.
  28. "Japan and the British Colonies," *Indian Opinion*, 18 November 1905.
  29. "Under-Population in Australia," *Indian Opinion*, 17 March 1906. For Gandhi's summation of the White Australia policy, which he had been observing for thirty-five years, see his interview with another Australian visitor, Bertram Stevens. When Stevens notes that the Mahatma has not visited Australia although he has been to England, Europe and South Africa, Gandhi replies: "No, thanks to you." "Interview to Bertram Stevens," *Harijan*, 3 May 1942.
  30. He notes that "it was Australia which led the anti-Asiatic cry." See his "Interview to Associated Press of India, *New India*, 2 November 1919. See also his comments on admission tests to enter the country that Asians simply could not pass: "Confusion" in "Johannesburg Letter," *Indian Opinion*, 26 September 1908.
  31. "Wicked Civilization" in "Johannesburg Letter," *Indian Opinion*, 25 April 1908.
  32. See "Indians in Australia," *Young India*, 20 May 1926.
  33. Graham, A.B. *Piddington*, p.169.

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# The Enemies and Friends of the People in Gandhism

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## ABSTRACT

*The concept of people has been variously interpreted in different stages of the historical development of human civilisation and culture. This paper provides a fundamentally new perspective for viewing the facts concerning the political, theoretical and emotive structures of the Gandhian ideology and praxis in the light of such values and concepts as the enemies and the friends of the people, the good of the people, the idea of forgiveness and intelligentsia's moral debt to the people. The concept of moral debt to the people was also conceptualised by Peter Lavrov of Russian populist tradition of 1870s, but Gandhi was totally unaware of different trends and tendencies of this ideological tradition. The similarity-difference syndrome of Gandhian and Lavrovian perspectives are briefly discussed at the end of this paper.*

**Key words:** Enemies of the People, Forgiveness, Intelligentsia as saviour of the people, Moral Debt, Gandhi and Lavrov

Life springs from ultimate resignation.  
Uncomplaining acceptance of the reality  
of society gives man indomitable courage  
and strength to remove all removable injustice  
and unfreedom.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

THE BELIEF IN the people is actually a legacy of the French Revolution in our times. This legacy has remained the proud inheritance of social philosophies in all ages of crisis since the great French Revolution. The concept of people, a major value category, has

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been variously interpreted in different stages of historical development of human civilisation and culture. In ancient Greece and Rome the slaves were not included in the category of people. In the liberal bourgeois tradition the category of people were interpreted as *tiers etat*, a more or less well-to-do middle class. In South Africa, Gandhi himself waged a twenty year-long battle against an interpretation of the concept of the people as a racist category identical with the minority community. To the Hegelian conservatism, the sovereignty of people was considered as one of the confused notions based on the wild idea of the people<sup>2</sup>. Marxism paid extreme attention to the problem of the people by showing that in the course of economic evolution of the society, the people split up into various parts each having its own class interests. Only in the course of a high degree of development of the class struggle of the proletariat, would these 'people' come to accept the proletarian outlook.

The fact that the backbone of Indian society are the overwhelming majority of small peasant proprietors, share croppers and landless farmers and artisans and the petty bourgeoisie and that they constitute a strong and significant force in Indian politics not only ideologically but also economically to the other two main productive classes. The fatalistic schema that the intermediary classes and strata of petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry would be eliminated as society is polarised by the inevitable contradiction of capitalism into either the proletariat or the bourgeois is not true in the Indian situation because of specific historical reasons. Under imperialism for quite obvious reasons the normal development of capitalism in India had been somewhat frozen leaving the residues of earlier pre-capitalist and feudal modes of production side by side with the development of the enclaves of advanced capitalism. Because of this uneven and thwarted development of capitalism in the context of colonial economy, there was a massive and continuing petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry which had always been the decisive if not the dominant classes and the crucial issue was through what political ideology and political practice their mobilisation and active participation in India's struggle national independence and laying the foundation of a free India could be ensured. Class slogans advanced from the standpoints of purely proletarian ideology would put the numerically and organisationally weak working class in a position of isolation from the mainstream of the political and social development not to speak of the establishing the working class hegemony over the peasant and petty bourgeois masses.

Gandhism has successfully demonstrated that the main slogans appealing to the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry must be 'national'

and at the same time 'popular' so that they would be capable of bridging the common interests between the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry and the working class. Some of the values, ideals and norms of the traditional society were firmly entrenched in the minds of the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry and they were hostile towards big capitalism which threatened to pauperise them, and encourage social dislocation which threatened their status and swallowed them up into the army of the proletariat. Gandhism by its hostility towards satanic capitalism, its synthesization of the progressive elements of the traditional social values, ideals and norms and by its advocacy of self-sufficient and egalitarian village communities of panchayat raj provided a popular ideology for a new mass *Risorgimento* (the movement for unification of Italy in the nineteenth century) which was not elitist in character. To the raise the popular wisdom and apparent spontaneity to the level of social and political understanding, the urban and rural intelligentsia must be won over as the organisers and educators of the peasant and petty bourgeois societies. Without these intelligentsia going to the people, the mass development of peasant consciousness and the integration of the various classes of the national popular forces and their ideological unity could not be achieved.

#### **THE IDEA OF ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE**

The British Raj, the foreign and indigenous capitalists, big landlords, Rajas and Maharajas who stand in the way of progress and social transformation are included in the Gandhian category of the enemies of the people. Popular sentiments react very strongly on economic and moral grounds against these enemies of the people who are described as the very antithesis of the popular social ideas of the good society, as the characters who play the villain in society's Morality Plays. The accusations and condemnations of the social crimes and all other forms of deviances, the ruthless economic exploitation to which the people are subjected by these enemies, throw into sharper relief the positive moral precepts of society to which the accused social groups belong. It is common practice for people in all societies, specially in the peasant societies to seek retrospectively for the causes of their misfortune and people who suffer misfortune often examine the social conducts of these enemies of the people specially in so far as it affects the life of the community. Thus, while the concept of the enemies of the people is primarily a negative model, it may also play a positive moral role by activating people to seek a solidaristic bond with those who are believed to be the friends of the people.<sup>3</sup>

The relative frequency of these accusations and condemnations

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against the social and economic crimes committed by the enemies of the people provide the people with set of social strain gauges from detecting where the tensions and role conflicts in a particular society lie. With dawning consciousness about the objective realities of social life situation, the social groups belonging to the category of the enemies of the people are projected as figures of sin incarnate and are placed on the wrong side of the moral line and the opposition between 'us' and 'them', between allies and foes, between 'in group' and 'out group' became more pronounced. The demands for overriding loyalties made by the social groups included in the category of the people withheld by the people and the fundamental cleavage between the popular masses and the enemies of the people are increasingly widened and broadened. The opposition of moral values, an opposition of good and bad, right and wrong, proper and improper, sinful and righteous are recognised side by side with the basic opposition between 'us' and 'them' and this is what makes the enemies of the people social criminals and not sinners in the eyes of the masses. Thus, the Gandhian concept of the enemies of the people play an important role in manipulating social situations and in involving the people as a whole in the broader struggle for social transformation of society which alone, it was preached, would be able to make an end of the system that generates the social groups and classes designated and classified as the enemies of the people.

Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920 in a spirit of love and non-violence with the aim of establishing people's swaraj within a year. Even then he justified the condemnation of the enemies of the people as legitimate on the grounds that the Hindu Sastras were full of condemnation of evil doers and had pronounced a curse upon them. Tulsidas had filled the Ramayana with adjectives against the enemies of Rama which it would be difficult to excel. Gandhi pointed out that the names themselves chosen for evil doers in their scriptures were significant of their qualities. Jesus did not hesitate to draw down divine wrath upon those whom he called a generation of vipers, hypocrites etc. Nor were the Korean and the Buddhist scriptures free from such use. Gandhi explained that these seers and prophets had no evil intentions in them. They had to describe persons and things as they were and resort to language so as to enable people to make their choice between good and evil. The more sparing the congressman in describing the government, the better it would be for the people. The best use that the people could make of the government was to ignore its existence and to isolate it as much as possible from the life of the people, believing that contact with it was corrupting and degrading. Gandhi said that the national movement

was not intended to drive out the Englishmen as such, it was intended to end the system they had forced upon the Indians.<sup>4</sup>

In his numerous speeches and both private and public correspondence, Gandhi characterised the British Raj as Ravana Raj or the rule of evil epitomised by Dyerism and the brutal mass-killings in Jallianwallabagh and other repressive measures adopted by the Raj during the Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India Movements in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.

There is a war on at present  
between Ravanrajya and Ramrajya. It is a war  
between God and Satan, conflict between  
evil and good people. I see that this government  
is possessed with Satanic spirit. ...I believe that the  
British Government is Satanic, has the nature of a demon.<sup>5</sup>

Gandhi's intense economic nationalism was grounded in Dadabhai Naoraji's Drain of Wealth theory during the Un-British rule in India and he condemned the foreign capitalists of Manchester and the foreign business and industrial houses operating in the Indian soil as the greatest enemies of the Indian people.

The economic imperialism of single tiny  
island kingdom (England) is today keeping  
the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300  
million took to similar economic exploitation  
it would strip the world bare like locusts.<sup>6</sup>

Also included in the Gandhian category of the enemies of the Indian people were the big landlords, the so-called Rajas and the Maharajas and those Indian capitalist and business interests who collaborated with the foreign capitalists and the Raj.

The greatest obstacle in the path of non-violence  
is the presence in our midst of the indigenous interests  
that have sprung up from British rule, the interests of  
monied men, speculators, script holders, landholders,  
factory owners and the like. All these do not always realise  
that they are living on the blood of the masses<sup>7</sup>....

The underlying ideas behind the Gandhian rejection of a capitalist development of India in the pattern of the West was that the exploitative, marketing and hoarding orientation and the selfish profit maximisation motives of the capitalistists at the cost of the wages, earnings and the living standards of the broad masses of working

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people were causing suffering and misery to the people and forcing them to live perpetually below the poverty line.

I dread Rockefeller spirit that seems to be overtaking the great House of the Tatas. I dread to think of the consequences of their appropriating poor people's properties for the doubtful benefit of making India Industrial.<sup>8</sup>

Gandhism is notable for its unwillingness to deny the reality of society's polarisation into classes and class struggle itself as the motive force of historical change and higher-order societal transformation. The Gandhian vision of the people was counterpoised to the ideas of classes and class struggle as the source of social integration of society that was already disintegrating into antagonistic conflicts.

#### **FORGIVENESS AS A SOURCE OF CREATIVE RENEWAL**

Gandhi refused to suspect human nature as it would bound respond to any noble and friendly action. To Gandhi, an evil man is one who does not change, not one who cannot be changed. Here lies the efficacy of Gandhian notion of forgiveness. The need for forgiveness requires two very practical aspects of reconciliation — cooperation and sustainability. Forgiveness, as opposed to revenge, is a noble sentiment of mutuality accompanied by a sense of empathy and compassion. It is characterised by a series of changes that occur within an individual.<sup>9</sup> Abandoning the path of vengeance and resentment, forgiveness paves the way for reconciliation and tolerance. Gandhi wrote:

Religion does not teach us to bear ill-will towards one another. It is enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one, who regards himself as your enemy, is the quintessence of true religion.<sup>10</sup>

In *'The Human Condition'* Hannah Arendt pointed to forgiveness as a source of creative renewal, allowing us to escape repetitive cycles of resentment and revenge. To forgive is to renounce our rage and resentment of past wrongs and establish the basis for a renewed relationship with a wrongdoer.<sup>11</sup> The Gandhian method visualises a change in the wrongdoer and it expects an end to wrong doing perpetually. While the other methods are punitive in nature or at best are preventive one, the Gandhian alternative stands for removing the intention of harming others by dispelling the evil intentions from the mind of the offender. Therefore, forgiveness reveals the

relationship between persons that makes dialogue possible.

Forgiveness moves from exchange to love and one love enemies unconditionally. Gandhi time and again, without number, tries to make this impossible possible and in this way glorifies the stature of forgiveness.

It is the acid test of non-violence  
that, in a non-violent conflict, there  
is no rancour left behind, and in the  
end the enemies are converted into friends.<sup>12</sup>

A great philosopher and thinker remarked: "What I dream of, what I try to think as the purity of forgiveness worthy of its name, would be a forgiveness without power."<sup>13</sup> Actually in the field of morality, there will be a need for respecting humanity and people's inalienable dignity; believing in humankind and the meaning of life; making a virtue of hope, spiritual energy and the eschatological striving for a higher goal.<sup>14</sup> Gandhi's firm faith in the ultimate efficacy of non-violence and satyagraha in changing the hearts and conscience of a large section of these enemies of the people gave Gandhism not only a certain flexibility and manoeuvrability, but this also accounts for a certain vagueness and uncertainty in the Gandhian attitude towards the concept of the enemy of the people. Some people disliked Gandhi for his overt or covert generosity to opponents. He was not bothered. He could be hurt when the recipients of his generosity reciprocated with malice. But this did not much bother him either. Gandhi did what he did because he believed it was the right thing to do. Anger and hatred were part of neither his personality nor his preference. He was of the opinion that since men share a common humanity, sooner or later the opponent will be won over. As a result an opponent is not always bad simply because he opposes. Gandhi's magnanimity manifests when he gives legitimacy to his actions by forgiving an opponent.

To realise the self is to become non-violent.  
To be non-violent is to love even one's opponent,  
to do good to him who has harmed us, to reward  
vice with virtue, and while doing so, to look upon  
it not as something strange but as one's natural duty.<sup>15</sup>

#### **THE GOOD OF THE PEOPLE AS A VALUE CATEGORY**

The concept of the people in the Gandhism may be viewed from the other angle as a problem of social psychology. People who are fighting

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against a given social system because of the evils associated with it are naturally inclined to wish for a social order which would be absolute negation of all these evils. If one fights against the exploitation of man by man, one has in view the ideal of a good society without exploitation. If one fights against a system which strangles the development, culture and freedom of the individual, one aspires to a system which will be a model of freedom and progress. If one fights against a system which puts premium on selfishness, self-aggrandisement etc., one fights for a system in which true brotherhood will be developed. In this way one builds up a set of values which show what is wrong with the things as they are and then what one is fighting against is the basis for the image of what one is fighting for. Such an approach is not only normal and understandable but also necessary.<sup>16</sup> Assurance of the effectiveness of struggle against the existing evils for which the enemies of the people are responsible helps to create the new reality. For the Gandhian movement, guided by the concept of the people, the whole complex process of negations and affirmations rests on the analysis of the evils of the existing society and of the new social forces which assure the possibility of constructing the good society based on certain egalitarian ideas and sense of brotherhood and community bonds. The necessary changes in social and political relations and in people's consciousness create the conviction in mass psychology that the protest against the evils of the ongoing society should not only create crises and despairs but the conviction of the need to a prolonged and sustained struggle in an organised manner for the good of the people and the realisation of the popular ideal of a good society. It was in this spirit that the Gandhian utopian vision of Ramrajya or Sarvodaya Samaj as the ideally good society, the true swaraj in the Gandhian sense, was counterpoised to Ravana Raj or the rule of the evil. The good of the people as a value category in Gandhian ideology means in principle the satisfaction of the material and spiritual requirements of the working man and the mass of the peasants, the improvement of their economic conditions by way of a just and equitable distribution by way of the preservation, consolidation and development of social institutions on the foundation of the principles of collectivism, mutual assistance, moral solidarity and humanist relations.

#### **GANDHIAN INTELLIGENTSIA AS FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE**

Closely related to the enemy of the people is the concept of the friends of the people. Friendship implies obligation of the self of taking care of and being concerned about the impact of his actions on others. Hence, friendship implies mutual and shared responsibility for self

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and others.<sup>17</sup> In the ideological format of Gandhism the intelligentsia or educated class is regarded as the vanguard social group who by way of paying moral debt to the people act as social, political and ideological leaders of the people. In the Gandhian belief the intelligentsia are the politically and ideologically conscious elements of the society who have a clear understanding of the aims and aspirations of the people and they defend popular interests and the people's cause in a spirit of high moralism, self-devotion and self-sacrifice. The social and political activities of the intelligentsia must be oriented towards a fundamental change of the status quo. Gandhi believed that the goodness of man is grounded not in some instinctive inclination of sympathy, but in man's capacity for self-determination. Its real proof lies not in the impulses of spontaneous affection but in the deliberate recognition of an ethical law to which the individual will surrender voluntarily.<sup>18</sup>

The fact is that in every society, in all ages, whatever their educational levels, there were a good number of intelligent men with a commitment to public welfare and certain 'Philosophies of Man' evolved to justify such humanitarian activism. It was Gokhale before Gandhi who formed the *Servants of India Society* in Western India whose members were asked by Gandhi's Guru, Gokhale, to give up their preoccupations with narrow and selfish well-being and seek a new public identity by initiating and participating in various social service activities for the well-being and social upliftment of the people. The social and political attitudes of the 'Servants of India' were largely influenced by Gokhale's social and political ideas that stemmed from his basic Moderatist position. While he was in South Africa, Gandhi did not identify himself with the politics of Moderatism nor did he get himself embroiled in the great schism between the Moderates and Extremists that was raging in India within the nationalist platform. He was, however, all praise for the 'Servants of India' who were concerned with the well-being of the people and described them as the modern variants of the *sannyasis* and the sages of ancient times. In his Gokhale memorial speeches, in many public meetings in India and in his writings also he continued to praise the 'Servants of India' in the same view. The movement of *Servants of India Society* and similar other movements, however, remained peripheral and were confined to a certain insularity and they died a natural death or were superseded by the Gandhian movement of Constructive Programme for the upliftment of the social and economic life of the vast masses of the rural poor. The Gandhian movement, both in the political and socio-economic aspects, had a distinctive social and political philosophy of the praxis based on the Gandhian doctrines of non-violence,

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satyagraha, non-cooperation and constructive programme with a well-defined *weltanschauung* (world view) largely oriented towards a basic and fundamental change of the status quo and not a mere replacement of the autocratic British rule by Indian rule.<sup>19</sup> The Gandhian intelligentsia considered itself not only as the carriers of Gandhian political ideas but also as a secular priesthood devoted to the spreading of the specific Gandhian attitude to life, something like gospel.

The rush for higher education of the western type specially among the urban middle classes and to a very limited extent among certain segments of the rural gentry remained confined to a sub-culture of college and university educated youths and elites reflecting the advantages of wealth and social origin and it never did become a mass phenomenon. In spite of the much advertised filtration theory, literacy rate remained almost stationary around eight to ten per cent reflecting the very poor state of affairs of mass education at the primary level. This lag in the very structure of education alongside with the very slow growth rate widened the gap between the Western educated intellectuals and elites and the man-in-the mass. The expansion of Western education did not lead to any sociologically meaningful degree of social mobility and change in the stratification system of the Indian society. Gandhi pleaded to students:

The basic imitation of the West, the ability to speak and write correct and polished English, will not add one brick to the temple of freedom. The student world, which is receiving an education far too expensive for starving India and an education which only a microscopic minority can ever hope to receive, is expected to qualify itself for it by giving its life blood to the nation. ... A nation building programme can leave no part of the nation untouched. Students have to react upon dumb millions.<sup>20</sup>

Westernisation and modernisation through modern education was, however, responsible for the growth of an enlightened intellectual strata whose inner directed identity consciousness found its expression in the birth of an elite nationalist culture counterbalancing the tendency towards the blind imitation of the West advocated by the Anglophiles mostly belonging to the upper-upper and the upper-middle classes. Gandhi did not deny the positive role of some of the values of modern education such as liberalism, freedom, spirit of individualism, rationalism, humanitarianism and denial of faith in dogmas. But its major limitation was that it created only an achievement oriented professional subculture which was exposed to persistent internal

systematic strains partly resulting from the structural maladjustment of this subculture with that of the larger predominantly backward agrarian society.

Gandhi developed a wide-ranging critique of the existing system of primary and higher level education stigmatising it as narrow, formal, sterile, parochial and anti-national in outlook. His system aimed at striking balance between development of the capacity for working manually technically and development of the capacity required for creative intellectual work. Gandhi's main problem was that of creating men and women, a new type of popular intelligentsia organically linked with the popular masses of peasants, artisans, workers etc.

The educated classes should as in spirit of humble service, go into villages and study the condition of the people... I certainly believe it will be difficult, if not impossible, to convince people with arguments addressed to their reason. The people will understand only through their heart and they alone can speak through their hearts who have won the people's confidence through service, love and sacrifice.<sup>21</sup>

Gandhi believed that a true life lived among people was in itself a lesson that must produce its own effect on the immediate surroundings. Gandhi always advised the Congressmen to approach the villagers as loving messengers in order to understand their wants and to help them to better their conditions. They should go to the villages and stay there as servants with the spinning wheel as the proper instrument of service.

It is the right however to say that we the politicians do represent the masses in opposition to government. But if we begin to use them before they are ready, we shall cease to represent them. We must first come in living touch with them by working for them and in their midst. We must share their sorrows, understand their difficulties and anticipate their wants. .... We must identify ourselves with the villagers who toil under the hot sun beating on their bent backs and see how we would like to drink water from the pool in which the villagers bathe, wash their clothes and pots and in which their cattle drink and roll. Then and not till then shall we truly represent the masses and they will, as surely as I am writing this, respond to every call.<sup>22</sup>

Gandhi sees the modern malady as a malady of distances, the

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distance between government and governed, rich and poor, city and village, hills and plains, high castes and low and educated class and man-in-the-mass. Compassion is the power which draws people closer together. Human love as seen in the ties of comradeship which bind workers for a common cause was perhaps the forms of love most intelligible to Gandhi.<sup>23</sup> The Gandhian call of going to the people was, however, a moral appeal to the guilty conscience of the intelligentsia. It was in the nature of man's recall to himself, an appeal to the conscience stricken intelligentsia that their personality must function properly, must be immersed among the popular masses independent of external sanctions and rewards.

To Gandhi, humility should make the possessor realise that he is as nothing. True humility means most strenuous and constant endeavour entirely directed towards the service of humanity. The path to truth necessarily involves freedom from deception, the ego is a powerful source of deception; it is the job of the ego to show the self in the best possible way in contrast to the other. The only way to get free of the ego and its self-projection is by love and friendship with all else, which is what Gandhi meant by ahimsa.<sup>24</sup> Actually, human beings need other human beings in order to become human and in order to remain human. The truth with Gandhi was that he who served the poor discharged a small part of his debt to the people. His service should be silent and sincere. The village worker should study the political grievances of the villagers and teach them the dignity of freedom, self-reliance and self-help in everything alongside with literacy training. According to Gandhi, the Congress was not wedded to any exclusive doctrine and did not belong to any one party. Tolerance from all points of view still remained the principle of Congress. They must take the village people and slum dwellers as companion and give them the benefit of their knowledge, skill, insight, constructive work and patriotic spirit. All their activities must be directed to the welfare of the people.<sup>25</sup>

### CONCEPT OF MORAL DEBT IN RUSSIAN POPULISM

The moral foundation of the intelligentsia's relations with the people, the great army of toilers was convincingly conceptualised in the *narodnik* (populist) doctrine of the intelligentsia's repayment of their irredeemable moral debt to the people of which Peter Lavrovich Lavrov was the greatest exponent within the Russian *narodnichestvo* (populism) of 1870s. In spite of the conservative reaction against him Lavrov was considered as the apostle of the *narodnichestvo* whose *Historical Letters* was not only considered as the handbook and the Bible of the young revolutionary *narodniki* but also as a distinctive

document defining the ethical core and laying down the value foundation of Russian populism. Lavrov used the concept of *Uvazhenie* or 'respect' not in the traditional sense of deference to authority but as the perception and understanding of the dignity of one's fellow men. Also in the late 1850s, he used the concept of *dolg* or debt not in the traditional sense of debt owned to the state as elaborated by the gentry but in the more general moral sense as duty and responsibility to oneself, to other individuals, one's society and to the abstract ideas which lie at the basis of every society. Closely allied with the early Lavrovian conception of respect and duty was the belief in self-sacrifice.<sup>26</sup> Later in his career, Lavrov gave a new direction to the concept of *dolg* or 'debt' by providing the Russian intelligentsia with a developed rationale for repaying its debt to the Russian masses. Lavrov told the Russian intelligentsia how it had evolved, what it was and what it ought to do. He believed that progress would be endangered if it was entrusted to a small isolated group of ruling elites. The intelligentsia should renounce its isolation from the masses and shift its emphasis from a programme of self-development to one of social service with a view to establish a living bond between the vanguard and the masses of the people. It should realise that every comfort which it enjoyed, every thought which it had the leisure to acquire was purchased by blood, by suffering of or labour of millions. The notion of repayment of debt to the masses in Lavrovian theory implied action in social context and recognition of moral obligation on the part of the repentant intelligentsia coming from the ranks of gentry. The moral responsibility of repaying the debt to the masses of the people meant that the intelligentsia should fight against social evils, search for and disseminate greater truth, clarify for itself the most just social order and in striving to realise all these things should do everything for the suffering majority of the masses in the present and in the future.<sup>27</sup> Russian populists by pulling greater emphasis on the myth of the people rather than on the class did, however, abandon a static functional model of system renewal in favour of a more dynamic model of system transformation, either along a revolutionary or gradualist path. Social, political, economic and religious crises make society specially vulnerable and create an atmosphere of confusion and uncertainty. The populists take advantage of this universally human and persistent tendency to single out certain clearly defined social groups like the big landowning nobility, the capitalists, the autocratic rulers and their camp followers and the top bureaucracy responsible for causing the sufferings and misery of the people and identify them as the enemies of the people.



## CONCLUSION

Man's moral consciousness properly developed disclose to all men uniform ideals of justice, human dignity and equal rights of self-development. Lavrov's critically thinking and determined minority was an open, not a closed elite and this was also true of the Gandhian critically thinking and determined intelligentsia. Lavrov's ultimate goal was to provide every member of society with the opportunity to become critical thinker through the educative force of his discussions in the *Historical Letters* and other writings. The aim of the Gandhian movement was also to provide every member of the Indian society with the opportunity to become a critical thinker. The Gandhian movement was more open ended than the Lavrovian system because of the Gandhian emphasis on a permanent non-violent revolution for social transformation. The Gandhian doctrines of love, tolerance and ahimsa or non-violence, the Gandhian belief in a change of heart of the enemy through persuasive methods and through satyagraha kept the door open for the conversion of a wider section of people to the Gandhian cause over time, thus, ensuring the formation of a stable generation entelechy and a Gandhian social and political sub-culture.

He was the fashioner of the instrument of non-violence in public life. All social evils need remedies; and the remedy can be either violent or non-violent. The essence of violence consists in inflicting punishment upon the wrong-doer, which may eventually lead to his destruction if he does not correct himself. The essence of non-violence, on the other hand, consists in resisting the evil of the wrong-doer so that he is forced to shower punishment upon the non-violent man for his resistance or non-cooperation with the evil. If the latter does not bend, then his heroic suffering in a just cause is likely to evoke respect for him in the heart of the wrong-doer, and the process of conversion begins. ...The way of non-violence thus becomes the way of heroic self-suffering in which the fighter never surrenders his respect for the personality of the opponent, and aims at his conversion rather than destruction.<sup>28</sup>

According to Louis Blanc, individualism, by proclaiming *laissez faire*, by subordinating the general welfare to the personal selfish interest of the individual, gives the individual an exaggerated sense of his rights without pointing out to him his duties and thus individualism leads to oppression through anarchy. In Blanc's other rule of the principles of fraternity and sociality, the individual is subordinated to and absorbed into the interest of society. In the Lavrovian social theory, neither the subordination of the social element

to the individual nor the absorption of individual by society but the fusion of social and particular individual interest is postulated. The Lavrovian critically thinking individual cultivates an understanding of social interests and directs his activities towards bringing truth and justice into social institutions because this is not some kind of abstract aspiration but is the most intimate personal interest. At this level individualism becomes the realisation of general welfare through individual strivings and sociality becomes the realisation of individual goals within social life.<sup>29</sup>

Like Lavrov, the Gandhian social theory also postulated the development of harmonious relationship between the individual aspirations and sociality and fraternity at a level of social action where individualism would become fused with the realisation of the general welfare of society and sociality would become the realisation of individual goals within social life. The fusion of individuality and fraternity and sociality was visualised by Gandhi when in the name of love, fraternity, truth and sociality he gave the call for social action for bringing about truth and justice in social institutions and for the general welfare and upliftment of the poor. The convergence of perspectives between Gandhi and Lavrovian current within Russian *narodnichestvo* (populism) is so striking that one cannot but take note of it, wondering how Gandhi might have reacted had he been aware of it.<sup>30</sup>

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper is a humble tribute to my departed parents **Mrs Achala Roy Chowdhury** and **Mr Gour Roy Chowdhury**.

#### Notes and References

1. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p.258.
2. Galvano Della Volpe, "The Marxist Critique of Rousseau", *New Left Review*, 59 (January-February 1970), P.105.
3. Marxism paid considerable attention to the enemies and friends of the people. Marx's intentions were to distinguish between primary and secondary criteria in the class division of society. The primary criteria places on the one side all the exploiting classes, i.e. those which profit by surplus labour, including industrial and commercial capitalists and landowners. On the other side are the sellers of labour power, i.e., wage earners, small peasants, craftsmen etc. Marx regarded the socialist revolution as a process entailing the forcible overthrow of capitalist power and the transfer of power to proletariat.

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Marxism stirred revolutionary enthusiasm in the working people and evoked the rage and hate of their class enemies.

Lenin played a distinguished part in the creative development of Marxism. Lenin wrote: "The enemies of the people in the twentieth century are not the monarchs, but the landowners and capitalists as a class." V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 25, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964) pp. 57-58. Lenin's idea of proletariat as the friend of all Russia's exploited population was amplified in *What The Friends of the People Are and How They Fight the Social Democrats*. The book was published in three parts in St. Petersburg in 1894.

As a great revolutionary in Marxist genre Mao *On New Democracy* discussed the role of enemies and friends of the people in Chinese society. "In China, it is perfectly clear that whoever can lead the people in overthrowing imperialism and the forces of feudalism can win the people's confidence, because these two, and especially imperialism, are the mortal enemies of the people. Today, whoever can lead the people in driving out Japanese imperialism and introducing democratic government will be the saviours of the people." *Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung*, 2, (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1975) pp. 349-50.

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5. *Ibid.*, Vol.18, pp 414-15.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol.19, pp 243-44.
7. Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Trust, 1948) P.87
8. CWMG. , Vol.19, p.470
9. The issue entitled "Revenge and Forgiveness" was immense help to me. *Seminar*, 698 (October, 2017).
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12. Quoted in Thomas Weber, *Gandhi, Gandhism and the Gandhians*, (New Delhi: Roli Books Pvt. Ltd, 2006) pp. 145-46.
13. Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London: Routledge, 2001), p.59.
14. Vaclav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless* (London: Hutchinson and Co. Ltd, 1985), pp. 213-14.
15. CWMG., Vol. 26, pp. 314-15.
16. I may be able to make my argument better by recalling the theme of the most explosive play written by great Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen which is still valid in our society today. The play is the story of a scientist who discovers an evil and innocently believing that he has done a service to the humanity, expects that he will at least be thanked. However, the town has a vested interest in the perpetuation of that evil, and his truth, when confronted with that interest, must be made to conform. The scientist clings to the truth and suffers

social ignominy. At the end of the play, the scientist, Dr. Stockmann said with a mixture of trepidation and courageous insistence. "...you are fighting for the truth, and that's why you are alone. And that makes you strong. ...and the strong must learn to be lonely." Gandhi himself was the solo sentinel for defending truth in different turbulent moments of his career. Henrik Ibsen, *An Enemy of the People* (London: Nick Hern Book, 1989).

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18. Raghavan N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Gandhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000) p.106
19. For a fuller discussion on the nature of Gandhian approach to organisation see Kunal Roy Chowdhuri "The Theory-Praxis Nexus in the Gandhian Principles of Organization", *Gandhi Marg*, 17,1 (April-June, 1995) pp. 49-66. Reproduced in Himmat Jhaveri (ed) *Aspects of Gandhian Thought* (Mumbai: Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya, 2003).
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25. CWMG., Vol 88 pp. 15-16 and 18.
26. Philip Pomper, *Lavrov and the Russian Revolutionary Movement* (London: Chicago Press, 1972) pp. 23-24.
27. James P. Scanlan (Trans.) *Historical Letters*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) pp. 139-40.
28. Nirmal Kumar Bose, *My Days With Gandhi*, (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1987), p.150-51.
29. James P. Scanlan, op.cit. , pp. 150-51.
30. The Russian streams of thought emanating from *Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Tolstoy, Bondaref* were all diverse and their ideas entered into Gandhi's framework of thought. *Narodnichestvo* (populism) as it emerged in Tsarist Russia in the period between 1860s and late 1890s was like a magnificent tapestry with many colours and patterns superimposed on one another. But Gandhi was totally unfamiliar with the Russian populist tradition and he never mentioned names of different populist thinkers like *Herzen, Chernyshevskii, Mikhailovskii, Lavrov* etc., anywhere in his writings and speeches. The strange affinity with Lavrovian brand of populism prompts me to call Gandhi an *Unconscious Populist*.

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# Gandhi's Links with Poona: An Overview

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## ABSTRACT

*Gandhi was intimately linked with Poona. He visited it after his return from South Africa. He was in close touch with Gopal Krishna Gokhale. After the Non-cooperation Movement he was imprisoned in Yeravda Jail. He also wrote a diary of daily events. After some months when he came to Poona, a bomb was thrown at him but he was not hurt. At the time of Quit India Movement he was kept as a prisoner in Aga Khan Palace. He undertook a fast to prevent the British to separate the depressed classes from the Hindu society and signed the Poona Pact with Ambedkar. Two personal tragedies struck him around that time. His secretary Mahadev Desai passed away followed by Kasturba.*

**Key words:** Poona Pact, Yeravda, Gokhale, Aga Khan Palace, Ambedkar

## I. Introduction

**G**ANDHI WAS A mass leader who travelled extensively in India. Although his most important movements were launched from Bombay and Ahmedabad, Poona (now Pune) was one of those cities which he visited and where important incidents of his life took place. While studies have been made of Gandhi's activities in Bombay and Ahmedabad, Poona has not been covered. Hence, this paper attempts to study the highlights of his sojourn in Poona.

## II. Gandhi and Gokhale

Gandhi and Gokhale first met in 1896. Both of them lived together in South Africa. When Gandhi returned from there and landed in Bombay

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on January 9, 1915 he was given a hero's welcome. From there he arrived in Poona in the morning on February 8, 1915. He was garlanded at several places during his drive from the railway station through the city to the buildings of the Servants of India Society where he put up. He met Tilak and this was the first meeting between the two. Tilak said: "I want to help you to the fullest extent. Of course you will meet me whenever you like. I am at your disposal." Next he met Gokhale in the grounds of Fergusson College (founded in 1885 by Deccan Education Society). Gokhale also assured him that he was always available for him. R.G. Bhandarkar (an eminent orientalist) was the third important person whom he met and he was again received with warmth.<sup>1</sup>

Gandhi was busy with some other activities in Poona. On February 11, there was a reception in his honour by the Deccan Sabha (established by Mahadev Govind Ranade and other political liberals in 1896). On the following day a friendly party was held by the Sarvajanic Sabha (a socio-political organisation started in 1870). His speeches in both the gatherings were edifying. He was seen as the living embodiment of simple living and high thinking. His unassuming demeanour, and free and hearty talks were considered to be revelations of the pure and burning spirit within him. He was asked several questions to which he gave straightforward replies. He said that the major grievances of the Indian community in South Africa had been settled. European public opinion was favourable which enabled passive resistance movement to succeed. The opposition came from the European trading and industrial classes as they could not stand competition with the Indians. The latter largely contributed to the industrial prosperity of South Africa.<sup>2</sup>

On February 13 he visited the well-known social reformer D.K. Karve's Anath-balakashram, Fergusson College and Anandashram (a repository of books and manuscripts founded by Mahadevrao Chimanaji Apte in 1888). He was warmly received there. This was followed by a public meeting at Kirloskar Theatre which was presided over by Bhandarkar. He was felicitated for his work in South Africa. In his speech Gandhi referred to Poona as a place of learning and culture. He answered questions about his struggle in South Africa.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter, he left Poona.

Immediately after his arrival in Poona, Gandhi had discussed with Gokhale the possibility of his joining the Servants of India Society (SIS) which Gokhale had founded in 1905. In the premises of the Society there still stands the historic banyan tree under which Gandhi and Gokhale sat to discuss the political and other problems of India. According to the old traditions of the Society, Gandhi also held his

prayer meetings under the tree. For years Gokhale hoped that Gandhi would work in the SIS as he thought that Gandhi was the greatest of the younger men coming into Indian public life. Gandhi's interaction with Gokhale was for a short time. Gokhale passed away on February 19, 1915. A condolence meeting was held on February 25 under the auspices of the Deccan Sabha. Gandhi was one of the speakers. He observed that Gokhale's efforts on the South African question alone cost him ten years of his life.<sup>4</sup>

Another condolence meeting for Gokhale was held on March 3 in which the Governor of Bombay presided. Gandhi moved the main resolution mourning for Gokhale in it. At the meeting of the Bombay Provincial Conference in Poona on July 11, Ramabai Ranade moved a resolution expressing grief on the passing away of Gokhale. Gandhi seconded it and said: "One of his missions in life, I think, was to inculcate the lesson that whatever we do, we should do with thoroughness."<sup>5</sup>

He desired to join the SIS in deference to Gokhale's wishes. But its members disapproved of his anarchical views and feared that his association would endanger its very existence. Therefore, Gandhi decided to withdraw his application for membership.<sup>6</sup>

On July 12, 1919 he arrived in Poona and had an interview with the Governor of Bombay. He also made a speech on *swadeshi* in respect of clothing at Fergusson College. He said that the use of *swadeshi* cloth constituted service to the motherland and gave protection to the peasants. For some time the people would have to be satisfied with coarse cloth but it was a small sacrifice considering the important issues involved.<sup>7</sup>

On August 8, 1919 he attended a meeting of the Deccan Sabha and moved a resolution to record its deep sympathy with the British Indian settlers in South Africa, struggling for the elementary rights of citizenship and to congratulate them on the brave and sustained struggle carried on by them. He assured them of hearty support from the motherland. The resolution was unanimously carried. He thanked the Government of India for its sympathetic attitude. On the same day, he spoke on *swadeshi* at Gujarati Bandhu Samaj. He said that *swadeshi* could bring *swaraj* to the Indians. He pointed out that India suffered from three kinds of afflictions, viz., disease, hunger and insufficient covering for the body. He pointed out: "A land afflicted with this triple disease loses the qualities of courage, fortitude and truthfulness.... *Swadeshi* is needed to fight this state of affairs." He emphasized the need to do spinning and went to the extent of saying, "In the same way as every boy in England knows some naval work, we should learn this work."<sup>8</sup>

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On November 5, 1920 he reached Poona. The country was charged by the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and the people looked at Gandhi for guidance. Mahadev H. Desai recorded in his diary, "The whole of Poona was bursting with joy on the 5<sup>th</sup> November as our route was blocked by mammoth crowds, there was not much to say in favour of order and discipline, but it was clear that the enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds."<sup>9</sup> He made a speech in Deccan Gymkhana. He expressed his displeasure that the Governor had been invited there to distribute prizes. The Governor had not resigned from the Government whose empire had the breadth not of God but of Satan. During another speech at a meeting in Bhavani Peth (a locality established in the heart of Poona way back in 1682) he expressed anguish at the Hindu-Muslim discord. He observed: "What little friendship we show for one another has a political aim and does not spring from the heart. I would say that now we cleanse our hearts and cultivated genuine love." What was more, he shuddered at the treatment meted out by the Brahmins to the non-Brahmins. On November 6 he addressed a women's meeting at the Kirloskar Theatre. Desai recorded: "All the space on the ground floor as well as in the two galleries above was filled with women. Hardly an inch of space was left vacant. Like a sea at the sight of the full moon, women had flooded the theatre to overflowing. Women of all ages and all communities - Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and others – were present."<sup>10</sup> He exhorted them to have courage, bhakti and faith. God should be the Lord of their heart and they should fear Him only and not any man. Then alone they would rear brave men.<sup>11</sup> On November 6/7 he left Poona for Bombay.

### III. Yeravda Jail

Yeravda Central Jail in Pune was built in 1871. It is a high security jail. It is spread over 512 acres and can hold over 3,600 prisoners. It is divided into various security zones and barracks. It is one of the largest prisons in South Asia. Under the British rule several freedom fighters were imprisoned here, the most important being Gandhi.

After the Chauri Chaura incident occurred on February 4, 1922, Gandhi withdrew the Non-cooperation Movement and was arrested in Ahmedabad. From there he was transported to this Jail on March 20, 1922. Along with him was lodged a group of satyagrahis in this Jail. They were peasants of Mulshi Petha, near Poona whose land was required by Tata Power Company (incorporated in 1919) for its hydro-electricity project. The peasants opposed the acquisition of their land and in the ensuing agitation many of them were arrested and lodged in this Jail. When they refused to do the work assigned to them, they

were flogged and undertook a fast. Gandhi twice sought permission of the Jail Superintendent to meet them which was refused. Thereupon on July 9, 1923 he decided to undertake a fast. On July 12 he was allowed to meet the satyagrahis and informed that flogging would be resorted to only if they attacked the jail officials. He persuaded the satyagrahis to give up the fast and abide by the rules of the Jail.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Gandhi's intervention settled the issue.

He faced severe stomach pain and admitted in Sassoon Hospital. Col. Maddock operated him for appendicitis. He was served the unconditional release order on February 4, 1924. He addressed the students of B.J. Medical School and entrained at night for Bombay on March 10, 1924.

Gandhi came to Poona on September 3. He visited the Servants of India Society. He also made speeches on September 4. The first speech was at a public meeting. He disapproved the use of mill cloth, whether foreign or Indian, and advocated the use of khadi. On the same day he spoke at the convocation of Tilak Mahavidyalaya (established in 1921 at Gandhi's suggestion). He said: "There is nothing wrong in your securing a teacher who can speak fluent English. It would be creditable if you have a penniless, religious-minded and self-sacrificing teacher who can impart education through Hindi or Marathi. It would not matter if he is inferior to others in scholarship." Thereafter he held discussions with workers. He pointed out: "I wish to bind the workers and the people together with a common bond. The yarn produced by a spinning-wheel can alone be such a bond." He also claimed that no one was opposed to khadi and if somebody did, he would not worry about it.<sup>13</sup> He left Poona on September 4.

After the failure of the Round Table Conference, Gandhi returned to India and launched the Civil Disobedience Movement beginning with the Dandi march. He was arrested in Bombay on January 4, 1932 and brought to this Jail in Poona. He wrote his diary here from January 4 to May 31, 1932. It covers his daily routine what he ate, which books he read, to whom he wrote letters, which visitors he met and what other things including spinning he did. From the prison he wrote weekly letters to the Satyagraha Ashram, Ahmedabad containing a cursory examination of the principal ashram observances. The subjects of these letters are truth, ahimsa, brahmacharya, control of palate, non-stealing, poverty, fearlessness, untouchability, bread labour, equality of religions, humility, importance of vows, yajna and *swadeshi*. They were written in Gujarati and there was a demand for their translation into other languages including English. These letters were subsequently brought out as a small book titled *From Yeravda Mandir*.<sup>14</sup>

Here a reference may be made to *Harijan*. It was published under

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the auspices of the Servants of Untouchables Society. Gandhi conducted it from Yeravda Central Prison. It first appeared on February 11, 1933 and priced at one anna. R.V. Sastry was its editor. The lead article in its vol. 1, no. 1 was titled "Untouchability" which Gandhi contributed. He wrote in it, "UNTOUCHABILITY as at present practised is the greatest blot on Hinduism. It is (with apologies to Sanatanists) against the Shastras. It is against the fundamental principles of humanity, it is against the dictates of reason that a man should, by mere reason of birth, is forever regarded as an untouchable, even unapproachable and unseeable. These adjectives do not convey the full meaning of the thing itself. It is a crime for certain men, women and their children to touch, or to approach within stated-distances, or to be seen by those who are called caste Hindus." He was released from prison on May 8, 1933. On May 13, he wrote: "All should know that even though I am supposed to be a free man, *Harijan* will continue to be edited as if I was in prison. It will still be solely devoted to the 'Harijan' cause and will scrupulously exclude all politics."<sup>15</sup>

British Prime Minister Ramsay J. Macdonald announced the Communal Award on August 16, 1932 and proposed that in the Indian constitutional reforms there would be separate reserved seats for Hindus and for minorities including the depressed classes. Gandhi saw through the game and on September 20 undertook an indefinite fast against it. Ambedkar was a champion of the depressed classes and feared that their future was not safe in the Hindu society. He subsequently recollected, "This fast unto death was a great gamble on the part of Mr. Gandhi. He perhaps felt that the mere threat to fast unto death would make me and other Depressed Classes who were with me just shiver and yield. But he soon found that he was mistaken and that the Untouchables were equally determined to fight to the last for their rights."<sup>16</sup> Many people pleaded with him to save Gandhi's life by entering into an agreement with him. Ambedkar continues, "The Congressmen who till then used to say, "Who is this Ambedkar?" got scared and started pleading, "Ambedkar please help us, Gandhi is dying please save his life." But I had greater noble cause of welfare of the ten crore Untouchables than the life of one Gandhi. Gandhi got impatient and pleaded to me "Ambedkar, my life is in your hands."<sup>17</sup>

Gandhi and Ambedkar reached an agreement on September 24. Commonly called the Poona Pact, the depressed classes obtained seats under it which were more than what they would have been given under the Communal Award. On September 26 Gandhi heard that the British Cabinet accepted the provisions of the Pact and he ended his fast with a drink of orange juice. He was also released from the prison.

Gandhi was weak but he gathered sufficient strength to speak for a few minutes in the wedding of his son Devdas and Chakravarti Rajagopalachari's daughter Lakshmi on June 16, 1933 in Parna Kuti, the residence of Lady Thackursay in Poona. He blessed the couple and concluded, "Let your life be a dedication to the service of the land, and of humanity. May you both ever be humble, and may you both walk in fear of God always!"<sup>18</sup>

On July 12, 1933 Gandhi spoke at the Leaders' Conference held at Tilak Memorial Hall. He said that he wanted to know their views whether they wanted suspension of the civil disobedience movement indefinitely or for a definite period with conditions. After hearing their views, he would express his own considered opinion. Next day he said: "I was sorry to hear several speakers say that workers were tired and wanted rest. I would have appreciated if they had said they themselves were tired. The workers were not tired. The country was not tired. The country was prepared to continue." After his speech, the Conference was adjourned for an hour to allow the members to discuss and express their opinions. When it reassembled, he answered questions put by the delegates.<sup>19</sup> The Conference authorized him to seek an interview with the viceroy Lord Willingdon which was refused. He asked for an interview again but in vain. He was arrested on August 1 and taken to Yeravda. On August 4, he was released and asked to quit Yeravda village and confine his movements to Poona city municipal limits. Within an hour the Assistant Superintendent of Police rearrested him for disobeying the order and taken to Yeravda Jail for trial which began in the afternoon. Although Gandhi pleaded guilty, the Magistrate insisted on recording evidence. When asked his occupation, Gandhi said, "I am by occupation a spinner, a weaver and a farmer." When asked about his residence, he said, "Yeravda Jail now." (Laughter). Gandhi added that he breached the order perforce, "...the system under which India is being governed today is not merely unjust, but is dragging her down economically and morally." He had found that "... men high and low, educated and uneducated, rich and poor, were demoralized, and were living in a perpetual fear of loss of liberty and their possessions." He added: "Being by nature from my childhood a confirmed believer in the methods of non-violence, I sought shelter in self-suffering such as might fall to my lot. That was the only way in which I could relieve myself of some of the agony that was burning in me." He clarified: "It is for reasons such as this that I am offering all resistance to this system of Government – a resistance that is within my capacity and resistance that a peaceful man like me could offer." He concluded: "I have no desire whatsoever to enjoy the special comforts to which other fellow-prisoners might

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not be entitled. I would like to be classified amongst those whom the Government may consider to be the lowest." In his judgement the Magistrate said that it was proved that Gandhi disobeyed an order of the Government and, therefore, sentenced him to one year's simple imprisonment.<sup>20</sup> On August 16, he commenced a fast as some facilities that he had asked for were not given. On August 21 he was removed to Sassoon Hospital in a serious condition. Expecting death, he distributed his personal effects among the hospital staff attending him. On August 23, he was released unconditionally and he broke the fast at 3.45 pm by taking orange juice. He was taken to Parna Kutī in an ambulance. In this context, Mira Behn makes a graphic presentation, "All hearts were praying. Then a message came that Bapu was being released. Our eyes (were) misty with tears of joy... and before long we saw a Red Cross ambulance coming.... Charlie Andrews, beaming with delight, was sitting by the driver. Then they jumped down, opened the back door and lifted Bapu on a stretcher. His spirit was still smiling in his eyes, but those eyes were sunken as I had never seen them before, and the whole body was wasted away. But he laughed as he was carried into the house and, catching sight of me, even put out a skinny arm and gave me a little slap as he passed on the stretcher."<sup>21</sup>

He wrote to Abbas Tyabji on August 24, 1933, "Well, many strange things have happened in my life, but this discharge is the strangest. However, there it is and I must take it as it comes; only I do not know what to do with myself. God will clear the way for me. Till then I wait on Him."<sup>22</sup> In an interview to the press on August 25, 1933, he pointed out, "One thing, however, I do want to make clear. This discharge is a matter of no joy for me; possibly it is a matter of shame that I took my comrades to prison and came out of it by fasting."<sup>23</sup> A day earlier, on August 24 he wrote to Vallabhbhai Patel and reminisced, "In Yeravda, I kept thinking of you all the time. I had not expected to be separated from you in this manner. We remembered you daily on several occasions. We missed your dictatorial orders."<sup>24</sup> At this time his opposition to untouchability was as strong as ever. He wrote: "But I know this much that whether in jail or outside, I shall not fail to make any effort, of which I am capable in thought, speech and act, to wash Hinduism of the dross of untouchability."<sup>25</sup> The Temple Entry Bill lay in the Legislative Assembly for about a year. Gandhi was grieved at this. He wrote: "The throwing open of temple will be an admission of the religious equality of Harijans. It will be the surest sign of their ceasing to be the outcastes of Hinduism, which they are today." Gandhi continued: "And when temples are thrown open to Harijans, schools, wells and many similar facilities

will be automatically open to Harijans."<sup>26</sup> Gandhi was aghast that untouchability prevailed even among Christians. While talking to a Parsi gentleman before September 3, 1933, he observed: "Recently, there was a conference of Christian untouchables in Madras. Has the world ever heard of anything like this?"<sup>27</sup>

The Servants of Untouchables Society declared September 24 as the Harijan Day which was the anniversary of Poona Pact. Gandhi issued a statement on it on September 8 which concluded, "I hope that Harijans will also take stock of their contribution towards their own purification and, therefore, the purification of Hinduism. But there is no doubt that by far the greatest responsibility rests on the shoulders of caste Hindus."<sup>28</sup> On the following day he gave an interview on *goseva*. He said: "In *goseva* of my conception, I include all living creatures.... For instance, I had also said that the ideal of cow-protection was the most important gift of Hinduism to mankind. But this remark of mine referred only to *goseva* of my peculiar conception."<sup>29</sup> Around this time differences emerged between Harijans and caste Hindus resulting in the boycott of the former by the latter. When they were resolved, Gandhi congratulated both of them and hoped that their harmonious relation would endure. He also complimented the Harijan Sevak Sangh for its successful efforts.<sup>30</sup>

Gandhi arrived in Poona on June 17, 1934. He visited the Mahila Ashram on June 21. He was garlanded by Harijan girls. He hoped that when they grew up they would not lead the life of luxury and self-indulgence. There was an old saying in Sanskrit that learning is not learning if it did not lead to deliverance from everything that was petty or selfish. Therefore, he expected them to devote themselves to the service of their less fortunate sisters. Further, he spoke about Hindi language. He regretted that it was optional and English was compulsory in a national institution such as the Women's University. He thought that it ought to be the other way. All the girls took up English as a routine because of the prevailing trends. He advised them to study Hindi because without the working knowledge of the national language, it was not possible to serve the motherland. Besides, it was easy to have mastery over Hindi since it was closely akin to Marathi and other languages of North India.

On the same day he spoke at a students' meeting. They desired to render service to the Harijans and sought Gandhi's guidance. He gave them his impressions of the Harijan quarters which he had visited and advised them to go there with brooms, buckets and spades, and thoroughly clean those places. They could help the Harijans to improve their houses by raising the height of the walls where necessary. They could teach the children as well adults not necessarily the three R's,

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but also about sanitation, hygiene and abstinence from liquor in the first instance.<sup>31</sup>

National Education Workers of Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapith gave him a questionnaire and they wanted to know his views on those issues. On June 22 he told them that Harijans were not treated as a part of the Indian society. Hence, the workers could adopt all means to get education for them in both national and government schools. He also said that they should build a team of village as opposed to city workers. That should be the principal aim of national education in which primary education was most needed.<sup>32</sup>

Under the auspices of Anjuman-i-Fide-e-Islam Gandhi spoke on June 23 on the occasion to commemorate the Prophet's death. He pointed out, "... the Prophet was a seeker of Truth. He was godfearing.... He suffered endless persecution. He was brave and feared no man but God alone. He did what he considered to be right in scorn of consequences. He was never found to say one thing and do another." Gandhi added, "The Prophet was a Fakir. He had renounced everything. He could have commanded wealth if he had so desired. Even as you would, I shed tears of joy when I read of the privations he, his family and companions suffered voluntarily."<sup>33</sup>

Gandhi attended the District Local Board meeting on June 24. It presented him an address in which it gave an account of its service to the Harijans. While congratulating it for its work, he insisted on the quality of work. He was confident that economic distress among Harijans and insanitation in their quarters would disappear soon if the local bodies did their duties. Harijan children needed to be taught in preparatory school and the teaching should be about keeping their persons and clothes clean to begin with and not about the three R's alone. He suggested that the local bodies should institute prizes for teachers who best attended their Harijan pupils. Another field in which the municipalities could work was to help the Harijans draw water from the public wells which they were not allowed even though they were legally permitted. Besides, the municipalities should construct special wells for them. On the same day, Gandhi gave an interview to over 100 Harijan workers for one and a half hours. The thrust of his answers was that workers should settle in villages and work both among the savarna Hindus and Harijans. They should go in for academic as well as industrial education. Municipalities should provide better housing to Harijans dwelling in cities. They could solve this problem with little expenditure. Lastly, as for drawing water from public wells, Harijans should seek police aid and protection of the judiciary, if necessary. In the evening Gandhi attended a public meeting. Deputations from different districts presented him purses. He asked

Shankarrao Lavate, a well-known social worker but a sanataniist opponent, to address the meeting. Lavate said that he too desired the removal of untouchability but objected to legislation affecting the whole Hindu community with the help of non-Hindus. Gandhi observed that the speech was both courteous and moderate. He pointed out that the bill for temple entry should be placed on the statute book only if it was supported by a majority of the Hindu members of the Legislative Assembly.<sup>34</sup>

#### **IV. Assassin's Target**

A serious incident occurred on June 25, 1934. A bomb was thrown on the automobile which the assailant believed carried Gandhi when he was on his way to the municipal building to receive an address. But Gandhi was following in another automobile with his wife and three girls and he narrowly escaped. Seven persons were injured in the attack. Gandhi arrived at 7.30 p.m., not knowing what had happened. When informed of it, he received the news calmly and agreed to the suggestion that the programme should be held. Accordingly, the address was presented and he left the hall at 8.30 p.m. He then departed Poona for Bombay.

Subsequently, he issued a statement on the attempt on his life. It said: "God be thanked that no one was fatally injured by the bomb.... I cannot believe that any sane sanataniist could ever encourage the insane act.... The sorrowful incident has undoubtedly advanced the Harijan cause. It is easy to see that causes prosper by the martyrdom of those who stand for them.... it is the easiest thing to do away with my body. Why then put in jeopardy many innocent lives in order to take mine which they hold to be sinful."<sup>35</sup>

#### **V. Agha Khan Palace**

It was built by Sultan Mohammed Shah Aga Khan III in 1892 as an act of charity to help the poor in the neighbouring areas of Poona. It is a majestic building in which Gandhi lived here as a prisoner of the British Government from August 9, 1942 to May 6, 1944. His wife Kasturba and his secretary Mahadev H. Desai, among others, were interned here with him. Although it has large rooms, Gandhi chose to live in a small room next to the bathrooms. He believed that he would be detained here for long and prepared a time-table for his daily chores. He maintained a diary of his daily caloric intake to ensure that he took not a calorie more than what was required for his mere sustenance. His prayers and daily walks took place at a fixed time and he spent the rest of his time in writing and reading. He studied books on anatomy, grammar, economics and English literature. Among

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them mention may be made of the works of Shakespeare and Marx. For the first time he had time to think about the education of Kasturba and edited some chapters of Ramayana and Gita for her.

Within a week of his detention, Gandhi underwent a severe bereavement. On the morning of August 15, 1942 Desai suddenly died of heart attack. Gandhi stood by the bedside, calling "Mahadev, Mahadev!" Then he fondly said: "If he only opens his eyes and looks at me once, he won't go." But Mahadev did not do so. With trembling hands Gandhi washed the body and anointed it with sandal and decorated it with flowers. He said with grief: "Mahadev, I thought you would do this for me. Now I have to do it for you." The jail authorities brought the Brahmins to take the body for cremation. But Gandhi refused saying that no father could hand over the body of his son to strangers. The jail authorities yielded and in the afternoon a small procession followed Mahadev's bier to a corner of the palace grounds. Gandhi followed it with a staff in one hand and a pot of fire in the other. After a short religious ceremony he lighted the fire and said: "Mahadev has lived up to the 'Do or die mantra.' This sacrifice cannot but hasten the day of India's deliverance."<sup>36</sup>

While Gandhi was in detention, there was unrest in the country. Railways, posts, telegraphs, etc., were attacked by the masses. The Government let loose a reign of terror with large-scale lathi charges, arrests, etc., to counter the violence by the masses. Gandhi decided to undertake a fast and informed the Government to this effect. The Government offered to release him for the duration of the fast which he rejected. On February 10, 1943 his fast commenced to be continued up to March 2. Aged 74, many of his followers were worried whether he would survive the ordeal. His condition began to deteriorate. On the third day he discontinued his daily morning walk and evening visit to Desai's Samadhi. His only activity was participation in the prayer meeting at dawn and dusk. By the fourth day nausea began bringing disturbed sleep. Then his heart beat became feebler and uraemia caused anxiety which increased when he did not show any inclination to talk. He spent most of his time in bed in silence, listening to the reading of the Gita. On February 21 the doctors said that if the fast was not ended without delay, it might be too late to save his life. They prevailed upon him to add orange juice to water instead of lemon juice. On February 22 he almost fainted and his pulse became nearly imperceptible. On February 28, he looked more cheerful. Nausea was absent and he took water without difficulty. Despite growing exhaustion, he was mentally alert on March 1. On the final day of the fast (March 2) after the chanting of the religious texts, at 9.30 am Kasturba handed him a glass containing orange juice diluted

with water which he took. Gandhi survived the ordeal.<sup>37</sup>

However, Kasturba was not keeping well for some days. The death of Desai was a severe blow to her and she blamed Gandhi for it. She was also critical of him for sending thousands of young men and women to jail so much so that Gandhi had to argue with her often to justify his Quit India Movement. Since her condition was fast deteriorating, Gandhi addressed letters to the Government, inter alia, requesting for an Ayurvedic physician. After a lapse of a week the latter was allowed to examine her but not allowed to stay in the premises although his presence was required often. On February 14 he wrote to the Inspector-General of Prisons, Bombay seeking his permission for Vaidyaraj Shiv Sharma's stay in the Palace. In his letter dated 16, 1944 Gandhi proposed three alternatives to him, i.e., (i) to permit the Vaidyaraj's stay in the Palace-prison, (ii) to release Kasturba on parole, or (iii) if neither of them was acceptable, to transfer him elsewhere. He wrote: "I must not be made a helpless witness of the agonies the patient is passing through."<sup>38</sup> Most of the time he sat by the side of Kasturba. Finally, she breathed her last lying on his lap on February 22, 1944. Next day about 150 relatives and friends came. Dressed in a white saree woven out of yarn spun by Gandhi and covered with a jail sheet, her bier was carried and placed on the pyre within the Palace. Gandhi was moved and wiped his tears. Before the fire was set ablaze, he said falteringly that she had achieved her freedom and died with "Do or die" engraved on her heart. He sat for about six hours near the pyre. He said, "I cannot even imagine life without Ba. She was a part and parcel of myself. Her death will leave a permanent void in my life."<sup>39</sup>

Another stone and mud mould was made by the side of Desai's. Gandhi visited it daily with flowers even though his health had pulled down. Within a few days he suffered malarial fever and his condition became serious. The fever came down with quinine but the weakness persisted. Dr. Dinshaw Mehta was called to attend on him. A haunting feeling spread that there was something deadly about the Palace and Gandhi should be transferred to some other place. On March 4 he wrote to the Additional Secretary, Home Department, Government of India that keeping him and others in the Palace was expensive and "virtually the whole of this expense is, from my point of view, wholly unnecessary; and when people are dying of starvation, it is almost a crime against Indian humanity, I ask that my companions and I be removed to any regular prison government may choose. In conclusion, I cannot conceal from myself the sad thought that the whole expense of this comes from taxes collected from dumb millions of India."<sup>40</sup> On May 5 in the evening the Inspector-General of Police informed him

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that he would be released next day at 8.00. Early in the morning on May 6 Gandhi went and paid the last floral tributes to his two dear ones. He was released from detention and left for Parna Kutti. The drive was peaceful but the news had spread like wild fire. Visitors came rushing and cables and telegrams poured in. He greeted everyone and listened to the written messages, dictating many of the replies. He had little strength and that too was used up. Therefore, he was persuaded to leave Poona for Bombay (on June 25).<sup>41</sup>

Here a reference may also be made to a booklet titled *Key to Health*. Gandhi originally wrote it in South Africa in Gujarati as a series of articles for the readers of *Indian Opinion* around 1906. They were published as a booklet under the title *Guide to Health*. It became popular and suggestions were made by friends to update it. But he did not have time to do that till he was confined in the Palace. He had it translated into Hindustani and English by Dr. Sushila Nayyar under his guidance. He went through both the translations to give them final touches. On December 18, 1942 he completed the revision of this booklet and gave it the new title. In the preface dated August 27, 1942 he wrote: "Anyone who observes the rules of health mentioned in this book will find that he has got in it a real key to unlock the gates leading him to health. He will not need to knock at the doors of doctors or vaidyas from day to day."<sup>42</sup>

Gandhi developed interest in Dr. Dinshaw Mehta's nature cure centre near Pune railway station. He founded Society of Servants of God along with Mehta. Gandhi thought that cities like Poona have medical facilities but villages lacked them. Search began for a proper place around Poona. Mehta and others came to Uruli Kanchan, but felt that it was not suitable for a nature cure clinic. Gandhi disagreed and insisted that he wanted a village like Uruli as he wanted to improve the conditions in rural areas. The clinic was established with three trustees, i.e., Jehangir Patel, Dinshaw Mehta and Gandhi. He wrote to Mehta from Mahishadal on December 28, 1945, "My heart is there. When I shall be there is in God's hands. He will take me there whenever he wills."<sup>43</sup>

Gandhi came to Poona on February 20, and remained till March 11, 1946. He lived in the Nature Cure Clinic. This was in the aftermath of the World War II and India was reeling under food and other shortages. One of the suggestions which he made was that public gardens should immediately be made to start growing vegetables by law.<sup>44</sup> He also mentioned that the creation of a Nature Cure University was the last mission of his life.<sup>45</sup> After a few days he wrote on March 10, 1946, "Nature cure occupies the place of honour and in it Ramanama is the most important.... This sovereign remedy is not administered

by doctors, *vaidyas*, hakims, or any other medical practitioners.... Nor... would (it) really be of any use for doctors to prescribe God's name to patients unless they themselves were conscious of its miraculous powers. One who has had personal experience alone can prescribe it, not any other." <sup>46</sup>

Earlier, in the context of the naval mutiny on February 23 he issued a statement to the press, "I have followed the events now happening in India with painful interest. This mutiny is not, in any sense of the term, non-violent action.... A combination between Hindus and Muslims and others for the purpose of violent action is unholy and will lead to and probably is a preparation for mutual violence — bad for India and the world."<sup>47</sup> When he was asked about the emerging fashion of writing letters in blood and using blood for auspicious marks, he said on March 3, 1946, "To my mind this is a revolting practice. It causes no hurt to take a little blood from oneself." In these days, in particular, blood letting can be performed without the slightest pain or inconvenience. If too much blood is taken from him, the donor experiences weakness. But to write or sign letters in one's blood is neither bravery nor does it connote any sacrifice or suffering. It is nothing more or less than criminal folly and ought to be adjured. Not only that, it is a duty to stop it."<sup>48</sup> During this period Gandhi did some other writing too.

On June 29-30, 1946 when he was on his way to Poona, between Karjat and Neral, he brushed past a serious accident. Some persons had placed boulders on the rails which would have derailed the train but for the presence of mind of the engine driver. In the course of the prayer meeting on June 30 in Poona, he said that it was perhaps the seventh occasion when providence saved him from the very jaws of death. Some American friends suggested to him that the atom bomb would bring non-violence as nothing else could as its destructive power would desist the world from violence. But he disagreed, "The atom bomb brought an empty victory to the Allied arms but it resulted for the time being in destroying the soul of Japan." He argued: "The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs even as violence cannot be by counter-violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through non-violence. Hatred can be overcome only by love. Counter-hatred only increases the surface as well as the depth of hatred."<sup>49</sup> On July 3, Joachim Dias and Chandrakanth Kakodkar interviewed him. They said that the Roman Catholic Church had become an instrument of oppression in the hands of the Portuguese Government and asked him what the attitude of a satyagrahi should be? Gandhi replied: "It is better to leave religion alone. But if it really

plays into the hands of oppressors, then it is your duty to oppose it in the same way as you would oppose any oppressive regime. But be against it only to the extent to which it hinders your cause."<sup>50</sup> During this time he held prayer meetings in which he touched different subjects. He referred to communal tension in Ahmedabad and opposed the use of the military and police forces to control it. On July 10 he said in another meeting that white supremacy in South Africa would have to finally end. He pointed out, "After all civil resistance had its birth in Asia. Jesus was an Asiatic. If he was reborn and went to South Africa today and lived there, he would have to live in a ghetto."<sup>51</sup> In yet another meeting on July 11 he compared the spinning wheel to the central sun round which the solar system of village economy revolved. He also suggested that the popular ministries should make a declaration that the villagers must produce their own cloth. They would be supplied cotton with which they must spin and make into cloth. This would enable them to have cloth almost free of cost.<sup>52</sup> He then left Poona for Panchgani, reaching there on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

On July 28, 1946 Gandhi came to Poona for the last time. On the same day he addressed the princes of the Deccan in the hall of the Servants of India Society. These princes were thinking in terms of forming a Deccan States' Union to protect their interests. Gandhi did not approve of the idea. It might be a military combination but useless against a first class military power. He feared that it was likely to be used against their own people. His advice was: "Do not do anything in the shape of unions. Leave that work to be done by the Constituent Assembly."<sup>53</sup> On July 29 he addressed the Education Ministers' Conference. Among the subjects he dealt with was the usage of mother tongue versus English. He suggested: "I must cling to my mother tongue as to my mother's breast, in spite of its shortcomings. It alone can give me the life-giving milk. I love the English tongue in its own place, but I am its inveterate opponent if it usurps a place which does not belong to it. English is today admittedly the world language. I would therefore accord it a place as a second, optional language, not in the school but in the university course."<sup>54</sup> On the 31<sup>st</sup> he gave a speech in the Industries Ministers' Conference. He said: "It is my belief that the machine has not added to man's stature and it won't serve the world but disrupt it, unless it is put in its proper place.... We stand today in danger of forgetting the use of our hands. To forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves.... India really resides in her 700,000 village units. What would it profit a man if he gained the world but lost his soul in the bargain?"<sup>55</sup>

He went to Uruli Kanchan and from there wrote on August 3, 1946, "But the house has not room enough for new students to be

admitted. I myself cannot permanently stay in Uruli Kanchan. If God wills it, I hope in future to spend six months in the neighbourhood of Poona and six months in Sevagram."<sup>56</sup> He left Poona on August 4 for Wardha. Providence did not lead him to Poona again. When the inaugural function of the clinic was to take place, he wrote to Manibhai B. Das from New Delhi on November 12, 1947, "I am glad that the inauguration is to be done by Kakasaheb. Tell all the friends at Uruli that I am both happy and sorry that I shall not be able to attend the function. I am happy because the work I am doing here is also, according to me, part of the work that is being done at Uruli; for, the nature cure of my conception includes treatment of both body and mind."<sup>57</sup> At the same time, he wrote to Jehangir P. Patel from Sodepur on January 16, 1946, "All I am worried about, if at all, is that the clinic should benefit the masses. Till now it has catered solely to the rich."<sup>58</sup>

## **VI. Conclusion**

Thus, there were many turning points in Gandhi's life which occurred in Poona. It was here that he was awarded Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal on June 26, 1915 for his services to the British Government during the World War I, but which he returned when he launched the Non-Cooperation Movement as his conscience did not allow him to keep it. He underwent the trauma of witnessing the passing away of Desai suddenly and unexpectedly. He saw Kasturba also inching towards death. The sun finally set over their conjugal life of sixty-two years. Attempts were made on his life when he was in Poona and when he was on his way to Poona. All the same, he had fondness for the people of this city. He had written as early as 1916, "... there is more of public life in Poona [than elsewhere].... In the whole of India, it is Poona that we come across persons from among whom a large number may emerge one day as leaders of the masses."<sup>59</sup> In a citizens' meeting in Poona on July 12, 1919 he recollected that on his return from South Africa he had told the people that '... what Poona thought one day, the rest of India would think on the next. He said that he was still of the same opinion. He believed that no city in India could compare itself with Poona in its learning and its self-sacrifice, and he had no doubt that if Poona saw eye to eye with him in the matter of *swadeshi*, it would relieve him from half of the task. What... Poona lacked was faith and self-confidence. Poona still believed... that there was no salvation without being Westernized. It was only when Poona disabused itself of this belief that it could truly help in raising the country from its despondency.'<sup>60</sup> He again wrote in 1922, "The city has shrunk from no sacrifice. Poona can do much. Even now I feel that in making sacrifices, Poona will outstrip all.... The picketing of

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liquor shops is getting very well organized. The best non-cooperators go out to picket.... Poona's women are intelligent and strong-minded. I have no fear about the outcome of the movement which they have started. It cannot but gather momentum and the Government will have to admit defeat." Gandhi concluded: "The fighters of Maharashtra (read Poona) have accepted the method of non-violence as a practical policy and there is no doubt, therefore, that they will proceed non-violently. And where there is a confluence of non-violence, sacrifice and wisdom, there can be no result other than victory."<sup>61</sup> He had great admiration for Seva Sadan, an institution established in the beginning of the twentieth century for the education of girls and women and with which Ramabai Ranade (a social activist) was associated. For her obituary, he wrote: "Search where we will in the country, we shall not find an institution the equal of the Seva Sadan of Poona. Here a thousand women and girls receive education in various fields. The Seva Sadan could never have acquired such prestige but for the single-minded devotion of Ramabai. She gave her whole life to this one task."<sup>62</sup> Gandhi devoted much time and effort to spread his message of social equality through *Harijan*. It may be pointed out that for years it was printed in Aryabhushan Press, Poona. He wrote: "I have a very good editor and an equally good manager. The press belongs to the Servants of India Society with which I enjoy what may be called spiritual relations. I have therefore not to worry about the details of management."<sup>63</sup> Subsequently *Harijanbandhu* (Gujarati) was also printed in the same press. On one occasion he told Rajendra Prasad, "The people of Bengal are very sentimental, they have a great capacity for sacrifice, and they *have* made tremendous sacrifices; but the place of pilgrimage for a person who wants to devote himself to the service of the people is Poona." Gandhi continued: "No other place in the country has so many public institutions run entirely by a selfless body of workers. In Poona, you will come across a great many people who have pledged their lives to the service of the country, and who are fulfilling their pledge with great firmness. I, therefore, look upon it as a place of pilgrimage."<sup>64</sup>

It is an irony that from among the people of whom he entertained such high thoughts emerged Nathuram Godse and his friends who made the last and successful attempt on his life in Delhi on January 30, 1948!<sup>65</sup>

### Notes and References

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  20. *Ibid.*, pp. 341-43.
  21. Mira Behn/Madeleine Slade, *The Spirit's Pilgrimage* (London: Longmans, Green and Co.), p. 178.
  22. *Collected works*, vol. 55 (1973), p. 368.
  23. *Ibid.*, p. 373.
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26. *Harijan*, September 2, 1933. *Ibid.*, p. 388.
27. "Discussion with a Parsi gentleman," *Harijanbandhu*, September 3, 1933. *Ibid.*, pp. 393-94.
28. *Harijan*, September 9, 1933. *Ibid.*, p. 406.
29. *Goseva*, *Ibid.*, p. 407.
30. "Congratulations," *Harijanbandhu*, September 10, 1933. *Ibid.*, p. 421.
31. *Ibid.*, vol. 58, pp. 95-97.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.
33. *The Hindu*, June 29, 1934 in *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 101-04.
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36. D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. 6 (Bombay: Vithalbhair K. Jhaveri & D.G. Tendulkar, 1953), p. 224.
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38. *Collected works*, vol. 77 (Delhi, 1979), pp. 227-30.
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42. For the text of the booklet see *Collected works*, vol. 77 (Delhi, 1979), pp. 1-48. For Preface see *Ibid.*, vol. 76 (New Delhi, 1979), pp. 411-12.
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46. "Ramanama, the infallible remedy," *Harijan*, dated March 24, 1946. *Ibid.*, pp. 234-35.
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50. *Ibid.*, p. 407.
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# Building Sustainable Business Models in the Contemporary World: Gandhian Response

*Seema Rohmetra*

## ABSTRACT

*In the contemporary world, stiff competition makes corporations devise innovative strategies that deliver them an edge over their competitors. These strategies range from value creation, limiting new entrants and increasing the market share to maintaining the crucial balance between maximizing shareholder value and maximisation of the utility function of the corporate managers. Under such circumstances, one cannot help but question the tactics being adopted by the corporations. Are the corporations really catering to the effective demand of the consumers or are they creating an illusion of 'Consumer being the King' through creation of artificial demands? Gandhi throughout his life maintained that every action should be in the larger good. Man is engrossed in the glorification of 'self' and the current market economies and business models only add on to this behaviour. Such business practices and lifestyle is unsustainable and will only make the prospects of a better tomorrow gloomy. The paper traces the cause of this unsustainable trend that has crept in the present corporate models and attempts to provide solutions (both at micro as well as macro level) to resolve this issue using Gandhian response.*

**Key words:** business models, corporations, market economy, management, non-violence.

## Introduction

ANY CONTEMPORARY SUSTAINABLE business model must have three attributes at its core: (ethical) economic growth, environmental development and the social development. Mr. John Elkington's concept

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of “Triple Bottom Line”<sup>1</sup> as being the best measure of a company’s performance is too based on these three parameters. Unfortunately, business models have focused more on the first attribute (i.e. growth) and have largely ignored the remaining two. The result has been the ever increasing pressure on the management to meet the targets and to sustain the business. And not surprisingly, they invariably fail in doing so. In the face of adversity, we find the business agents opting for corrupt, illegal and immoral practices. These are the times when management is too stressed to meet the deadlines and they stretch the envelope by shaving off the ethical edges to meet the expectations. Such growth path has crisis always lurching around the corner. And the consequence of such an unsustainable practice and behaviour is an even bigger crisis. Investors lose not only their wealth but faith as well. And ironically, companies come up with even more elaborate innovative (risky) strategies to regain the investor’s lost confidence. The cycle continues; only this time the crisis is even more staggering and severe than the previous one. This is because literature is full of management, financial and economic theories that describe the process of rapid economic growth. But very few actually talk about and prescribe ‘responsible economic growth.’

Gandhi has written immensely on the subject of non-violence and his definition of non-violence is quite comprehensive. It represents a state which is free from chaos and disorder; a state where equal dignity of all the souls is achieved and maintained; a state where “We” comes before “I”. When someone asked Gandhi as to how the concept of non-violence was applicable to the worldly things like business and commerce, he evoked the spirit of Bhagavad Gita. He wrote:

The common belief is that dharma and artha are mutually antagonistic to each other. ‘In worldly activities such as trade and commerce, dharma has no place. Let dharma operate in the field of dharma, and artha in that of artha’—we hear many secular (*laukik*) people say. In my opinion, the author of the Gita has dispelled this delusion. He has drawn no line of demarcation between moksha and worldly pursuits.<sup>2</sup>

According to Gandhi, for an action to be non-violent, it must be “Right”. For an action to be ‘right’, it must satisfy five conditions:

1. It has to restrain such evils as greed, aggression and egoism, and promote such virtues as detachment, devotion to duty, the work ethic and empathy for fellow human beings, regardless of religion or caste. This condition is necessary for upholding the human rights of individuals. Sometimes there could be a contradiction between the individual morality and the corporate morality. But it is the

individual conscience that eventually translates into social conscience.

2. The action has to be good in itself, i.e. good according to the requirements of one's calling or profession (*swadharma*). This includes the morals, ethics and values that an individual and company believes in. The motive of action has to be noble, i.e. it should be in good faith.
3. The benefit that accrues to the agent should not be allowed to interfere with the good that might accrue to the public also (*lokasamgraha*). This means that individual actions of the individual corporations should not create negative externalities for the society. If it does, then these negative externalities need to be internalized.
4. The intention has to be free of selfish motives, the focus being "not on the fruit of one's action" but on the goodness of the action itself. This condition puts emphasis on the piousness of the means in achieving the desired result.
5. Not only the end but the means too has to be good.

Gandhi firmly believed that an action that met these five conditions would ipso facto be non-violent. Corporate and business world grows and prospers only in a primarily peaceful, non-violent socio-political and economic setup. In the following sections, we will explore as to how corporate actions and strategies can become 'non-violent' and hence sustainable.

### *Business and Environment Linkage*

Prof. Lynda Gratton of London Business School lists three things that successful corporations do:

1. They address the global challenges and don't just sit on the fringe.
2. They anchor themselves in the community and'
3. They build up inner resilience.

Addressing the global challenges creates positive perception of the firms amongst the various stakeholders; community participation builds reputation and adds to the brand value; and the inner resilience provides economies of scale to the firms. In the introduction, we mentioned responsible economic growth. Business strategies must be conceived to realize it. Taking care of the environment, while pursuing the growth targets, is one such growth strategy.

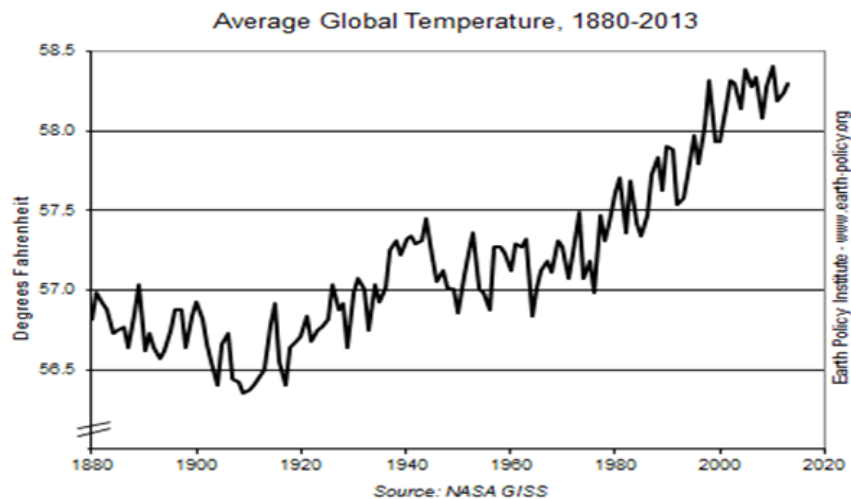
Climate change is the biggest challenge being faced by the world today. The result of unsustainable growth has been that the rate of global climate change has dreadfully increased in the last 3-4 decades. The possible effects of such climatic adversities range from disruption of livelihood to loss of income, infrastructure damage, greater number

of vector borne diseases, health issues, loss of assets, breakage of social network, mental trauma to the affected and disruption of population. Corporations need to address this global challenge to be successful in the present era. Industrialization has been the prime culprit of this wrong doing and by addressing this issue they would only be making their wrongs rights. Gandhi believed in the cosmic union where each and every organism and the non-living matter were working in unison. Any imbalance in any of the quarters of this union would result in a cumulative disequilibrium. He believed that “the universe was structured and informed by the cosmic spirit, that all men, all life and indeed all creation were one.”<sup>3</sup>

The modernized man today is faced with a dilemma, wherein on the one hand man has become the master of nature and has conquered almost every part of the earth, while on the other hand man himself has become a victim of his own unlimited diabolical powers which he has acquired over a period of time. Going through the various texts of Gandhi, one can infer that he advocated a life which was simple. A simple life is based on the basic necessities of life wherein people are not trying to accumulate more than what is absolutely necessary, but are primarily focused on inner peace and spiritual contentment. Such a lifestyle allows people to contemplate and provides means to satisfy one’s spiritual desires instead of the carnal ones. This approach of life stresses on small communities where people are always at equilibrium with their living and the non-living environment. But the modern world is complex. People are in a race against time to accumulate more. And in this race they invariably lose. The modern day world is guided by the principles of mass production and mass consumption. The strength of the modern nations is gauged by the yardstick of affluence and wealth creation. An elaborate description of such a strategy and design has been given by Adam Smith; who is widely regarded as the Father of Economics, in his work: “An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations.”<sup>4</sup> In his book, he talks about how a nation’s strength and prosperity is dependent on the wealth it accumulates. He justifies his argument of individualism by talking about the ‘invisible hand’ which guides people towards the prosperity of the nation while pursuing their own individual utility functions. This classical economic concept has been at the core of modern business houses wherein firms have continued to plunder the natural resources so as to increase the extent of their wealth. Business models, throughout the decades, have been working on the unholy principal of “Take, Make and Waste.” To maximize the gains, capital accumulation is prescribed. This capital accumulation reveals itself in the form of machines and mechanical plants and is fuelled by

the non-renewable sources of energy such as coal, petroleum, natural gas etc. The large tracts of forests and fauna are cleared to make room for the mechanical giants. Once the setup is in place, mass production follows. Tons of pollutants are dispersed into the environment and the consequence of this is what we today define as the 'climate change.' Gandhi foresaw the future modernization was leading to. That is why, he declared that, "The earth, the air, the land and the water are not an inheritance from our fore fathers but on loan from our children. So we have to handover to them at least as it was handed over to us." Countries have now started to acknowledge the gravity of the situation and have realized that such business practices are unsustainable.<sup>5</sup>

The environmental impact of industrialization has been shown in Figure-1. It shows the increase in average global temperature for the period 1880-2013. The figure presents an alarming situation of temperature rise. Since the industrialization, the global temperatures have been showing an upward trend.



**FIGURE-1**

The Climate Accountability Institute's study in 2013 documented that just 90 companies were responsible for two-thirds of man-made carbon emissions since the Industrial Revolution. What is even more staggering is that the report claimed that since 1854, 12.5 per cent of all Industrial Carbon pollution had been produced by just 5 fossil fuel based companies. Big corporations have been plundering the natural

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resources creating huge negative externalities with little regard to others' right to life. This is because the focus on 'self' resists any kind of mutual coexistence. This notion of 'self' becoming a collection of egoistic and self-centered individuals, according to Gandhi has generated a human crisis. Elaborating on the subject of being sensitive to the needs of others, Gandhi wrote: "It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings."<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the human beings are getting degenerated into their lower selves – the physical selves, whereby their consciousness is reduced to the level of the body. This has the consequence of unending self-indulgence of man in a continual hankering after instantaneous gratification of material and physical wants. Materialism has therefore come to define the contemporary world. These materialistic values are not only skin dip but have become the soul of present day commerce. Exploitation, alienation, conflict, violence, control over nature have become natural consequences of these values. It is in this vein that Gandhi offers a critique of mechanization and modernization.

Gandhi's focus on community rather than on individual; his faith in 'survival of all' rather than in 'survival of the fittest' is the mantra for achieving sustainable business practices. Companies do understand the benefits of this cooperative behaviour but seldom practice it. Every time a consensus seems within reach, someone defects and cheats. This is true for a number of strategies, but a special case of environmental protection is being discussed here:

		<b>COMPANY B</b>	
		<i>Cooperate</i>	<i>Don't Cooperate</i>
<b>COMPANY A</b>	<i>Cooperate</i>	(4,4)	(-3,7)
	<i>Don't Cooperate</i>	(7,-3)	(-2,-2)

In the above illustration, a game has been framed which is akin to the one being faced by the global business houses whenever they sit to chart out strategies on environmental protection and sustainable business practices. In the absence of full information regarding what the other country will do, each country tries to maximize his/her

own pay offs and eventually everyone ends up at a less beneficial situation than what could have been possible had they realized the benefits of mutual existence. In the given illustration, a simple two player, two strategy game has been discussed. The two players could be Company A and Company B, both of who can play two strategies, 'to cooperate' or 'don't cooperate'. The row strategies belong to Company A and the column strategies to Company B. Let us assume this cooperation is regarding limiting the carbon emissions and putting checks on unsustainable production and consumption. To cooperate means reducing the carbon emissions either through reduction in the level of output produced or through the use of superior technology (causing a potential increase in the cost of production), both of which can reduce growth prospects in the short-run but the benefits are a cleaner, safer environment, better brand value and long-run future certainty. To not cooperate means not binding oneself to the commitment of limiting carbon emissions and continuing with the objective of maximizing growth. The disadvantage in this case is the environmental degradation and the long-run future business uncertainty. The cells in the illustration represent the payoffs to the individual companies. The first value in each cell is the payoff to Company A and second value in each cell is the payoff to Company B. For example, if Company A does not cooperate and Company B cooperates, Company A would get a payoff of 7 and Company B would get a payoff of -3. In the absence of mutual trust and sense of responsibility towards others, each company would try to play a strategy which would yield it the best possible outcome. A simple glance at the illustration reveals that a rational decision and outcome should be that both the companies cooperate and thus achieve a payoff of 4 each. But the result actually varies from this optimum decision. First let us talk about Company A. She would think about her possible payoffs. If Company B plays strategy "Cooperate," then Company A can play either strategy "Cooperate" (payoff of 4) or the strategy "Don't cooperate" (pay off of 7). In this case Company A has the chance to 'Free Ride.' Obviously the payoff 7 is greater than payoff 4, so Company A would play the strategy "Don't cooperate." If Company B plays strategy "Don't Cooperate," then Company A can play either strategy "Cooperate" (payoff of -3) or the strategy "Don't cooperate" (pay off of -2). Obviously the payoff -2 is greater than payoff -3, so Company A would play the strategy "Don't cooperate." So no matter what Company B does, Company A will always play "Don't Cooperate" strategy. Similar is the case with Company B. If Company A plays strategy "Cooperate," then Company B can play either strategy "Cooperate" (payoff of 4) or the strategy "Don't cooperate" (pay off

of 7). In this case Company B has the chance to 'Free Ride,' Obviously the payoff 7 is greater than payoff 4, so Company B would play the strategy "Don't cooperate." If Company A plays strategy "Don't Cooperate," then Company B can play either strategy "Cooperate" (payoff of -3) or the strategy "Don't cooperate" (pay off of -2). Obviously the payoff -2 is greater than payoff -3, so Company B would play the strategy "Don't cooperate." So no matter what Company A does, Company B will always play "Don't Cooperate" strategy. So the solution to this game is (Don't cooperate, Don't cooperate) and the resultant payoffs to the two Companies would be (-2,-2). So both the Companies end up losing. Had they cooperated, both would have benefitted with the payoff of 4 each. The reason why such an outcome ensues is that people in the present world are following the canons of individualism. They give priority to their own lives over others' welfare and overall well-being. This individualism resists mutual existence and everyone ends up being worse off. This was the precise reason why Gandhi advised to shun the sin of glorification of self. Gandhi wrote: "I must reduce myself to zero. So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him."<sup>7</sup> Gandhi was a staunch supporter of the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: a philosophy that inculcates an understanding that the whole world is one family. Gandhi believed in the power and potent nature of this philosophy. The path that is to be followed is the path of mutual trust, coexistence, peace and sincerity. The harmony between individuals and between man and his environment is essential to achieve sustainable living and this is true for businesses as well. Corporations must realize the benefits of synergy. The outcome of the game changes once we introduce a 'credible threat.' Ms. Hannah Jones, the Vice President of 'Sustainable Business and Innovation' division at NIKE (the footwear manufacturing giant) suggests this credible threat comes on two accounts. First is the increasing cost of inputs. She acknowledges that the natural resources are getting scarce and hence the supply chains are becoming constrained. The raw material is getting expensive and so is the labour. Unless companies invest in sustainable resources and inputs, they will lose the competitive edge and would be forced to shut down or go bankrupt. The second threat comes from the consumers. The present day consumer is more aware and a global citizen. He is well informed and wants to know what the companies are doing for the communities over and above the commercial enterprises they run. Consumers look for companies who 'walk the talk.' This is crucial in building brand name. NIKE has had firsthand experience of this threat when it got involved in the 'Sweat shop

scandal' of 1990s which battered the reputation of its brand and hurt its sales. Ms. Jones considers these threats as credible which gives incentive to the firms to cooperate and work together for environmental protection and to address the global challenges together. These credible threats reward cooperation in environmental protection and punish non-compliance. The new payoff matrix may look like this:

STRATEGIES		COMPANY B	
		<i>Cooperate</i>	<i>Don't Cooperate</i>
COMPANY A	<i>Cooperate</i>	(5,5)	(-1,3)
	<i>Don't Cooperate</i>	(3,-1)	(-3,-3)

Now the dominant strategy is (Cooperate, Cooperate) and both the companies get a payoff of 5 each and are better off.

In the previous section we talked about the strategies corporations can adopt to make their business models sustainable. One indispensable and crucial strategy is to innovate continuously. Modern day firms spend billions of dollars on the 'R & D' department to grow faster. Austrian American economist Joseph Schumpeter has given paramount importance to innovation in his theories of growth. The entrepreneur becomes the factor which innovates and takes the company forward. The concept of 'creative destruction'<sup>8</sup> which builds on the remnants of old structure, system and technology is at the heart of his theory. But companies cannot go on doing it forever and repeatedly. Each time this happens it causes massive bubbles in the economy and disturbance. The new equilibrium is reached only after wide spread economic fluctuations and sufferings. And the new equilibrium thus reached is only waiting to be disturbed by yet another wave of 'destructive innovation.' Instead of investing in this destructive creation, companies should be investing in 'sustainable innovations' which is a concept practiced by Gandhi in his Ashrams and settlements. The Phoenix settlement and Tolstoy Farm in South Africa and Satyagraha Ashram and Sevagram Ashram in India are a testimony to Gandhi's belief in sustainable innovations. The life in these settlements was simple, where the focus was on basic needs

and co-existence. Manual labour and its dignity were given importance over physical capital and man-environment relationship was at the core of these ashrams. In fact his ashrams were living laboratories where the inhabitants experimented and innovated sustainable ways of living.<sup>9</sup> For instance, Gandhi suggested the use of newspapers as insulation against cold and damp. Quilts made of old newspaper sheets, worn-out saris and thin cotton waste (used as padding) were used.

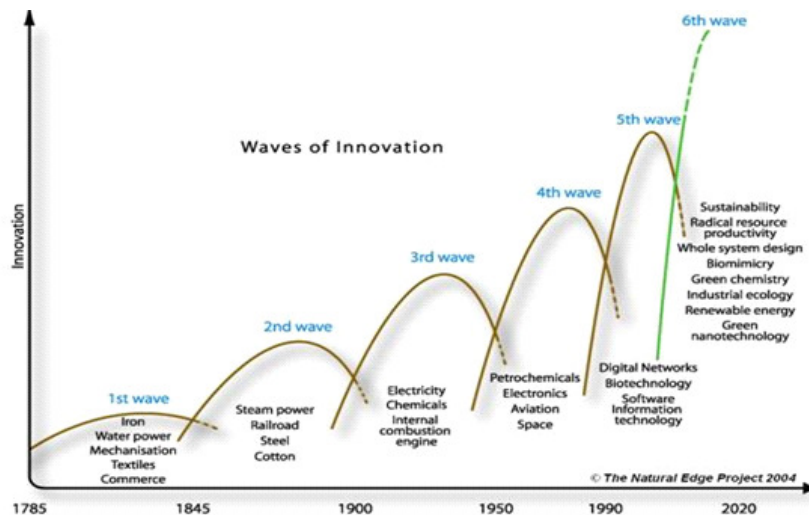


FIGURE-2

The Natural Edge Project of 2004 paints an elaborate picture of waves of innovations of the Industrial Revolution, which have been replicated in Figure 2. The study declares that:

There is significant evidence that the next waves of innovation will be driven by the twin needs to simultaneously improve productivity whilst lightening our environmental load on the planet. We now possess both the technological innovations and design know-how to tackle many environmental problems cost effectively and in some areas very profitably..... the scale of change needed to genuinely achieve sustainable development this century will see 'Creative Destruction' in traditional sectors in how they deliver services. We will always need for instance energy but how that is delivered will change significantly. Hence firms and nations that miss these next waves of innovation to achieve sustainable development risk losing significant long-term market share and eventually being completely replaced.<sup>10</sup>

The study has found that the companies who have been

environment leaders and have adopted the sustainability practices in their operations have outperformed others in their respective industrial sector.

*Business Practices and Alienation*

The UN Global Compact-Accenture CEO Study on Sustainability-2013 comprising of more than 1000 top executives from 27 countries across 103 countries was undertaken to assess the present, past and future of sustainable business. As per the study, 93 per cent of CEOs regarded sustainability as key to success; 80 per cent of CEOs viewed sustainability as a route to competitive advantage in their industry; 81 per cent of CEOs believed that sustainability reputation of their company was important in consumer's purchasing decisions; 84 per cent of CEOs believed that business should lead efforts to define and deliver sustainable goals. But only 33 per cent of CEOs believed that business was doing enough to address global sustainability challenge. Now this is a contradiction. When companies acknowledge sustainability to be essential to their survival, then why would they not do more in this regard? Again the answer lies in the Gandhian philosophy and his views on 'alienation of man.'

The present day man has become the victim of his own unlimited powers. In pursuit of mass production and mass accumulation, he is only alienating himself from his job and trade. This is affecting his occupation and commerce. This problem of alienation of man has been a matter of great concern to a number of scholars ranging from Marx to Marcuse. These philosophers have linked alienation of man to the processes of modernization and development. Like these philosophers, Mahatma Gandhi has also responded to the impacts, that the processes of modernization and development have been leaving on society in general and man in particular. To some extent, Gandhian reaction resembles Marxian reaction. This can be attributed to his concept of alienation of man that totally coincides with the Marxian concept of alienation, which includes alienation of man in four important respects. In the first place, man is alienated from his own product, as his own creation does not belong to him. It means that he has to simply follow the instructions at the workplace. Secondly, man is alienated from nature, as his work tends to become increasingly routinized and monotonous. In the third place, man is also alienated from other fellow-beings, as he is always in competition with them, and lastly man is alienated from his own self, as the realm of necessity dominates his life and reduces him to this level of an animal existence, leaving no room for a taste of art and cultural heritage. Gandhi located the cause of this alienation in the amoral nature of man, being one of

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the natural repercussions of unending competition, consumerism and mass production which mark the contemporary societies, thus leading to conflictual situations all around. In the corporate world, one of the forms in which this alienation manifests itself is the 'diseconomies of scale.' Due to the enormous size of the present day corporations, the communication and bond between the participants breaks. There arises a gulf between the owners and the managers; between managers and labour; and between managers of different departments of the same unit. This reduces efficiency and increases the cost of production.

It is due to this alienation that the world economies were struck with the severe recession and financial crisis of the late 2007. With the setting up of the limited liability companies, owners have very little stake in the individual companies.<sup>11</sup> Rather than looking at the long-term growth objective, they look for the short-term gains. The goal is to maximize short-term dividends. This has created a class of highly 'mobile' and 'floating' shareholders. They cling to their shares only till the time the prospects are bright and even then sell them at a profit and get rid of them at the first instance of trouble. The exit from the 'responsibility' is too easy and the costs too low. This is why Adam Smith, the father of economics and one of the greatest proponents of free market capitalism said that the 'directors of (joint stock) companies...being the managers rather of other people's money than of their own, it cannot well be expected that they would watch over it with the same anxious vigilance with which the partners in a private co-partnery (i.e., partnership, which demands unlimited liability) frequently watch over their own.'<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the modern business operations have brought a very clear distinction between the owners of the firms and the operators (managers) of the firm. The goals and objectives of both these economic agents are different. The manager of the firm is alienated from the firm he works in. He looks to achieve the short-term targets for the owners (which he considers as a constraint) and works to maximize his own utility function. The 'Hire and Fire' policy of the management is only adding fuel to the fire. The hired personnel see very little at stake and are alienated from the companies they work in. They too develop short-term goals and work towards them. They are guided by the principal of 'Greater the risk, higher the return.' The result is short-sighted risky investments and business operations that are unsustainable to their very core. The present day owners, being mobile and floating, are too alienated from their produce and operations. Because the only thing to lose is the extent to which investment is made and that too can be reduced to considerable measure with the help of yet another class of 'prudent' investment managers. The outcome is investment

in risky assets, creation of unheard and risky derivatives (which are considered great financial innovations), and the loot of ordinary man's hard earned money such as the pension funds. It is because of this alienation that the principle of shareholder value maximization, which has its operational origins in the 1980s and was hailed as the Holy Grail, has actually done more harm to the world than good. Of course, it has done good to the handful of investors and top managers who have benefitted at the expense of ordinary and less 'innovative' investors. Shareholder value is maximized through short-term strategies like cutting costs via labour lay off and reducing capital expenditure by minimizing investment, as increasing revenue is relatively much difficult to achieve. Profits are used for own-share buybacks to retain the share values and are sold at a premium at the opportune time. This is not at all a long-run viable and sustainable business option as it lowers the quantum of retained profits (which are the primary source of company's investment) and leaves the other stakeholders such as labour and the supply chain constituents fending for themselves. This is because labour acquires specific skills and suppliers the necessary equipment and infrastructure which makes exit an unviable option for them

### **Business Ethics and Social Responsibility**

At this moment, any prudent person would see a contradiction. Why would the owners of the firms and the managers, who are running these companies, would want to jeopardize its long-run prospects? Don't they have responsibility towards the community and the consumers they serve? The Enron scandal of 2001, in which shareholder's lost US \$ 74 billion, the 'WorldCom' scandal of 2002, which led to 30,000 lost jobs and \$ 180 billion losses for investors, the American Insurance Group (AIG) Scandal of 2005, in which accounting fraud of \$ 3.9 billion and bid-rigging and stock price manipulation was alleged, the Lehman Brothers Scandal of 2008, which hid \$ 50 billion loans in disguise of sales, are only few of the notable instances in the recent past where such a degraded and corrupt behaviour of corporate sector has been revealed to the world. We tried to address this contradiction using the Gandhian response of 'Alienation of man.' Yet another reason for such a behaviour lies in the moral code of conduct and the ethical values. This is the segment where the third constituent of sustainable business practices gets introduced into our discussion, i.e. the community and society's development and the corporate responsibility towards it. Gandhi has given a very elaborate response to the unethical attitude and 'mechanization of beings.' The contemporary societies according to him, face a kind of disorder

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which gets reflected in the 'unethical developmental models' being pursued at varied levels. Rather than locating the disorder in the institutional arrangements, he locates it in the spiritual soul which rather than being represented in its higher form has degenerated into the lower self (physical self). Gandhi, as such explains the cause of degeneration. "The physical self is the modernized conception of the self where man is the competitor for and a rational accumulator and consumer of property. It considers all desires worth pursuing so long as they are freely chosen, and so long as in pursuing them no harm is done to others, the modern self, lives, moves and has its being in the closed circle of rational egoism and rational choice." This 'self' becoming a collection of egoistic and self-centered individuals, according to Gandhi has generated a human crisis. The materialistic values have not only permeated the individual lifestyles but also the societies, governmental bodies and all the developmental policies. Further arguing against materialism, he refers to the negative impact that it can create on society as a whole. The competition of scarce resources causes negative tendencies in the society. These tendencies, including: exploitation, domination, inequality and oppression etc. according to Gandhi, are becoming almost universal and are reflected not only in the relationships of one country with another but everywhere else, at every level – to the extent that it effects the very nature of the human being. So dehumanized the human beings become that it effects the whole civilization. It is in this context that Gandhi terms the whole of modern civilization to be operating on the maxims of "Might is right" and "Survival of the fittest." According to him, these principles which are in operation today are the root cause for our ethical insensitivity and moral degradation in different levels of the being.

The question of ethical behaviour and social responsibility is paramount to sustainability prospects of a company. A company's reputation, whether positive or negative, is based on how a particular company is perceived by its stakeholders like shareholders, employees, investors, consumers, media etc. The ethical business practices and actively sharing the social responsibilities goes a long way in building a positive and healthy image of the company. This creates inner resilience of the company as discussed earlier. Ethics could be both positive and negative. But instead of focusing exclusively on 'Don'ts, i.e. the negative ethics, companies should devote much attention to the Do's, i.e. the positive ethics. This is crucial because the stakeholders assume that once they have fulfilled their obligation towards the Don'ts, rest all is permissible. These business ethics should rather focus on a set of 'tests.' Every action has a motive and a consequence.

Hence every corporate action must pass through these tests. First is the 'Test of Significance.' The company needs to answer as to what the particular business action is trying to achieve, who are the stakeholders and what would be the eventual outcome and effect of such an action on the respective stakeholders. The second test is the 'Test of Responsibility.' Here the company needs to identify the rights of the stakeholders which are at risk and its responsibility and obligation towards maintenance of such rights. The third test is the 'Test of ideals.' The company owners and managers have to look beyond the established canons of business. Instead of looking outward, an inner journey is required. Those at the helm of affairs need to draw a line as to what is acceptable and what is not. Of course, it is a case of value judgment, but it is imperative for building a company's inner resilience. The employees must have the courage and freedom to speak out what they truly believe in. This is the test where the 'Responsible Business Leaders' are identified. The last test is the 'Test of Compassion' wherein the company needs to adopt the 'bottom to top' approach. Instead of passing standing instructions from the top management down to the ranks, an informal channel along with a former process should be opened. The communication and feedback from the employees is a must. They are the ones doing the actual operations on ground. Companies, who consider and implement the suggestions and proposals from their employees, develop a strong internal ethical base. Companies which spend and invest on the welfare of their employees, retain the skilled workers. This increases the production efficiency because a happy worker is simply more productive and efficient. This model has been replicated by the coffee giant Starbucks, which spends more on health care of its employees than on coffee. Even during the turbulent times, the company refused to cut down the healthcare expenditure. The goal was to keep the employees happy. There is a reason why Starbucks Coffee Company has been consistently (since 2007) named one of the 'Most Ethical Companies' by The Ethisphere Institute, a New York City think tank. And yes they call their workers 'partners' and not employees.

The same set of tests that is discussed above has been very briefly summarized by the Mahatma in his incredible Talisman. He says:

Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man [woman] whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him [her]. Will he [she] gain anything by it? Will it restore him [her] to a control over his [her] own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj [freedom] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?<sup>13</sup>

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This talisman is simple yet very potent in its application. It contains in it the mantra of sustainability for businesses and corporations. They just need to observe whether their actions and business strategies are doing any good to their most lowly placed worker or not. Because it is he who forms the building block of the enterprise and on whom the whole empire rests.

Incorporating ethics and social responsibility into the business practices is also very clearly suggested in Mahatama Gandhi's 7 social sins<sup>14</sup> which are: Wealth without work; Pleasure without conscience; Knowledge without character; Commerce without morality; Science without humanity; Worship without sacrifice and Politics without principle. Economic entities continue to manipulate the markets, adding nothing to the value but still creating wealth as seen in the recent financial crisis. This is the case of wealth without work. Corruption too becomes source of this wealth without work. The individualistic lifestyle of the present world reflects today's pleasure without sacrifice. Everyone asks, "What is in it for me?" Companies pay huge salaries and perks to their management on the basis of their IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and not HQ (Humane Quotient), this is knowledge without character. Showing disregard for individual life and social responsibility in pursuit of single corporate agenda is commerce without morality. Even Adam Smith, who is considered to be the earliest advocate of the free market capitalism, calls for spirit of benevolence, service, contribution and sacrifice as the moral grounds of commerce in his work, 'The theory of Moral Sentiments.'<sup>15</sup> Using scientific knowledge to cater to the demands of only rich and affluent is science without conscience. Machines have replaced labour and this has only created massive unemployment. The present corporate world demands a 'man to be fit for machine' and not 'machine to be fit for man.' And our educational institutions and curriculums are being setup to meet this demand. Talking about corporate social responsibility and making it only a peripheral and not the core departmental unit of the enterprise is corporate equivalent of worship without sacrifice. Companies acknowledge the fact that their reputation is much affected by how consumers perceive the company. That is why companies engage in social and community services. But as soon as responsibility and ethics come in direct conflict with their corporate interests, the latter supersedes everything. The Coca Company runs The Coca Cola Foundation for philanthropic work but the same company is reluctant to relent on the demands of the 17 village councils of Mehdiganj area of Varanasi district in Uttar Pradesh, India who are suffering from the depletion of ground water on account of excessive pumping of the scarce resource by the Coca Cola plant in

the region. Instead of engaging with communities and fellow water users in reducing shared water risk, the company is relying on its legal experts to save the day. This is worship without sacrifice. The collusion between the corporations and governments and the unethical ways in which big businesses are governed is politics without principal. We have numerous cases where elaborate tactics have been used to influence political decisions to suit corporate interests. The means may include lobbying, campaign contributions, political appointments, bribes etc. Even the so-called business regulations by the governments only help the well-established corporations to maintain their supremacy and crowd out the small businesses. It is because the cost of compliance to these regulations is too high for the small firms or a new entrant. The corporate governance and the way business is run today is yet another indication of politics without principal. In 2012, when the Barclays and other 15 banks were caught in a scandal of having manipulated the LIBOR (London Interbank Offered Rate) for profits as far back as in 2003 and eroding the financial market trust, they simply replied by saying, "Everyone else was doing it...our only way to compete." This is business governance without principals. Corporations must shun off these ills if they want to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. They need to embed the spirit of ethics, values and responsibility in their working culture just as the technology is embedded in the production process. Instead of making CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) a fringe element, it should be internalised into the core business strategies. There is ample research which has shown that companies only benefit from such strategies. Several researches suggest that responsible business practices towards primary stakeholders can be very profitable and beneficial to Indian firms. Moreover, CSR has been found to benefit Indian companies in terms of better corporate image, long-term customer relationships and customer loyalty.<sup>16</sup>

### *Conclusion*

We have talked about the sustainable business model which is based on ethical growth, environment protection and social responsibility, all of which are Gandhian responses. We have seen how this model can actually ensure long-term certainty and survival of the companies. To the sceptic business minds who feel that ethics and responsibility are only acting as additional costs and are diverting companies from their objectives and goals, Gandhi gives a befitting reply. It is important what one's goals are. But it is even more important as to what means are being adopted to achieve those goals. Gandhi in *Hind Swaraj* says:

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Your belief that there is no connection between the means and the end is a great mistake... The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree. I am not likely to obtain the result flowing from the worship of God by laying myself prostrate before Satan.... If I want to deprive you of your watch, I shall certainly have to fight for it; if I want to buy your watch, I shall have to pay you for it; and if I want a gift, I shall have to plead for it; and, according to the means I employ, the watch is stolen property, my own property, or a donation. Thus we see three different results from three different means. Will you still say that means do not matter?<sup>17</sup>

This statement by M.K. Gandhi sums up the whole topic. It is the journey that makes the destination pleasant and of any worth. A journey that is marred by conflict, violence, materialism and individualism will only translate into misery and suffering for all once the destination is reached. One cannot hope to get “a rose through planting a noxious weed.” The corporate enterprises need to be more responsible and ethical in their actions. The cost of such behaviour might be high in the short-run in few of the cases, but it has immense long-term sustainability benefits. Like the 35th President of the United States, John F. Kennedy said: “There are risks and costs to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction.”

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# Will J.C. Kumarappa Guide Another Village Movement?

*G. Palanithurai*

## ABSTRACT

*This paper seeks to bring out J. C. Kumarappa's contribution towards democracy, decentralization and development and explore whether a new village movement can be built up with the active participation of the poor to strengthen self-governance at the grassroots drawing on his insights.*

**Key words:** Village, governance, globalisation, poverty.

## Introduction

FARMING COMMUNITIES, PASTORAL communities, tribal communities, craft communities and fishing communities in India are in deep crises. Land, water, sea, forest and crafts are the major sources of their livelihood. But now, in the name of economic growth, the sources are being disturbed. In India, 350 million people live in absolute poverty. Government of India has made it clear that 30 per cent of the people are poor. These people survive with Rs. 26 per day per person in the rural areas. It is also estimated that 65 million people have been displaced due to development projects. Nearly 680 million Indians cannot meet their basic needs. 40 per cent to 60 per cent of the population lack access to basic entitlements such as health care, drinking water and sanitation. Due to vagaries of monsoon, and frequent natural disasters their distress has increased. The unorganized sector without any security accounts for 92 per cent of the labour force. All the vital statistics were provided by different reports of the government. In order to reduce poverty and distress,

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roughly 11 per cent of the revenue is being spent every year with not much impact on the poor because of waste, corruption and ineffectiveness.<sup>1</sup> The rural indebtedness, farmer's suicides and abject poverty are the result of an exploitative economy perpetuated over a period of time since independence and more specifically after the introduction of globalization of economy. Self-reliant nature of the Indian villages are systematically made to disappear. Dependency syndrome has been set in even to meet basic needs. In reality, Indian villages are the lifeline and cultural identity of the nation. Yet they are in deep trouble.<sup>2</sup>

Being an academic activist in a Gandhian institution for more than two decades, working with panchayat leaders and civil society organisations to transform the rural communities,<sup>3</sup> I would like to look at the framework developed by J.C. Kumarappa for transforming rural India and analyse its relevance to the present context. Here, one has to understand that J.C. Kumarappa never believed in the form of state and economy pursued by India under Nehru after independence. The economy envisaged by J.C. Kumarappa is opposite to the economy of today. Changing the framework of economy and policies is not in the hands of the people today but changing the attitude and behaviour of people can at least safeguard their livelihood. Against this background, we try to look for some ideas from his framework to save natural resources and to nourish the rural economy from a livelihood perspective. The central government has heralded the New Panchayati Raj system through the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of India. Now, it is right-based development.<sup>4</sup> To make use of all the opportunities for the benefit of the community in the rural areas, a series of steps had been taken and yet the dream has not been realised.<sup>5</sup> When it is possible for the poor to fight for their rights and succeed in their attempt, in the same way it is possible for the poor to make use of the new opportunities to transform their life by improving their quality and standard of life. To achieve the above, a new people's movement is the need of the hour. To build such a movement, will J.C. Kumarappa's approach of village movement be of any use? Against this background, J.C. Kumarappa's contribution towards democracy, decentralization and development is revisited in this article. A new village movement can be built up with the active participation of the poor to strengthen self-governance. To strike a balance between state, market and society, a people's movement to strengthen self-governance is an imperative need. Self-governance here refers to the strengthening of the system of governance at grassroots by empowering the people to participate in the decision making process with enabling provisions like reservation. Self-governance is possible by empowering all

segments of the community and by orienting a new transformative leadership. While we cannot reverse globalization, it can be made to work for the poor by enabling the poor to participate in the decision making at the grassroots.<sup>6</sup> Some finer elements from the approach of J.C. Kumarappa appear to be useful to transform the villages even now, and they can be considered here.

### **Introducing Kumarappa**

J.C. Kumarappa is one of the few original thinkers who stood behind M.K. Gandhi in conceptualizing Gandhi's ideas on development during freedom struggle and even after independence. J.C. Kumarappa is a forgotten intellectual not only by the mainstream intellectuals but also by the Gandhians. His 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary in 2017 had largely gone unnoticed. It is a known fact that his ideas and thoughts were quite opposite to the political regime we had in India at the dawn of independence. As a result, no one has evinced interest in compiling the documents of J.C. Kumarappa for the future generations not even in Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. During the 125<sup>th</sup> year of his birth anniversary, all the documents could have been unearthed and compiled and for which the Government of India could have encouraged scholars to do so. J.C. Kumarappa is an original thinker and richly contributed for the development of rural areas not only by contributing ideas but also through action research.<sup>7</sup>

All crises what we see today in the villages are nothing new and they have been predicted by M.K. Gandhi and J. C. Kumarappa as India had started adopting the model of the West for economic development.<sup>8</sup> In the seven decades of development experience in India, what we have today is the active role of the state and market, which indicates the poor positive impact in the life of the people in the rural areas despite plethora of schemes implemented with heavy outlays to alleviate poverty<sup>9</sup> and to achieve prosperity. After seeing the failure of the state and market, responsibility now lies with the civil society and people to enable the market and the state to work for the people more particularly the poor as per direction of the civil society.<sup>10</sup>

### **A New Opportunity**

It is an appropriate time to make use of J.C. Kumarappa's economic democracy in the rural areas in the context of the Government amending the Constitution to give power to the people.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of India came into existence. It is to be noted here that decentralization has come into operation along with globalization of economy, democratization of the communities

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and societies. It is aimed at involving the people in the process of development and governance through the new local government. It has to work for economic development and social justice. If the intention of bringing the amendment is analysed consciously, one can conclude that it is for self-governance.<sup>12</sup> Successes of the new initiatives depend on how it is being perceived and operationalized by the people and their leaders at the grassroots and the sincerity of state governments. Development should not be at the cost of environment and ecology as we have witnessed the negative impact of development activities carried out so far, on the life and livelihood of the poor.<sup>13</sup>

Following this historic amendment, a series of Acts have been passed giving people entitlements.<sup>14</sup> Huge outlays have been made to create activities at the ground level. The 14<sup>th</sup> Central Finance Commission stipulated that every Gram Panchayat has to prepare a village development plan with the active participation of the people.<sup>15</sup> It has provided untied grant to Gram Panchayats. All entitlements have been given in the form of rights and hence it is called "Rights Revolution." Following the above initiative, the central government has launched a movement called Gram Swaraj Movement. This has to be done by the Panchayati Raj institutions. It requires a well informed and transformed leader as a constructive worker to make every Gram Panchayat a little republic. While looking at the above opportunities created by the central government, will the thoughts and ideas of J.C.Kumarappa help the village panchayats is the question to be answered?

### **J.C. Kumarappa's Framework**

J.C. Kumarappa an architect of Gandhian framework of economics is to be re-read in the present context as his framework and development activities suggest alternatives to the ill effects of economic globalization in the rural areas of India and other countries in the world.<sup>16</sup> He envisaged an economy for India suited to achieve sustainable development.<sup>17</sup> People's economic activities are not at the cost of nature, environment and ecology. They should be in harmony with nature. In this context, he talked about democracy, which is revolutionary in nature. It is not a liberal democracy of the West orienting oneself to work for individual benefit. All human activities should be tailored to realize the well being of all. Individual's works and activities are well within the framework of community's welfare.<sup>18</sup> It is to be done with the active participation of the people. It is to be understood that community implies equality, equity and harmony among various segment of the people living in the village without any discrimination. When we use people it refers to the poor and the

marginalised. It is to be recognized that the fruits of all economic activities including globalization so far have not been used for the benefit of the poor in the rural areas<sup>19</sup> in India. Neither the state nor the market helped the poor and they declared their failures. M.K. Gandhi and J.C. Kumarappa envisaged a framework of development which solely relied on nature and the community. The economy pursued in India by Nehru was not the one advocated by M.K. Gandhi and J.C. Kumarappa. It is to be noted that though Nehru followed the western path of development he tried his level best to integrate the model of development advocated by M.K. Gandhi and J.C. Kumarappa into the mainstream economy.<sup>20</sup>

It is evident from launching of community development programme, panchayati raj, cooperative movement creating Khadi and Village Industries Council and creating Ministries for Panchayati Raj and Khadi and Village Industries in his ministry he tried his level best to integrate Gandhian framework of development with mainstream development.<sup>21</sup> It is unfortunate that the dream of Nehru could not be materialized. It is also evident that there was no support system for all the initiatives of the government to bring success in every sector activities in the framework of Gandhian economy. Even the Gandhian institutions do not have adequate manpower and visionary leadership to make use of the policy and programme support of the government to facilitate the development activities of the people and the stakeholders to strengthen the basic structure to transform the rural communities.<sup>22</sup> Apart from the above, there was no substantial knowledge and skill enhancement through rural higher education to transform the rural communities. Here, one should not forget that the policy framework evolved at the centre and state governments are totally opposite to the Gandhian framework of development. All minor efforts taken by the Gandhians and civil society organisations in line with the framework of M.K. Gandhi and J.C. Kumarappa had been made ineffective because of the mainstream development activities. In such a way, the Gandhian framework of development has been given a go-by. Subsequently, the whole development process is market-friendly. Now the market economy has also failed to deliver the goods as promised.<sup>23</sup>

In this context, decentralization was initiated as a new paradigm. It is nothing but giving power and responsibility to the people to take care of their life within the framework of governance and administrative decentralization. In this context, J.C. Kumarappa's concept of decentralization could be examined. Now empowerment, employment and entitlement are the catchwords of development.<sup>24</sup> It will be operationalised through a vibrant institutional framework at

the grassroots. Decentralization conceptualized by J.C. Kumarappa is to enable the people to engage themselves in governance and development. Fundamentally, his argument is to evolve an institutional structure and practices, which will facilitate such engagement. It is to be understood that the whole development activities have to be carried out within the moral standard of highest order. In this regard, he criticized the constitutional pundits for their lapse in detailing the provisions in the Constitution a role for the citizens. In a society like India, people have to be empowered and enabled to participate in the process of development. His paradigm of development relies on nature, people and their capacity and capability. Basically, India is a communitarian society. A true democracy must be a living union between the government and the people. The constitution should lay down clearly the functions of the government and the people. The constitution has to distribute the duties and responsibilities of the society. Legal democracy rules from the top. Duty based democracy originates and derives its power from the people. A duty based constitution gives the people a sense of responsibilities. The entire community work for the common good. There is no scope for individual profit. It is the Indian spirit. In this democracy, there won't be any exploitation. Basic minimum necessities will be met from the economic activities of the people. J.C. Kumarappa argued fundamentally that "democracy cannot exist where there is starvation, nakedness and poverty alongside of squalor and glamorous living which condition indicates exploitation of the weak by the strong." He further adds: "if our country aims at true democracy it should be made up of self-sufficient units which are capable of looking after their own primary needs. We may start with villages. These should realize, their salvation lies in their standing together as a unit. Each village should strive to produce all the commodities needed for civilized existence."<sup>25</sup> How this aim could be achieved has been shown through a model evolved for a village.<sup>26</sup> The same model can be adopted in each and every village panchayat and thereby a non-violent democracy could be achieved.

J.C. Kumarappa argued for planning not for material production and thereby economic development. For him, any planning aiming at material production and material development would end in violence and exploitation. Hence, he advocated a new planning for human growth not for economic growth. While advocating economic democracy, it is for meeting the needs of the people and the community not for greed and economic development. The whole economy should be made a non-violent economy. Is it possible to create such an economy today is the fundamental question? It is possible even today through

the new rural local government. It has got freedom and mandate to prepare development plan for each and every gram panchayat. In the new local government, activities have to be designed to achieve economic development and social justice, whereas in J.C. Kumarappa's framework both are integrated into economic justice. This could be achieved through planning by people at the grassroots. It needs fundamentally a new conceptualization based on J.C. Kumarappa's framework of economic democracy for human growth. Survey of the performance of the panchayat leaders in the last twenty-five years has revealed that many leaders have excelled in their performance in managing development in the lines of J.C. Kumarappa to a certain extent.<sup>27</sup> Tremendous achievements have been made by the panchayat leaders without much background knowledge of J.C. Kumarappa's economic justice. If panchayat leaders are trained and sensitized on the framework of economic justice of J.C. Kumarappa, lot more could be achieved in the villages and in the life of the poor and the marginalised. In the absence of the above in the rural areas, the natural resources are being exploited recklessly by the market forces, more often illegally and its impact is seen in the life of the poor in the villages. People have started realizing the importance of environment and ecology and they have started struggling against mindless exploitation of the natural resources and polluting the atmosphere through industrialization.

#### **Stand-alone Movements**

Farmers are committing suicides in thousands. They are not sporadic activities. It is happening continuously.<sup>28</sup> Tribals have come out from the forests and are fighting for their rights. Craftsmen and women are on the street fighting for their livelihood security. Same is the case of the fishers. People have been mobilized and fighting against the state and the market to save natural resources, environment and ecology.<sup>29</sup> The struggle could be channelized in an organised way by using the new opportunities created for the people to participate in governance and development. The framework of J.C. Kumarappa can be used to create awareness among the people in the rural areas and train the elected panchayat leaders to involve people in economic development activities by evolving a development plan. Social revolution can be created in the rural areas through the panchayati raj by training the panchayat leaders as transformative leaders.<sup>30</sup> In reality, they have not been used to fight with the state and the market legally and constitutionally. These opportunities have been seen as mere administrative decentralization.<sup>31</sup> The peoples groups fighting against the state and the market have not used the Acts passed in

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Parliament to claim their entitlements. A new training framework and package can be evolved to train the panchayat leaders, and other functionaries who work with people on evolving alternative model which should be people-centric, nature-centric and peace-centric. If all the opportunities are used, a village based economy could be created as envisaged J.C. Kumarappa through participatory planning..

### Box - I

#### Fundamentals of J.C. Kumarappa

- Development activities for the needs of the community.
- Human activities in harmony with nature.
- People's participation in economic activities.
- Highest moral standard has to be followed in all activities
- Activities for human growth and not for economic growth.
- Planning by the people for the people.
- No space for individual benefit oriented activities and focused on community's welfare.
- Harmony not only between human being and nature but also among all segments in the villages.
- Economic activities based on local skills, knowledge and natural resources.
- Science and technology needed to reduce human drudgery not to produce more for individual benefits.
- Rediscovering village culture and art.
- Practicing and amplifying the ethical values of the community.
- Organizing multipurpose cooperative society in the villages.
- Making village panchayat not mere administrative agency but an agent to involve people in all development activities by providing knowledge and skills.
- Nurturing village citizenship by fostering responsibilities to members of the village.
- Agriculture and village industries for economic activities.
- Self-control, renunciation and simplicity are the regulators.
- Social education fundamental to social reform and social justice.

*Source: J.C. Kumarappa, Why the Village Movement? Wardha: All India Village Industries Association, 1946.*

### Box - II

#### Actionable framework from J.C. Kumarappa to the Gram Panchayats of today

- Scientific planning can be done at Gram panchayat level for economic activities.
- A new perspective can be developed for planning for economic

- activities to protect and nurture natural resources.
- A multipurpose people's cooperative society can be created by following the models of people's cooperatives in different states.
- Panchayat office can be designed as peoples centre to build social capital for transformative action.
- Every gram sabha can be used for not only for decision making but also for social education.
- All commons could be protected for the peoples use.
- People's service group could be created with the active participation of volunteers as Village Seva Sangh suggested by J.C. Kumarappa.
- Village panchayat has to work for self-governance from the present agent function.
- Creating enabling environment to revive village arts, and culture.
- Local skills and knowledge have to be utilized for all development activities.
- All rural industries should be revived and production could be initiated by using the government schemes.
- Multipurpose cooperative societies could be used for all economic activities.
- Building the capacity of the citizens to take more responsibilities and work for self-governance.
- Social reform could be initiated through a process of dialogue in the Gram Sabha meetings.
- All the rural cultural and ethical values evolved and practiced over a period of time could be constantly appreciated.
- Service, self-control and simplicity could be practiced by the leaders.
- Leaders could be shaped through training as transformational leaders and visionaries.
- Panchayats can be made as not subservient to officials and the governments but they should be made as self-governing institutions.
- All decisions not based on majority but on ethical and moral values.

Like the above series of activities can be evolved based on the framework of J.C. Kumarappa's economic justice and practiced in the villages through the panchayats. Many of the panchayats are performing well in this direction. But their number is less.

*Source: G. Palanithurai, M.A. Thirunavukkarasu and G. Uma, Change Makers at Grassroots. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2012.*



**What is to be Done?**

In the light of the economic justice framework, activity manual has to be prepared. How to protect, nurture, culture and utilize natural resources without exploiting them?, how to save energy and natural resources like water and sand? How to revive cottage industries?, how to create an economic system with agriculture and village industry by using the skill and knowledge of the people and by creating a people's cooperative institution? and how to train the farmers in organic and natural farming, have to be incorporated into the activity manual. Activity manual has to be prepared and with the help of the activity manual panchayat leaders have to be trained in achieving economic justice by using the New Panchayati Raj system. Farmers have to be trained in organic and natural farming. To do all the activities, new brand of training institutions have to be created.

**Conclusion**

Re-visiting and re-reading the activities and writings of J.C. Kumarappa after 70 years of development activities in the rural areas initiated by the government, one could see the deep knowledge of J.C. Kumarappa about the transformative process of the communities. Having realized the gap in the development initiatives, a revolutionary step had been taken to amend the Constitution with an objective of creating an institution of self-governance very near to the people. It was created to fill the gap by involving the community in the whole process of development and governance. Subsequently, series of Acts have been passed to make all entitlements as rights and thereby rights revolution has been created in India. They are not only rights but also huge outlays for all development activities. These are all new opportunities created to make use of people's power, knowledge, skill and energy to redeem the villages from deep stress and crises. This could be possible only through adoption of ideas evolved by J.C. Kumarappa for social and economic actions at grassroots. It requires transformative leadership at the grassroots and this can be created through leadership training programmes. Further, it requires mobilization of people for social transformation and economic development.

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# Reimagining India on Gandhian Lines

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## ABSTRACT

*The paper argues that power of imagination or imaging future is an important factor in the attainment of an ideal society. Gandhi envisioned the future of India and worked out its details in different facets of human life including political, economic, social and religious. In the context of the challenges India is facing on these fronts, Gandhian ideas and principles could serve as a frame of reference when we are reimagining the vision of a better India.*

**Key words:** Reimagining India, Gandhi's vision of Indian society, Current politico-economic and social scenario of India.

## I

THE NOTED NORWEGIAN peace researcher, Johan Galtung, on the occasion of commencement of the celebrations of International Day of Non-violence, on October 2, 2007, at the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York, delivered an address on the theme "Gandhi and the struggle against imperialism." He placed five points at the UN Round Table Meeting. Other panelists in this meeting were also noted scholars and activists like Ahmed Kathrada, Amartya Sen, Ela Gandhi, Gene Sharp, Jesse Jackson Sr., John Nash and Lia Diskin. According to Johan Galtung there are five approaches in Gandhi's constructive handling of conflict: They are the following: 1) Never fear dialogue, 2) Never fear conflict: more opportunity than danger 3) Know History or you are doomed to repeat it (Burke) 4) Image the

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future or you will never get there 5) While fighting occupation, clean up your own house!<sup>1</sup> All these points are equally important and give food for thought when we are discussing Gandhian ideas.

In the present discussion, we will consider the fourth point which is very significant because we are discussing about the reimagining of India. Galtung was right when he said, Gandhi had imaged the future and trained the people to achieve that goal. According to Galtung, "Be today the future you want to see tomorrow" was Gandhi's way of translating this point. Gandhi was very much aware of the power of imagination and he used it effectively in his life, philosophy and methods of action. That is why he wrote in one of his letters to Jawaharlal Nehru, on 5th October 1945. "*My ideal village still exists only in my imagination. After all every human being lives in the world of his own imagination.*"<sup>2</sup> Gandhi was a visionary and always imagined or dreamt about India of his vision. The India of his vision is clearly articulated in the collection of his writings titled "India of my dreams." It is true that if we don't imagine the picture of the future, we will never be able to reach that goal. Gandhi not only imagined the future but also trained the people and tirelessly worked toward the goal.

To begin with, we will look into the India which Gandhi imagined by examining some of his important writings on this subject. Gandhi outlined India of his dreams in the columns of *Young India* way back in 1931. He wrote:

I shall strive for a constitution, which will release India from all thralldom and patronage, and give her, if need be, the right to sin, I shall work for an India, in which the poorest shall feel it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of the intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men. Since we shall be at peace with all the rest of the world, exploiting, nor being exploited, we should have the smallest army imaginable, all interests not in conflict with the interests of the dumb millions will be scrupulously respected, whether foreign or indigenous. Personally, I hate distinction between foreign and indigenous. This is the India of my dreams... I shall be satisfied with nothing less.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it is clear that the India he imagined was a poor person's India in which his/her voice is heard. To put it differently, he visualized an India keeping in mind the poorest of the poor and their needs and aspirations. It is a class-less and caste-less society in which all communities live in perfect harmony without any distinction. In fact

his vision was not limited to India alone even though he placed his ideas taking into consideration the harsh realities prevailing the Indian scene. His approach was universal in nature and not limited to any particular country or group of countries.

He realized the unique role of villages and that is the reason why he described the villages as the very heart of India. He visualized every aspect of the village life, its administration and the role of individuals in the whole process. He placed before us the concept of oceanic circle in the place of pyramidal structure with an organic relation between individual and villages, each ready to perish for the other. Gandhi outlined the picture of an ideal system of village administration which he called as republic or panchayat having full powers and outlined salient features relating to it in the columns of *Harijan* in 1946. To quote him:

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a Republic or Panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in its attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured, in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour.... In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the villages, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but give strength to all within and derive its own from the centre. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and therefore within and derive its own from the centre. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and therefore not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, thought incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. *Let India Live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want before we can have something approaching it.*<sup>4</sup> If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture in which the last is equal to the first, or in other words, none is to be the first and none the last.

In this picture every religion has its full and equal place. We are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which

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are deep down in the bowels of the earth. The mightiest of wind cannot move it.

In this there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultural human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place. But I must confess that I have never sat down to think out what that machine can be. I have thought of Singer's sewing machine. But even that is perfunctory. I do not need it to fill in my picture.<sup>5</sup>

The democratic polity Gandhi envisaged was highly decentralized and he considered village as the basic unit. He was of the view that true democracy has to be worked by the people from below or bottom. He was convinced that "True democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre."<sup>6</sup> In such a democratic polity, the "people's will" in consonance with truth and non-violence must be the guiding principle in the decision making process. In the true spirit of democracy, the activities of the State would be guided by public opinion and a popular State cannot act against the will of the people or public opinion. Gandhi asserted that "Government of the people, by the people and for the people cannot be conducted at the bidding of one man, however great he may be."<sup>7</sup> According to Gandhi, real *swaraj* can be attained only by educating the masses and building up their capacity to regulate and control authority when it is abused or misused. He wrote in *Young India* in 1925. "Real Swaraj will come, not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused."<sup>8</sup> Gandhi was aware of the importance of individual liberty and freedom in a democratic polity. He wrote: "Democracy is not a state in which people act like sheep. Under democracy, individual liberty of opinion and action is jealously guarded. I, therefore, believe that the minority has a perfect right to act differently from the majority."<sup>9</sup> His technique of *Satyagraha* was intended not only to redress the injustice perpetuated by alien rulers but also to act against our own rulers who are not following the true spirit of democracy.

Gandhi's vision of a decentralized polity presupposes a decentralized economy in which economic power would not be concentrated in the hands of a few people. Here also the focus will be on the development of individuals in complete harmony with nature. The economy he conceived was based on twin principles of truth and non-violence and it eschews all forms of exploitation because exploitation in essence is nothing but violence according to Gandhi. The attainment of human happiness is possible only in a decentralized structure. Elaborating on this point, he wrote: "The end to be sought is human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. I

use the adjective moral as synonymous with spiritual. This end can be achieved under decentralization. Centralization as a system is inconsistent with a non-violent structure of society."<sup>10</sup> Gandhian economy is aptly described as an "economy of permanence" aimed at bringing peace and prosperity to all. The goal of production is fulfillment of basic needs and not endless wants which lead to exploitation of renewable and non-renewable resources. The basic requirements of life like food, clothing, shelter, health, education etc. would be adequately taken care of in such an economy. Instead of "mass production," there will be "production by masses." Machinery and automation would be to assist human beings and not to replace human labour. Work is looked upon as a means of creative expression of self ultimately leading to self realization. Poverty is not considered as a virtue in itself and it has to be eradicated completely. But the rich people should embrace poverty and lead a life of simplicity instead of extravagance. Gandhi advocated the revolutionary concept of trusteeship for the management of wealth and resources. He strongly believed that all wealth and resources belonged to God and we are just custodians of it. Therefore, it would be our duty to possess wealth and resources as its trustees and not as its owners. It should be used for societal welfare instead of personal gains. Gandhi even approved a practical trusteeship formula drew up by his colleagues with some substantial changes in the draft.<sup>11</sup>

As a corollary to political and economic order, he visualized an ideal social order based on justice and equality. He envisaged the *sarvodaya* social order in which the main focus was the uplift of the poor and downtrodden who is called *daridranarayan*. He wanted to change the social scenario prevailing in the villages at that time through his Constructive Programme, which aimed at the total reconstruction of the villages for the attainment of *swaraj*. It tried to remove the social evils prevailing in the Indian society through voluntary and constructive action. His Constructive Programme included steps like promoting communal harmony among the people of various religious communities, removal of untouchability, implementation of prohibition, emancipation of women and other marginalized sections of the society, promoting of basic and adult education, village sanitation, health, hygiene etc. In such an ideal social order, there would not be any discrimination based on caste, creed, colour, birth, religion and so on. Each individual/citizen must be trained in such a manner to fulfil the duties and responsibilities one owes to the society. An individual while discharging the responsibilities as a useful citizen, would also get equal opportunity for his or her fullest development.

Gandhi fought against the caste based discriminations and practice

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of untouchability prevailing in the Indian society.<sup>12</sup> After his return from South Africa, he established Satyagraha Ashram in May 1915. The removal of untouchability was one of the vows he prescribed for the inmates of the Ashram. He wrote: "The so-called untouchables have equal place in the Ashram with others."<sup>13</sup> He proved his commitment by admitting an untouchable family in the Ashram in spite of the opposition from different quarters including his wife. Though he believed in the division of *Varna* based upon occupation and the *Ashram dharma*, he rejected the idea of caste system altogether. It is evident from the vows of the Ashram penned by him. "In the Ashram caste distinction has no place. It is believed that caste distinction has caused harm to the Hindu dharma. The ideas of the superior and inferior status and pollution by contact implied in caste distinction serves to destroy the dharma of non-violence."<sup>14</sup> His total rejection of caste and practice of untouchability achieved greater intensity with the passage of time. This is evident from Gandhi's foreword to his collection writings on *Varnavyavastha* on 31 May 1945.<sup>15</sup> He pleaded that all Indian people irrespective of their social status must consider themselves as *Shudras* or even *Ati-Shudras* and openly supported inter-caste marriages in which one of the party must be from the untouchables. He also made it a rule that he will attend and bless any couple in his ashram only if one of parties of the marriage was an untouchable. He even refused to offer his blessing on the occasion of marriage of Narayan Desai, son of his secretary Mahadev Desai, whom Gandhi had always treated as his own son. This non-compromising approach of Gandhi on the issue of caste discrimination and untouchability helped to a great extent in taming these social evils.

Similarly, Gandhi included *Sarva Dharma Samabhava* (equal respect for all religions), as one of the eleven vows prescribed for every inmate of his ashrams and communal unity was the first item of his 18 fold Constructive Programme. Gandhi looked upon various religions as different roads converging at the same point. He believed that the underlying principles of all religions were one and the same and he respected every religion as his own religion. In fact Gandhi's approach to religion goes far beyond religious pluralism and secularism. It is often described as positive multiculturalism.<sup>16</sup> On the basis of his relentless search for truth for about fifty years, Gandhi arrived at the conclusion that "Truth is God."<sup>17</sup> Thus, he included the secular, the atheist and the humanist in his discourse of religion. Gandhi's approach to religion was not merely toleration; rather he attempted to develop a spirit of a fellowship among different religions. Religion was the guiding force for Gandhi in all his activities from spiritual to the

mundane. Even his political activities were governed by the spirit of religion. But he considered religion as a purely personal matter and the State has nothing to do with it. He was convinced that the responsibility of the State is to look after secular matters like people's welfare, health, communications, foreign affairs and so on, but not one's religion. He unequivocally declared: "If I were a dictator, religion and State would be separate. I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The State has nothing to do with it."<sup>18</sup> He was highly revolutionary and scientific in his approach to religion and suggested that religion should be subjected to the acid test of reason and he scrutinized every scripture, including *Gita*, before acceptance. He said: "I reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality. I tolerate unreasonable religious sentiment when it is not immoral."<sup>19</sup> Gandhi was of the view that religions are conveyed through a human medium and there are imperfections in them and it is the duty of an individual to rectify the defects in one's own religion in order to enrich and purify it. In that process, an individual can enrich one's religion by drawing out the best from other religions and there is no need for converting to another religion. However, he was not against true conversion out of one's own inner conviction and he differentiated it from proselytization.

## II

It is quite unfortunate that Gandhi's ideas were not given adequate importance in the post-independent era. The framers of the Constitution paid lip service to Gandhi by including some of his ideas in the "Directive Principles of State Policy" which cannot be enforced or guaranteed by the law. Following the British model, India adopted parliamentary system of democracy, which Gandhi vehemently opposed and criticised as early as 1909 in his seminal work *Hind Swaraj*.<sup>20</sup> The Indian experience shows that some of his criticisms were prophetic in nature. It even turned into dictatorial forms during 1970s but due to sustained efforts of the people, India could check such tendencies which plagued our form of governance. However, the government formed after emergency could not come up to the high expectations it created during anti-emergency movement. The most unfortunate thing is that it was short-lived and the Indian democracy again went back to the same plight. Whether it is the rule of the right or the left wing, people felt it as one and the same. The form of governance largely served the interest of the ruling elite and corruption and favouritism became part and parcel of the system. Sometimes a feeling is created that our nation is moving towards fascist tendencies

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and democracy is turning into mobocracy and hypocrisy. Thus, it is clear that there is an urgent need for reimagining the political system of the country. Gandhi's idea of decentralized and participatory form of democracy is worth pursuing when we envision or reimagine the political structure of the country to make it more vibrant and democratic. Gandhi's ideas have become more and more relevant in the phase of crisis which we are seeing in different forms of governance all over the globe. That is the reason why there is a systematic attempt on the part of political scientists to develop Gandhi's political philosophy and its relevance to overcome the current impasse. What is really required is not merely theoretical appreciation, but concrete efforts to translate them into action.

In the economic field also, Gandhi's ideas were not matters of priority in the post-independent era. India adopted a "mixed economy" combining both capitalist and socialist features. Instead of the decentralized human centered economy proposed by Gandhi, India preferred centralized industrialized economy paving the way for mechanization and automation. Though India was following the Soviet model, we can see a paradigm shift from agriculture to industry from the Second Five Year Plan onwards under the guidance of P.C. Mahalanobis. Thus, India was trying to catch up with Rostow's theory of economic growth, which is considered as a non-Communist manifesto.<sup>21</sup> The influence of Capitalist ideas grew in the course of time and it reached its peak with the opening up of our economy in the wake of globalization, privatization and liberalization drives in the 1990s. Instead of the promise of growth and revitalization of the economy, it failed to fulfil its basic objectives. On the contrary, it resulted in gross disaster in economic field resulting in growing poverty, unemployment and widening the gap between the rich and the poor. The new Oxfam report viz. 'Reward Work, not Wealth' released in January 2018 is really a shocking one. According to the report "73 per cent of the wealth generated last year went to the richest one per cent, while 67 crore Indians who comprise the poorest half of the population saw one per cent increase in their wealth. In the last 12 months the wealth of this elite group increased by Rs. 20,913 billion. This amount is equivalent to the total budget of the Central Government in 2017-18."<sup>22</sup> This widening gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' led to social tension, inequality and injustice and the marginalized sections of the society became the worst victims of the globalization process. The renewable and non-renewable resources were exploited and resulted in grave environmental crises. The traditional custodians of forest and its resources like adivasis were uprooted from their areas which were their home and hearth for

generations. It resulted in the rise of violent movements like Naxalism in every nook and corner of the country. Thus, it is proved beyond doubt that this pattern of development and economic policies on Gandhian lines with emphasis on *swadeshi* and self-reliance. It demands a decentralized and human economy where economic activities are guided by ethical concerns and not by profit and cut-throat competition. It is argued that Gandhi's concept of trusteeship can be used as an alternative to overcome the issues associated with management of wealth and resources.

In the social front also India is facing a number of problems. In spite of the social engineering by different governments which ruled this country, India could not overcome the problems associated with caste, language, religion and so on. The reservation policies for the vulnerable sections of the society failed to reach its target and the creamy layer in such communities pocketed the benefits of reservation. the discrimination on the basis of caste and practice of untouchability has not disappeared even in cities. The recent research report of the Research Institute for Compassionate Economics (RICE) on the basis of a survey of social attitudes and behaviours revealed the explicit prejudice prevailing in the Indian society against women and Dalits in Delhi, Mumbai, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.<sup>23</sup> The Indian society is divided in the name of religion and caste and political parties are taking undue advantage of it by conducting the whole electioneering process on the basis of these factors. The religious divide has become more and more evident and it may affect the multicultural fabric of India and the very idea of nationhood. The religious minorities are facing a sense of fear and insecurity that is against the cultural ethos and tradition of "unity in diversity" of this country. The problems which we face in the social and religious front take us to the doorsteps of Gandhi who tirelessly worked to remove social inequalities and the discrimination based on caste and the evil practice of untouchability. Gandhi's outlook towards religion and his concept of *Sarvadharm Samabhava* is worth emulating to solve problems associated with religious divide prevailing in this country.

From the above analysis, it is clear that Gandhi had a clear vision of the future society India should have. In his hectic life, shouldering many responsibilities, he found time to reflect, analyse and come out with practical solutions for the problems which India was facing at that time. With the passage of time, new issues and problems have come up which were not severe at that time. However, the broad guidelines and principles which Gandhi placed before India and humanity could serve as beacon lights in our efforts to build a non-violent, just, equitable and peaceful society. Gandhian ideas cannot

be termed as Utopian and impractical because they were never given a serious trial in our country. People all over the world are taking clues from his principles to solve the riddles humanity is facing. It was from India, Gandhi placed his ideas before humanity and India has a special role to play in showing the efficacy of his revolutionary and scientific approach by literally putting them into practice. Let us imagine and envision the future of the country on Gandhian lines in order to realise the India of Gandhi's dreams.

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11. On the release of Gandhi and his associates from detention in the Aga Khan Palace in 1944, the question of Trusteeship was taken up. K.G. Mashruwala, N.D. Parikh drew up a single practical trusteeship formula which was fine tuned by M.L. Dantwala. It was placed before Gandhi and he made a few changes in it. The final draft with Gandhi's corrections reads as follows:
  1. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.
  2. It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.
  3. It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and

use of wealth.

4. Thus under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interests of society.
5. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that could be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.
6. Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity, and not by personal whim or greed.

For a discussion on the changes made by Gandhi in the draft Trusteeship formula, See Siby K. Joseph "Gandhi's Trusteeship: An Alternative to Capitalist and Socialist Systems" in Siby K. Joseph et al. (eds.) *Trusteeship A Path less Travelled* (Wardha: Institute of Gandhian Studies, 2016) pp. 123-138.

12. For a detailed discussion on Gandhi's approach to Caste refer Siby K. Joseph, *Caste-based Discrimination in the Indian Church: Lessons from Gandhi's fight for human dignity*, (Carcassonne: Gandhi International, 2017)
13. <http://www.gandhiashramsabarmati.org/en/about-gandhi-ashram-menu/ashram-observances.html>.
14. *Ibid.*
15. On 31 May 1945 Gandhi in his foreword to his collection of writings on Varnavyavastha wrote: "... It would not be correct to say that my views on *Varnashram* are the same as they were in the past. I have said that the *varnas* and the ashramas are the gifts of Hinduism to the world, and I still adhere to that view. But today neither the *varnas* nor the *ashramas* of my conception are in existence anywhere. They should form a part of our religion. But it can be said that these days the *ashramas* have disappeared altogether and *varnas* are found in the form of privileges. The claim of being a Brahmin, a *Kshatriya*, a *Vaishya* connotes pride. How can there be pride where there is religion? And the *Shudras* are not taken into consideration at all! *Shudras* are low and the *Ati-Shudras* are the lowest of the low. This is not religion but a negation of it. ...Where are the four *varnas* of the *Gita* today? *Varna* is entirely different from caste. There are numerous castes. I know of no authority for caste in the *Gita* or any other scripture. The *Gita* has prescribed four *varnas* and they are based on one's aptitudes and *Karma*. I am saying four just to give you an example. There can be more or less *varnas* than that. But there prevails only one *varna* today, that is, of *Shudras*, or, you may call it, *Ati-Shudras*, or *Harijans* or untouchables".... In the eyes of religion all men are equal. An educated, intelligent and affluent man is no better than an ignorant, stupid and poor man. If he is cultured, that is to

say, if he has been purified by *dharma*, he will strive to give them, that is to say, the whole world, what he has got. If that is true of religion, then in our present condition, devoid of religion our *dharma* lies in becoming *Ati-Shudras* voluntarily.”

16. See Siby K. Joseph, Gandhi, Religion and Multiculturalism: An Appraisal,” *Gandhi Marg*, Vol. 33, Number 4, January-March 2012.
17. Gandhi while replying to a question as to why he considers ‘God is Truth’ at a meeting in Switzerland, on his way back from the Round Table Conference in London said: “If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, I have come to the conclusion that for myself, God is Truth. But two years ago I went a step further and said that Truth is God. And I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth which began nearly fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to Truth was through love. But I also found that love has many meanings in the English language at least and that human love in the sense of passion could become a degrading thing also. I found too that love in the sense of Ahimsa had only a limited number of votaries in the world. But I never found a double meaning in connection with truth and even atheists had not demurred to the necessity or power of truth. But in their passion for discovering truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God—from their own point of view rightly.”
18. M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan* 22-9-1946.
19. M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 21-7-1920.
20. Gandhi wrote: “The Mother of Parliament is like a sterile woman and a prostitute. Both these are harsh terms, but exactly fit the case. The parliament has not yet, of its own accord, done a single good thing. Hence, I have compared it to a sterile woman. The natural condition of the Parliament is such that, without outside pressure, it can do nothing. It is like a prostitute because it is under the control of ministers who change from time to time.” He further stated: “Parliament is without a real master. Under the Prime Minister, its movement is not steady but is buffeted about like a prostitute. The Prime Minister is more concerned about his power than about the welfare of Parliament. His energy is concentrated upon securing the success of his party.” M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 2004), pp. 27-29. However, in late thirties, he conceded that he would not have used these harsh words like prostitute and sterile women out of his respect for the women fold, if he was writing *Hind Swaraj* afresh.
21. Rostow’s model postulates that economic growth takes place in five basic stages viz. (i) Traditional society; (ii) Preconditions for take-off; (iii) Take-off; (iv) Drive to maturity; and (v) Age of high mass consumption (W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

22. <https://www.oxfamindia.org/pressrelease/2093>. The report is available on the website of Oxfam.
23. Daniel Coffey, Payal Hathi, Nidhi Khurana and Amit Throat "Explicit Prejudice: Evidence from a New Survey," Research Institute for Compassionate Economics (RICE), 2018.

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## *Notes & Comments*

# Dissecting the Silence: Mahatma Gandhi and Congress on Bhagat Singh's Martyrdom

*Saurav Kumar Rai*

THERE ARE SEVERAL 'myths' pertaining to modern Indian history and India's struggle for independence. While some of these myths were created by the colonial state itself to weaken the ongoing independence movement, some of them were constructed out of vested political interests in post-independence India. One such powerful myth is regarding Mahatma Gandhi's alleged silence on martyrdom of Bhagat Singh and comrades. It should be noted that Bhagat Singh and two of his associates Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar were sentenced to death by the colonial state in the Lahore conspiracy case and were hanged on 23 March 1931. Now, it is often alleged that Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress could possibly avert this execution. At the same time silence of prominent Congress leaders following the death of Bhagat Singh is often cited as a glaring example of Congress's insecurity towards soaring popularity of Bhagat Singh and his associates. Thus, a binary of Mahatma Gandhi/Congress vs. Bhagat Singh/Revolutionaries has been created over a period of time resonance of which can often be heard in various discussions and debates in public sphere.

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However, careful dissection of this alleged 'silence' gives some interesting insight on the whole issue. It should be remembered that the execution of Bhagat Singh and comrades took place around the same period when the Gandhi-Irwin settlement was in force. Consequent on the conversations that took place between the Viceroy, Lord Irwin and Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress agreed to temporarily suspend the ongoing Civil Disobedience Movement and to participate in the Second Round Table Conference. Subsequent to this, instructions were issued for the guidance of all the Congressmen carrying on propaganda so that there may be no complaint of breach of understanding arrived at between the Congress and the government. Now, one such instruction stated 'If any lawful orders are passed, right or wrong, they should not be disobeyed.' Further, 'During the period of truce [our] speeches should not be an attack on the Government. There is now no necessity to show past misdeeds of misgovernment.' Moreover, it was instructed that 'we should not make any approving references to acts of violence; congratulation of bravery and self-sacrifice on the part of persons committing acts of violence are unnecessary and misleading, except when made by persons pledged to non-violence in thought and deed as Gandhiji.' These instructions explain the unusual silence of the prominent Congress leaders over the execution of Bhagat Singh which was eventually 'a lawful order' passed by the competent judicial authority. At the same time, bound by the instructions to prevent any breach of understanding, they could not openly criticize the Government for its unforeseen haste in this matter, nor could they celebrate the heroics of Bhagat Singh.

Nonetheless, it was not that nobody spoke against this brutality of the Government. In fact, the very person, Mahatma Gandhi, who is charged of being insecure of Bhagat Singh's popularity and of being guilty of remaining silent in the whole matter, spoke on more than one occasion against the entire logic of hanging Bhagat Singh and his associates. Mahatma Gandhi, on 23 March 1931, made a final appeal to the Viceroy in the interest of peace to commute the sentence of Bhagat Singh and two others. He emphatically argued that 'popular opinion rightly or wrongly demands commutation; when there is no principle at stake, it is often a duty to respect it.' Subsequently, Mahatma Gandhi himself penned a moving yet powerful resolution on Bhagat Singh and comrades adopted by the Indian National Congress on 29 March 1931. The resolution stated as follows:

'This Congress, while dissociating itself from and disapproving of political violence in any shape or form, places on record its admiration of the bravery and sacrifice of the late Sardar Bhagat Singh and his

comrades Syts. Sukhdev and Rajguru, and mourns with the bereaved families the loss of these lives. The Congress is of the opinion that this triple execution is an act of wanton vengeance and is a deliberate flouting of the unanimous demand of the nation for commutation. This Congress is further of the opinion that the government has lost the golden opportunity of promoting goodwill between the two nations, admittedly held to be essential at this juncture, and of winning over to the method of peace the party which, being driven to despair, resorts to political violence.'

Thus, contrary to popular myth of 'unforeseen silence,' Mahatma Gandhi did admire the bravery and sacrifice of revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh. The difference between them was basically over the 'use of violence' as a mean to attain independence. In fact, people today often fail to fathom the depth of the virtues which drove our leaders to struggle for independence. Political opposition and difference of opinions nowhere stripped them of the warmth which they shared among each other at personal level. Hence, binaries such as Gandhi vs Bhagat Singh, Gandhi vs Subhas Chandra Bose, Nehru vs Patel, etc. hardly do justice to the cause for which these towering leaders devoted their lives.

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### GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION

*The Gandhi Peace Foundation (G.P.F.) was born in the late 1950s when an escalating nuclear arms race threatened human civilisation. Never before, or after, did peace seem so precarious or so elusive. Though time passed, the threat continues.*

*For Gandhi, peace in the ordinary sense was never the first imperative. As a relentless fighter for truth and justice his actions often brought suffering and sacrifice, although he always fought without violence.*

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## *Book Reviews*

**Alex Damm (Editor), *Gandhi in a Canadian Context: Relationships between Mahatma Gandhi and Canada*, Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2017, ISBN 978-1-7712-235-1, HB, pp. 191; Rs. 5259**

This book is, in the main, the outcome of a conference on “Gandhi in a Canadian Context” held in 2012 at Wilfrid Laurier University and deals with the rather unknown connection between Gandhi and Canada. In that sense the book attempts to fill an existing gap in the field. The book is intended for both academic audience and educated laymen and women. The book seeks to highlight the fact that Canada, though in a small way, had supported Gandhi’s nationalist campaign and that his understanding of a multi-cultural India resonates also with the current focus of Canada on multiculturalism. The book is presented as part of a larger project to raise greater awareness about Gandhi in Canada. The editor has brought together papers that fall within the realm of biography, Gandhi’s thought, students reception of Gandhi in the classroom environment and Gandhi’s relevance in addressing contemporary problems encountered by Canada. The editor thinks that Gandhi’s ideas on conflict resolution, non-violent action, sustainability and interreligious harmony are particularly relevant to Canada.

There are ten chapters including the introduction. Alex Damm in his chapter entitled “Mahatma Gandhi’s Understanding of Canada” tells us that there are at least fifty-three references to Canada in Gandhi’s writings between 1902 to 1946. The author says that Gandhi’s understanding of Canada was incomplete in that it was more Anglo-centric — without making a reference to the Francophone and indigenous cultures. Before 1917, Gandhi’s references to Canada were related to the condition of the Indian immigrants in the country. After 1917 he cited the Canadian model of dominion status as a suitable one for in the path to Indian independence. Gandhi also compared the plight of the Indians in Canada with that of Indians in South Africa.

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In the chapter entitled "A Dent in His Saintly Halo? Mahatma Gandhi's Intolerance Against Cowards," Scott Daniel Dunbar discusses rather elaborately Gandhi's vehement denunciation of cowards and cowardice. The author sees the condemnation quite inflammatory and not in accordance with the high ideals of non-violence and the saintly halo attributed to him. It must be admitted that cowards are placed outside the realm of redemption in Gandhi's thinking. There can only be a progression from violence to non-violence, not cowardice to non-violence. The author also comes up with five hypotheses to account for Gandhi's aversion to non-violence. Although not directly connected to Canada, the article is known for its depth of treatment of the subject.

Ramin Jahanbegloo looks at the implications of Gandhi's encounter with Islam for Canada. He says that Gandhi was influenced by the tolerant Islam enunciated by Gaffar Khan and Maulana Azad admitting also that their soft reading of Quran was in turn influenced by their association with Gandhi. Besides evolving an Islam that is able to engage creatively with other religions and subscribe to international norms, or 'Gandhian Islam' as he calls it, he also recommended the idea of non-violent citizenship from a Canadian point of view.

In a contribution entitled 'Gandhi in Canadian Academic Religious Studies: An Overview,' Harold Coward examines research on Gandhi by Canadian religious studies scholars and Gandhi's impact on the teaching of Canadian religious studies. Another contribution by Kay Koppedraye, in a similar vein, looks at the relevance of Gandhi's teachings to students. He says that more than Gandhi reshaping the ideas of students, they helped 'to reinforce some of their own conclusions regarding the nature of conflict' (p.107). Anne M. Pearson has a chapter on the Canadian connection of Mahila Shanti Sena (women's peace corps), a Gandhian inspired movement established in Bihar to foster women's leadership and cultivate a culture of peace and prosperity. She chronicles the association of individuals from McMaster University's Centre for Peace Studies in sponsoring some of the events of the Shanti Sena as well as the initiatives of the Hamilton Indo-Canadian community to promote knowledge about Gandhi.

Paul Younger has a piece on 'Gandhi in Canada in the Latter Part of the Twentieth Century.' It describes his experiences of a conference on Gandhi he had co-hosted in MacMaster University in 1969 and the discussions that took place when he taught a course on the life and thought of Gandhi for nearly four decades since the conference. There is another chapter on Gandhi and Winnipeg, Manitoba, a city known for several Gandhi admirers. The author of the chapter Klaus Klostermaier proceeds to discuss Gandhi's understanding of truth

and his ecological ideas. The final chapter by Rama S. Singh is on Twenty Years of Hamilton's Gandhi Peace Festival, an experiment in peacebuilding, an attempt to 'expose the drawbacks of divisive politics' (p.161).

This book is on the whole a welcome addition to the literature on Gandhi's connections with Canada and the relevance of his ideas for the country. Some of the chapters are not particularly relevant for a volume of this kind and some of them may not meet the analytical standards of academic articles. This is not surprising since the editor himself has said it is targeted at a mixed audience. Although, there are references made to George Grant, the absence of a definitive chapter on George Grant and Gandhi is quite glaring. As the editor has mentioned in his introduction, we can expect more contributions when the Gandhi project expands.

**JOHN S. MOOLAKKATTU**  
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I, Ashok Kumar, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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**Brian Martin, *The deceptive activist*, Irene Publishing Sparsnas, Sweden, 2017 ISBN 978-91-88061-21-8, pp. 167, Creative Commons, Price Unavailable.**

This handbook for activists consists of seven chapters including an introduction. Brian Martin, who has brought out several books and booklets for nonviolent activists during his academic and activist career, has chosen to look at lying and deception this time, which many people engage in for various reasons, often of a benign kind. Martin thinks that instead of brushing the theme under the carpet, it is more fruitful to have a conversation about it, bringing out its various facets and the ethical issues associated with it. The author does it by taking up examples from everyday life. The book is aimed at highlighting the tensions around activism, honesty and transparency. After describing some real life situations to introduce the problem of deception, the author makes a typology of different types of lying in the second chapter. The third chapter examines the question of lying by persons in authority such as politicians, church authorities, scientific personnel and police, to name a few. Chapter 4 is focused on how we can detect deception and the next chapter deals with ethical questions related to lying and deception. Chapter 6 describes a number of situations in which one encounters issues of secrecy and honesty and how one can evaluate such deception on the basis of certain criteria. This is followed by a conclusion, an annotated bibliography and a useful index.

The author says that “In many cases, people start off lying and then, having repeated the lie many times, start to believe it”(p.11). Further, “Truth-telling has a social value to be sure, but it needs to be balanced against other values”(p.22). Secrecy is often used by the authorities to deceive outsiders even in places where right to information provisions exist. In order to detect deception, we need to “ assess the speaker, check the evidence, and assess history and context”(p.63) with collecting and examining the evidence being the most crucial one. Regarding lying, there is the absolutist Gandhian and Kantian position, the relativist position which allows exceptions and finally the position of expediency, which places less importance to moral commitment. Martin also cites a case where Gandhi’s letter praising the people of Japan, but condemning Japanese imperialism, was used by the authorities for the opposite purpose of justifying their belligerence.

In the end, the author says that we should work out “when deception is necessary or valuable and to avoid harmful lying”. The book covers considerable ground with several illustrative cases. Although primarily intended for an activist audience, it is equally

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beneficial to the lay reader. The failure of the book to introduce culture as a factor in the discussions is glaring although it does not minimize the value of the book. The annotated bibliography is a boon for those who would like to do further research in this line.

**JOHN S. MOOLAKKATTU**  
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## *Tribute*

# Robert Aspeslagh

25.08.1940 – 31.10.2016

*Robin Burns*

THE DEATH IN late 2016 of Robert (Rob) Aspeslagh, while a sad occasion and one which leaves a large hole in many people's lives around the world, is also an opportunity to celebrate the life of someone who spent many decades exploring peace through research, writing, speaking, painting and practice. Born in the Dutch East Indies at Tanjung Pinang, Riau Islands, young Robert and his parents became Japanese prisoners-of-war. In later years he speculated that his experiences in the camp as a victim of war may have stimulated his concern for peace-making. Further, his visits to his birthplace in his last decade, and his ongoing close relationship with his 'second mother' and 'camp brother' from those times, show the deep marks those early years left. He was able to talk about them, and to visit the site of his and his mother's prison camp. And eventually he worked through his flinch reaction when he heard loud commanding voices, to work with Japanese peace education colleagues, and to attend the International Peace Research Association conference in Japan in 1992.

### **An Educator First and Foremost**

Education always played a major role in anything Robert did. I suspect this was even the case during his compulsory military service where

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he refused any role involving weapons, spending most of his time on naval paperwork. He began to train as an elementary teacher, though found that training disappointing and at the suggestion of one of his teachers, took up a position as history and geography teacher at an unusual secondary school. Based on the principles of the Dutch educational reformer Kees Boeke, the IVO school is run by the Kindergemeenschap [Children's community]. The school emphasised individualised learning, freedom through self-discipline, equality between teachers and pupils, and a concern for others and for the environment. Robert described its basis in a 1993 interview as "pacifist, non-violent, anti-militaristic ideas, which were translated into pedagogy" (in Bjerstedt, 1993: 5). While he didn't know at that time that "it was peace education that I was doing" (*ibid*) these ideas came to underpin his subsequent work and thought about peace education and international relations.

An influential experience at the school was an opportunity to "work with Language and Image, trying to find a connection between what is written or said and the expression through arts" (op. cit.: 8). Not only did Robert love both literature and art, but combined both when he retired and became a full time painter. The two came together in his books entitled *Pictures and Poems* [schilderijen en gedichten], finally brought together as *Poems Painted* [Gedichten Geschilderd, 2016]. At the school, he worked with Theo Vesseur, the poet and artist Joop Willems.

His decade long teaching at the IVO Kindergemeenschap had a profound effect on Robert professionally and personally, and in turn he clearly influenced those he taught. He continued to meet former students and colleagues throughout his life, the last reunion occurring shortly before his death. This happened in every job and association with which he became involved, with treasured reunions and meetings right up to his last weeks. The importance of people to Robert is expressed in both a complex mosaic of miniature paintings of family members and friends, and this accompanying poem:

#### Sublime life

By war, I remained an  
only child; others came  
into my life and stayed,  
some remained only for  
a moment, then they were gone,  
for good...  
...Family comes to you  
for life, friends you've got

for long or for a time.  
 Together they made my life  
 sublime. (2016: 62)

He loved children, his daughters, his grandchildren and many many more, and he has left a legacy not just of relationships and positive pedagogical experiences, though there was often a didactic intent in his interactions, but of very practical assistance to disadvantaged youth in Indonesia, South India and South Africa. Travelling with him, you were aware how he noticed children, made contact, and was concerned in particular for their safety.

### **A Developing Peace Educator**

Not wanting to become stale, in 1975 he reluctantly left the IVO school after ten happy years there, for a position as education staff member at the *Nederlands Instituut voor Vredesvraagstukken* [Netherlands Institute for Studies on Peace and Security]. His new focus was on peace education, which he reflected he had been doing at the school without realising it. His new tasks included both research and curriculum development. As a pedagogue, Robert liked to be provocative, true to his firm belief that learners should be allowed to discover issues and solutions for themselves. He would question rather than give answers, and this includes his own conception of peace education which he maintained was not a single entity but “a step-by-step process in education, aiming at a concept or idea of peace that people develop together” (in Bjerstedt, op. cit.: 6). Always there was the goal to aim for the “creation of responsibility for and contribution to a more liveable and human world society, which is non-violent and just” (loc. cit.).

Tension between the individual and the world, one’s own group and others, and the common polarities East-West and North-South continued to weave through his work. While he did not explicitly reject these bipolar conceptualisations of issues, he sought ways around them, especially through the recognition that education exists within a socio-economic, political and cultural framework and that will determine peace education priorities. He saw the goal of peace education as work towards a more just and less violent society, both local and global. Working with this, he espoused internationalism and rejected extreme relativism, wrestling with the issues of education for pluralist societies including his own, minorities and intercultural conflict. A survey of peace education in different countries undertaken by Swedish educator Åke Bjerstedt (1988) concluded that central to the debate and work in The Netherlands was the concept of *‘mondiale*

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*vorming'* [global education] "referring to an integrated global political education, focusing on disarmament, ecology and underdevelopment" (p. 57). Robert espoused the global objective, care for the environment and for developing countries; he saw disarmament education as only a part of peace education (Aspeslagh and Weise, 1981) and something that unfortunately could be presented in a way that approached indoctrination rather than enabling learners to make their own discoveries.

Underlying all his work in peace education there is a dual concern with pedagogy and content. At the time Robert was working explicitly in peace education, he was a member and for four years international executive secretary of the Peace Education Commission (PEC) of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA). The debate about the task of peace educators was lively within IPRA, many of the researchers considering that the only role of the educators was to package their findings for transmission especially to learners within formal education settings. Within PEC, however, "peace educators also saw the need to integrate research, education and action, rather than just posing an alternative solution to war or a separate approach to peace" (Aspeslagh and Burns, 1996: 42). And while PEC paid less attention especially in the 1970s and 1980s to pedagogy and didactics *per se*, the recognition that education must include research into the issues, and the possibility to take action as a result of findings, combined to form a basis for peace education and one that was integral to Robert Aspeslagh's work. Essential as the basis of peace education was the recognition that violence is the most over-arching concept. War is a significant example but not the only one (ibid: 43). 'Positive peace' then becomes the goal, implying the absence of both overt and covert violence. Through the recognition that the way in which learning takes place may in itself be violent and reflect such relations outside the classroom, creating a culture of peace can be seen as the over-arching task of peace educators. Creating a peace culture at the international level is one aspect; creating it within the classroom in relations between learners and between learners and teacher, shows the vital relationship between pedagogy and substance for effective peace education.

In order to delineate the broad scope needed for peace education, Robert summarised his view of its scope as including five different domains of interests: the international system, peace, development, human rights and the environment. It should also "create an awareness of the relationships between the different levels of human existence and presence, namely the personal, the structural, the cultural, the regional, the national, subglobal and the global level, and add a global

dimension to all these levels through education” (Aspeslagh, 1996:334). How these could be taught, both the setting and the methods, can be seen in his curriculum development work.

Robert’s principles were realised through his work. It is difficult now to find his name on peace education materials which he was instrumental in creating during the 11 years when that was his primary task. One curriculum dealt with power, titled “Who’s afraid of the lion?” [*Wie es bang voor de Leeuw?*] and used that image with a cartoon presentation for classroom application. “They and us: how groups face each other” [*Zij en wij: hoe groepen tenenover elkaan stan*] is another, Robert having prepared the teacher workbook (1985). The realities of both pupils and teachers were the starting points for these courses. Working with teachers and trialling in the classroom was the method to develop materials and curricula, and for Robert to maintain close connection with those involved in peace learning. Reflection on those experiences continued to inform his approaches to classroom learning and to widen his perception of the huge scope and variability of peace education around the world.

#### **Executive Secretary of the Peace Education Commission**

Following Magnus Haavelsrud of Norway as PEC executive secretary in 1979 opened up that wider world for Robert. It was a time when the international political climate stimulated Unesco’s work in first promoting education for international understanding (1974) and then disarmament education (1980). Robert represented PEC/IPRA at the 1981 informal consultation on disarmament education at Unesco Headquarters in Paris. In a critical report of that meeting, he noted that there was a danger that an “interest in peace is moving from the North-South relationship towards the relationships between East and West. By that one emphasizes the danger of armament and the prevailing ideas on the prevention of war instead of the unjust relations in the world as the main focus of peace....education for disarmament and education for peace go hand in hand and are both necessary in the quest for social justice.” (Aspeslagh, 1981:22)

During his time as PEC executive secretary Robert, like Magnus Haavelsrud (and myself as his successor as executive secretary) worked hard to spread the PEC network in both East and South. The support of local initiatives, and his work to enable greater representation at the IPRA international conferences contributed to the development and strengthening of his desire for inclusiveness and diversity. He saw the complexity and diversity of peace education and its main direction in different socio-economic and politico-cultural contexts. While there was an inevitable Euro-centric hub for his work,

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given the limited opportunities to travel as executive secretary, he responded to the ongoing challenge of a flourishing of diverse inputs to peace education and their dissemination. And bearing in mind his early background in Indonesia, and his strong sense of the nature of power and the need for social justice, in his work for PEC he was particularly concerned to encourage dialogue with colleagues in Latin America, Africa, and South and Southeast Asia. From this emerged a firm conviction that there could be no single peace education. Rather, as we expressed in an attempt chart what was happening in PEC from its inception, it is possible to discern:

A core set of values [that] provides a basis for constructing models which can be used to clarify education aims and their human, social and ecological consequences. It also provides a basis for charting one's way through the maze of educations which are all in some way concerned with the future, and with shaping it to more 'desirable' moulds. Appropriate pedagogical and didactic techniques follow from the values which define the models; in many instances we lack tried versions of these, and the models therefore present a challenge to educators, and perhaps a new way of thinking about the tasks of education itself. (Aspeslagh and Burns, 1996: 59)

In the process of envisioning preferred futures, culture became a central issue in Robert's work, not just its conceptualisation as 'intercultural understanding' as promoted by Unesco, though that he considered as part of the continuum. Striving for a peaceful global culture was his ultimate goal. His pedagogy focussed on peaceful relations within the classroom as a key component of peace education, and he did implicitly espouse psychological approaches especially in his curriculum work, from political socialisation through fear of war, enemy images and conflict resolution. However, he rejected any focus on 'personal peace' as either a starting point or end point for peace education. Rather, for Robert the work of Brazilian Paolo Freire was central to conceptualising the pedagogical relationship between 'learner' and 'teacher,' research/theory and action/practice, and the importance of the learners' reality as the starting point of the educational process.

Peace education has a firm basis in The Netherlands, with schools established in the 1930s based on the peace-oriented ideals of educators Montessori, Freinet and Boeke (Bjerstedt, 1993: 7). Peace education was first promoted by a working party in 1968, following the formation of an institutional peace research institute in Groningen in 1962 (Bjerstedt, 1988:57). Robert became an integral part of the ongoing development of the field in The Netherlands. However,

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through PEC opportunities arose for him to participate in very different situations. In particular, from 1988 to 1993 he was involved in a project on peace building in Lebanon. The project was undertaken by IPRA in collaboration with Unesco and resulted, after several drafts and many meetings, in a *Handbook Resource and Teaching Material in Conflict Resolution, Education for Human Rights, Peace and Democracy* (Paris, 1994).

Robert contributed a section on 'Education for a pluralist society, peace, culture and human rights' which can be read as a summary of his approach to peace making and peace education. He begins with the assertion that "Education cannot be separated from society. The society of a given nation cannot be seceded from the region or the continent to which it belongs, and they all form part of the world" (Aspeslagh, 1994: 11). Education itself is "a mirror of society" (*loc. cit.*). While applying it specifically to Lebanon at that time, he stated that all society is now heterogeneous, in other words, pluralist. However, pluralism does not simply occur because of heterogeneity, it is "an attitude through which people are reckoning with the opinions, experiences and actions of others when making their own judgements or their own action" and also "encompasses a dynamic relationship between people and their environment" (*loc. cit.*).

His analysis of the situation in Lebanon suggested that "Communities can obtain peace by acting for the establishment of a pluralist society, which is built on the idea of co-operation and seeking for a common overarching framework on the one hand, and strengthening of each separate framework on the other hand" (*ibid.*: 13). This would not guarantee the absence of conflicts but promote compromise and the finding of ways and means to achieve peace. Towards this, education should start with the learners' reality, paying attention to what is shared rather than what differentiates people. Ideally, he considered NGOs the best organisations to implement education for pluralism, human rights, peace and democracy, and went on to list 20 issues to be addressed in selecting materials for such education.

### **From Education to Research and Diplomacy**

The Netherlands Institute for Studies of Peace and Security merged with four other institutes in 1983 to form the Netherlands Institute for International Relations Clingendael, a think tank and diplomatic academy which combines research, training and public debate whereby it aims "to inspire and equip governments, businesses, and civil society to contribute to a secure, sustainable and just world" (<https://www.clingendael.org/about-us>, accessed 7.08/2018). Robert

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came with the smaller institute. His position was 'scientific worker' in a unit that covered education and information, but soon realised that peace education was not a high priority for the new institute, at least not for schools and not as a specific field.

He was able to continue some of his prior educational work and in 1984 proposed an East-West co-operative project which the Dutch National Committee of Unesco was prepared to co-sponsor, once approval was obtained from the Foreign and Education Ministries. It appears not to have gone ahead but with colleagues outside the institute, he developed a plan for a peace education project between Hungary and The Netherlands. The project was to run from the start of the 1987-1988 school year through to 1991-1992. In order to enhance communication with participants in Hungary Robert studied the Hungarian language, and developed a strong bond with his Hungarian counterpart, who sadly died before the project concluded (personal communications). I could not locate a formal report of the project.

With no colleagues in the institute working in the field of education, Robert was under pressure to place more emphasis on information, including the preparation of brochures and booklets on international issues for the public in general, which raised for him the issue referred to previously of peace researcher - peace educator roles. Perhaps the only outcome of informational work by Robert was a controversial booklet on drugs and the law (1987b). The only formal education task Robert had was to organise an annual United Nations Day for Teachers, in part because the institute received some funding from the UN agencies. The 1985 theme he chose for the day was the way the United Nations was treated in Dutch history textbooks (see 1986c). He subsequently undertook research on the way nuclear issues were handled in Dutch history textbooks (1986b) and we both presented papers on nuclear issues in school history books at the 1986 IPRA conference in Brighton, England, including a discussion of the different content analysis methods we used.

During the 1980s, Robert continued his involvement with the Peace Education Commission, which included editing one issue of the international journals *Gandhi Marg* and the *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*. He also published a book on the tension between wholeness and diversity in education about world issues (1987a).

### **Towards a Pluralist, More Just and Humane Future**

Culture came increasingly to play a key role in his research. This was seen in the Lebanon project, above, and in work he undertook on the situation of minorities in Eastern Europe. He was one of the seven contributors assessing the opportunities for democracy and tolerance

in the region. His over-arching concern was always the reduction of violence and conflict, acknowledgment of how people perceived the issues, and the creation of opportunities for action towards a more just and humane future society, whether at the local, national or international level. This desire is clearly the over-arching concern and the key to all his work.

His final major project at Clingendael was research on the attitudes of Dutch youth to Germany and Germans which led to a focus on Dutch-German relations, and collaboration especially with Henk Dekker of Leiden University. He became scientific secretary of the Dutch Foundation for the Promotion of German Studies in The Netherlands and of Platform Germany. Clingendael includes a large diplomatic academy and diplomacy was clearly Robert's major *modus operandi* during this final period at Clingendael. Through the institute's courses, consultations, public presentations and programme of interns, as well as through ongoing contact with those with whom and for whom he worked, his educational outreach continued.

Yet another strand in Robert's life work was his interest in and concern for Indonesia, his birthplace. He was involved in discussions with Indonesian officials during his time at Clingendael. And he wrestled with post-colonial relations between the two countries. One act was to participate in discussions in 2000 concerning a monument in Amsterdam to Van Heutsz, the Dutch general who became Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies in 1904 after successfully ending the war in Aceh, where he was Military Governor. The monument had been defaced a number of times. Robert argued that it should remain in place as it was part of the Dutch history which should not just be swept away. (It was re-named as a Dutch East Indies memorial in 2004, omitting van Heutsz's name.) And he visited Indonesia a number of times in his final decade, alone and with family or friends, searching for old connections and forging new ones, especially with the Batak Sialagan family.

Robert retired from Clingendael in 2002, in order to spend time painting, travelling and with his grandchildren. This did not mean loss of interest in the essential task of peace education, however, as he continued to put it into practice in his personal relations, his work with the other artists in the studio complex where he painted, his support for young artists to find a place to work, involvement in local government issues, ongoing interest in former pupils and interns, and with his friends around the world. Many of his paintings reflect this concern, as he strove to express his worldview through his art. His many papers, books and research reports are testimony to the development and refinement of this view. This short poem, to

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accompany a painting from a bushwalk in Tasmania, Australia, is a succinct and subtle summary:

Steps take us  
beyond the rock  
of today  
to an unknown  
future of hope (2016)

That “future of hope” is spelt out in his many publications, friendships and actions over the decades, through dialogue between the local and the global, and for peace educators, through an attempt to “integrate research, education and action, a desire to communicate across the present structural, cultural and situational barriers, justice throughout and between societies.

**Reference** (not in the Aspeslagh bibliography) Bjerstedt, Åke. 1988. *Peace education in different countries*. Malmö School of Education *Educational Information and Debate* 81.

**ROBIN BURNS** has a PhD in Comparative Education and was a brief time in the Australian Diplomatic Service. She taught across development, peace, multicultural, women’s and health education and has considerable experience in development and peace international NGOs. She is the author of almost 100 articles. She co-edited “Three Decades of Peace Education around the World” (with Robert Aspeslagh) and “Contemporary Perspectives on Comparative Education” (with Anthony Welch). Email: [rburns@netspace.net.au](mailto:rburns@netspace.net.au)

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## Justice Chandrasekhar Shankar Dharmadhikari (1927 – 2019) - A Tribute

*Siby K. Joseph*

NON-AGENARIAN FREEDOM FIGHTER, jurist, Gandhian scholar and activist, Justice Chandrasekhar Shankar Dharmadhikari passed away on January 3, 2019 in Nagpur. The mortal remains of the body were kept at Sarvodaya Ashram, Nagpur and his last rites were performed in Nagpur with State honour in Ambazari Ghat crematorium. Despite his poor health, he came to participate in some programmes in Nagpur and at the Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha on 27<sup>th</sup> of December 2018. He was feeling uneasy on his arrival in Nagpur. But as a workaholic, he ignored it and participated in a programme in Nagpur on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Later he was admitted to a private hospital, where he suffered a cardiac arrest and finally passed away.

He is survived by his daughter Aruna Patil, a medical doctor and two sons- Justice Satyaranjan Dharmadhikari, a judge of Mumbai High Court and Ashuthosh Dharmadhikari, a lawyer in Nagpur. The passing away of Justice Dharmadhikari created a great void among Gandhian and Sarvodaya circles and a number of educational, cultural and social organizations and institutions lost a guardian and guide.

He was born on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1927. His parents were freedom fighters, who were jailed during the freedom movement. His grandfather T. D. Dharmadhikari was in the judicial service, his brother, the late Y. S. Dharmadhikari was Advocate General of Madhya Pradesh. His father was Acharya Dada Dharmadhikari, a prominent Sarvodaya thinker, writer, orator and activist. As a mere lad of fourteen, he participated in the Quit India Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. Taking into consideration his contribution to the national movement, the Government included his name in the nation's list of freedom fighters, without any request or application.

He studied law and took Master of Arts degree in Economics from Nagpur University. He practised law at Nagpur for many

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years and was elevated to the Bench, as a judge of the Bombay High Court. He worked as senior judge and Acting Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court from 1972 till his retirement in 1989. Post retirement, he was the Chairman of Maharashtra Administrative Tribunal from July, 1991 to November, 1992. He is well-known for his landmark ruling during the Emergency, in which he had held that apart from constitutional rights, the Right to Life is natural and a human right. He made it clear that even during the Emergency; a citizen could approach the court. Accordingly, he entertained many petitions and released several detained people against whom there was no substantial evidence. As the Chairman of the Dahanu Taluka Environment Protection Authority, he introduced new concepts and principles in the field of rehabilitation and emphasized on 'Pre-habilitation' and 'Pre-Afforestation' some terms coined by him.

He was connected with a number of organizations and institutions till his last breath. He was the President of Abhyankar Smarak Trust, Nagpur; Maharashtra State Federation of Goshalas and Panjarpol; Kushtarog Niwaran Samiti, Shantivan; Vice President of Shiksha Mandal Wardha and Jabalpur ; Patron of the International Leprosy Union and Global School Foundation, Singapore; Chairman of Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha; Sarvodaya Ashram, Nagpur; Gandhi Research Foundation, Jalgaon and Member of Board of Advisors, Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya; Advisory Board, Sane Guruji Rashtriya Smarak; Advisory Committee, Campaign Against Child Labour; Advisory Board, Sevagram Asharam, Wardha; Trustee of Kushtarog Niwaran Samiti, Shantiwan; Society for Education, Action and Research in Community Health (SEARCH) Gadchiroli, Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation, Geeta Pratisthan, Fujji Guruji Memorial Trust and Gandhi Labour Foundation, Puri; Chairman, Council of Advisors, Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation and Awards and Ladies' Wing of Indian Merchants' Chamber Jankidevi Bajaj Award.

For his contribution in the field of education and literary work, he was awarded Gopal Krishna Gokhale Award, Government of Maharashtra Literary Awards and Karandikar Trust Dharwad Literary Award. Other important awards which he received include the Distinguished Citizens Award from Rotary Club of Bombay, Michael John Memorial Award, Gandhi Jan Puruskar, Ramashastri Prabhune Social Justice Award, Justice Ranade Award for social service, Rashtra Gaurav Puruskar, Go Seva Ratna Puruskar and Hindi Seva Puruskar. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the Government of India in 2004. Besides, in 2007, Rani Durgavati Vishwavidyalaya, Jabalpur

conferred on him Honoris Causa Degree of Doctor of Laws. He had a number of books to his credit in Marathi, Hindi and English. He delivered innumerable lecture on various themes with a Gandhian perspective which kept him moving all over the country and sometimes even abroad.

He headed a number of Gandhian organizations including Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, New Delhi for a short span. He was the backbone of several Gandhian and Sarvodaya movements. He guided the activities of Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha for more than two decades. In 1999, he was co-opted as the trustee and appointed as the Vice Chairman of the Institute. In the year 2000, he was appointed as Chairman and he took keen interest in the activities of the Institute till his last breath. He added many feathers to the Institute by reinforcing its pre-eminent position both nationally and internationally. During his tenure, the Institute witnessed a quantum jump in research oriented publications, which were disseminated globally through print and electronic media. His collection of writing on women was published in a book form viz. *Women Power : A Gandhian Discourse*, which was formally released on 11 April 2018 as a tribute to Kasturba Gandhi on the occasion of her 149 birth anniversary. This may perhaps be the first Ba-Bapu Sesquicentennial publication not only of the Institute but also of the whole Gandhian fraternity in India or even abroad. After his demise, this book was selected by Rajarammohun Roy Library Foundation, Kolkata, which comes under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India for circulation of libraries all over the country.

His last visit to the Institute was on July 22, 2018 to address the participants of Post Graduate Diploma Course run by the Institute. I was personally fortunate that he released a tract of mine on that occasion. He was in high spirits when he addressed a meeting of representatives of Gandhian institutions at the Institute to chalk out the programmes and action plan for the Ba Bapu Sesquicentennial Birth Anniversary Celebrations. He reminded the representatives of Gandhian organizations and institutions in Wardha about their special responsibility because Wardha was the Karmabhoomi of Mahatma Gandhi. He placed before the audience the activities to be undertaken in connection with Mahatma Gandhi, Acharya Vinonba Bhave and India's struggle for freedom in the coming years. He made it clear that he may not be alive to see these activities but it was his duty to place before the people, as a person who had the privilege of associating with Bapu in his childhood days. Only by working for the

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programmes and actions he placed before us that we can pay a real tribute to the departed soul.

**SIBY K. JOSEPH**  
**Dean of Studies**  
**Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha**

**GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION LIBRARY**

GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION houses a library designed as a reference centre for Gandhian Literature/Thought.

The collections are diverse ranging from books, journals, periodicals, newspapers, magazines, 240 books written by Gandhiji and more than 100 biographies of Gandhiji by different authors. Currently the library maintains a collections of more than 10,000 books.

“Library is connected to DELNET (Network of Libraries)

### Information for Authors

Gandhi Marg is the premier quarterly journal of the Gandhi Peace Foundation having a standing of more than half a century published from New Delhi in the months of March, June, September and December every year. Original contributions on themes of national and international importance falling under the broad area of Gandhian Studies are invited from scholars and practitioners. Articles submitted to Gandhi Marg are refereed. It is presumed that an article submitted to Gandhi Marg is original, and has not been under the consideration of any other journal. In general, the articles should not exceed 8000 words including notes and references. Periodically, we also bring out special issues on selected themes.

We also invite provocative shorter essays (1500-2500 words) for inclusion in the notes and comments section. Review articles assessing a number of recent books on a particular subject and book reviews are also solicited.

All articles should have an abstract of not more than 150 words and five key words. The name of the author, institutional affiliation and complete address including email and telephone/fax should be supplied. A short biographical statement of the author containing information about the area of specialisation and principal publications is also necessary. British spellings should be used throughout the manuscript. All the authors will be informed about the status of the submissions within three months. Author-identifying information including acknowledgement should be placed on the title page and not on any other page.

When an abbreviation is used, it should be spelt out in full the first time. All notes and references should be numbered consecutively and placed at the end of the article rather than on each page. References to books should include author, title (italicised), place of publication, name of publisher, year, pp. (in that order). Place of publication, publisher and year should be within brackets. In subsequent references to the same work, *ibid*, and *op.cit.* can be used. References to articles should include author, title of article in double quote, title of the journal (italicised), number of volume and issue, year of publication, pp. (in that order). All short quotations are to be included in the text with double quotation marks. Longer quotes are to be indented. All quotations should be accompanied by full references.

#### Examples

Books: Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p.23.

Articles: Ramashray Roy, "Parameters of Participation", *Gandhi Marg*, 12, 3(October-December 1990), p.276.

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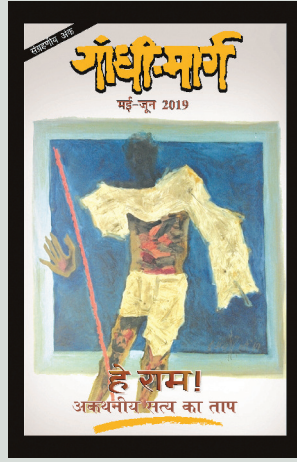
Internet Citations: Apart from name of author and article, include also the URL and date of download. For example: [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) accessed on 10 May 2006.

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