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Editorial

THE NATIONAL REGISTER of citizens is an idea that is fraught with dangerous overtones. Not only is the 'sons of the soil' idea so strong in many States that those who saw this country as their home and settled outside their home State oblivious of such developments have become the most vulnerable. Citizenship issues are highly contested issues everywhere and passions are ignited by those who claim themselves to be autochthones against sections whom they call settlers or migrants. When the State itself takes the initiative to identify the foreigners, they fail to recognize the fact that many genuine Indian citizens also become outsiders or second-class citizens. While the government is expected to be an impartial arbiter among competing interests, when it acts as an interested party to identify foreigners and expel them, its conflict resolution role becomes eroded and suspect. The experience of Assam suggests that such exercises in identification of citizens carried out by the State cannot be efficient and inclusive. Many foreigners with resources will find themselves included and many genuine citizens will be classified as foreigners. It is the poor who suffer most in such situations due to lack of documents. The poor includes landless nomadic tribes, Bengali-speaking Hindu and Muslim migrants and even Assamese Muslims.

People in Assam have to prove that either they or their parents had lived in the State before the Bangladesh liberation war in order to qualify for citizenship. When we do not have a repatriation arrangement with Bangladesh, what can we do with those declared as illegal settlers other than accommodate them in detention camps? We know that thousands of people from Bangladesh fled to India to escape from the clutches of the Pakistani army immediately prior to the conflict or during its course. Not being content with the flawed Assam register, the Central government has announced a national register for the entire population of the country. Such an exercise can bring in conflicts of greater magnitude than imaginable and generate feelings of xenophobia based on language, race and religious identities

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throughout the country. Would it be sane to take a more nuanced approach to the problem of citizenship rather than trying to homogenize the border lands given the fluidity that citizenship has assumed in the South Asian context?

This issue of Gandhi Marg has four full-length articles and seven shorter ones in the notes and comments section. The first article by Sujay Biswas revisits Gandhi's and Ambedkar's views on untouchability. B. Samabasiva Prasad examines resolution of economic conflicts from a Gandhian perspective. Preeti Singh examines the evolution of Mohandas to Bapu and Kasturba to Ba. Chris Brown examines the potential of non-violent action in the Naxalite conflict. In the notes and comments section we have articles by Amitabha Bhattacharya, Ananta Kumar Giri, Arun K. V., Saurav Kumar Rai, Suresh Chandra Ch and Joseph Geraci. We hope that the variety of articles contained in this issue will enthuse the readers.

JOHN S MOOLAKKATTU
Editor



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Gandhi and Ambedkar against Untouchability: A Reappraisal of their Discourses

Sujay Biswas

ABSTRACT

A false dichotomy has been created in much of our historical and political analyses between the welfare programme for the 'Harijans'¹ as put forward by Gandhi and Ambedkar. Gandhi's constructive programme, it is stated, was "non-radical", as it sought to improve the conduct of the 'Harijans' at the individual level, with campaigns also involving the 'caste Hindus' to work in the 'Harijan' slums and promote "cleanliness, abstinence from alcohol, meat-eating and other Brahmanic virtues." Ambedkar, on the other hand, is said to have stood for the annihilation of caste to secure equality for the 'Harijans'. Ambedkarite scholars view Ambedkar's proposals as being "more progressive" than Gandhi's constructive programme. This paper draws on a letter that Ambedkar wrote on 14 November 1932, addressed to Amritlal Vithaldas Thakkar, the Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, proposing a programme of action that the Harijan Sevak Sangh should undertake for the welfare of the 'Harijans' and the Constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh (1932, 1935), drafted by Gandhi himself, to question the above hypothesis and to argue that the programmes of the two leaders actually show similarity in the intent and content of their welfare programmes towards the ultimate uplift of the 'Harijans' in India.

Key words: Gandhi, Ambedkar, Harijan Sevak Sangh, 'Harijan' welfare programme, untouchability.

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UNTOUCHABILITY WAS ONE of Gandhi's central concerns. Gandhi attacked untouchability in both words and actions that seemed radical for a 'caste Hindu' to consider. In the early 1920s, Gandhi had pushed for the removal of untouchability to the forefront at the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress where non-cooperation resolution was adopted.² The inception of an enduring and autonomous Anti-Untouchability Movement under him, however, dates from his 'fast unto death' against the Communal Award that was announced in 1932 by the British Government and had awarded separate electorates to the 'Untouchables'. The Poona Pact resolved this crisis between the 'caste Hindus' and the 'Untouchables' through Ambedkar.

The Poona Pact (1932) was accompanied by a pledge by the Hindu leaders at public conferences in Bombay on 25 and 30 September 1932, to secure for the 'Harijans' complete political and social equality and to work for the removal of all disabilities and hardships suffered by them. On 30 September 1932, a large public meeting of the Hindus was held at the Cowasji Jehangir Hall in Bombay under the Presidentship of Madan Mohan Malaviya. Through a resolution, the meeting established the Harijan Sevak Sangh with its headquarters at Delhi and branches in different provincial centres for the purpose of carrying on propaganda against the observance of untouchability, and that for this purpose the following steps were to be immediately taken: (1) all public wells, dharmashalas, roads, schools, crematoriums, burning ghats, etc., be declared open to the 'Untouchables', and (2) all public temples be opened to the members of the 'Depressed Classes'.³ The meeting appointed Ghanshyam Das Birla as the President and Amritlal Vithaldas Thakkar as the General Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, and authorised them to take all the necessary steps to organise the Harijan Sevak Sangh and bring about the fulfilment of the objects of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and to organise collection of funds for its work.⁴

"The settlement arrived at," Gandhi said in a message, "is to me but the beginning of the work of purification," and added: "The agony of the soul is not going to end until every trace of untouchability is gone [...]. I shall undergo as many fasts as are necessary in order to purify Hinduism of this unbearable taint."⁵ He assured the 'Harijans' likewise that, though the Government had accepted only that part of the agreement, which referred to the British Government's Communal Award, he himself was "wedded to the whole of that agreement" and they could hold his life "as hostage for its due fulfilment."⁶ The

aim of his fast, Gandhi said, was not merely to get the decision changed but to bring about an awakening and self-purification, which were bound to result from the effort to get the decision changed.⁷ Gandhi was thus involved in something other than mere political bargaining. He was out to create an atmosphere of trust between the 'Harijans' and the 'caste Hindus'. What Ambedkar demanded as "compensation,"⁸ was for Gandhi an expiation by the 'caste Hindus', an earnest of their readiness to accept the 'Harijans' as equal members of the Hindu society.⁹ This was an opportunity for Gandhi to strike at the very root of untouchability.

Ambedkar shared similar ideas, and stated that larger social problems could not be solved by electoral systems alone. Social change, he said, required more than political arrangements and hope that, in the time to come, it would become possible to go beyond the political realm to devise ways and means for ensuring that the 'Untouchables' occupied positions of equity and honour in the Hindu society:

I do not believe that joint electorates are going to be the final solution for the problem of absorbing the Untouchables in the Hindu community. Any electoral arrangement cannot be a solution of the larger social problem. It requires more than any political arrangement, and I hope that it would be possible to go beyond this political arrangement that we are making today and devise ways and means whereby it would be possible for the Untouchables not only to be part and parcel of the Hindu community but also occupy an honourable position, a position of equality of status in the community.¹⁰

The "epic fast" of September 1932 and the subsequent events, coupled with personal contact with Ambedkar, reinforced Gandhi's commitment to the removal of untouchability. As a prisoner, Gandhi started one of the largest social reform movements of the first half of the twentieth century to redeem the 'Untouchables' from their lowly status. Soon the movement against the practice of untouchability became "the biggest religious reform movement in India, involving," as it did, "the well-being of nearly sixty million human beings living in serfdom."¹¹

II

The Harijan Sevak Sangh was the brainchild of Gandhi. It was an all-India organisation, of which Amritlal Vithaldas Thakkar was the chief architect, and Ghanshyam Das Birla, one of its major donors. The Harijan Sevak Sangh had its State and Regional branches not only in British India but also in the Princely States. An interim Constitution

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for the Harijan Sevak Sangh was prepared and adopted by the Central Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh at its meeting in Delhi on 26 October 1932. Gandhi had suggested some modifications. The amended Constitution adopted the name Harijan Sevak Sangh and said that the object of the Harijan Sevak Sangh

shall be the eradication by truthful and non-violent means of untouchability in the Hindu society with all its incidental evils and disabilities, suffered by the [...] Untouchables, hereinafter described as Harijans, in all walks of life and to secure for them absolute equality of status with the rest of the Hindus.

Moreover, in the furtherance of its objective, the Harijan Sevak Sangh

will seek to establish contact with the caste Hindus throughout India and show them that untouchability, as it is practised in Hindu society, is repugnant to the shastras and to the best instincts of humanity, and it will also seek to serve the Harijans so as to promote their moral, social and material welfare.¹²

The Constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh also required for its members to pledge:

I (full name, age, occupation, residence) believe in the necessity for the complete eradication of untouchability as it is practised today in the Hindu society and hereby subscribe to the Constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. [...] I shall personally refrain from considering any person as Untouchable by reason of his birth or caste. I do not consider any human being as inferior to me in status and I shall strive my utmost to live up to that belief. [...].¹³

The Constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh provided for the setting up of a Central Board and State Boards to direct the activities of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. The Central Board included the Presidents of all the State or Regional Boards as well as other nominated members, and had not more than fifteen members. Gandhi himself conceived the working pattern of the organisation and evolved a functional strategy that ensured unity of command as well as effective integration of the Central Body with the State Branches. He suggested that the Harijan Sevak Sangh “should include both the caste Hindus and the Untouchables.” Its fifteen-member board of management had four ‘Harijans’ and it was explicitly committed to fighting untouchability.¹⁴ Ambedkar had accepted a place for himself on the Central Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and was looking forward

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to playing his role in it. He had written a letter on 14 November 1932 to the Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, A. V. Thakkar, outlining his views on the eradication of untouchability and requesting the Secretary to consider them while chalking out a programme of action.¹⁵

A false dichotomy has been created in much of our historical and political analyses between the welfare programme for the 'Harijans' as put forward by Gandhi and Ambedkar. Ambedkar's letter focused on the nature of the campaign to be adopted to secure equal rights for the 'Harijans', which was in variance, it is argued, with Gandhi's initiatives of achieving the goal. Gandhi's constructive programme, it is further stated, was "non-radical", as it sought to improve the conduct of the 'Harijans' at the individual level,¹⁶ with campaigns also involving 'upper-caste Hindus' to work "in Dalit slums" and promote "cleanliness, abstinence from alcohol, meat-eating and other Brahmanic virtues." Ambedkarite scholars view Ambedkar's proposals as being "more progressive" than Gandhi's constructive programme.¹⁷ However, a close scrutiny of the letter that Ambedkar wrote on 14 November 1932 to Amritlal V. Thakkar, proposing a programme of action that the Harijan Sevak Sangh should undertake for the welfare of the 'Harijans' and the Constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh (1932, 1935), drafted by Gandhi himself, demonstrates that the programmes of the two leaders actually show similarity in the intent and content of their welfare programmes towards the ultimate uplift of the 'Harijans' in India. In fact, Gandhi was the greater, more total revolutionary in this respect, for he worked to mobilise the Hindus of all castes against caste and untouchability, while Ambedkar argued for a struggle of the 'Untouchables' against all the 'non-Untouchable' castes.

III

Gandhi, a leader and a strategist of mass struggles against all kinds of oppression, realised that the 'Untouchables', who were subjected to social, economic and political oppression and suppression for centuries could seldom be mobilised in militant struggles. Their very oppressed condition acted as a barrier. For them, to rise up in struggle, a prolonged period of preparation was needed. He set out to prepare the 'Untouchables' for such a struggle by carrying on 'constructive work' among them. Gandhi asked his co-workers to go and work among the 'Untouchables'. He never said that "you politically arouse them and bring them to participate in the national movement." Rather, Gandhi said: "No, you must educate them. You must spread hygiene

among them. You must spread social consciousness among them so that they can arouse themselves and learn to improve their condition themselves.”¹⁸

The Harijan Sevak Sangh was meant to holistically cover the life of the ‘Harijans’ and generally revolved around four aspects: (1) struggles for civic rights – access to water, schools, admission in village squares and public conveyances; (2) campaigns for equality of economic opportunity by opening up employment; (3) programmes of social intercourse in which the ‘caste Hindus’ would accept the ‘Harijans’ into their homes as guests or servants;¹⁹ and (4) the ‘caste Hindus’ were to work along with the ‘Harijans’ towards eradicating untouchability.²⁰

Foremost among the functions of the Harijan Sevak Sangh was to reach out to the ‘caste Hindus’ through propaganda work and educate them to favour the complete removal of untouchability in all its forms. The purpose was to involve the ‘caste Hindus’ to support the newly formed organisation, and help make it the nucleus for mobilising the Hindu community as a whole, including the ‘Harijans’. The Harijan Sevak Sangh organised special Harijan days, processions, etc., to bring the ‘caste Hindus’ and the ‘Harijans’ on to the same platform. The members of the Harijan Sevak Sangh were also to make house-to-house visits, to organise exhibitions, to promote handicrafts specially suited to the ‘Harijans’ and to accurately report the conditions under which the ‘Harijans’ lived and the disabilities they suffered. The circulation of books and periodicals dedicated to the cause was also integral to the programme.

Simultaneously, the Harijan Sevak Sangh was required to carry out constructive work to enable the uplift of the ‘Harijans’ economically, socially, hygienically and educationally in order to spread social consciousness among them so that they could arouse themselves and learn to improve their condition themselves. This was to be achieved by making efforts to encourage the ‘Harijan’ children and adults, wherever possible, to attend schools. There was a distinction here, that is, in no case were new schools to be opened exclusively for the ‘Harijans’. The emphasis was always on joint enrollment along with the ‘caste Hindus’, so that the children of these two segments of the Hindu community could study together. Similarly, efforts were made to open all hostels for the ‘Harijan’ students to provide residential facilities for them. Scholarships, books and clothes were other amenities meant to be forwarded to them along with technical and vocational training. Spinning, weaving, tanning, shoemaking, bamboo and cane work were some of the vocations that the Harijan Sevak Sangh members were to promote

among those 'Harijans' who had the aptitude for these. There were no references to hereditary occupations in Gandhi's constructive programme. In addition, special emphasis was placed on the 'caste Hindu' workers of the Harijan Sevak Sangh to be in constant touch with the 'Harijans' by settling in the vicinity of the 'Harijan' localities or bastis. Donations for promoting such activities were to be invited from all sections of the Hindus, and also from the non-Hindus.

Administrative initiatives were also assigned to the Harijan Sevak Sangh. It was to induce the municipalities and local bodies to provide clean and cheap housing/quarters, the provision of fresh water supply and clean clothes to the 'Harijans'. In addition, efforts were to be made to make all public wells, taps, and any source of water supply available to the 'Harijans', but, where such resources were not accessible, common supply of water was to be used by the 'Harijans'. Most revolutionary of all the responsibilities of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, however, was to make efforts to secure the opening of all temples to the 'Harijans'.²¹ Gandhi placed the main responsibility on the 'caste Hindus' to bring about a change. They had to atone for their sins against humanity for the historical injustice that they had shown towards the 'Harijans'. They had to do expiation. At the same time, he asked the 'Harijans' to do things by way of self-purification as individuals. Gandhi urged the Harijan Sevak Sangh workers to go to the villages and work for the upliftment of the 'Harijans'. He believed that the Anti-Untouchability Movement would pave the way for the unification of all the Indians. It was a social campaign aimed at touching the conscience of the masses. The Harijan Sevak Sangh's most formidable task was to secure absolute equality of status for the 'Harijans' with the 'caste Hindus'.

IV

In the letter that Ambedkar wrote on 14 November 1932 to the Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, A. V. Thakkar, he advised that the Harijan Sevak Sangh should not "dissipate its energies on a programme calculated to foster private virtues," such as "temperance, gymnasium, cooperation, libraries, schools, etc., which are calculated to make the individual a better and virtuous individual."²² According to R. Srivatsan, Ambedkar criticised Gandhi's "social reform" and methods of uplift as a "non-radical" initiative as it sought to mould "the conduct of an individual from the Depressed Classes as if it was that conduct which is flawed and needed improvement without fighting the social oppression that is the root cause of the problem." This was because, adds Srivatsan, for Gandhi, "viciousness or

sinfulness is a matter of past incarnations of the individual – his present suffering is due to his past sins.” Thus, Ambedkar “targets,” Gandhi’s “approach to service comprehensively.”²³

Ambedkar’s assessment appears to be based on a flawed understanding of Gandhi’s views and method. The first step for the ‘caste Hindus’, Gandhi invariably stressed and insisted upon, was “to receive the Untouchables as they were.”²⁴ He asserted that “the cleanliness of the Bhangis has very little part in the removal of untouchability.”²⁵ In fact, abstention from flesh and drink were not contingent to the removal of untouchability. He also asserted that those ‘Harijans’ who could not give up carrion eating “should not be summarily boycotted,” as it was not an easy matter to give up a long-standing habit.²⁶ Moreover, abstention was not an indispensable condition of temple entry for the Hindus. Though personally Gandhi was in favour of making abstention to be a condition, but “it could not be imposed upon the Harijans alone, if it was not imposed upon all the Hindus.”²⁷ Such Gandhian beliefs negated the perception that an ‘Untouchable’ was an outcaste only as a result of his own karma in the past life. On the contrary, Gandhi asserted that “the disabilities that the Harijans are labouring under, were imposed upon them by the caste Hindus.”²⁸

Ambedkar wanted the Harijan Sevak Sangh to uplift the ‘Untouchables’ as a whole and not just a few individuals. “The fate of the individual,” Ambedkar said: “is governed by his environment and the circumstances he is obliged to live under, and if an individual is suffering from want and misery it is because his environment is not propitious.”²⁹ He therefore insisted that the Harijan Sevak Sangh should “concentrate all its energies on a programme that will effect a change in the social environment of the Untouchables.” He suggested that the pursuit of the Harijan Sevak Sangh should be to secure civic rights, such as taking water from the village wells, entry in village schools, admission to village chawdi, use of public conveyances to “bring about the necessary social revolution in Hindu society, without which it will never be possible for the Untouchables to get equal social status.” The essence of such suggestions met with Gandhi’s assertions of seeking equal civic rights for the ‘Harijans’. To Gandhi, it was the duty of the ‘caste Hindus’ to procure civic amenities for the ‘Harijans’, for example, having easy access to clean water supply. They were to find public wells and tanks used by the ‘caste Hindus’ and canvass their opinion by pointing out to them that “the Harijans have a legal right to the use of all such public services.”³⁰

It must be noted that so far as civic amenities, such as sanitary dwelling, clean water, clean food, education and healthy occupations

were concerned, Gandhi very strongly urged their extension to the 'Harijans'. Where possible civic amenities were to be enjoyed by the 'Harijans' on equal terms with others, but where the caste prejudice would not allow it, then these facilities were to be provided separately till such time as public opinion could be educated.³¹ He asserted that in regard to such problems as the removal of carrion, admission to schools, etc., about which something ought to be done and about which public opinion also was favourable, "legislation is essential. Where there are no laws, there can be no Government but only anarchy or misrule."³² For example, on the quarrel between the 'caste Hindus' and the 'Harijans' over the use of a well at Wanowri, Poona, in 1933-34, Gandhi suggested that legal aid should be sought with a view to getting the matter settled in a court of law.³³

V

Ambedkar predicted that there would be many obstacles to such a campaign. The most serious being the "riots between the Untouchables and the caste Hindus, which will result in breaking heads and in criminal prosecutions of one side or the other." Ambedkar also predicted the prejudice of the colonial state in favour of the 'caste Hindus', which would be reflected in the harassment of the 'Untouchables' by throwing them out of jobs and to starve them. To make such an eventuality possible, he was convinced that "the forces in charge of law and order must be on our side if it is to end in success."³⁴ The British role was crucial, precisely because they held state power – an important determinant for any movement to succeed.³⁵ Ambedkar said that the Harijan Sevak Sangh "will have to have an army of workers in the rural parts who will encourage the Untouchables to fight for their rights and who will help them in any legal proceedings arising therefrom to a successful issue."³⁶ He thus sought a change in the social environment through the Harijan Sevak Sangh's activism.

According to R. Srivatsan, in Ambedkar's formulation of revolution by the 'Untouchables', caste battles were not to consume the Hindu society in flames, nor they were to attempt the overthrow of the 'caste Hindu' oppressor. These were meant to force the dominant community to think about its practices. Preaching and the use of other easy options of converting the 'caste Hindu' opinion through rational ideas would fail because "they do not compel thought, for they do not produce a crisis."³⁷ To Ambedkar, the 'caste Hindu' would never think about his habitual practices of oppression unless a crisis would force him. The campaign to secure civic rights

and services, Ambedkar further spelt out in his letter to A. V. Thakkar, was necessary in spite of bloodshed. If there was opposition from the 'caste Hindus', the 'Untouchables' should assert their rights even if there was violence.³⁸ Srivatsan asserts that the assumption behind this imagination of the revolution was that while there were a large number of thoughtless and violent followers of the dominant tradition, there was also a significant part of the dominant group that could be forced by a critical situation to see reason and enlightenment over the issue of caste.³⁹

Ambedkar criticises Gandhi for depending on methods of persuasion in the removal of social disabilities of the 'Untouchables'. Till 1937, the Congress was not in power, and therefore, its main activity was propaganda, which alone were open to it. Whatever may be the political value of the Civil Disobedience Movements of 1920-22, 1930-34 and 1942-45, there could be no doubt that the intimate social contact of thousands of national workers in jails as equals in total disregard of all the rules of the caste system played a significant role in weakening the caste barriers and gave a perceptible impetus to the eradication of caste and untouchability. K. Santhanam, who was a member of the Congress from 1920-1942, later recalled:

During the three stormy years of 1920-23, rural India, which had continued in its somnolescent medieval existence, awoke to the puzzling spectacle of youths belonging to the highest castes thundering to shocked audiences on the crime of treating fellowmen and women as Untouchables. These youths went to the hamlets of the Untouchables and defied the elders to boycott or punish them. Having had the privilege of belonging to this heroic band, I can testify to the marvellous effect produced by these years of intense propaganda.⁴⁰

In a matter where the social conscience alone could rectify the state of affairs, there was a limit to legal and constitutional sanctions. Ambedkar himself admits that "Untouchability" is a mental attitude. "You cannot untwist," he further acknowledges, "a two thousand years twist of the human mind and turn it in the opposite direction."⁴¹ In an interview to Charles A. Selden of the *New York Times* on 30 November 1930, Ambedkar again acknowledged that "'Untouchability' is far worse than slavery, for the latter may be abolished by statute. It will take more than a law to remove this stigma from the people of India. Nothing less than the aroused opinion of the world can do it."⁴² Instead of this realisation leading to patience, the conclusion drawn by Ambedkar is one of despair and opposition to political freedom of India.

Moreover, the British policy towards the 'Untouchables' was

marked by “reluctance to remove their socio-religious disabilities and treatment of the ‘Untouchables’ as a ‘minority’ for the purpose of representation in the legislatures.”⁴³ The Government sought to provide them political representation through separate electorates in order to introduce a new element of division and weaken the national movement.⁴⁴ Ambedkar assigns two reasons for the Government’s refusal to remove the social disabilities of the ‘Untouchables’: First, they had no intention of removing them. They only advertised the unfortunate conditions of the ‘Untouchables’ “because such a course serves well as an excuse for retarding the political progress of India;” second, the British apprehended that “intervention to amend the existing code of social and economic life” would give rise to resistance from the orthodox Hindus.⁴⁵ There was another factor owing to which the Government did not pass any legislation to remove the social disabilities of the ‘Untouchables’. The Government sought to appease the orthodox elements in the Hindu society as the latter were thought to be “on the whole supporters, or at any rate, not open opponents of the Government.”⁴⁶ At the First Round Table Conference (1930-31), Ambedkar severely criticised the British Government for its failure to remove the disabilities of the ‘Untouchables’:

When we compare our present position with the one which it was our lot to bear in Indian society of pre-British days, we find that, instead of marching on, we are marking time. Before the British, we were in the loathsome condition due to our untouchability. Has the British Government done anything to remove it? Before the British, we could not draw water from the village well. Has the British Government secured us the right to the well? Before the British, we could not enter the temple? Can we enter now? Before the British, we were denied entry into the police force. Does the British Government admit us into the force? Before the British we were not allowed to serve in the military. Is that career now open to us? To none of these questions can we give an affirmative answer. Our wrongs have remained as open sores and they have not been righted, although 150 years of British rule have rolled away.⁴⁷

Ambedkar quotes Gandhi, who wrote on 3 November 1921: “Untouchability cannot be given a secondary place on the [non-co-operation swaraj] programme. Without the removal of the taint, swaraj is a meaningless term.”⁴⁸ Earlier, on 27 October 1920, Gandhi had declared, “if a member of a slave nation could deliver the suppressed classes from their slavery, without freeing myself from my own, I would do so today. But it is an impossible task. A slave has not the

freedom even to do the right thing." Hence, "though the Panchama problem is as dear to me as life itself, I rest satisfied with the exclusive attention to national non-co-operation, feel sure that the greater includes the less."⁴⁹ This was Gandhi's explanation for his non-co-operation movement for swaraj when untouchability still waited to be removed. Since the swaraj goal could not be abandoned, the solution, as Gandhi saw it, was to attack untouchability alongside the struggle for swaraj. Instead of appreciating in the context Gandhi's attitude/approach, Ambedkar criticises him with "not [taking] the slightest interest in the programme of amelioration" for the 'Untouchables'.⁵⁰

VI

The next step in Ambedkar's vision that the Harijan Sevak Sangh was to pursue concerned the struggle to bring about an "equality of opportunity" for the 'Untouchables'. The 'Untouchables' were not permitted to sell vegetables, milk, eggs, or butter in order to earn a living, for "a caste Hindu will buy these things from a non-Hindu, but he will not buy them from the Untouchables." Moreover, the 'Untouchables' were not employed even on the lowest positions of a messenger and were liable to be employed last in the days of prosperity and first to be fired in the days of adversity. In the urban private sector, the 'Untouchables' were employed in the most menial jobs and were likely to be thrown out at the slightest hint of business adversity. The condition of the 'Untouchable' women was worse. They were discriminated against even in the distribution of raw material for piece-work in comparison to the 'caste Hindu' women and were left to face hunger. Ambedkar desired the Harijan Sevak Sangh to create public opinion against such practices and to establish bureaus meant to deal effectively with the treatment of inequality meted out to the 'Untouchables'. He, in particular, wanted the 'caste Hindu' owned private firms and companies to extend their patronage to the 'Untouchables' by employing them according to their capacities.⁵¹ Ambedkar in this sense resonated with Gandhi's vision to include the 'caste Hindus' in the activities of the Harijan Sevak Sangh.

Right from its inception, the Harijan Sevak Sangh had been agitating for a better deal for the sweepers from their employers – the municipalities. For example, the Ujjain and Bhilsa Municipalities in Gwalior had begun to give loans to the sweepers at low rates of interest. In the United Provinces, the Faizabad Municipality advanced 500 rupees to the Sweepers' Cooperative Society and agreed to recover

the amount in monthly installments from their salaries. As a result of the efforts of A. V. Thakkar, the Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Hyderabad Municipality in Sind agreed to spend 10,000 rupees on building quarters for the sweepers.⁵² Moreover, the workers of the Harijan Sevak Sangh had been making efforts to improve the economic conditions of the 'Untouchables' by securing employment for them in Government services, factories, shops and even in the homes of the 'caste Hindus'. They were also induced, as in the Anantapur District in Andhra Pradesh, to take to the professions of barbers and washermen and the 'caste Hindus' were persuaded to patronise them. At Ambarnath, in Maharashtra, the Harijan Sevak Sangh arranged for the supply of seeds for cultivation to the 'Untouchables'. It also supplied bullocks. In Loharka Village in the Amritsar District, the Harijan Sevak Sangh was able to secure higher wages for the 'Untouchables' employed as field labourers.⁵³

VII

Ambedkarite scholars have argued that Ambedkar highlighted other concerns, which had kept the 'Untouchables' excluded. Both R. Srivatsan and Christophe Jaffrelot suggest that in Ambedkar's assessment, the Harijan Sevak Sangh "should campaign for [...] the promotion of inter-caste marriages and dining" between the 'caste Hindus' and the 'Untouchables'.⁵⁴ Srivatsan has emphatically put forward that it might be "necessary at one place, in a given period, to break the caste Hindu heads in a pitched battle," it might be "equally necessary at another place, in the same period, to dine with the caste Hindu and get used to him, while he gets used to the Untouchables."⁵⁵ But whenever Gandhi spoke of the removal of untouchability, laments G. Aloysius, "he qualified his statement by adding that he did not mean inter-dining," thereby "arresting the process of the mixing up of all castes."⁵⁶

However, in his letter to the Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Amritlal Vithaldas Thakkar, Ambedkar had proposed a course of action for the Harijan Sevak Sangh that sought "the admission of the Depressed Classes to the houses of the caste Hindus as guests or servants in order to dissolve the nausea which the Touchables feel towards the Untouchables."⁵⁷ As Dhananjay Keer, the biographer of Ambedkar, puts it: "Ambedkar expressed his opinion that the activities of the [Harijan Sevak Sangh] should be mainly directed to the economic, educational and social improvement of the Depressed Classes rather than to the problems of temple entry and inter-dining."⁵⁸ Gandhi was equally clear that inter-dining was not a part

of the movement against untouchability. However, when and wherever mixed dinner parties with the 'Harijans' took place, he "welcomed" them as a healthy sign. Gandhi felt that "those who consider it a dharma to practice these deserve to be applauded," and added: "I have not noticed any injunction against inter-dining and inter-marriages in the scriptures."⁵⁹

Moreover, the various interpretations argued above are a product of seeing Gandhi merely on the basis of certain statements without adequately looking at the 'context' and Gandhi's overall actual practice, and also of seeing him as an 'unchanging' person. Critics of Gandhi have rooted their understanding of Gandhian ideas through some of Gandhi's 'early' writings from which his statements on the caste system, on inter-caste dining and inter-caste marriages are picked out. But in fact, as Bipan Chandra has argued: "Gandhi constantly 'experimented with truth', and changed and developed his understanding of society, politics and social change."⁶⁰ Gandhi's thought and activity in these and other aspects were in constant evolution.

For example, in the 1920s, Gandhi appreciated restrictions on inter-caste dining and marriages, but also insisted that closed-dining and closed-marriages were minor parts in varnashrama dharma,⁶¹ and that a beginning should be made in breaking the barriers through inter-caste marriages among the members of the different sub-castes.⁶² He declared in 1921 that "the four divisions define a man's calling, they do not restrict or regulate social intercourse."⁶³ By the mid-1930s, Gandhi openly affirmed his acceptance of and advocated for inter-caste dining and marriages.⁶⁴ Gandhi's views, once expressed freely, culminated in the announcement by 1946 that in his Sevagram Ashram, couples could marry only on the condition that one party was a 'Harijan'.⁶⁵ Gandhi's beliefs were backed by the force of a lifetime of action. Gandhi would invariably eat with people of different faiths and castes, including the 'Untouchables'.⁶⁶ Not only did Gandhi allow his son Ramdas to marry someone who was from a different sub-caste, but also allowed his other son Devadas to marry a girl who was from another varna altogether. Gandhi also married off his adopted daughter Lakshmi, who was an 'Untouchable', to a Brahmin boy in 1933. On many other occasions, Gandhi expressed his support for inter-caste marriages.⁶⁷

VIII

Moreover, Ambedkar believed that if the activists of the Harijan Sevak Sangh had to fight alongside the oppressed, they would have to be

people who loved the oppressed, and were not “fighting” mainly for financial consideration. “Hire purchase” of the ‘Depressed Classes’ activism by organisations who were also engaged in several other programmes, Ambedkar said, was to be eschewed because love for the ‘Depressed Classes’ could not be purchased on hire. Activists would have to be disciplined to have a “single-minded devotion” to the problem, “narrow-minded and enthusiastic about their cause,” he added. Ambedkar believed that such activists would best be found among the ‘Depressed Classes’ themselves. He emphasised that one could be more sure that a worker drawn from the ‘Untouchables’ would regard the work as love’s labour – a thing, which was so essential to the success of the Harijan Sevak Sangh.⁶⁸ In this context, R. Srivatsan argues that “through his explicit advocacy of the Depressed Classes activists, Ambedkar clearly [showed] his assessment of the limitations and limits of the caste Hindu activism.”⁶⁹

Gandhi also “strongly disapproved” of “paid propagandists”⁷⁰ and “hirelings” for the removal of untouchability. “Hirelings,” he stated: “will never be able to remove untouchability [...]. They have never been able to initiate reform.” The difference between a voluntary worker and a hireling, Gandhi pointed out: “lies in the fact that whereas a hireling gives his service to whosoever pays his price, a national voluntary worker gives his service only to the nation for the cause he believes in and he serves it even though he might have to starve.”⁷¹ In this context, Gandhi also informed that the members of the Harijan Sevak Sangh “are volunteers getting nothing.” He assured that the bulk of the money collected was spent to ameliorate the conditions of the ‘Harijans’ and “as little as possible on administration.”⁷²

In this respect, Gandhi differed from Ambedkar in one important aspect. Ambedkar worked for self-regeneration and struggle on their own by the ‘Untouchables’. Ambedkar would educate the ‘Untouchables’, mobilise them politically, and enable them to confront the ‘caste Hindus’. In concrete reality, it is one thing for the ‘Untouchables’ to organise and mobilise against caste discrimination and caste oppression or even the caste system itself; and another to treat as enemies the entire ‘non-Untouchable’ population. This type of activism inevitably pitches the ‘Untouchables’ into an unequal social and political struggle, for it pits fifteen per cent against nearly seventy per cent. Moreover, most of the ‘Untouchables’, being non-landowning labourers, get separated from the other rural poor – the agricultural labourers and petty landowners – belonging to the ‘non-Untouchable’ castes.

Significantly, Gandhi, even while advocating self-regeneration by

the 'Harijans', advocated co-operation between them and the 'caste Hindus', emphasised the task of persuading and pressurising the 'caste Hindus' to give up untouchability in all its forms, including the ban on inter-dining and inter-marriages, and promoted constructive work among the 'Harijans' for their social, cultural and economic uplift. Gandhi believed that any anti-caste struggle must be based on the co-operation of the mass of the 'caste Hindus', for they constituted the overwhelming majority of Hindus in the country. No social change could occur by confronting and spreading hostility and hatred against the majority. Gandhi believed that any hostile confrontation with the 'caste Hindus' would only harm the 'Harijans', for they constituted a minority and the fight would be an unequal one. This is where Gandhi's political and mobilisation strategies are far superior to Ambedkar's, for it advocates the unity of the 'Harijans' with the vast majority of the 'non-Harijans' who are against, or can be persuaded to oppose the caste system. Thus, the political consequences of the numerical inferiority of the 'Harijans' and, therefore, their political isolation are overcome.

IX

Ambedkar was however critical of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, as it had left no scope for drawing members from the 'Depressed Classes' community. It had become "the policy of the [Harijan Sevak] Sangh," Ambedkar said: "to exclude the Harijans from the management and higher direction of the [Harijan Sevak] Sangh."⁷³ In R. Srivatsan's words, Gandhi added "insult to injury" by not permitting membership of the 'Harijans', even though the original Central Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh once had three 'Harijan' leaders.⁷⁴ The act of service-expiation, Srivatsan argues: "was the duty and in reality ultimately the privilege," of the 'upper-caste Hindus'. The 'Untouchable' had no right to do what he thought was right for himself – "he had to submit to the painfully masochistic ministrations of the sevak,"⁷⁵ laments Srivatsan.

Christophe Jaffrelot, Gail Omvedt⁷⁶ and Trilok Nath⁷⁷ fully accept this view. Jaffrelot argues that Ambedkar's suggestion that the various committees of the Harijan Sevak Sangh "had to comprise a majority of Untouchables [...] was not followed by any positive action and the League remained dominated by upper-caste Hindus largely because Gandhi wanted [...] to make it 'an organisation of penitent sinners'."⁷⁸ The Harijan Sevak Sangh had begun to function as a 'caste Hindu' organisation seeking salvation for its members' souls by offering repentance for the sins of untouchability committed by them. "The

irony of this 'prayaschitta' for the caste Hindu soul," argues R. Srivatsan, "was that it was to be achieved through the purification of the physical body and moral fibre of the 'Harijan'!"⁷⁹ Gandhi's style of campaign, to Bhikhu Parekh, thus, not only prevented the 'Harijans' from developing their own organisation but also "denied them an opportunity to work, and constantly interact with the caste Hindus." Since the Harijan Sevak Sangh worked "for, but not with the 'Harijans'," he further argues: "the two communities lacked a common platform." Devoid of any meaningful contact at the social level, the two communities also remained separate at the political level as well,⁸⁰ concludes Parekh.

Ambedkar was, therefore, caustic in his disapproval of the 'upper-caste Hindu' service that had turned many 'Untouchables' into "mere recipients of charity."⁸¹ According to Vijay Prashad, Gandhi's position "did not argue for emancipation from Dalithood, but reform within Dalithood."⁸² Gandhi's refusal to address untouchability in any, except 'upper-caste Hindu' reformist terms, asserts Rajeswari S. Rajan, meant that Gandhi successfully contained both the 'Untouchable' and the peasant politics within the ambit of bourgeois and upper-caste seva that "checked the revolutionary agency" of the 'Untouchables'. Gandhi's "non-revolutionary praxis, fearing violence," Rajan adds: "sought to retain the status quo of [...] caste relations, relying instead on a change of heart, which would put the onus of transforming social structure on those who are in possession of power and privilege."⁸³

The records, however, do not substantiate these assessments. Of the fifteen organising members of the Central Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh in 1932, four were 'Harijans' – Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Diwan Bahadur R. Srinivasan, Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah and Palwankar Baloo.⁸⁴ "Rule 24" of the Constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh (1935) also laid down that "every Board or Committee shall have as many Harijan members as it is possible to secure consistently with its maximum,"⁸⁵ thus, giving the 'Harijans' a direct voice in its management. It is, therefore, not correct to say that the policy of the Harijan Sevak Sangh was to exclude the 'Harijans' from the management and higher direction of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, as professed by Ambedkar.⁸⁶ Moreover, in the Central Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, there were in 1946 several 'Harijan' members, viz., N. S. Khajrolkrar of Bombay, Karan Singh Kane of the United Provinces, F. D. Ghodke of Karnatak, M. Govindan of Kerala, Radhanath Das of Calcutta and B. S. Moorthy of Andhra.⁸⁷

Moreover, Gandhi evolved a process of associating the 'Harijans' with the Anti-Untouchability Movement. To broaden the base of the

Anti-Untouchability Movement, Gandhi suggested the formation of compact, small representative committees that would frame rules for the conduct of their proceedings and formulate their expectations of the 'caste Hindus'. These Advisory Committees, wherever they were formed, were meant to advise the Central Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh of their existence and show their preparedness to help the latter. Gandhi believed that the 'caste Hindus' "will never be able to discharge their debt except with the co-operation of the Harijans."⁸⁸ Whilst the 'Harijans' were in no way called upon to share in the act of penitence, they were to form independent Advisory Committees, and to offer helpful advice, guidance, inspection and review of the work of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Gandhi asserted that this was not only the privilege but also the duty of the 'Harijans'.⁸⁹ Gandhi also warned that there should be "no repetition of the old method when the reformer claimed to know more of the requirements of his victims than the victims themselves," and, therefore, he wanted that the workers should "ascertain from the representatives of the Harijans what their first need is and how they would like it to be satisfied."⁹⁰ Gandhi repeatedly emphasised that it was necessary to know the 'Harijan' mind in any programme of work that may be taken up.

The Central and State or Regional Boards had three functions – to raise the economic, social and religious status of the 'Harijans', that is, to remove the difficulties that the 'caste Hindus' for centuries have put in the way of the 'Harijans' raising their heads in life. The Boards had to provide wells, scholarships, boarding houses, schools and civic amenities, wherever the need arose. In all these, the general body of 'Harijans' was to take the help wherever it was offered. The Advisory Committees, Gandhi said, were to help the cause by making useful suggestions to the Boards and also rendering such help as they themselves could to those whom they represented. "Thus only will they," emphasised Gandhi: "acquire the power of asserting themselves."⁹¹ The Advisory Committees were to take up internal reforms and cause an awakening among the 'Harijan' masses, so that "they too begin to realise that they were men and women entitled to the same rights as were enjoyed by other members of the society to which they belonged." Moreover, the Constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh laid down that no 'caste Hindu' shall be a member of any Board, unless he or she performed some definite service, for example, having a 'Harijan' in his or her house as a member of the family, at least as a domestic servant, or was teaching a 'Harijan' or 'Harijans', or was paying a regular visit to the 'Harijan' quarters and cleaning them, or if he or she was a doctor, treating the 'Harijan' patients free of charge.⁹² Thus, Gandhi's campaign to eradicate

untouchability not only encouraged the 'Harijans' to establish and develop their own organisation, but also gave them an opportunity to work and constantly interact with the 'caste Hindus'.

X

Contrary to the arguments of the critics of Gandhi that his idealisation of varnashrama dharma led to "non-radical" programmes being adopted by the Harijan Sevak Sangh, to Gandhi "the removal of untouchability [was] more precious than the retention of varnashrama dharma."⁹³ Gandhi had declared in November 1927 that he did not care "if varna went to the dogs in the removal of untouchability." Moreover, as the eminent scholar of Gandhi, Anthony Parel writes, "nowhere in [Gandhi's] entire political career, do we find him attempting to restore the dharma of the discredited varnashrama."⁹⁴ Gandhi rejected the possibility when he said in November 1927:

I have gone nowhere to defend varna dharma. I am the author of a Congress resolution for propagation of khadi, establishment of Hindu-Muslim unity, and the removal of 'untouchability', the three pillars of swaraj. But I have never placed establishment of varnashrama dharma as the fourth pillar. You cannot, therefore, accuse me of placing a wrong emphasis on varnashrama dharma.⁹⁵

Starting with his grandfather, Gandhi states, his family had not been pursuing their hereditary duty that was assigned to them.⁹⁶ He himself never earned his bread and butter by following his ancestors' calling. He also allowed his children to choose their own professions and never pressed them to follow any pursuit prescribed for their caste. Moreover, Gandhi tried to master many activities that were prohibited for his caste. He himself worked as a scavenger, a barber, a washerman, a cobbler, a tiller and a tailor – all 'unclean' works. He even forced his family to break pollution taboos by engaging them in shoemaking, leatherwork, cleaning of toilets – works profoundly 'polluting' to the 'caste Hindus'. In fact, cleaning toilets persisted all his life.⁹⁷ None of Gandhi's ashrams were built on the principle of the caste system or varnashrama dharma; and none of the caste restrictions were observed in his ashrams.

Gandhi also urged the 'caste Hindus' to realise that just as other castes had given up their occupations in a pattern of mobility, the 'Harijans', too, had a right to give up their hereditary occupations.⁹⁸ In fact, Gandhi helped many 'Harijans' to quit their hereditary callings, to acquire an academic education and to qualify themselves as doctors,

engineers and teachers.⁹⁹ It was the policy of the Harijan Sevak Sangh to encourage the 'Harijan' students by giving them scholarships, particularly for technical and professional courses.¹⁰⁰ In this context, Gandhi also advised the Harijan Sevak Sangh that in the villages, if the 'caste Hindus' remained obstinate and persisted in boycotting the 'Harijans', the latter, if they have any self-consciousness, "[should] persist in their refusal to render service, [...] and, if the boycott proves to be too hot for them, they [should] quietly vacate the offending village."¹⁰¹

Gandhi, thus, in his personal life rejected untouchability and relentlessly made efforts to eradicate it. The critics of Gandhi by focusing on a 'selective' reading of some of Gandhi's 'early' writings reach a conclusion that Gandhi never decisively renounced his belief in 'chaturvarna' or the system of four varnas. They rest their understanding of Gandhi's concern with caste based on these writings and ignore his 'practice', which were a clear denunciation of untouchability and caste prejudices.

XI

In sum, Gandhi's constructive programme for the welfare of the 'Harijans' was similar in intent and content with Ambedkar's programme. The basic themes in both the programmes were: (1) a campaign to secure civic rights for the 'Harijans'; (2) to bring an equality of opportunity for the 'Harijans'; (3) the admission of the 'Harijans' to the houses of the 'caste Hindus' as guests or servants in order to dissolve the nausea which the 'caste Hindus' felt towards the 'Harijans'; and (4) co-operation between the 'caste Hindus' and the 'Harijans' in the removal of untouchability.

Both Gandhi and Ambedkar felt that the Anti-Untouchability Movement was necessary. Except for the Mahad Satyagraha (1927), Ambedkar himself never led or organised any struggle or campaign against untouchability, either before or after independence. In fact, he remained a constitutionalist politician. Whereas Gandhi, first from jail and then from outside, for nearly two years from 1932 to 1934 gave up all other pre-occupations and carried on a whirlwind campaign against untouchability. Between November 1933 and August 1934, for nearly nine months, he conducted an intensive crusade against untouchability all over the country travelling over 20,000 kilometres by train, car, bullock cart, and on foot, collecting money for the recently founded Harijan Sevak Sangh, propagating the removal of untouchability in all its forms and practices, and urging the social workers to leave all and go to the villages for the social,

economic, cultural and political uplift of the 'Untouchables'.

The Annual Report of the Harijan Sevak Sangh for the year 1933-34 indicated that there was in all the provinces a militant and claimant section fighting for equal rights and privileges. Even in the general mass of the 'Harijans', not excluding women, there was an admirable desire for the education of the young, there was a desire for a cleaner and better life.¹⁰² Ambedkar, despite his great commitment, had not succeeded to that extent to mobilise the mass of the 'Untouchables' in political, social or economic struggles, against their oppression. Ambedkar's major success was among the Mahars, who had already risen socially and economically through a minimum degree of education and service in the police and the army and work in the factories.¹⁰³ Ambedkar's greatest achievements take place when he is in alliance with those who had led the nationalist movement and not when he is at cross purposes with them. For example, the statutory abolition of untouchability takes place with the retreat of British power from India and not earlier. Moreover, the rise of 'Untouchable' representation in mainline services, increased educational opportunities and the associated enhancement in their political presence takes place only after independence.¹⁰⁴ In this context, Bipan Chandra argues that Gandhi's "strong theme of 'penance' largely explains why the caste Hindus born and brought up in pre-1947 India so readily accepted large-scale reservations in jobs, enrolment in professional colleges and so on for [the 'Untouchables'] after independence."¹⁰⁵

Gandhi actively mobilised the 'Harijans' through his campaigns which gave them dignity and power; moral, social, political and economic equality; and self-respect and the self-confidence to fight their own battles. As Anil Nauriya puts it:

The space for growth of Dalit power in India was [...] the product of the [national] movement. [...] The movements against untouchability, carried out at an all-India level, created the social atmosphere that made further change possible. [...] It was only in independent India that untouchability was abolished and its practice made an offence. This created an atmosphere, which made it possible for Dalits to make a bid for political power [...].¹⁰⁶

Thus, Gandhi's style of campaign had both the advantage of focusing attention on the centuries of 'caste Hindu' oppression and also the great merit of involving the 'Harijans' in the struggle for their own liberation. Gandhi always encouraged the 'Harijans' to speak for themselves. The Harijan Sevak Sangh was intended to be a forum for both the 'caste Hindus' and the 'Harijans', and it was

explicitly aimed to eradicate untouchability, giving the two communities a common platform. Such meaningful contacts at the social level, allowed the two communities to come together at the political level as well. Gandhi's approach followed from his own profound political insight that no system of oppression could be ended without the active involvement and consequent political education and organisation of its victims.

Notes and References

1. 'Antyaj', 'Bhangi', 'Dalit', 'Depressed Classes', 'Dhed', 'Harijan', 'Panchama', 'Pariah', 'Scheduled Castes' and 'Untouchable' are several names for the same people. They are a group of several castes; themselves divided from one another, the common factor being their very low economic and social condition. I have used the term 'Untouchable' as well as the other designations. I hope that the employment of 'Untouchable' will not be mistaken as implying any derogation of these persons.
2. Indian National Congress, *Report of the Thirty-Fifth Session of the Indian National Congress Held at Nagpur on the 26-31 December 1920*.
3. M. K. Gandhi, *Constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh (including Explanatory Notes & Bye-laws)* (Delhi: Harijan Industrial House, 1935), p. 2.
4. Pyarelal, *Epic Fast*, (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1932), pp. 194-95.
5. "Message to Great Britain," 25 September 1932, M. K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 51 (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1956-94), pp. 140-41. Hereafter, cited parenthetically in the text as CWMG followed by volume and page(s).
6. "Statement to the Press," 26 September 1932, CWMG, Vol. 51, p. 145.
7. "Letter to Kedarnath Kulkarni," 20 September 1932, CWMG, Vol. 51, p. 114.
8. B. R. Ambedkar, *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, ed., V. Moon, Vol. 17, Part 1 (Bombay: The Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1991), p. 159. Hereafter, cited parenthetically in the text as BAWS, followed by volume and page(s).
9. S. Chandra, "Gandhi's Twin Fasts and the Possibility of Non-Violence," *Economic & Political Weekly*, 46, 23 (Jun. 2011), p. 37.
10. Pyarelal, *Epic Fast*, pp. 190-91.
11. "Statement on Untouchability-III," 7 November 1932, CWMG, Vol. 51, p. 367.
12. Gandhi, *Constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh*, pp. 3-4.

13. *Ibid.*, Appendix A, p. 10.
14. B. Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*, Revised Edition (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999), p. 262.
15. BAWS, Vol. 9, pp. 134-40.
16. R. Srivatsan, "From Ambedkar to Thakkar and Beyond: Towards a Genealogy of Our Activisms," *Economic & Political Weekly*, 43, 39 (Sep.- Oct. 2008), pp. 96-97.
17. G. Omvedt, *Ambedkar: Towards an Enlightened India* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2004), pp. 49-51.
18. B. Chandra, *Essays on Indian Nationalism* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 2012), p. 43.
19. Gandhi, *Constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh*, pp. 18-23.
20. "How They Should Act," 20 April 1934, CWMG, Vol. 57, p. 417.
21. Gandhi, *Constitution of the Harijan Sevak Sangh*, pp. 18-23.
22. BAWS, Vol. 9, pp. 134-35.
23. Srivatsan, "From Ambedkar to Thakkar and Beyond," p. 97.
24. "Statement on Untouchability-X," 9 December 1932, CWMG, Vol. 52, p. 155.
25. "Letter to Hiralal A. Shah," 23 November 1932, CWMG, Vol. 52, pp. 47-48.
26. "Letter to Sitaram K. Nalavde," 12 January 1933, CWMG, Vol. 53, p. 37.
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Resolution of Economic Conflicts: A Gandhian Perspective¹

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to discuss the causes of economic conflicts and expound the method of resolving them on Gandhian lines. At the outset, the definition and types of conflicts are given. The reasons for economic conflicts are then analysed. Gandhian conception of economics and its difference from modern economics is explained. Gandhi's principles for resolving economic conflicts are listed and discussed. It is argued that economic conflicts could be resolved only when there is a change from "Economic Man" to "Gandhian Man". Man has to shed his egoism and cultivate altruism. There must be a continuous expansion of his higher self (Self) and shrinking of small self (ego). Unless such an expansion of Self takes place, and unless a change from Economic Man to Gandhian Man comes about, economic conflicts will remain unresolved.

Key words: Satya, Ahimsa, Sarvodaya, Economic Man, Gandhian Man, Altruism.

Introduction

IN COLLINS ENGLISH DICTIONARY, 'conflict' is defined as a serious disagreement and argument about something important. It is also defined as a state of mind in which one finds it impossible to make a decision.

Conflicts are of different kinds. There may be conflicts among individuals or groups or nations. Some times conflict may arise within the individual himself. In *Mahabharata*, Duryodhana was confronted with an internal conflict between right and wrong. He proclaimed

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“Na jamidharmam, nachmepravrittihi; najamiadharmam, nachemenivritthi”
– I know what is *dharma*, but I am unable to do it; I also know what is *adharmam*, but I am unable to desist from it.

From another perspective, conflicts at social level may be classified as political, economic, structural, religious and cultural. When two or more parties differ in their political standpoint, conflict arises between these two or more groups. The differences between various political parties of today’s India and changing of political leaders from one party to the other reflect political conflicts. The conflict between the rich and the poor, is an instance of economic conflict. The conflicts between people of different castes or community and dominating one over the other is an instance of structural conflict. The differences between different religious faiths and practices may generate religious conflicts. Similarly, differences among cultural groups may generate cultural conflicts. Thus, conflicts are of different kinds. Most of them arise in view of economic interests. These conflicts generate violence. Like conflicts, violence is of different types — political violence, religious violence, structural violence, cultural violence and so on. Therefore, conflicts must be contained in order to build up peace in society. Mahatma Gandhi wanted to bridge conflicts through his technique of non-violence. The two principles that he advocated for conflict resolution are truth (*satya*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*), which are integrally related. His ideal of conflict resolution “emphasizes an arrival at truth, rather than at victory.”² Gandhi wanted to be led by the “inner voice” to resolve individual as well as social conflicts. He wanted to realize Truth in order to resolve conflicts. One could reach Truth, through the practice of non-violence. For him Truth is the “end” and non-violence is the “means”. This paper is confined to economic conflicts. It aims at discussing the causes of economic conflicts and expound the method of resolving them on Gandhian lines.

Economic Conflicts: Their Causes

Economic conflicts arise when the gap between the rich and the poor gets widened; when the rich exploit the poor; when the rich procure more goods and services and consume much more than the poor; when the landlords, the mill-owners and moneyed men aim at huge profits at the cost of the welfare of their workers; when the peasants are levied heavy taxes by the government in spite of poor crop as in the case of British rule in India; when the town dwellers exploit the villagers; when one ignores economic neighbourhood. This list may go further.

In the context of economic conflicts, the rich enjoy the luxuries

of life while the poor suffer for want of basic needs of life. This leads to conflict between them. It is a dialectical process. How to resolve this dialectic? In Gandhian philosophy, such dialectics could be resolved and a synthesis could be arrived. "Whether it is politics or philosophy, ethics or economics, conflict resolution or human development, the three-way starting point for Gandhi is to understand the actual, cherish the ideal, and bring about a synthesis of the two *in practice*. In political action, the dialectic is between the ends sought and the means used. In ethics, it is the conflict between personal happiness and the common good. In human development, it is the opposition between animal instincts and spiritual aspirations. In conflict resolution, it is the reconciliation of the two conflicting claims. ... His method and philosophy go beyond the common logic where opposites contradict each other. Instead, we find in Gandhi coexistence of contraries."³

Resolution of Economic Conflicts: Gandhian Model

In order to understand the Gandhian method of resolving economic conflicts, one must understand Gandhian views on economics.

Gandhian economics is different from modern economics. While modern economics aims at mass production, maximum possible profits and accumulation of wealth, Gandhian economics aims at production by the masses and the welfare of the common man. It is human being and his welfare that constitute the centrality of Gandhian economics. While modern economics promotes "economic man" who aims at huge profits by purchasing at cheap market and sells it in dear market, Gandhian economics endorses "Gandhian man" who follows the principle of *swadeshi* and cares for the welfare of his neighbour. Modern economics aims at maximum happiness of the maximum number. However, Gandhian economics aims at "sarvodaya" the welfare of all. Gandhi never demarcated between economics, politics, religion, education of man. For him they constitute an integral whole. They are woven round the two basic principles of *satya* and *ahimsa*.

Gandhi had suggested several principles to be followed in resolving economic conflicts. They may be broadly covered under the following subjects.

(1) *Aparigraha*, (2) Bread labour, (3) *Swadeshi*, (4) Economic decentralisation, (5) Economic Equality, (6) Trusteeship, (7) *Sarvodaya*, (8) Sustainable Development.

Let us discuss them briefly.

1. *Aparigraha*

Aparigraha is non-possession. In Gandhian economics, it is need-based

economy. Gandhi said that the secret of happiness lies in renunciation “Renunciation is life. Indulgence spells death”.⁴ The point of Gandhi is that one should not possess more than one’s needs. According to him, possessing more than one’s needs is a kind of theft. He opined that people procure more goods out of their greed. This leads to unjustified distribution of goods, widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

Gandhi said: “The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need...; while millions starve to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession of only what he needed, no one would be in want and all would live in contentment.” He added: “Civilization in the real sense of the term consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants.”⁵ In Gandhian economics, consumption is determined by need.

Gandhi makes a beautiful distinction between “needs”, “wants” and “greed”. He said that it is out of “greed” that man acquires large quantity of goods beyond his necessity. Man requires certain needs for his life like food, clothes and house to live in and hygienic life. However, the modern man multiplies his wants out of greed. Gandhi remarked that if man goes on multiplying his wants, there is no end to it. It goes on increasing. Like the sage Buddha, Gandhi remarked that the root cause of all suffering is multiplication of wants. Gandhi said that mind is a restless bird and the more it gets, it wants more and more. Therefore, one must control his mind and its wants, restricting to needs only. Thus, we find in Gandhian thought a remarkable distinction between “needs” and “wants”. It is the human greed that increases wants. In short, Gandhi advocated “wantlessness”. He wanted to lead a simple life with high thinking. He wanted man not only to confine to himself and his family and enjoy selfish life (egoism), but one must care for his fellow being. He wanted man to see himself in others and others in himself. This is “altruism”. Thus, Gandhian economics stresses upon the need for the transition of man from egoism to altruism. This requires “aparigraha”, a need based economy.

Two other concepts that are integrally related to Gandhian notion of *aparigraha* are *asteya* and *aswada*. In fact Gandhi included them under his list of Eleven-Ashram-Vows, that which he prescribed for his ashramites.⁶

Asteya is the virtue of non-stealing. Stealing, Gandhi considered, is of two types — physical and mental. Stealing of the physical/material goods is physical stealing. Even to think of possessing of others’ goods is stealing. It is psychological stealing. According to Gandhi to possess material goods, more than one requires is a kind

of stealing, because by doing this, one deprives others not to possess them.

Asvada or control of the palate is necessary for the practice of *Brahmacharya*. Gandhi said that one should eat to live, not live to eat. Food is meant only to sustain the body for service to others. This vow was adhered to rightly in Gandhi's Ashram. There the food was simple and was cooked in a common kitchen.

Another important principle that Gandhi suggested for the resolution of economic conflicts is 'bread labour'.

2. *Bread Labour (Saririka Shrama)*

According to Gandhi, one must physically do some work for his bread, because the needs of the body must be supplied by the body. He did not belittle the intellectual labour, but claims that any amount of intellectual labour cannot be equivalent to physical labour.

Initially, Gandhi means by bread labour the agricultural labour (the labour of the tiller of the soil). However, as farming is not possible for all persons, he recommended everybody to do some manual labour say in the form of spinning, weaving, cleaning toilets etc. Gandhi remarked that he learnt the notion of bread labour from Tolstoy. He said that labouring with one's own hand, was first stressed by the Russian writer T.M. Bondaref. However, it was Tolstoy that advertised it and gave it a wider publicity. Gandhi felt that the principle of bread labour is also found in the *Bhagavadgita*, where it is told that he who eats without offering sacrifice eats stolen food. Here the word "sacrifice" stands for bread labour.

Gandhi felt that if everybody practises bread labour, this would remove the misconception that the work of a cobbler is inferior to the work of a lawyer. One will realize that all professions are equally important for the holistic development of a society.

Economic conflicts, Gandhi believed, could be diminished if one practices the principle of *swadeshi*.

3. *Swadeshi*

"Swadeshi", Gandhi observed:

...is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition, I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion. That is, the use of my immediate religious surrounding. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects.

In the domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics, I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and

serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting.⁷

Swadeshi, a native movement that Gandhi had introduced, primarily aims at encouraging *Khadi* and other village industries. By practicing *Swadeshi*, Gandhi wanted every village should be self-sufficient. It should become independent of its own. In other words, every village should attain *swaraj*.

Swadeshi is economic neighbourhood. It respects and safeguards the interests of one's neighbours, rather than distant people. For instance, if I wear an imported shirt that would help a foreign merchant but makes my neighbour (village weaver) without a customer, thus leaving him in poverty and hunger. This was what Gandhi opposed. He wanted to develop the spirit of economic neighbourhood among people. He desired every Indian to practice it and apply to his life.

The principle of *swadeshi*, advocated by Gandhi, was not only relevant to the days of British India, but also to the contemporary times. Though we achieved political freedom from the British yoke, still we are under the grip of colonial syndrome (*videshi mindset*). We prefer imported goods at the cost of indigenous articles. That makes Indian market poor, leading to economic disparities and conflicts. Therefore, I feel that Gandhian principle of *swadeshi* is as much relevant today as it was relevant in his times.

Gandhi, though a votary of *swadeshi*, did not oppose international trade. He was not totally against importing foreign goods, if necessary. By advocating *swadeshi*, Gandhi means that a country must be self-reliant as far as food, cloth and other basic needs. However, goods which cannot be produced at home, and which are important from people's welfare point of view, may be imported. He remarked: "I have never been an advocate of prohibition of all things foreign because they are foreign."⁸ Gandhi added:

..*Swadeshi*, like any other good thing, can be ridden to death if it is made a fetish. That is a danger which must be guarded against. To reject foreign manufacturers merely because they are foreign, and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion in one's country of manufactures for which it is not suited would be criminal folly and a negation of *Swadeshi* spirit. A true votary of *Swadeshi* will never harbour ill-will towards the foreigner; he will not be actuated by antagonism towards anybody on earth. *Swadeshim* is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service, that has its roots in the purest *ahimsa*, i.e., Love.⁹

Another principle, that Gandhi focused upon to resolve economic conflicts is “economic decentralization”.

4. *Economic Decentralisation*

Gandhi said that India lives in villages and hence, the economic development of India must be built up from its grassroot level. Therefore, it is not centralized planning but decentralized planning must be necessary. This is the reason why, Gandhi tirelessly focused upon *gram swaraj*. He said that every village should be self-sufficient and self-reliant. Gandhi viewed that villagers were being exploited by the city dwellers. The villagers produce food, but they are starving without food, they produce milk from their cattle, but their children were deprived of milk. This grave condition of the villages, Gandhi wanted to change. He wanted every villager to have balanced diet, decent house to live in, proper education and medical facilities for their children. He wanted every village to become a village republic. While explaining his notion of village *swaraj*, Gandhi wrote:

My idea of village *Swaraj* is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops, thus excluding ganja, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks, ensuring clean water supply. This can be done through controlled wells or tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of satyagraha and non-cooperation will be the sanction of the village community. ...The government of the village will be conducted by a Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications.¹⁰

In 1946, Gandhi wrote:

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 an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.¹¹

In order to make a village, self-sufficient Gandhi not only wanted to encourage khadi but also all village industries like hand-grinding, hand pounding, hand-chakkis, soap making, paper-making, match-making, tanning, oil pressing, sandal making etc. Gandhi argued that hand-pounding of rice or hand-chakkis for husking paddy is good because it is a well established fact that white polished rice put by mills is unhealthy.

Another principle that Gandhi focused upon for the dissolution of economic conflicts is economic equality.

5. *Economic Equality*

In economic matters, Gandhi wanted equality to be maintained. This does not mean that equal pay should be given to all professions — doctors, engineers, teachers, lawyers, scavengers, etc. But he means by it “equitability.”

Gandhi believed that goods must be distributed according to one’s needs. A person who has five children should be given more goods than a person who has only two children. The Marxian principle of “To each according to his needs” is also the principle of Gandhi. However, he wanted to achieve it through “non-violent” means.

Initially, Gandhi argued for equal distribution of wages; according to it a cobbler, a lawyer and a professor should get equal wages. However, having realized the difficulty involved in its implementation, Gandhi wanted “equity” in the place of equality. He wrote: “My ideal is equal distribution, but so far as I can see, it is not to be realized. I therefore work for equitable distribution.”¹²

Gandhi is of the view that economic conflicts will be resolved, provided the rich will act as trustees for their surplus wealth.

6. *Trusteeship (Social Ownership)*

Trusteeship is social ownership. It was offered as an alternative to both capitalism and communism. Gandhi was not against the rich to procure more wealth. But he wanted them to use their surplus wealth for the common good of people living in a society. He wanted the rich to act not as “owners” but as “trustees” for their surplus wealth. Once a rich man met Gandhi and said that he wanted to shut down his business and become his *ashramite*. At this point, Gandhi advised him to continue his business but use his surplus wealth for the welfare of the poor. Thus, Gandhi was not against the rich to earn and procure wealth, but wanted them to spend their surplus wealth for the good of the society. The rich could become a trustee, only when they practise the principle of “aparigraha” — the need based economy.

The modern concept of “Corporate Social Responsibility” (CSR) reflect the spirit of Gandhian notion of trusteeship. Under the CSR, the companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interacting with their stakeholders. It is the way through which a company achieves a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives.

The six-point formula of Gandhi’s notion of trusteeship 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 interest 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.¹³

The six-point notion of Gandhi on Trusteeship is known as ‘Practical trusteeship formula’ and its wording was finalized by Gandhi after the draft prepared by his associates including economists, was presented to him. It was first published in *Harijan* (25.10.1952).

There is a basic difference between Marxism and Gandhism. Both aim at the welfare of the common man in society. However, Marx and his followers wanted to bring it through force and violence. In Marxist ideology, the rich must be forced to free from their wealth. However, this is not so in Gandhism. Gandhi wanted the rich to be transformed and voluntarily share their surplus wealth with the poor. Gandhi wanted the rich to be transformed through conviction not by coercion.

All the above principles, Gandhi suggested to resolve economic

conflicts, would finally lead to *sarvodaya* (Welfare of All).

7. *Sarvodaya* (Welfare of All)

Gandhi developed his principle of *sarvodaya*, from John Ruskin's (1829-1910) work *Unto This Last*. This work came to Gandhi's hand in 1903. This work so captivated Gandhi that he read it non-stop during his journey in a train in South Africa. Being impressed by its ideas, he subsequently paraphrased it into Gujarati as "Sarvodaya". He published nine articles in *Indian Opinion* (1908) under the title "Sarvodaya". In these articles, Gandhi had discussed the substance of Ruskin's work.¹⁴ Gandhi remarked that Great Britain gave him Ruskin, whose *Unto This Last* transformed him overnight from a lawyer and city dweller into a rustic living away from Durban.¹⁵ This work had inspired Gandhi in founding the Phoenix Settlement in South Africa in 1904, on the principles of bread labour and community organization.

Sarvodaya is "Gandhi's Moral Economy."¹⁶ It is a non-violent socialism or non-violent communism. It is a synthesis of contrasting dimensions of self and society in one's life. The synthesis, Gandhi sought is in terms of *sarvodaya*. It is a synthesis where the individual and society become reflexive of each other and the conflict between the two would disappear. The conflict here is between 'what is good for oneself' versus 'what is good for the society.' It is the conflict between personal happiness and people's welfare.¹⁷

In the *sarvodaya* economics of Gandhi, economics and ethics go together. Justice and equality are the guiding principles. According to him, economic policies of a country should promote non-violent society, which implies that co-operation and not competition should be the guiding factor. Decentralization, but not centralization of power is needed for promoting a just society. In Gandhian *sarvodaya* state, labour and capital are not rivals, because labour itself constitutes the capital. Gandhi opined that decentralization of production as well as distribution is necessary to avoid exploitation. Therefore, he had advocated *swadeshi* and cottage industries.

Gandhi's *sarvodaya* aims at "the greatest good of all". It does not merely aim at maximum happiness of the maximum number, as we find in Mill's and Bentham's utilitarianism. According to the doctrine of utilitarianism an action is good when 51 per cent of the people in a society are satisfied with it. It does not care for the 49 per cent of the people left behind. Gandhi considers this as a "heartless doctrine".¹⁸ Gandhi's *sarvodaya* aims at the happiness of all. According to him an action is good when all the 100 per cent of the people are happy and satisfied. In short, Gandhi's *sarvodaya* aims at *antyyodaya* — the welfare

of the last man in a society i.e., welfare of the weakest and poorest man in society. Gandhi's *talisman* observes:

Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to *him*. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him ... control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and ... self melting away.¹⁹

The principles laid down by Gandhi for the resolution of economic conflicts will aim at sustainable development.

8. Gandhi on Sustainable Development (Economy of Permanence)

Development is sustainable, when there is a balance between economics and moral development, between rural and urban sectors and between man and environment. Also sustainable development (SD) is possible, when man is able to realize the interdependence of all life in the universe, when he is able to perceive the holistic development of human life — physical, mental and spiritual, when he is able to recycle the waste and implement wastage-management. Gandhi's economic order focuses upon these aspects and hence it is sustainable. It constitutes a complete ideology for achieving economic development through a non-violent, egalitarian and sustainable social order. Gandhi was one of the first thinkers to formulate a normative and holistic approach which aims at material growth in conjunction with political, social and moral growths. His economic thought is founded on the precept that 'the good of the individual is contained in the good of all'. His "is an economic order of concepts, values, perspectives and directions, which aims at long-term human good and growth."²⁰

Gandhi's prescription for sustainable growth is called by J.C.Kumarappa, as the "Economy of Permanence".²¹ It is even more relevant today than in Gandhi's time.

Was Gandhi an Opponent of Industrialization?

It is often argued that through his doctrine of promotion of Khadi and village industries, Gandhi was taking us back to dark ages. He was against large-scale industries and machines. However, this is a misconception. Gandhi was not against machine as such. He was against craze for machine. He was against the machine, if it exploits the poor and the weak. He was of the view that small-scale village

industries will provide jobs to millions of people living in villages and hence they should be encouraged. However, he was not against using heavy machines, in the case of railways, ship building, production of steel etc. But he said that such large-scale industries should be nationalized, so that their profits will be controlled by the government.

To the question, whether he was against machine as such, Gandhi replied that he was not. He said that human body itself is like a machine, a needle is a kind of machine, the *Charkha* is a machine, which he loves most. Therefore, he was not against machine as such. He was against machine, when it atrophies the limbs of man, when it leaves millions of men without work and food. Gandhi viewed that in Western countries, where there is deficit of labour, machinery is required at every stage, however it is not the case in countries like India where there is surplus labour. Therefore, it must be clear that Gandhi was not against machine as such, but he opposed only craze for machinery. He was not completely against large-scale industries. He wanted socially appropriate machinery and technology. Therefore, we must work out a balance between large-scale and small-scale industries.

Conclusion

To conclude, Gandhian economic order focuses upon a social and moral basis for all human activities. Gandhi's writings may lack academic rigour. But his is an economic order of concepts, values, perspectives and directives, which aims at long-term human good, growth and progress.

According to Gandhi, ideal economic order is possible only when man is able to shed his selfish quality and care for the happiness of others. He said: 'So long as man remains selfish and does not care for the happiness of others, he is no better than an animal and perhaps worse. His superiority to the animal is seen only when we find him caring for his family. He is still more human, that is, much higher than the animal, when he extends his concept of the family to include his country or community as well. He climbs still higher in the scale when he comes to regard the human race as his family.'²² According to Gandhi: "We have neither practised nor known ethical religion so long as we do not feel sympathy for every human being ... the higher morality must be comprehensive, it must embrace all men."²³

I feel that economic conflicts could be resolved only when there is a change in man himself. He should be transformed from 'Economic man' to 'Gandhian man.' He has to shed his egoism and develop altruism. He/she must be able to see himself/herself in others and

others in himself/herself. This presupposes to reduce oneself to zero. While the economic man is egoistic, Gandhian man is altruistic. The Gandhian man labours for his bread, practices the principles of *aparigraha* and *swadeshi*. He reduces his wants and leads a simple life with high thinking. He cares for his needs only and avoids greediness. In short, he develops the divinity within himself. He will be led by his inner voice. This requires the change from “economic man” to “Gandhian man”. An economic man is a man who seeks after ‘self-indulgence’. On the contrary, Gandhian man pursues after ‘self-realization’. In Gandhian philosophy, we find two kinds of self — the small self which is identified with the ego and the higher self which is identified with God or Truth. The process of self-realization in Gandhian economics is possible when there is a “continuous expansion of the Self and simultaneous shrinking of the ego”.²⁴ Unless such an expansion of Self takes place, and unless a change from economic man to Gandhian man will come about, economic conflicts remain unresolved.

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From Mohandas to Bapu and Kasturbai to Ba: Some Reflections on Ashram Life

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ABSTRACT

A sincere peep into past uncovers that two very significant journeys which contributed to making of modern India started almost at the same time – ‘from Mohandas to Bapu’ and ‘from Kasturbai to Ba’. While the former journey was highly visible and at the front, the latter was at the background constantly supporting the former, remaining largely invisible. These two journeys were integrally associated with each other, as one helped the other not by the way of total surrender but through mutual criticism, learning and understanding..

Key words: ashram, swaraj, satyagraha, untouchability, khadi

I

THE INSTITUTION OF Ashram was evolved by Gandhi, perhaps as the tool to convert the principles of truth and non-violence into action. Gandhi’s fight whether in South Africa or in India was not merely political — limited to win certain political rights — but rather was a crusade to establish an alternative way of life where self-control and all encompassing universal love shall be the guiding principle. The India, Gandhi was dreaming about was not only a geographical territory free from British rule rather was ‘a self ruled and a self restrained nation’ what he calls *Swaraj*.¹ The nation Gandhi was dreaming about could not be built through mere political movements or philosophical preachings. In fact, a rigorous training of mind, body

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and soul was needed to make this dream of *Swaraj* come true and the Ashram was perhaps a 'training academy' for the soldiers of *Swaraj*. One can question how Ashram which is a hierarchical form of organization where the *Guru*, the leader has the decisive authority can be a model of *Swaraj*? How hierarchy and principles of equality and liberty can coexist? There is some weight in these questions, but when we look at the Gandhian *Ashram*, we find that the leadership was perhaps not authoritarian because most of the times decisions were taken after a good amount of discussion among the members of *Ashram* and so were the result of collective effort and reasoning. Perhaps keeping this uniqueness of the Gandhian *Ashram*, Rudolph and Rudolph see the *Ashram* as a democratic public sphere and argue that 'the *ashram* was a voluntary, not a coercive organization; discipline was helped by the fact that its denizens had self-selected themselves into the *ashram* and its ethos of self-sacrifice and collective solidarity for a common good.'²

What is significant to note is that the training in *Swaraj* was consisted not only of intellectual preaching but was much wider aiming at shaping the action, thought and speech of the trainee through the examples set by the trainer. Since his early years of *Satyagraha*, Gandhi perhaps knew that what he is proposing is though in congruence with the real nature of human being (which is good), yet in the age of growing materialism is an attempt to set the tone against the wind; so what is needed is a full fledged training in self-discipline. Perhaps keeping this goal in mind, Gandhi founded Phoenix Settlement in 1904 as an immediate result of the deep impact of Ruskin's '*Unto This Last*' on him, then Tolstoy Farm in 1910 in South Africa. He continued this project of training the mind, body and soul of the *Satyagrahis* through founding Ashram even after his arrival in India.

However, foundation of Ashram free from the barriers of caste, class and religion was highly challenging in the hierarchical caste based Indian society. Despite, knowing the challenges, Gandhi with the help of his followers founded *Satyagrah* Ashram in 1915 at Ahmadabad which later on shifted to Sabarmati due to sudden outbreak of plague.³ Few years later in 1933 Segaoon, a small untouchables' village, a few miles away from Wardha was chosen to lay the foundation of Sevagram. However, the foundation of Sevagram was not planned like his previous Ashrams. But perhaps the institution of Ashram had become such an integral part of his personality that wherever he went, formally or informally an Ashram came into existence. This time Gandhi's lonely hut gradually became Ashram.⁴ 'By that fall of 1937, the Mahatma's would be hermitage looked like a small village in itself. So much so that Mohandas who still found it

hard to believe he had unwittingly started another Ashram.⁵

Through setting-up Ashrams both in South Africa and India, Gandhi perhaps wanted to 'transform the world by transforming the micro-context of everyday life.'⁶ The Ashram transgressed the dichotomy between public and private. 'The Ashram was and was not public, a place focused on the political vocation, even while engaging all the rounds of life.'⁷ The inmates of the Ashram were expected to strictly follow self disciplinary rules in every aspect of their lives, so that they can be fearless soldiers of non-violence, who can go through the ordeals of suffering for truth with love for the opponents. Actually, Gandhi's main motive behind insistence on self-discipline was preparation for that stage where external authority would not be needed at all for maintaining discipline.

It must be understood that Gandhi's Ashram was actually a model of 'India of his dreams' and so a 'nation in making'. The way of life followed by the ashramites and incidences of Ashram were conveyed to the people regularly through the newspapers and writings of Gandhi. Perhaps, one of the purposes was to convey to his countrymen that the way of life he is advocating was not utopian, rather practically proven. Through the example of Ashram he was giving concrete form to India of his dreams. Ashram was a space 'signifying the asceticism of the religions seeker, an abjuring of private self-indulgence in favour of the public interest, identification with the least and a strike at the hierarchical and exclusivist feature of Indian culture. These forms of simplicity were the visible weapon against social injustice... As volunteers among the poor, the ashram-dwellers saw enactment of simplicity both as a moral obligation and as a strategy for transforming the society.'⁸ Explaining his idea of *Swaraj* in his book *India of My Dreams*, Gandhi perhaps had made it clear that the nation he is dreaming about would be actually an extended form of the Ashram. 'The Swaraj of my... our ... dream recognizes no race or religious distinctions. Nor is it to be the monopoly of the lettered persons nor yet of moneyed men. *Swaraj* is to be for all... it is as much for the prince as for the peasant, as much for the rich landowner as for the landless tiller of the soil, as much for Parsees and Christians as for the Jains, Jews and Sikhs irrespective of any distinction of caste or creed or status in life.'⁹

The Ashram as the experimented model of multi-religiosity, cross-caste mingling, and multiculturalism was actually a preparation for building a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, non-violent, truthful and peaceful Indian nation.

It can be argued that Gandhi's efforts in the direction of nation-building cannot be and should not be understood without

understanding Ashram which was 'evolved by [Gandhi] as a tool of 'transformation of inner selves, of the will and intent of human actors, that is the path of social change.'¹⁰ What is significant to note is that if Gandhi's concept of nation-building cannot be understood without referring to the Ashram, the Ashram cannot be understood without referring to the unique role of Kasturba in creating this 'decolonized public space' in the era of colonization. If the Ashram was the brainchild of Gandhi, it reached the stage of excellence with the enormous sacrifices, unconditional maternal affection and critical guardianship of Kasturba.

II

A peep into the Ashram life unveils the fact that Gandhi's role in the Ashram was of guiding leadership while Kasturba was there as the link between the leader and ashramites. In the absence of Gandhi in the Ashram during his political tours and imprisonment, which were very frequent, it was Kasturba who, informally, used to take the whole responsibility of the Ashram. In Phoenix Settlement in 1908, when Gandhi was arrested, Kasturba took the charge of Phoenix Settlement like a 'matriarch' and tried her level best to run it smoothly on Gandhian lines. Arun Gandhi sees this change in her role from Gandhi's wife to the care taker or manager of the Ashram as a turning point in Kasturba's life. He writes:

It was at Phoenix Settlement, working with the diverse, multiracial group of residents of that original Gandhian Ashram that she first began to exert the gentle but unquestioned authority which later became so familiar to all who knew her. I have often contemplated how difficult it must have been initially, for her to establish this enlarged role for herself. All of the men and a number of the women at Phoenix were more knowledgeable, more educated than she; she was unable to converse in their language with several of them. Nevertheless, Kasturba made her wishes understood and she could be firmly persuasive. She won the respect, cooperation and affection of her colleagues – just as she would in future Ashrams not because of her position as *Mohandas' wife*, nor because of their shared dedication to his cause, but because of her unassuming natural dignity, her unshakeable belief in herself.¹¹

An incidence of Phoenix Settlement is indicative of how quickly Kasturba managed with her changed role and gave utmost priority to her responsibility towards the Phoenix Settlement. After Gandhi's release from jail in 1908, she got the news that Gandhi was assaulted near his office in Johannesburg, she got panic but refusing the

suggestion that she should go to visit Gandhi she gave 'priority to Phoenix' and replied firmly that 'Phoenix is short of money as it is. I cannot spend what little we have for my selfish needs. There is really no need. He has many friends there to take good care of him.'¹²

One point becomes quite clear from the above account that if she could manage things so courageously and efficiently in a foreign land among those people who were belonging to different cultural background and that also on her, perhaps, the first encounter with such a big public responsibility, how easy it would have been for her to shoulder the responsibilities of Ashram situated in her own homeland. In Satyagraha Ashram and Sevagram, Kasturba served in different capacities: as the informal manager of the Ashram; as the representative of Ashramites before Gandhi and as the affectionate trainer of the inmates of Ashram.

Referring to her unique managerial capability Arun Gandhi writes that 'while Ba's attitude was never dictatorial, she was a demanding taskmaster. In South Africa and later in India, I have heard veteran residents of Gandhian Ashrams recount stories of how my grandfather always noticed minute details others might miss or ignore, but they all invariably agreed that my grandmother was even sharper. She always saw what needed to be done. Words like 'forget' or 'overlook' were just not part of her working vocabulary – not for herself, not for those around her. My grandparents long time friends liked to recall how meticulous Bapu was in his daily financial accounting, but they always pointed out that Ba was equally as painstaking.'¹³

Similarly, like the true representative of the Ashramites, whenever Kasturba found that Gandhi – the perfectionist – the idealist – under his belief that all human beings have immense potential to attain the highest level of '*indriyanigrahata*' with the tool of self-restraint is imposing extreme rules on Ashramites, she came with her 'ethics of care' for their rescue. Here one very interesting incidence related to Satyagraha Ashram needs mention. In Satyagraha Ashram Gandhi carried on several experiments in food. It was the rule that all should have food from the community kitchen, the vegetables being supplied from the Ashram garden. Once there was a large supply of pumpkins. Like all other vegetables pumpkin was also served boiled and saltless (though whoever wanted could have salt). Maniben, Durgaben and few other inmates found it difficult to digest boiled pumpkin. But none had the courage to complain against the rule made by Gandhi. Somehow, this issue reached Kasturba and then as the voice of Ashramites she spoke to Gandhi regarding the flaws of his rule of boiled pumpkin. She argued as the diet expert: 'The pumpkin, in

order to be digestible, has to be seasoned with some spices. It is never taken boiled. That is why Durgaben and the others have been feeling sick.' Gandhi listened to her argument and slightly agreed to relax the rule and asked for names of those inmates who would not like to have boiled pumpkin, so that they can be exempted from the diet of boiled pumpkin. But again Kasturba, the representative of inmates, came forward and declared: "we simply refuse to give our names; we womenfolk shall decide the matter for ourselves."¹⁴ There are ample such incidences of mild confrontation of Kasturba with Gandhi, where the former was there as the shield for the Ashramaites. But it must be clear that such kind of opposition was not at the level of basic principles rather only at the level of application of the principles.

However, acceptance of the ideas of Gandhi from the side of Kasturba was never uncritical but once she got convinced with the idea, she became the most firm follower and then the trainer who trained the trainees in those ideas through informal and formal methods. To illustrate, the Khadi vow of Gandhi, which made it compulsory for all inmates to wear only Khadi was also gone through critical review of Kasturba. Gandhi expressed his difficulty in convincing Kasturba for Khadi:

It took a lot of coaxing on my part to persuade Ba to take to socks and boots in South Africa, and a little less of coaxing when years afterwards, I tried to dissuade her from using them. But it appears, I shall have to do a lot more of cajoling this time to persuade Ba to take to the Khadi saari.¹⁵

But after initial mild opposition to Khadi, Kasturba not only accepted Khadi but also observed the *vrata* of khadi unconditionally till her death. Once she got an injury in her toe and was suggested by an inmate to use fine mill cloth for bandage, Kasturba replied firmly that 'no, I will use only the Khadi bandage and even if it is extremely rough, it will not hurt me.'¹⁶

Thus, the silent opponent of Khadi became the firm practitioner of Khadi and later on became the trainer who explained the importance of Khadi to the inmates and observed that *vrata* of Khadi should be strictly followed in the Ashram. Here again, one incidence of Ashram needs mention. In the Ashram, use of mill cotton was not allowed and Khadi cloth was to be used for all purposes. Once when Meeraben was sick, Manuben without understanding the gravity of the matter, used a piece of mill cotton for straining milk. In between Kasturba came and saw that in the Ashram, Manuben is using mill cotton. She

objected to it and very affectionately explained to Manuben the *vrata* of Khadi:

How can we use mill cloth? If any of our work can be completed only by using mill cloth better we stop that work but cannot compromise with our vow of Khadi. You might have thought that you are using it for only straining milk and there is nothing wrong in that because actual objection is in wearing Khadi. But you are wrong because today you strained milk with mill cloth tomorrow you may feel that it is so soft and there is nothing wrong in wearing it. Thus the small act of today would actually weaken your conviction. We have taken the vow of *Swadeshi* and the vow should be observed completely and minutely only then the vow is genuine." Manuben writes that after this motherly lecture, Kasturba instructed her to again strain the milk using Khadi cloth and in this way taught her 'how to observe a vow?'¹⁷

It is really very interesting that Kasturba the so-called 'illiterate' wife of Mohandas is lecturing on the philosophy of Khadi, actually whom we see here is not 'wife of Gandhi' but a committed soldier of *Swadeshi* who has deeply imbibed the principle of *Swadeshi*.

III

In this journey of Kasturbai from wife of Mohandas, daughter-in-law of Gandhis and mother of Harilal, Manilal, Devadas and Ramdas to Ba of Ashram, Gandhi was her instructor/trainer and facilitator who helped her in broadening the horizon of her life from Gandhian household to the Ashram. But this transformation was gradual and self-chosen, not a result of imposition of the will of the trainer. In Satyagraha Ashram, once Kasturba reached late in Gandhi's room as she was preparing food for Ramdas, her son, who had to go on a journey. When Gandhi asked her the reason for being late, she told him the reason. Gandhi suggested her that she should not overwork herself as she is already taking care of a number of Ashram responsibilities. He said that everyday one or the other member of the Ashram will go on journey, how can she cater to the special needs of all of them. Then 'the *Mahatma*' got a very innocent and truthful reply from the *mother of Ramdas*: "It will not be possible for me to cater to everyone's special requirements. But you are no doubt a *Mahatma* and all here are like your sons to you. However, I am not *yet a Mahatma*. This does not mean that I love the others any less. But truth to tell is that they are not like Ramdas to me. So can I not occasionally prepare some special food for him? You are indeed very hard on me, even in such small matters."¹⁸ Then '*Mahatma*' tried to

explain to her that since they have chosen Ashram life, where all inmates love them as their parents, they cannot limit their love, affection and care to few of them and finally told her that she should always be aware of the fact that she has chosen to be a part of a big mission: 'Remember, the whole world is watching us and is expecting great things from us.'¹⁹ Kasturba was listening to the whole lecture silently without saying anything. Actually, the case was not that she did not know that she had chosen a bigger goal than family, because when Gandhi asked her why are we in Satyagraha Ashram she replied without any doubt 'so that we all brothers and sisters, may together serve our country.'²⁰ Perhaps, the mother needed sometime to fully accept this change in her role from within and, therefore, said that she is not '*yet a Mahatma*'. Finally, this unique disciple of Mahatma, who herself used to decide when to learn and when not to learn, gradually reached to that level where she could transgress the boundary of mine and thine and fully became Ba of the Ashram. When she was reaching near death in Aga Khan Palace, one day she said to Dr. Gilder that 'I shall very soon be on the funeral pyre'. Doctor tried to console her by saying that 'why do you say like this? Today your sons, Ramdas and Davdas are coming to see you; would you not like to meet them?' The Ba of all ashramites replied with firmness: 'Why are you calling them, you all are like sons, so if I die, all of you would together cremate me.'²¹

The transformation in Kasturba has many aspects. Another most significant aspect is her journey from orthodox Hindu Kasturbai to an advocate of '*Vasudhavo Kutumbakam*'. Initially, Kathiyawadi Gujrati, Hindu, Vashnavite Kasturbai found it difficult to match with and accept the egalitarian ideals of 'the Mahatma'. She was socialized in Hindu customs and practices some of which were not in congruence with the 'Mahatma's' philosophy of universal love for all being transgressing the human created boundaries of caste, religion and so on. Few silent fights between the two throw light on this difference of perspectives between the two. After the widely quoted and debated incidence of South Africa,²² Kasturba gradually tried to rise above the boundaries of caste and religion. But there is an old saying that childhood *samsakars* do not go so easily and this is applicable in case of Kasturba also. Arun Gandhi rightly comments that in 'South Africa, where the Indian community had been united in single purpose, it had been easy for her, as a good wife supporting her husband, to forget all differences of religion, region and caste. But back among her own people in India, it was almost impossible not to slip into the old ways of living – of knowing.'²³ While laying down the rules in Satyagraha Ashram, Gandhi made it clear to his friends that 'I should

take the first opportunity of admitting an untouchable candidate to the Ashram if he was otherwise worthy.²⁴ His friends wrongly assumed it as the rare of the rarest possibility and argued 'where is the untouchable who will satisfy your condition.'²⁵ But few months later Gandhi found a worthy untouchable family and a new test of Ashramites and Kasturba started. Dudabhai, his wife Daniben and their daughter Lakshmi came to the Ashram and expressed their firm will to follow Ashram rules. This episode of coming of an untouchable family in Ashram was widely opposed outside Ashram and quite surprisingly also within the Ashram. Gandhi perhaps thought that Kasturba had got rid of the ill of untouchability. But he was proved wrong because Kasturba and other women though not openly opposed or could not oppose entry of untouchable family in the Ashram but they 'did not seem quite to relish the admission in the Ashram of the untouchable friends.'²⁶ This incidence speaks of the fact that how deeply Kasturba was under influence of orthodox Hindu beliefs. But again gradually change occurred and she could free herself from the bondage of orthodox Hindu beliefs and could accept from within the teaching of universal love. A solid proof of this change is that finally Dudhabhai's daughter Lakshmi became Kasturba's daughter; her love for her adopted daughter was so pure that Sushila Nayer during her initial stay in the Satyagrah Ashram could not know that Lakshmi is not Kasturba's own daughter but a Harijan girl.²⁷ Not only this, the woman who was once under the mental bondage of caste taboos gradually became a strong preacher against untouchability. During her stay in Aga Khan Palace, whenever there was a discussion on this topic this disciple of the Mahatma used to remark: 'After all, God has made us all. How can there be any high or low? It is wrong to entertain such feelings.'²⁸

On the basis of the above account of Ashram life it can be argued that while journey of Gandhi from Mohan to Mahatma is widely discussed, debated and analyzed but at the same time one point somewhere got missed or not properly looked upon that when Gandhi was on his journey from Mohan to Mahatma another traveller was also on her journey, it was the journey of a Kathiyawadi, unlettered Kasturbai from wife of Mohan, mother of Mohandas's son to Ba of Ashram. In this journey both the travellers opposed each other, learnt from each other and ultimately accepted each other and this all for a greater cause that was the nation which for both of them was nothing but extension of their family.

IV

Finally, it can be argued that if Gandhi was the ideologue, Kasturba was the exemplar. Gandhi's ideas became Kasturba's action and that not merely as a mark of wifely obedience rather as a self-chosen move. Arun Gandhi rightly remarks that 'while Mohandas experimented with truth, Kasturba experienced it.'²⁹

Gandhi's ideas, once they appeared convincing to her, became life of Kasturba. To illustrate, Gandhi's idea of simple living is perhaps most efficiently executed by Kasturba in her life. Gandhi once commented; 'Even I, who have always been so keenly intent on observing uttermost simplicity, have twice over what Ba possesses.'³⁰ Gandhi's idea of simplicity was so deeply imbibed by Kasturba that she could not tolerate mention of luxury even in narratives. Remembering her days with Kasturba in Aga Khan Palace, Sushila Nayar writes: 'In Aga Khan Palace, we used to recite two stanzas from the Tulsi Ramayan at the evening prayers... But with all her reverence for Ramayan, she had not lost her critical faculty... when we came to long accounts of the grandeur of king Dasaratha or Janaka's court, and of the beauty and decorations of the place of Sita and Ram's wedding, she would remark. 'Tulsidas seems to have had plenty of leisure to have spent so much time on these accounts.'³¹ However, it is not always the case that Gandhi's idea shaped Kasturba's life. In few cases action of the exemplar shaped the idea of ideologue. To illustrate, it can be argued that Gandhi's notion of '*strishakti*' was a reflection of Kasturba who was a true embodiment of *strishakti* who cooperates but not compromises; accepts but not submits and opposes but not disrespects. Gandhi himself accepted Kasturba's influence on him: "I learnt the lesson of non-violence from my wife when I tried to bend her to my will. Her determined resistance to my will on one hand, and her quiet submission to the suffering of all that, ultimately made me ashamed and cured me of my stupidity in thinking that I was born to rule over her; and in the end she became my teacher in non-violence."

This relation between the ideologue and exemplar has one more very significant dimension. Some of the ideas which originated in Gandhi's mind became exemplary because of unconditional acceptance by Kasturba. Gandhi's widely discussed and debated vow of celibacy could set an example, perhaps, due to Kasturba's unimaginable response to it. Initially, Gandhi did not share his thought with Kasturba regarding his vow of celibacy but before taking the vow he informed her and got the reply that 'she did not have any objection'. The biographers of Gandhi and researchers have interpreted

Kasturba's this response from diverse perspectives. Referring to the account presented by B.R. Nanda on this matter, Arun Gandhi suggests that it is Kasturba's response which made Gandhi's vow of celibacy exemplary. To quote Arun Gandhi:

"Count Leo Tolstoy, whose thinking often foreshadowed or paralleled that of my grandfather declared late in his life that the Christian ideals of loving God and serving one's fellow men were incompatible with sexual love or marriage which amounted to serving oneself. Nanda discusses how this 'shattered the already weekend vessel' of Tolstoy's marriage; how Tolstoy's wife became hysterical, threatened to kill herself; how their life became a round of recriminations; how 'the Countess was totally unable to appreciate, much less adopt, the ideals of her husband: [In contrast to this] Kasturba [who] was sustained by the faith of a Hindu wife followed in the 'footsteps of her husband', however much it went against the grain... The changed attitude to sex did not introduce a discordant note into the life of Gandhi; Gandhi himself has no doubt that it sweetened and enriched it."³² However, since it is nowhere documented that what was Kasturba's inner feeling on this matter, it is difficult to say a last word on this matter, but it cannot be denied that it was Kasturba's acceptance and co-operation which made Gandhi's vow exemplary. In fact, he could move in this direction, perhaps, due to Kasturba's inborn quality of celibacy as he accepted in his autobiography that 'to be fair to my wife, I must say that she was never the temptress. It was therefore the easiest thing for me to take the vow of *brahmacharya*."³³ Thus, the ideal of celibacy which has often celebrated, since the ancient times, as emancipation of the individual from the bonds of physical needs, can become the ideal of strong marital bond in Gandhi's life because of Kasturba. As Gandhi accepted: "What developed self-abnegation in her to the highest level was our *Brahmacharya*. The latter turned out to be more natural for her than for me. She was not aware of it at first. I made a resolve... Thenceforth we became true friends. From 1906, really speaking from 1901, Ba had no other interest in staying with me except to help me in my work. She could not live away from me. She would have had no difficulty, if she had wished, in staying away from me."³⁴

To sum up, when we talk about making of 'Mahatma' the ideologue and exemplar, contribution of Kasturba cannot be ignored. In fact, these two personalities were so integrally interwoven with each other that questions like who influenced whom; who made whom and who dictated and who submitted appear quite superficial and irrelevant.

It was a relation of mutual learning, mutual influence, mutual making and mutual acceptance. Therefore, this couple appears to me a beautiful combination of ideologue and exemplar.

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1. See, M.K. Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 2006), p. 6.
2. S.H. Rudolph and L.I. Rudolph. 'The Coffee House and the Ashram', in Carolyn M. Elliott, ed., *Civil Society and Democracy*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 394.
3. Gandhi was very particular on the matter of naming the Ashram and so decided to name the Ashram as 'Satyagraha Ashram' because he 'wanted to acquaint India with the method' he 'had tried in South Africa and desired to test in India the extent to which its application might be possible.' [M.K. Gandhi, *My Experiment with Truth*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927), p. 364].
4. In Sevagaon, Gandhi perhaps wanted to have a hut for himself, referring to formation of Sevagram, Arun Gandhi quotes Mohandas Gandhi: "If Ba desires, then with her, otherwise, I would live alone in a hut in Sevagaon... As little expense as possible should be incurred in building the hut and in no case should it exceed 100 rupees... I will continue my outside activities, but people from outside should not come to see me at Sevagaon. They may see me at [Wardha] on days fixed for my going there." [Here quoted from Arun Gandhi, *Daughter of Midnight: The Child Bride of Gandhi*, Mumbai: Magna Publishing, 2014, p. 203].
5. Ibid.
6. See, Rudolph and Rudolph, op.cit, p. 392.
7. Ibid, p. 400.
8. Ibid, p. 397.
9. *India of My Dreams*, op.cit, pp. 8-9.
10. Rudolph and Rudolph, op.cit, p. 404.
11. Arun Gandhi, op.cit. p. 148 (*emphasis added*).
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13. Ibid.
14. Mukulbhai Kalarthi, *Ba Aur Bapu*, (Ahmadabad: Navjivan Prakashan Mandir, 2013), p. 54-56.
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17. Baburam Joshi and Ramesh Chandra Ojha, *Mata Kasturba*, (Varanasi: Servaseva Sangh Prakashan, 2013), pp. 44-45.
18. *Ba Aur Bapu*, op. cit., p. 53.
19. Ibid, p. 54.
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21. Ibid, p. 96.
22. See, *My Experiments with Truth*, op. cit, p. 255.
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25. Ibid.
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27. Sushila Nayar, *Kasturba : Wife of Gandhi*, (Pennsylvania: Kissinger Legency Reprints, 1948), p. 41.
28. Ibid.
29. Arun Gandhi, op.cit, p. 165.
30. See, Vijay Kaushik and Belarani Sharma, *Kasturba Gandhi : A Great Patriot* (ed.), (New Delhi: Swarup Book Publishers, 2013), p. 22.
31. Sushila Nayar, op.cit, p. 38.
32. Arun Gandhi, op. cit, p. 138.
33. *My Experiment with Truth*, op.cit, p. 189.
34. cited in Kaushik and Sharma op.cit., p. 83

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Non-violent Action and the Naxalites

Chris Brown

ABSTRACT

The Communist Party of India (Maoist) has long been wedded to a revolutionary programme predicated on the necessity and efficacy of violence. This, they argue, is because non-violent forms of action are futile against the brutality of the Indian state, and therefore unable to effect genuine revolutionary change. Whilst the Indian government has indeed proven itself a bellicose and ruthless adversary, this article argues that the Maoists' routine dismissal of non-violence as a tactic not only ignores a significant literature substantiating the efficacy of nonviolent action, but also fails to acknowledge the role of many non-violent tactics within their own movement. Using Gene Sharp's well-known taxonomy of non-violent action, this article locates some of these non-violent tactics used by the Maoists, and in so doing, hints at ways in which they might be further enhanced. The core argument made is that a shift from violent to non-violent struggle need not entail a dilution of revolutionary intent, nor necessitate a co-opting submersion into mainstream electoral politics. Rather, a shift to non-violent methods yields a depth and diversity of previously untapped tactical alternatives that better support the struggle against the neo-liberal paradigm.

Key words: Maoism, Naxalism, nonviolent action, adivasis, Gene Sharp

Introduction

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of India (Maoist) has long adhered to a revolutionary programme premised on the necessity and efficacy of violence. Non-violence, they argue, is a process which supports the status quo because it is inherently incapable of challenging entrenched systems of exploitation and violence. "The ruling classes", the now

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deceased Maoist leader Ganapathi wrote: “will not abandon political power or exploitation, oppression or suppression of the people until they are forcefully overthrown.”¹ Highlighting what he saw as the failure of the two-decade long non-violent struggle against the Sardar Sarovar dam project, Ganapathi draws the conclusion that the suffering and oppression of many Indians can only be addressed through violence, and that adherence to non-violent action suggests a docile willingness “to live a life of slavery and indignity.”² Indeed as Azad, the now deceased spokesperson for the Maoists, wrote in his reply to a special edition of *Economic and Political Weekly* which subjected the Maoists’ use of violence to a sustained critique:

What answers do the writers (in the *EPW* special issue on the Maoist movement in India) have to put an end to such endemic state violence on different sections of struggling people? How should these people organise to improve their lives? How should they fight back? To negate the Maoist method, which has at least achieved some degree of success, at least in those areas where the Maoists have adopted the path of armed struggle, without providing an alternative, in effect, is to push people into deeper and deeper despair (and poverty), even as the moneybags strut around flaunting their wealth.³

This article begins with the premise that the Maoist Party is accurate in highlighting the Indian government’s brutality and ruthlessness, but misperceiving of the depth and potential of non-violent action as a method for supporting and enhancing revolutionary struggles. As I have explored elsewhere, there are a number of struggles and social movements, such as the Zapatistas and the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado, which suggest that a shift towards, and/or an explicit strategic inclusion of non-violent methods, does not necessarily, as thought by the Maoists, involve an inherent co-optation by elite interests, or an inevitable submersion into a corrupted and inherently reformist (as opposed to revolutionary) electoral mainstream.⁴ Whilst these and numerous other struggles do indeed provide an abundance of strategic ideas and possibilities from which the Maoists might draw, in this article my intention is to actually highlight ways in which non-violent action already does, and always has, formed as a key plank in the Naxal repertoire, and might, if further advanced and nuanced, hold significant revolutionary potential.

The potential connection between non-violent action and the Naxalite movement is not, in contrast to government and Maoist perceptions, so difficult to comprehend or locate. This is because even the Indian Maoist movement, with its explicit commitment to

the strategic efficacy and necessity of violence, engages in numerous actions and processes that are not violent. Importantly, though, these applications of non-violent tactics and their strategic potential has largely been ignored by the research. Bhatia's important article on the Naxalite movement in central Bihar provides one of the few works to highlight, albeit briefly, some of the ways in which the Naxalites have utilised non-violent forms of struggle. She writes that

...in practice a large part of the Naxalite movement's activities are 'non-violent'... non-violent protest has taken many forms and has been geared to varying objectives. Common forms of non-violent action include sabha (meeting), bandh (closure), aarthik nakebandi (economic boycott), samajik bahishkar (social boycott), jan adalat (people's court), dharnas (e.g., the 14-day dharna organised by Liberation in Ara against Ranbeer Sena in 1995), gheraos (e.g., the famous gherao of the state assembly after the Arwal massacre in 1986), rallies (including silent marches, torch processions, and more), chakkajaam (road blocks), putla dahan (effigy burning), and of course strikes. Even hunger strikes have figured in this rainbow of agitations, as and when Liberation MLAs and cadres launched an indefinite fast after the Bathani tola massacre in 1996, demanding an enquiry. Cultural media (sanskritik madhyam) such as songs and plays have an important role in mobilisation, especially since a large majority of the people in central Bihar are illiterate.⁵

Building upon Bhatia's observation, I probed a little deeper into the extent to which the Maoists have employed non-violent tactics. To carry out this study I utilised Gene Sharp's well-known taxonomy of non-violent action as a way of locating and considering the Maoists' use of such action.⁶ I located three important sites of non-violent tactics – mobilisation, strikes and parallel government - and then briefly discussed some further avenues that might work to further enhance these tactics. My argument is not that the Maoists have shown an ethical or strategic commitment to non-violence, or that any actions have consciously been considered and planned within the framework of non-violent strategy. Rather, I aim to show that the Maoists' strategic focus on violence neglects to acknowledge the presence and role of non-violent tactics within their movement, much to the detriment of their cause. In locating such tactics and actions, this article seeks to highlight a breadth of non-violent potential, and to open up discussions and possibilities around how the neoliberal paradigm might be better resisted and replaced.

Mobilisation

A crucial part of any social change movement, revolutionary or otherwise, is its ability to mobilise supporters. Mao, for example,

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recognised that political mobilisation “is the most fundamental condition for winning the war.”⁷ The Naxals too are aware of the potency and necessity of successful mobilisation, highlighting how “the first and foremost task throughout the course of the new democratic revolution is to wage ideological struggle and create public opinion in favour of agrarian revolutionary war and the protracted people’s war.”⁸

In approaching this mobilisation imperative, the Naxals have, on the one hand, used the very act of violent struggle itself. That is, they have attempted a display of strength and power through the control or domination of certain areas, assuming that (potential) supporters will see in such violence the possibilities of protection and liberation.

At the same time, the Maoists have employed a number of other important, and largely non-violent, forms of mobilisation. The Maoists have, for example, effectively mobilised Adivasi supporters through the use of drama, song and dance. Sharp acknowledges this terrain of non-violent action, discussing “political humour” in the form of “a humourous prank or a skit, or ... a play of political satire”, “the performance of certain plays, operas, and other music” and “singing” as potential acts of “non-violent protest.”⁹ These kinds of actions are clearly evident in the work of the Chetna Natya Manch (CNM), the artistic and cultural troupe of the CPI (Maoist), who travel to remote villages with performances of highly popular, and subversive, plays, dances and songs. Their popularity and appeal are partly attributed to their deliberate amalgamation of traditional Adivasis art with revolutionary content, combining, for example, Maoist-inspired lyrics to a traditional Adivasis melody.¹⁰ The CNM also take a longer term approach to their work, usually establishing themselves in villages and assisting with work as a means of engaging the villagers and building participation in their workshops, training camps and performances.

The presence of the CNM within the broader Maoist strategy suggests that the characterisation of the Maoist movement solely as a violent and totalitarian organisation is, at the least, incomplete. It also reveals a sophistication to the Maoists’ mobilisation strategy which is significantly greater than the mobilisation approach practised by the government. This is evidenced not just in the Maoists’ adoption and use of traditional arts, but also in their promotion and celebration of local language, and their broader attempt to engage and collaborate with Adivasis people as complex, creative and culturally thriving individuals and communities. This is in contrast to the government’s primary, perhaps sole, point of reference for engagement with the

Adivasis — namely, that it is a community defined by deficit, disadvantage and in need of improvement. Indeed, the power and efficacy of this non-violent method is attested by the government's attempt to mirror the Maoists' approach through the creation of a government-sponsored troupe in Sukma district charged with propagating a counter-narrative.¹¹

The Maoists have also attempted to mobilise supporters through written/printed materials such as statements, press releases, pamphlets, journals and posters. This is a terrain of action also acknowledged by Sharp's taxonomy of non-violent action. He discusses, for example, signed public statements, considered as "a declaration directed primarily to the general public, or to both the public and the opponent, and released with the signatures of supporters," as "a method of non-violent protest and persuasion."¹² He also includes declarations of indictment and intention as another method and defines this action as "written statements of grievance or future intentions to produce a new situation" which "are seen to be of such a quality or to meet such a response that the document itself becomes influential in influencing people's loyalties and behaviour."¹³ Further, he lists the publication and distribution of banners, posters and displayed communications as well as leaflets, pamphlets, books, newspapers and journals as common "media for advancing the views and causes which their publishers espouse."¹⁴ Moreover he notes that in situations where such publications are illegal (as they are in the Maoist example), they "merge with civil disobedience and the general class of political noncooperation."¹⁵

The CPI (Maoist) has made extensive use of all of these actions. One of their most common tactics is the issuing of a press release which, as a method, appears primarily concerned with articulating and promoting their narrative amongst the broader populace. On the 24th of March 2014, for example, the party issued a press release with the lengthy title:

Boycott the sham parliament & assembly elections!
Make the New Democratic Revolution successful!
The building of an Indian people's democratic federal republic based on
genuine democracy and self-reliance is the only alternative!¹⁶

In this press release they attack dominant political parties, including the relatively new, successful and so-called progressive Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). The Maoists' primary point is that elections, and the system of parliamentary democracy that they represent and uphold, offer no hope or potential for Adivasis people and others

who have been systematically marginalised and exploited. They state: “the present exploitative system cannot be transformed with elections” and that new parties like the Aam Aadmi Party are “serving as a safety valve to divert the erupting people’s anger into peaceful and parliamentary solutions.”¹⁷

Many of the Maoists’ press releases do, of course, include consistent calls for taking up arms against the Indian state. At the same time, though, some also call for broad-based action that appears more in line with non-violent civil resistance than armed struggle. On the 19th of June 2015, for example, the Party issued a press release titled “the closure of three thousand schools and ashrams by the CG government is a symbol of the economic and academic bankruptcy and its anti people character.”¹⁸ Here, they challenged the political economic justifications for education policy by the State government and concluded by calling upon

....all the students, teachers, parents and guardians, progressive and democratic intellectuals, human rights organisations, adivasi and non-
adivasi social organisations to strongly protest the anti-education policy of the Chhattisgarh government and to take up programmes to demand the withdrawal of the decision of closing the ashrams. We call upon the people and teachers of the affected villages to come forward and demand the retaining of the ashrams in their original places.¹⁹

In another press release the Maoists “Condemn the Invasion of Gaza and Massacre of Palestinians by Zionist Israel!”²⁰ and highlight the support both major parties have offered the Israeli government. It concludes:

All the revolutionary and democratic organisations, oppressed nationalities, organisations of Muslims and other religious minorities, freedom and peace-loving people belonging to all political parties and the people of our country must stand in solidarity with Palestinian people and strongly protest against the Indian government’s conciliatory policy towards Israeli rulers. Our party calls upon the Maoist forces, anti-imperialist organisations, national liberation organisations and freedom and peace-loving people of all countries to unitedly oppose Israel’s aggressive war and support the fighting people of Palestine.²¹

These sorts of examples of written/printed propaganda by the Maoist movement reveal a certain aptitude for this method of waging struggle. Its potential, though, is perhaps undercut by a lingering sense of hyperbole and dogmatic repetition in their written material. Indeed, the Maoists’ strict, formal, and exaggerated tone involving the endless repetitions of decades-old slogans results in a kind of

contradictory outcome and process. Whilst they claim to want to liberate and empower oppressed people and communities, the focus on armed struggle, the necessity of violently overpowering the 'enemy' and the endless Maoist slogans suggest more a one-dimensional conditioning which expects, indeed demands, non-critical adherence to their revolutionary agenda.

The repetitive and strident use of such slogans also tends to appeal only to people who are already supportive of the Maoists' broader programme. And whilst it is indeed important to invigorate and operationalise any existing supporters and networks, this approach is unlikely to positively impact upon those who are currently disengaged with, or openly opposed to, the Maoists' struggle. Should the Maoists seek to mobilise a broader set of supporters, attention might be paid to building and propagating salient narratives or stories which can engage and persuade a wider audience. This is the core idea behind Reinsborough and Canning's notion of story-based strategy.²² Reinsborough and Canning draw a distinction between what they call the 'story of the battle' and the 'battle of the story'. The story of the battle, the more common approach used by social-change agents, and certainly by the Maoists, is a "more literal, partisan, or tactical story about what is happening and what needs to happen" and "is intentionally designed for reaching people who already share some key assumptions and worldviews but need to be activated for a specific purpose."²³ As a tactical approach, the story of the battle targets only a small and supportive audience, and there is little attention paid to bringing on board new supporters.

The battle of the story, by contrast, targets a less sympathetic audience, and in so doing, aims to perturb the unquestioned and dominant assumptions which ultimately filter and distort the information or stories received about a given issue. This is a process, Reinsborough and Canning argue, designed "to control the framing of an issue."²⁴ They explain:

Framing helps define a story by setting the terms for how to understand it. Like a frame around a piece of art or the edges of the television screen, the frame focuses and organizes our perception, drawing attention to what's within it. The frame defines what is part of the story and (often more importantly) what is not, both visually and cognitively. We make meaning from what is inside the frame and we ignore what is outside of it.²⁵

It is here, in this more challenging terrain, that a productive enhancement of the Maoists' already existing non-violent tactics for mobilisation might occur. Rather than rely on the dated slogans and

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endless exhortations to violence which fail to resonate outside their already supportive demographic, the development of salient and effective counter-narratives, and the way in which these narratives work to deconstruct dominant assumptions, might assist in the building of a greater support base. And as I discuss below, this more inclusive, less dogmatic approach to building a broader base of support might not only work to re-orient the dominant public understanding of the conflict, but in so doing, lay a foundation which better allows and supports further instances of non-violent action, such as strikes.

Striking

Perhaps the most well-known method of non-violent action is the *bandh* (strike). Sharp lists over twenty forms of strike, of which three forms have been used primarily by the Maoists. The first form resembles what Sharp labels as the “generalized strike”, where “several industries are struck simultaneously as part of a general grievance.”²⁶ Numerous press releases issued by the CPI (Maoist) announce a day-long *bandh* in which they “appeal to the people to express their protest...by closing down educational and commercial institutions, banks, railways, transport etc.” whilst “exempting the exams of the students and emergency services like healthcare.”²⁷ Of course, many or all of these *bandhs* are surrounded by the threat of violence for those who do not conform or participate, making it difficult to discern whether the support offered to the Maoist initiative is genuine or coerced.

Another form of strike that has been regularly used by Naxal insurgents is a combination of the prisoners’ and hunger strike. Sharp describes a prisoners’ strike as the refusal of prisoners “to do work required of them by prison officials” and highlights how “the refusal may have various motives” such as “an objection to being incarcerated at all” or “an effort to improve specific conditions in the prison.”²⁸ The hunger strike, considered in contrast to “the fast of moral pressure”²⁹ and the “satyagrahic fast,”³⁰ is “defined as a refusal to eat with the aim of forcing the opponent to grant certain demands but without any serious effort to convert him or to achieve a ‘change of heart.’”³¹

Although it is rarely mentioned by the Naxals themselves, or their government adversary, the use of hunger strikes by imprisoned Maoists has a long history that can be traced back to the ruthless police operations that followed the Naxalbari uprising in Kolkata. A People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) bulletin charts a range of hunger strikes undertaken by Naxalite prisoners who were serving life sentences in the state of Tamil Nadu. The report quotes an affidavit

written by one of the prisoners:

In 1972, 950 Naxalite undertrials were brought from West Bengal to Cuddalore Central Prison in Tamil Nadu, as the prisons there were overcrowded. No one can deny that the culture and food habits of Tamil Nadu are different from that of Bengal. Those who made arrangements for bringing those comrades from several hundred miles away should have made arrangements for the supply of the kind of food they were used to. Instead of doing this, the prison authorities supplied them the worst kind of gruel which the poorest in Tamil Nadu living below the poverty line are forced to take in order to exit.³²

The report notes that in response to the situation “the Bengali prisoners decided on a protest hunger strike”³³ which prompted a brutal reaction from prison officials including lathi beatings and forced “homosexual acts”³⁴ between prisoners serving life sentences. The report also highlights how many of the same prisoners undertook at least three more rounds of hunger strikes. In October 1972 Naxalite prisoners launched a “hunger strike demanding treatment of prisoners according to jail rules”³⁵ which prompted prison authorities to try and force-feed the strikers. In 1974 the same prisoners launched another strike against prison conditions which resulted in the intervention of the District Medical Officer who, though managing to stop the strike by giving assurances to the prisoners, was subsequently assaulted by the prison superintendent “and a case filed against him”³⁶ after he complained of the prisoners’ treatment in the PUCL bulletin. By 1975 the same prisoners had “resorted to a relay fast for four months” which, the report notes, was “the longest such attempt in Tamil Nadu jails”.³⁷

It is tempting, and perhaps relevant, to consider and explore the use and prevalence of nonviolent tactics by people incarcerated and therefore denied freedom of movement and association. Are nonviolent tactics employed by Maoist prisoners only because the power imbalance is so significant that other options are impossible? Is nonviolence an approach for the weak, to be employed only by those unable to gain access to other forms and means of militaristic struggle? Although the Maoists seem to think so, it has not prevented them from openly declaring their support for the strikers. Indeed, at their Ninth Congress the CPI (Maoist) adopted a “Resolution on Prisoners’ Struggles” which reads like an action list from a mainstream campaign involving non-violent methods:

The Congress resolves to:

Form organizations, such as “Committee to Release Prisoners along

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with intellectuals, democracy-lovers and members of the families of imprisoned comrades, in solidarity with prisoners' struggles and to lend them strength. Such an organization shall conduct struggles on various demands related to the jail by establishing coordination between various Prisoners' Action Committees. Employing different means, such committees shall help create public opinion about the assault upon the civil rights of the prison inmates. In this direction efforts are already underway. Organize progressive lawyers to provide legal support to the prisoners. Some efforts have been made in this direction. Yet we shall lay stress upon forming such organizations in different cities. These organizations shall provide legal support to imprisoned comrades as well as generate public opinion against draconian laws. Mobilize "Committees to Release Prisoners", lawyers organizations, civil liberty organizations and the common masses against "Fast Track Trials" and such other outright anti-people provisions. Pay special attention to raise protest against and organize resistance to atrocities perpetrated upon women prisoners. Rope in various means of propaganda in order to highlight the inhuman conditions in prisons. Conduct signature campaigns on various demands of the prisoners and in support of their struggles in order to arouse and mobilize the masses. Strive to punish the prison officials who carry out atrocities upon the prisoners. Constitute a Prisoners Fund to help secure their release.³⁸

A key issue, though, identified by the Maoists, as well as key commentators like Arundhati Roy, is the seeming futility of strikes and other forms of non-violent action when the general public is paying little attention, displaying minimal or no empathy, or is just plain unaware of what is going on. Should a group or individual take up a hunger strike, for example, what would be its power if no one knows about it, if the media doesn't report it, or if those who learn of it care little for the person or their cause? Indeed, as Roy sees it, non-violence is a theatre, and in the Maoist case at least, no one is watching.³⁹ In response to this difficult dynamic — what we might call a dynamic of indifference — the Maoists have continued their use of violence, seeing it as the only way in which progress can be made, and attention drawn to their struggle. Rather than overriding the public indifference with violence, however, an alternative might be the non-violent priming of broader and more supportive audiences, with the intention of building a kind of platform upon which non-violent actions, like strikes, might better reverberate and be recognised. And it is here, in this consideration of how to build a broader support base, that we can turn back to the notion of story-based strategy mentioned above, and begin to recognise a kind of interconnected integration of non-violent strategy. That is, the deployment of actions like strikes, and the re-working and nuancing of mobilisation tactics to include and/or prioritise salient stories, actually

work in tandem. Without the support, engagement and empathy generated by such stories or narratives, the strikes, or any other more confrontational or obstructionist action, struggles to resonate. In recognising this inter-connectedness of various strategies, non-violence becomes not just a process which plays to an audience, but rather, a process which is equally, indeed necessarily, engaged in the creation of an audience so such 'playing' can better resonate.

Janata Sarkar - An Alternative 'People's Government'

The final non-violent tactic offered by Sharp in his comprehensive typology is that of "dual sovereignty and parallel government". He explains:

When a non-violent revolutionary movement seeking the abolition, not reform, of a regime, and possessing extensive popular support, reaches an advanced stage, it threatens the stability of the old regime by depriving it of the obedience and cooperation of the populace... A new sovereignty thus begins to replace the established one and a new political structure evolves to claim the support and allegiance of the populace... A parallel government with widespread popular support can take over the governmental functions and eventually squeeze the tottering regime out of existence.⁴⁰

Such a concept, I suggest, can be seen in the Maoists' Janata Sarkar (people's government) which they have established in various regions in which they operate, particularly Dandakaranya. Janata Sarkars (JS) operate in what the Maoists call their 'guerrilla bases', which they distinguish from 'guerrilla zones'. Guatam Navlakha, having spent a fortnight living and talking with Maoist party members, explains the difference:

A guerrilla zone is a fluid area in the sense that there is contention for control and the State is not entirely absent, even if it be in the shape of its police or armed force. However, there are areas in these zones demarcated to ensure that some work can carry on relatively uninterrupted. These are 'bases' not easily penetrable or accessible. It is here that the RPCs (revolutionary people's committees) functions and one can see the liberated zone in its embryonic form.⁴¹

The first JS was established in April 2007, and the party claims that elections to it are held every three years. The JS has a constitution, called the 'Policy Program of Revolutionary People's Committees', which, amongst other things, outlines the procedures for the 'People's Courts'.⁴² The JS is responsible for nine departments which include the People's Army, trade and industry, and public relations. In both

State and Central elections in 2008 and 2009 the JS led election boycotts, interestingly, another non-violent action listed by Sharp.⁴³ According to Navlakha, the JS “called public meetings in their villages and told the people that they have been electing their own government” and asked “how can they elect another government outside of themselves at the same time?”⁴⁴

The parallel administration of the JS has extended to the running of education and health programmes in Maoist-dominated areas. They have, for example, published multiple textbooks on social sciences, mathematics, Hindi and politics. Notably, all of these textbooks have been printed in Gondi, the predominant Tribal language of the region.⁴⁵ Neither the State government of Chhattisgarh, where the majority of Gondi speakers live, nor the Central government had published a textbook in or about Gondi until 2010, when it was belatedly noted that an attempt to recognise, promote and preserve such languages might improve the way in which Tribal people perceive the government.⁴⁶ In administering health programmes in a region bedevilled by a lack of hospitals and trained medical officers, the JS has attempted to combat this issue by implementing workshops where doctors working in the region train JS members and party supporters in the identification of key symptoms and the administration of vital medicines.

This parallel administration instituted by the Maoists represents a form of what is commonly referred to as direct and/or prefigurative action. That is, they are directly instituting the kind of ideas and changes they would like to see without calling or relying upon the State, or any other actor, to do it for them. It might be noted also that in pursuing this kind of approach, the Maoists are actually implementing, at least on a small-scale, the broad idea explicated by Gandhi in his notion of the constructive programme.⁴⁷ Here, the vision and creation of an alternative society, albeit on a small-scale, need not occur only as the culminating part of a struggle after all other initial pieces have successfully fallen into place. Rather, the construction of the alternative society forms as the core or foundation of the struggle, guiding, supporting and reinforcing all of its other component parts.

The Maoists tend to view this component of their struggle as but one practical step in their revolutionary strategy of capturing and wielding State power. That is, they seek to establish regions or bases which grow over time and are designed to propel them to an overall national victory. Rather than maintain this overall goal of capturing and wielding State power, however, the Maoists might beneficially revise it, working instead towards a less totalising objective of establishing and constructing various autonomous zones which, in

their smaller (non-state) scale, better allow and support the active inclusion and participation of its members. Indeed, this smaller-scale form of action which concentrates on local autonomy, rather than national domination, is more in-keeping with the oft-stated aspirations of their Adivasis comrades who have aligned themselves with the Maoists not necessarily because they want to control and revolutionise the State, but because they see in the Maoists' struggle against the neoliberal paradigm a key support for their long-held objective of autonomy and self-determination regarding jal, jangal and jameen.⁴⁸

Conclusion

Some recent research has begun to explore how numerous armed movements have, in various ways, transitioned away from armed struggle towards non-violent methods.⁴⁹ And whilst one can point to certain examples of this violent-non-violent transition, like the Zapatistas, from which the Maoists might take inspiration, this article has concentrated on highlighting the Maoists' own, often unacknowledged and taken-for-granted, use of such methods. In so doing, this article has strived to reignite discussion around how non-violence might actually support and enhance, not detract from or dilute, revolutionary struggle.

Non-violent action includes multiple dimensions and works in many different ways, extending far beyond the dated caricature of Gandhians misguidedly and idealistically attempting to convert hostile opponents through senseless suffering.⁵⁰ And indeed, the Maoists, throughout their long struggle, have deployed various types of non-violent action to great effect: mobilising supporters through propaganda and the creative adaptation of cultural media; various forms of strikes from prisoners' hunger strikes to general bandhs which seek to shut down whole regions; the direct establishment of a parallel government or administration which actualises, at least to a small degree, the kind of society they envisage.

Importantly, though, this article has suggested that the potential of each of these methods (and the many others available) have only been partially realised, and that deeper possibilities might be further unlocked through a more thorough consideration of various non-violent developments. Ideas raised included the idea of story-based strategy, where compelling narratives are used to deconstruct and challenge dominant assumptions regarding certain issues with the intention of engaging, perhaps persuading, previously unsympathetic audiences. Such an approach, it was argued, would support a mobilisation process targeted at a broader audience, and in so doing, provide a supportive scaffolding for other important non-violent

tactics, such as strikes, by generating the kind of audience and attention that such processes demand and require. Furthermore, the possibility of re-orienting the revolutionary goal of capturing State power, and instead, favouring a smaller-scale and more localised form of participatory autonomy, was raised. Of course, a shift to non-violent action is not to be thought of as some kind of simple and easily implemented panacea to the injustices experienced by those resisting the neo-liberal paradigm. Non-violent action, like any military strategy, entails significant risk, and many complex questions demand serious contemplation and strategic consideration. But what this article has tried to show is that non-violence is already at work in the Maoists' struggle, that numerous non-violent enhancements are available, and ultimately, that non-violent action offers a potentially revolutionary set of tools which operate far beyond the narrow confines imposed upon it by its most sceptical critics.

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Notes & Comments

Gandhiji and the Spiritual Leaders of His Time

Amitabha Bhattacharya

HERE IS A STORY I heard from Ramchandra Gandhi, author and scholar in philosophy, about twenty-five years ago. Mahatma Gandhi had sent his son Devdas as his personal emissary to Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry with his message that the freedom movement should be led by a spiritual person and that Aurobindo should be the right person to do so. Aurobindo reportedly told Ramchandra's father, 'That is not my path.' I have not read of any such conversation in the literature on Gandhi or Aurobindo. Maybe this was not known outside the family. But, as would be seen later, Gandhi did send his son to Aurobindo.

Gandhi (1869-1948) was a professed Hindu in the true sense of the term. He found Hinduism to be the most tolerant, free from dogmatic ideas and a religion that revered all living beings, not only the human. His deep respect for all other religions perhaps stemmed out of this strong moral and spiritual foundation. It is in this context that his interest in and interaction with the leading spiritual leaders of his time like Swami Vivekananda, Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo, Sree Narayana Guru, Anandamayi Ma and Acharya Satish Chandra Mukherjee should be studied.

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During his visit to Calcutta in 1901, Gandhi was keen to meet Vivekananda. '...it was impossible to be satisfied without seeing Swami Vivekananda. So with great enthusiasm, I went to Belur Math, mostly, or may be all the way on foot...I was disappointed and sorry to be told that the Swami was at his Calcutta house, lying ill, and could not be seen,'¹ he wrote in his autobiography. Gandhi visited Belur Math again in 1921 and wrote moving tributes to Vivekananda. As a matter of fact, much of what Vivekananda preached was practiced and translated into action by Gandhi.

Gandhi and Ramana Maharshi had great admiration for each other. Sometime in the 1930s, he (accompanied with C. Rajagopalachari) addressed a public meeting near the Maharshi's ashram but did not alight there. According to an inmate's account, Maharshi had said: 'Gandhi would like to come here but Rajagopalachari was worried about the consequences.'² It appears that Rajaji had feared that Gandhi, being an advanced soul, might change and be lost to the political movement, and hence was opposed to Gandhi meeting the Maharshi. Whatever Rajaji might have thought, Gandhi was not the one to be easily influenced by others. What had crossed Gandhi's mind at that point of time was never known but the two were not destined to meet.

However, Gandhi's eagerness to meet Aurobindo manifests in a letter he wrote on January 2, 1934: 'Perhaps you know that ever since my return to India I have been anxious to meet you face to face. Not being able to do that, I sent my son to you. Now that it is almost certain that I am to be in Pondicherry, will you spare me a few minutes & see me! I know how reluctant you are to see anybody, but if you are under no positive vow of abstinence, I hope you will give me a few minutes of your time...' Five days later, Aurobindo replied: 'Dear Mahatmaji, It is true that I have made no vow... I think you will understand that it is not a personal or mental choice but something impersonal from a deeper source for the inner necessity of work and sadhana. It prevents me from receiving you but I cannot do otherwise...'³ But in 1939, Aurobindo conveyed through S.M. Ghose that Gandhi could see him.⁴ Sadly, the meeting never materialised.

Gandhi met Narayana Guru at the latter's ashram on March 12, 1925, and a day later Narayana Guru reciprocated the visit.⁵ Their conversation, however, mostly centred around the Vaikom *Satyagraha*, untouchability, other caste and social issues.

As regards Anandamayi Ma, it was Jamnalal Bajaj who was keen that they should meet. Anandamayi Ma had gone to visit Gandhi twice, the first time at Sevagram in early 1942 and then again in Delhi in late 1947. Details of their first meeting, available in public

domain, indicate that it was short, warm and courteous.⁶ But nothing much came out of them. [One is reminded of Sri Ramakrishna having gone to visit the great social reformer Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar on August 5, 1882. That meeting was also warm, courteous and full of humour. [But the two noble men never met again.]

Even Paramahansa Yogananda in *The Autobiography Of A Yogi* recounts his pleasant meeting and interaction with Gandhi, when he had gone to visit him at Wardha.⁷

Very few people today know of Acharya Satish Chandra Mukherjee and of Gandhi's association with him. Mukherjee was a brilliant student, a contemporary of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee and Narendranath Datta (later, Vivekananda), and a lawyer. The first part of his life was dedicated to the cause of education and national regeneration efforts when he was instrumental in setting up the influential Dawn Society, helped founding the National Council of Education (NCE) and succeeded Aurobindo as the Principal of the Bengal National College under it. (NCE, after amalgamating with the Society for Promotion of Technical Education, eventually transformed to Jadavpur University, Calcutta.) Around 1914, as directed by his Guru, Mukherjee moved to Benaras solely for spiritual pursuit. Much of Gandhi's moral purity and ethical life, according to Maha Mukhopadhyay Gopinath Kaviraj, was inspired by Mukherjee.⁸ Gobinda Gopal Mukherjee, a noted scholar in Sanskrit and philosophy, alludes to a letter from Gandhi where he wishes Satish Babu, 'May you attain the full span of 125 years, which I may not attain for lack of equanimity prescribed for it in the Gita...I am trying hard to reach that state.'⁹

Admittedly, Gandhi and the notable spiritual figures of his time were natural allies. However, the enormous literature on Gandhi does not highlight this aspect of his personality. Much of the information is available though from the other sides, as recorded and interpreted by their devotees and ashramites. Saints and sages, of different hues and faiths, were supportive of Gandhi and his cause.

Being self-luminous, Gandhi appears to have always been guided by his own conscience. He also held that 'complete realisation is impossible in this embodied life. Nor is it necessary. A living immovable faith is all that is required for reaching the full spiritual height attainable by human beings....'.¹⁰ A genuine Vaishnavite, he had unshakable faith in God and adhered to the ideal of serving Him through servicing the poor, the underprivileged and the exploited.

While Gandhi's doors were open to all holy men and women, as a man of action, he seemed to be more attracted towards such enlightened persons who had, at some stage of their lives, been

engaged in social and educational reforms or in the national struggle for independence, perhaps for moral support or validation of his own ideas. He appeared less interested in metaphysical speculations on the nature of reality and God.

So immersed in public service, Gandhi was perhaps not the one to be guided by a religious Guru by surrendering himself completely to what such a Guru ordains. His inspiration came from within. Thus, Gandhi epitomised a unique confluence of our Karmic and Bhakti traditions. He steadfastly pursued his goal, driven by the ideals of truth, non-violence, and service without attachment. *Ekla Chalo Re*, no wonder was his favourite Tagore song. He walked alone — all his life.

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Towards a New Art of Border Crossing Integration: Meditative Verbs of Pluralizations and the Calling of Planetary Realizations

Ananta Kumar Giri

Introduction and Invitation

INTEGRATION IS AN important calling of life, self, culture, society and the world. But its significance is rarely realized especially in our present day world as we live a fragmentary existence and valorize differences. Social and discursive movements in the last half a century have rightly challenged us to cultivate differences but cultivation of difference is different from valorization. Differences also have threads of connections among them—they also seek to be part of a respectful and dignified emergent wholeness which calls for threadworks and thread meditations on the part of an individual and societies. Differences are also part of an emergent journey of integration, an integration which does not suppress differences but which build upon their flourishing. This calls for a new art of cultivation of identity and differences and making both co-travellers and co-painters in a new art of integration which may be called differential integration. It is a new art of integration which is not totalitarian and oppressive as the dominant discourse of integration in State and society, such as valorization of national integration and unilateral integration of immigrants into host societies without challenging the host societies to also transform their lack of cultural knowledge and language of the immigrants. It is a border-crossing integration where integration emerges with and beyond our vision and practices of crossing borders and boundaries of various kinds rather than just be entrapped within them.

This new art of integration which invites us now is different from the earlier discourses and practices of integration which were imprisoned in a logic and machinery of strong integration. It is an

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art of weak and gentle integration compared to the telos of strong integration in modern self, society and polity. The discourse of integration in social sciences as well as in the wider public discourse in modernity, for example, in the discourse of nationalism and self, has been imprisoned in a logic of strong integration which has been a source of much violence, suffering and annihilation of potentiality. It has been imprisoned in a logic of assertive and exclusionary sovereignty. In this place we need to cultivate an art of weak and gentle integration, where integration begins with realization of weakness and vulnerability and where this acknowledged vulnerability becomes the lubricant and binding thread for integration as an unfolding, evolving and emergent journey of realization of connectedness and wholeness. This is facilitated by transformation of sovereignty to shared sovereignties and realizing non-sovereignty.¹ If sovereignty propounds the cult of mastery, non-sovereignty urges us to serve and share which help us in our art of gentle and weak integration. This involves artistic processes of creativity and nurturance and is facilitated by the work of creative art in politics, society and spirituality.²

A new art of integration is a weak and gentle one. Cultivating weak and gentle integration is facilitated by building on and cultivating weakness in different domains of life and thought, for example, weak naturalism, weak nationalism, weak epistemology, weak ontology, weak identity, weak difference, weak theology and weak pedagogy. Weak naturalism as a companion in quest for weak integration helps us realize that we are part of nature but we are not determined by it and we should eschew the arrogance of human mastery and social control.³

Cultivating weak naturalism building upon works of scholars such as Habermas can be accompanied by cultivating weak nationalism which interrogates the construction of nation-state as a naturalized entity propagating the cult of unitary strength at the expense of the plurivocity of beings, societies, languages, nations and cultures. Weak epistemology in this journey makes our epistemic certainty humble and urges us to realize the limits of methods in our scientific understanding as well as social life. All these are accompanied by weak ontology which urges us to realize that ontological cultivation is not only a cultivation of mastery of the Self but also cultivation of its humility, fragility, weakness and servanthood facilitating blossoming of non-sovereignty and shared sovereignties. Weak ontology helps us realize that both identities and differences have in-built limitations and they ought to realize their own weakness as a starting point for communication and sharing through cultivation

of weak identities and weak differences. This, in turn, is facilitated by realizing that all identities have a dimension of non-identity as differences have also a dimension of non-difference. If we realize relationship between identity and difference from the starting points of non-identity and non-difference, it helps us realize a new art of relationship rather than just the relationship between identity and difference which is often talked about now.⁴

With weak ontology and dimensional ontology with its striving to realize the spiritual dimension of being, we can cultivate weak theology as a companion in the journey of weak integration. This makes theology weak rather than strong which then facilitates border-crossing dialogues among religions and theological systems. Weak theology is also facilitated by the rise of practical spirituality in religions, which relativize pronounced religious beliefs and dogmas and lay stress on practice, especially transformative practice, to transform suffering. Finally, weak pedagogy helps us realize that as educators we can not perpetuate the logic of strength imposing our views on others, especially children, but persuade them to take part in collective transformative co-learning where as educators we realize, as Sri Aurobindo challenges us to realize, “nothing can be taught.” Weak pedagogy can transform all of us, including some who fashion themselves as teachers, into learners—co-learners. This co-learning is helpful for a new art of border-crossing integration where subjects including in their dominant manifestation as political subjects can realize themselves as co-learners.

Cultivating Gardens of Differential Integration

Processes of weakening of entrenched identities and differences through cultivation of non-identities and non-differences lead to a new art of differential integration. Our earlier models of integration were based upon annihilation of differences and diversities. But the new art of integration builds upon our differences both in the ordinary sense as well as in the sense Derrida talks about it. Difference in Derrida is characterized by both spatial and temporal refusal to be incorporated into dominating systems.⁵ But what Derrida and followers of Derrida have not explored is the emergent art of communication among differences as well as differences. Differential integration transforms both identities and differences as it challenges both identity and difference to realize the responsibility that they have to each other, come out of their closures, embrace each other and learn together. It also calls for working on threads of connections among and across identities and differences which can be called threadworks. It also calls for meditating with threads which can be

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called thread meditations.⁶ Threadworks and thread meditations take place in the midst of threats—inner as well as outer. Inner threats refer to inner and internal hesitations and resistances to acknowledge and cultivate connections and communications across boundaries and borders.

The logic and machinery of strong integration in modernity has created many wounds in self and society and a new art of integration is also an art of healing our many wounds. It is confronted with the challenge of reconciliation and transformation. Through healing and reconciliation it seeks to realize a new solidarity, a solidarity which is beyond the absolutism of both the collective and the individual. It is a solidarity which nurtures the creative solitude of individuals, at the same time, urging them to be part of a vibrant sociality—a soulful togetherness—to realize their potentialities. Solidarity is part of nurturing solidary praxis and multiple journeys of solidarization. It is a new solidarity which seeks to realize a new strength which is, at the same time, gentle and weak. If traditions such as *Tantra* had helped us cultivate strength then the called for new solidarity which cultivates weak strength calls for a new *Tantra* of human and social development which helps us cultivate weak strength.

A new art of integration also builds upon integration of personality about which Carl G. Jung had taught us long ago.⁷ A new art of integration on the way to realizing a new art of wholeness and solidarity also seeks to integrate the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of self and society. Modern knowledge guided by critical rationality and democratic mobilizations has challenged us to realize the significance of the horizontal. Habermas' communicative rationality is part of the much needed democratic transformation for horizontal dignity, justice and equality. Religions, spiritual quest, artistic and philosophical works have always challenged us not to forget the significance of the vertical and depth dimension of our lives. But in traditional religions and spirituality the vertical has got imprisoned within many hierarchies of domination and it has also been accompanied by world-rejecting renunciation and flight from responsible and transformative engagement with the world. Ascent has rarely been accompanied by descent and horizontal solidarization with fellow beings. But now we are called for a new art of integration of the vertical and the horizontal as part of an ever-evolving, expanding and mutually interpenetrative circle of the vertical and the horizontal. This calls for bringing together practical discourse and practical spirituality which involves border-crossing dialogues, mediations, meditations and transformations.

A New Art of Border-Crossing and Meditative Verbs of Pluralization

A new art of integral calls for a new art of border-crossing. Our existing and dominant models of integration are based upon fixed and essentialist boundaries between States, ethnic groups and other identities. We need to rethink and transform such entrenched borders and boundaries including boundaries between margins and the mainstream. Integration does not mean integration of margins to a dominant mainstream but opening of the mainstream itself to transformative learning from and with the margins which are margins are spaces of creative border-crossing insights and practices.

A new art of border-crossing is also linked to a new art, politics and spirituality of pluralization which may be called meditative verbs of pluralization which are different from the conventional discourse and practice of pluralism. Conventional pluralism looks at pluralism as a noun and in a fixed state where identities and differences are also conceptualized in essentialized ways as nouns. Meditative verbs of pluralizations transform these nouns into multiple verbs which are simultaneously activist as well as meditative.⁸ Art of border crossing with meditative pluralization at the heart of it not only pluralizes existing conceptions of boundaries, borders, identities and differences but also brings a process of meditation into the dynamics of interactions and interrelationships. Interaction here is not merely reflective or action-oriented as it is in the dominant discourse and practice of modernity but also involves meditation, so that interacting individuals and groups also meditate about their selves and identities and realize the need for pluralization and border-crossing. Meditation brings a depth dimension to action and interactions involved in border-crossing and our *sadhana*, struggles and strivings with integration.

One concrete project of such a meditative verb of pluralization in a society such as India is to create new movements of visiting different parts of India. In contemporary India, there is a politically charged discourse about patriotism, nationalism and anti-nationalism. But in India we do not have any programme where young people such as school and university students can visit and spend a semester in another school in another part of India. In European Union, Erasmus programme named after the great traveller and soul-touching bridge builder Erasmus who through his travel and letters had crated a Republic of Letters has helped European Union to create a bond of European consciousness despite many challenges. In India travellers such as Buddha, Shankara, Swami Vivekananda, Pandita Ramabai, Gandhi, Vinoba and P.V. Rajagopal had created such a journey of pan

Indian awareness and consciousness. Educational programmes helping all learners to spend a semester school in another part of India would help us realize this.

Planetary Realizations

In modernity, our models of Self and society are narrowly conceptualized as members of a social group or State. We do not conceptualize and realize our identities as emerging with our Mother Earth, as children of Mother Earth. Integration here thus becomes a process of integrating with our narrow conceptualizations in which there is not much place for Nature, Divine and Cosmic. Planetary Realizations invite us to realize that we are children of Mother Earth and our dreams, aspirations and calling of integration needs to begin with this realization as it can draw new strength and inspiration from this.

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Practical Utility of Gandhian Style of Research in Social Sciences

Arun K. V.

RESEARCH IS NOWADAYS a prevalent academic practice all over the world. Generally, research is either for testing existing knowledge or to gain new knowledge. Several theoreticians have given varied interpretations to the idea of research. While explaining the meaning of research C. R. Kothari states that search for knowledge through objective and systematic method of finding solution to a problem is research.¹ Both the natural scientists and social scientists are carrying out researches in the academic realm. Unfortunately, most of the research findings of both groups do not address the question of practical utility. Results from the former are used against humanity as Gandhi rightly points out as a social evil, it being science without humanity.² For example, nuclear energy is used for the development of weapons of mass destruction. In the case of latter, research findings remain on paper, fails at the implementation level and even plagiarism is reported. M. K. Gandhi is an ideal researcher and his methodology is still pertinent. As an agent of social change, social research has great implications. Social science research is a systematic method of exploring, analyzing and conceptualizing human life in order to extend, correct or verify knowledge of human behaviour and social life.³ Since the 1950s, Social Science Departments in the American Universities have been offering courses in research methods and over the years they have obtained popularity among the students. Universities in India have introduced research methodology in Social Science mostly in the 1970s.⁴ Harvard University, University of Oxford, London School of Economics and Political Science, National University of Singapore, University of Chicago, Jawaharlal Nehru University etc. are among the pioneering Social Science research institutions in the world. Besides that, at the national level numerous institutes are working in the field of social sciences. The question is, are the researches in Social Sciences potentially capable of bringing about social change? If so, to what extent? Nowadays, research is carried out

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mainly for an academic degree, for weightage in a job oriented set up, for increment.⁵ In social sciences, there are four important methods for data collection viz. positivism, interpretivism, critical research and multiple strategies. All these are of western origin and each method has contributed to the growth of another. For example, positivism contributed to the development of interpretivism. Positivism has originated from natural sciences and advocates of this tradition want to follow the same method in understanding the social problems. Positivism demands that the social world should be researched using the principle of natural science and the analysis is based on statistical testing of given theories. On the other hand, interpretivism gives importance to qualitative data. It demands that the social world should be studied in its natural state using participant observation and in-depth interview to understand naturally occurring behaviour and analysis based on verbal and situation description from which theory evolves. Critical research is more advanced than positivism and interpretivism. This mode of research is associated with the Frankfurt school of thought. To them, social research is to ask critical questions with a view to changing the society for the better.⁶ By compiling all these Denzin and Lincoln (1998) state that the combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observes in a single study is best understood then as strategy that add the rigour and breadth to any investigation (ibid).

We have large quantity of data generated by western liberal tradition. They even claim that all these data are original and reliable and applicable to modern day problems. The fact is that every society, particularly the non-western countries have generated and maintained large quantities of knowledge which is best suited even to modern day societal problems. This paper intends to explore research methods followed by non-western societies and compare it with the so-called western methodologies. For this purpose, this paper seeks to explore the Gandhian way to social change and conclude Gandhi as one of the best researchers the world had ever seen. Here, in order to analyze this topic the western theories of research are also analyzed. When we analyze the Gandhian way of social work we have to conclude that Gandhi has practiced the multi-strategy approach. Though this method was much discussed in the 1980s, prior to more than five decades, Gandhi had applied this strategy for social change. Here this paper attempts to present the researcher in Gandhi in its different facets.

Interpretivism in Gandhi

As stated earlier, interpretivism gives importance to qualitative

elements and follows participant observation and in-depth interviews for gathering data. Theoretically, advocates of this mode of research give importance to data collection and analysis. However, most of them are silent about application of their acquired knowledge for social change. We often witness the elements of interpretivism in Gandhi. What makes his approach fundamentally different from modern day interpretivism is that Gandhi not only followed this method but also utilized the acquired knowledge for effecting social change. Consequently, it was manifested in his writings and actions. In fact, Gandhi himself once stated that 'I am not built for academic writing, action is my domain.'⁷

Gandhi's interventions in India during the Indian National Movement reveals that Gandhi is known for his applied interpretivism. Champaran experiment itself testifies to the participant action researcher in Gandhi.⁸ While assuring, his support to the indigo peasants at Champaran, he also wanted to study the problem in detail. So he first of all took time to spend in Champaran. Gandhi had carried out the Champaran experiment in a systematic way. He used all the required steps to study the problem deeply as well as to resolve the miseries of village folk in an effective manner. That can be illustrated as follows:

- Decided to intervene into the grievances of indigo peasants.
- Started to enquire the condition of riots, to find out the truth, he heard both planters as well as the commissioner.
- Deployed five to seven volunteers to record statements.
- Realized permanent solution was impossible without giving proper education to villagers.
- Decided to open primary schools in six villages.
- Due to lack of fund to provide remuneration for teaching, issued public appeal for voluntary teachers.
- Villagers offered food stuff.
- Teaching extended to the importance of sanitation and cleanliness; for meeting the goal, requested Servants of India Society to lend the service of doctors.
- Passive attitude of villagers — their unwillingness to do their own scavenging was eradicated through public awareness.
- The doctor volunteers entrusted their potential on keeping the village ideally clean including the well, roads etc.
- Gained confidence of villagers by establishing school, sanitation facilities and so on.
- After empowering the villagers, Gandhi organized a mass movement against the indigo planters and Champaran Satyagraha becomes a great success.⁹

Champaran Satyagraha was the first Satyagraha of Gandhi in India and this year is celebrating as centenary year of this historic event.

The methodology adopted by him to collect, classify, analyze data and find out solution to a problem is interpretivism in general. What makes Gandhi unique from others is his ability to transform the interpretivist data into an interventionist style to solve the problem. We can call it as Participatory Action Research.

Critical Researcher in Gandhi

Prior to enlightenment, philosophers like Socrates had questioned the existing system. The spirit of reason is the base of research process according to the advocates of critical research. As pointed out earlier, critical research aims to improve society. Political goals also set the base of critical research. Matt Henn and others including Marxists, feminists etc., are the champions of raising critical questions. But they were not ready to add any one from the South in this group. If critical research is for political goals by challenging the existing social and political set up, Gandhi from the East is the best suitable example for critical research. This is because he worked hard to create a better socio-political order compared to those who confined only to raising questions. His masterpiece work *Hind Swaraj* is an excellent example of critical enquiry and is relevant even today. In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi rightly questions the so-called modern civilization and parliamentary system and aims at achieving real Swaraj. He also criticized the modern civilization by asking several questions :

Formerly, when people wanted to fight with one another, they measured them their bodily strength; now it is possible to take away thousands of lives by one man working behind from a hill...formerly men worked in the open air only as much as they liked. Now thousands of workmen meet together and for the sake of maintenance work in factories or mines, their condition is worse than that of beasts. They are obliged to work, at the risk of their lives at most dangerous occupations for the sake of millionaires... Formerly men were made slaves under physical compulsion, now they are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy... there are now diseases of which people never dreamt before, and an army of doctors is engaged in finding out their cures, and so hospitals have increased. This is a test of civilization.¹⁰

These are the few statements from *Hind Swaraj* on civilization by Gandhi. This classic was written by him in 1908. But the statements are relevant even today. To him true Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty performance of duty and observances of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind our passions. So doing

know ourselves. In another chapter he criticizes the British parliament as a sterile woman and a prostitute; he also acknowledges that both these are harsh terms, but exactly fit the case. He continues that

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 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 and when the greatest questions are debated; its members have been seen to stretch themselves and to doze.¹¹

To conclude, Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* is a small classical work which is critical in nature and has eternal relevance in Social Science and Humanities.

Gandhi as a Multiple Strategist

While presenting the researcher in Gandhi I am little bit confused on where to place Gandhi. Is Gandhi an interpretivist? Or a Critical researcher? But when I go through the different connotations of multiple strategies, I wish to place him as a multi strategist. An in-depth analysis of the Gandhian style of social action through his writings reveals that he has thoroughly used multiple strategies to interpret, analyze as well as resolve problems. Gandhi was able to transform the data which was collected through multiple strategies into action to a considerable extent. Even though I placed Champaran Satyagraha and *Hind Swaraj* within categories of interpretivism and critical research respectively, we have to see in both, elements of each other.

Means and Ends: Concept of Gandhi

To Gandhi both means and ends are equally important. To him the means to reach an end should be virtuous. In his entire life he was not ready to compromise the perceived end to justify the means. Though Gandhi used the means and end concept during the national movement, this concept is relevant in normative social research. In order to complete the thesis nowadays researchers attempt to replicate earlier studies of others without acknowledging them; we called it plagiarism. Why most of the universities develop plagiarism software to check the research reports? For personal gain researchers are ready to commit academic fraudulence of any kind. To them end is more important than the means. Very recently, a Pro Vice Chancellor's thesis in Kerala was under scrutiny for plagiarism. In this aspect, to a researcher both means and ends need be straight and transparent.

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Is Gandhian Way of Research Relevant Today?

Gandhian way of research is more result oriented. He himself had not confined to academic writing. Though scientists have differences regarding the meaning, method and methodology of research, all of them do agree that a researcher should possess objectivity, impartiality, truthfulness, enthusiasm etc. We can see all these required qualities in Gandhi. In his way of action, there is a connection between theory, societal problems and policy that we lack today. To summarize the relevance as

Gandhi's methodology is multi- strategic in nature.

It is result oriented — he was able to pressurize the society as well as the policy makers for social change.

The researcher himself is to be active as a harbinger of socio-political change.

Gandhi was able to make rapport with community with which he engaged.

Gandhi recognized the contributions of others while dealing with a problem. for e.g., while stating the concept of bread labour, he acknowledges the contributions of John Ruskin's work *Unto This Last*.

He emphasized peaceful method for social change.

Conclusion

Twenty-first century is an era of honorary doctorates. Many Universities are awarding honorary doctorates to dignitaries for their outstanding services. Though Gandhi was not a holder of a research degree, he developed his own strategy from a practical standpoint. Practical utility of his way of action is eternal. It shall be applied either to the societal problems or organizational problems, because without making any rapport with them, no reforms could take place and if it happens, it is not everlasting. Purity of mind and action is desirable for good ends.

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Gulzarilal Nanda: Making of a Gandhian Trade Union Leader

Saurav Kumar Rai

Introduction

WITH THE ONSET OF colonial modernity, Indian social and economic landscape witnessed the rise and growth of nascent capitalist as well as industrial working class. Although small in size, the organised nature of these two newly emerged social classes made them vital socio-economic categories to reckon with. Nevertheless, the very structure of capitalist production generated a spontaneous friction between these two classes right from the outset. This, in turn, led to politicisation of industrial labour and relations of production. It was in this backdrop that the issue of labour attracted Mahatma Gandhi's attention as early as in 1918, when he actively intervened in the Ahmedabad mill issue. The occasion for this was provided by the citywide strike of workers in the textile mills of Ahmedabad against the unilateral decision of the mill owners to withdraw the plague bonus of the workers secured by them in 1917. Invited by one of the prominent mill owners of the city, Ambalal Sarabhai, Mahatma Gandhi went on to assume the role of an arbitrator between the workers and the mill owners. Exalting the struggle of workers to a righteous plane, Mahatma Gandhi undertook his first fast unto death on Indian soil to bring both the parties at arbitration. He eventually succeeded in his effort of subsiding the labour unrest in order to let production continue smoothly.¹

Relations of Production: The Gandhian Way

Unlike the proponents of Marxist ideology, for Mahatma Gandhi, the social relations of production between the working class and capitalists was not necessarily antagonistic. Instead, Mahatma Gandhi envisaged a harmonious relationship between the two. He categorically stated: "I have always said that my ideal is that capital and labour should supplement and help each other. They should be a great family living in unity and harmony, capital not only looking to

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the material welfare of the labourers, but their moral welfare also, capitalists being trustees for the welfare of the labouring classes under them."² In this regard, Mahatma Gandhi was very much inspired by the '*mahajani pratha*' (mercantile system) which dominated the traditional commercial culture of Ahmedabad, wherein the spirit of benevolence guided the mercantile class of the city to make necessary arrangements for the working hands ensuring peace, stability and prosperity. Incidentally, the idea of non-violence and conversion of soul which was fundamental to Gandhian philosophy guided labour-capital relationship as well. According to Mahatma Gandhi:

If I would recognise the fundamental equality, as I must, of the capitalist and the labourer, I must not aim at his destruction. I must strive for his conversion. My non-co-operation with him will open his eyes to the wrong he may be doing....It can be easily demonstrated that destruction of the capitalist must mean in the end destruction of the worker, and as no human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption, no human being is so perfect as to warrant his destroying him whom he wrongly considers to be wholly evil.³

Further,

Exploitation of the poor can be extinguished not by effecting the destruction of a few millionaires, but by removing the ignorance of the poor and teaching them to non-co-operate with their exploiters. That will convert the exploiters also. I have even suggested that ultimately it will lead to both being equal partners. Capital as such is not evil; it is the wrong use that is evil. Capital in some form or other will always be needed.⁴

In fact, Mahatma Gandhi did not consider the capitalists as inherent exploiters. In contrast with the Marxist ideologues, the idea of class war did not appeal to Mahatma Gandhi. He firmly believed that in India a class war was not only not inevitable, it was avoidable if we had understood the message of non-violence. According to him, those who talked about class war as being inevitable had not understood the implications of non-violence or had understood them only skin-deep.⁵ To quote his own words:

I do not think there need be any clash between capital and labour. Each is dependent on the other. What is essential today is that the capitalist should not lord it over the labourer. In my opinion, the mill-hands are as much the proprietors of their mills as the shareholders, and when the mill-owners realise that the mill-hands are as much mill-owners as they, there will be no quarrel between them.⁶

All this does not mean that Mahatma Gandhi in any way argued of co-operation between the exploiter and the exploited, so long as exploitation and the will to exploit persisted. Instead, he argued that if the labour knew their power and use it wisely and constructively, they would become the real rulers and the employers would be their trustees and friends in need and deed. According to Mahatma Gandhi, this happy state of things would come only when the labourers know that labour is more real capital than the capital in the shape of gold and silver which they extract from the bowels of the earth.⁷ Mahatma Gandhi emphasised the similar ideal even in one of his correspondences with Gulzarilal Nanda, whereby, he stated: "If the Majoor Mahajan realise that the value of their labour is always greater than that of capital and if they all combine, they can come into their own without hurting a single individual."⁸

Gulzarilal Nanda and Majoor Mahajan Sangh

It was in Ahmedabad that Mahatma Gandhi experimented with his aforesaid ideas involving the relationship between the labour and capital. Textile Labour Association (or Majoor Mahajan Sangh) was the fulcrum of this experiment which ensured a relatively peaceful industrial atmosphere in Ahmedabad vis-à-vis the other industrial cities of colonial India. Gulzarilal Nanda was the product of this unique Gandhian laboratory called Majoor Mahajan Sangh. Born on 4 July 1898 at Sialkot (now in Pakistan), Nanda was undoubtedly one of the most prominent trade union leaders of India. In 1921, while pursuing his research, Nanda went to Bombay in search of primary material as Bombay by that point of time had already emerged as the centre of labour movement in India. It ultimately proved to be a life changing experience for Nanda. The entire nation, including Bombay, was under the grip of a massive non-cooperation movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Nanda clearly noticed the "tensions and militancy in the atmosphere of the city."⁹ According to Nanda, "In the air of the place one could breathe the spirit of the challenge, which filled the minds of the people."¹⁰ It was in this atmosphere that Nanda met Shankarlal Banker, a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi and the prominent trade union leader, to discuss the labour problems. Shankarlal Banker expressed his compulsions having pledged not to cooperate in any form with those working for a Government institution including university. He told Nanda that while his thesis would certainly help in terms of ideas, but ideas alone could not be enough. On account of this curt refusal, Nanda for the first time experienced the real spirit of the movement the news about which he had been reading on daily basis

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with complete indifference. The incident shook Nanda from within and he found himself duty bound to participate in the grand movement and join the march towards independence. The meeting with Mahatma Gandhi, the very next day of the aforesaid incident, further consolidated the commitment of Nanda to enter the India's struggle for independence. Consequently, Nanda left his research in midway and joined the non-cooperation movement.

Keeping his educational background in mind, Nanda was appointed for the time being as the Professor of Economics at National College, Bombay. In order to prepare him for greater role in future, Nanda was given some orientation in constructive work at the National College under Professor Puntambekar. Labour being his favourite terrain, Nanda was soon sent to Ahmedabad to join the Textile Labour Association (TLA). Nanda remained its Secretary from 1922 till 1946. These were the formative years for Nanda. Immediately after his entry in the Textile Labour Association Nanda organised a strike against the unilateral action by the employer regarding wage cut. It proved organisational skills and credentials of Nanda so much so that despite being a non-Gujarati, Nanda quickly emerged as the faithful leader of Gujarati working class. The confidence of the Gujarati working class on Nanda can be assessed from the fact that when the aforesaid strike was called off, at one of the mills workers refused to enter mill until and unless advised by Nanda in person. Nanda gradually developed close contact with Mahatma Gandhi's inner circle in labour matters, viz. with Anusuya Sarabhai and Shankarlal Banker.

Under his leadership, TLA rose above merely being a labour association confined to the factory premise and started participating in the Ahmedabad Municipality. In 1927, Gulzarilal Nanda himself entered the Ahmedabad Municipality defeating a mill owner. Nanda along with other elected members of TLA crafted a close cooperation between labour and capital in civic affairs on Gandhian lines by doing away with the spirit of confrontational politics. Besides introducing many welfare schemes for labourers Nanda organised innovative Mohalla Committees as well to understand and swiftly resolve the problems of a working class locality such as cleanliness, water supply, lighting in lanes and bylanes, etc. Establishment of Latta Mahajans (Locality unions) and Matadar Mandals (Voters Organisations) at the behest of Nanda and other Gandhian labour leaders were important steps in this regard to ensure proper civic arrangements in working quarters. He also established in Ahmedabad a proper grievance procedure uniform for all mills for settling individual complaints. It ensured remedial of individual grievances at an early stage fairly

expeditiously. Incidentally, Nanda attempted to translate this experience in the wider all India context later on as the Union Labour minister. The close cooperation between labour and capital in civic matters helped Nanda in trade union matters such as negotiations with the employer or the employers' group. In fact, the comparative industrial peace that Gujarat enjoyed over the years was much due to the constructive work done by TLA under the leadership of Nanda.

At the Helm of Portfolios

Riding high on popularity, in 1937, Gulzarilal Nanda was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Bombay Presidency from Ahmedabad labour constituency and became the Parliamentary Secretary (Labour and Excise) to the Prime Minister B.G. Kher between 1937 and 1939. During his tenure, Nanda instituted Joint Management Committees for Labour and Management and set in motion the machinery for peaceful settlement of industrial disputes which was the harbinger of the Industrial Relations Act. He was also responsible for introducing Shops and Establishment Act. At the same time, Nanda was also instrumental in tabling the Bombay Industrial Disputes Bill, the first piece of legislation in the country making provision for union recognition.

Nanda, like other prominent leaders, was put behind the bars during the Quit India movement. It was followed by a prolonged strike of Ahmedabad workers on their own exhibiting their faith in national leaders, particularly Nanda. After his release, Nanda was once again elected to the Legislative Assembly of Bombay Presidency in 1947 and was given the portfolio of Minister of Labour and Housing (1947-50). He was also appointed as member of the Economic Programme Committee constituted by the All India Congress Committee in November 1947. Around this time, with independence on the horizon, Nanda felt the need to create a national centre for like-minded union leaders to forge a unity among the workers and their leaders. He took an initiative in this regard leading to foundation of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) on 3 May 1947. Although sharing the same political outlook as that of the Congress Party, INTUC was deliberately kept outside the party organisation by Nanda to ensure the autonomy of labour movement. He believed that strict adherence of a trade union to a particular political party would unnecessarily politicise the labour movement and would divert the attention from real problems of the workers.

After serving for a brief period at Planning Commission as its founding Deputy Chairman, following the resignation of V.V. Giri in 1957, Nanda was appointed as the Union Minister of Labour and

Employment while retaining the erstwhile portfolio of the Union Minister of Planning. Thus, Nanda returned to his favourite terrain viz. 'Labour' once again. Nanda made immense contribution as the Union Labour Minister bringing back the era of voluntarism in matters pertaining to labour. Nanda strove hard to set up Joint Management Councils both in private as well as public sectors to ensure workers' participation in the management. He was greatly influenced by the Gandhian philosophy in this matter. According to him, workers' participation was not an appendage but an essential feature of the economic organisation in a democratic set-up. Nanda went on to give it an official recognition when a specific recommendation was made in this connection in the Second Five Year Plan. In fact, he was of firm belief that all the constituents of industry had to work in harmony to achieve economic growth. In this regard, Nanda stressed upon the principle of arbitration and condemned inter-union rivalries among the trade unions disrupting industrial growth.

As Union Labour Minister, Nanda believed that it should be our common aim that the total effect of our policies leads to creation of maximum employment in the country, accompanied by a steady rise in living standards.¹¹ In this regard, Nanda made some headway on the question of fixing workers' wages. Incidentally, he was the architect of the formula of need-based minimum wages. Simultaneously, Nanda made a welcome suggestion of instituting an unemployment relief fund for workers and to widen the scope of the Employees Provident Fund by increasing the rate of contribution so as to pave the way for its eventual conversion into a pension fund.¹² Furthermore, addressing the problem of frequent strikes, Nanda strove for the concept of voluntarism in the settlement of labour disputes through non-statutory Wage Boards, voluntary arbitration, Code of Discipline and workers' participation in management. By and large, Nanda tried to secure labour-oriented holistic economic growth in a harmonious set up as dreamt by Mahatma Gandhi.

Conclusion

The enormous experience of working as a grassroots trade union leader developed in Nanda a humane, pro-poor and realistic approach towards economic and day-to-day public affairs. He always emphasised amicable solutions over radical measures to resolve dispute at industrial workplace. He carried the same ideals and attitude in his various other capacities as Union Minister of Planning, Union Minister of Irrigation and Power, Union Home Minister and Union Minister of Railway. In fact, being a true disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, Gulzarilal Nanda always placed morality over and above

every action. He wished to infuse high moral standards in public life often personifying this trait himself. One can conclude with the following appraisal of Gulzarilal Nanda by Mahatma Gandhi:

Like Pyarelal, Nanda is another Punjabi who has sunk his roots deep in the soil of Gujarat. In fact, Nanda in many ways is greater than Pyarelal as Pyarelal does not have to face opposition from anyone, whereas Nanda has to constantly face his opponents on ground. Incidentally, Nanda is very well organised, powerful and a great devotee of truth.¹³

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Impact of Mahatma's Path of Trusteeship in The Development of CSR Practices in India – A Case Study

Suresh Chandra Ch

Overview of Mahatma's Trusteeship

THE THEORY OF trusteeship as proposed by Gandhi is non-violent in character while retaining the freedom of occupation, consumption and production and thus ensures the right of development of individual personality, which is completely lacking in a communist state. Gandhian Concept of Trusteeship does not permit an owner to misuse his wealth and exploitation. And this has been one of the foundations for the present theme of the paper called 'Corporate social responsibility'. The study of Chakrabarty B., (2012) shown that 'trusteeship' was rooted in the strong religio-social tradition of India'. It is observed that Gandhi drew on indigenous sources while formulating his notion of Trusteeship. Further, it can be viewed that 'trusteeship' emphasizes on rule of equity by contributing to 'corporate property' which primarily drew on 'voluntary' surrender of a significant portion of private wealth to meaningfully establish trust between the rich and the poor. The guidelines provided under Trusteeship concentrate on providing the sources for transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one and recognizing the right of property for the society's welfare. Gandhian trusteeship that translated concern of business houses for society into reality was a context-driven response. For Trusteeship to succeed, Gandhi insisted on 'a moral revolution' which meant 'a change of heart'.

'Trusteeship' has set a powerful trend in India' development trajectory that was articulated differently in different phases of her history thought. In conceptual terms, it has elements of CSR because the principle that the wealthy have a social responsibility remains as

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pivotal in CSR as it was true of Trusteeship.

1) EVOLUTION OF CSR IN INDIA THROUGH GANDHI'S PRINCIPLES

In this section, the evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is presented comparing it with the Gandhi's principles.

First Phase of CSR (1850 to 1914): CHARITY AND PHILANTHROPIC NATURE

CSR was influenced by family values, traditions, culture and religion, as also industrialization. The wealth of businessmen was spent on the welfare of society, by setting up temples and religious institutions. In times of drought and famine these businessmen opened up their granaries for the poor and hungry. With the start of the colonial era, this approach to CSR underwent a significant change. In pre-Independence times, the pioneers of industrialization, like Tata, Birla, Godrej, Bajaj, promoted the concept of CSR by setting up charitable foundations, educational and healthcare institutions, and trusts for community development. During this period, social benefits were driven by political motives.

This stage can be compared with Gandhi's principles on charity. He said: "There are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.' Further, 'The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.'

Here, Gandhi's view of charity was entirely characteristic of his realist stand on social issues. The concern on society and contribution towards society's needs were being emphasized by Mahatma in his principles on charity.

Second Phase of CSR (1910 TO 1960): TRUSTEESHIP

The second phase was during the Independence movement. Mahatma Gandhi urged rich industrialists to share their wealth with the poor and marginalized in society. He influenced industrialists to set up trusts for colleges, and research and training institutions. These trusts were also involved in social reform, like rural development, education and empowerment of women.

Third Phase (1950 To 1990): Transparency and Social Accountability

This phase was characterized by the emergence of PSUs (Public Sector Undertakings) to ensure better distribution of wealth in society. The policy on industrial licensing and taxes, and restrictions on the private sector resulted in corporate malpractices which finally triggered suitable legislation on corporate governance, labour and

environmental issues. Since the success rate of PSUs was not significant, there was a natural shift in expectations from public to private sector, with the latter getting actively involved in socio-economic development. In 1965, academicians, politicians and businessmen conducted a nationwide workshop on CSR where major emphasis was given to social accountability and transparency.

Mahatma Gandhi's model of trusteeship motivated strengthening of the belief that, essentially, society was providing capitalists with an opportunity to manage resources that should really be seen as a form of trusteeship on behalf of society in general. During pre-independence days the Mahatma called for the development of the nation by funding and providing education, health and other social services. And these are actually framed as the CSR activities under Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013.

Phase 4 (1980 Onwards): Modern CSR

In this last phase, CSR became characterized as a sustainable business strategy. The wave of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG), together with a comparatively relaxed licensing system, led to a boom in the country's economic growth. This further led to an increased momentum in industrial growth, making it possible for companies to contribute more towards social responsibility. What started as charity is now understood and accepted as responsibility.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MECHANISM IN INDIA

CSR in India has traditionally been seen as a philanthropic activity. But, CSR activities by the companies have been made mandatory through the introduction of amendments in the Companies Act, 2013. As per the Gazette notification of Ministry of Corporate Affairs, published on 27th February, 2014, every company having net worth of rupees five hundred crore or more, or turnover of rupees one thousand crore or more or a net profit of rupees five crore or more during any financial year shall constitute a Corporate Social Responsibility Committee consisting of three or more directors, out of which at least one director shall be an independent director.

Under sub-section (3) of section 134, the company shall disclose the composition of the Corporate Social Responsibility Committee and the committee shall formulate and recommend Corporate Social Responsibility Policy to the board which shall indicate the activities to be undertaken by the Company as specified in Schedule VII and recommend the amount of expenditure to be incurred on the activities and monitor the CSR policy of the company from time to time. As

per the clause 135 of the Companies Act, provided that the company shall give preference to the local area and areas around it where it operates, for spending the amount earmarked for CSR activities. Further, if the company fails to spend much amount, the Board shall, in its report made under clause (o) of sub-section (3) of section 134, need to specify the reasons for not spending the amount.

Every company including its holding or subsidiary, and a foreign company defined under clause (42) of section 2, having its branch office or project office in India which fulfills the criteria specified in sub-section (l) of section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 shall come under the purview of CSR initiatives and need to specify disclosure of CSR activities in its official website.

The Act encourages companies to spend at least 2 per cent of their average net profit in the previous three years on CSR activities. The ministry's draft rules, that have been put up for public comment, define net profit as the profit before tax as per the books of accounts, excluding profits arising from branches outside India. The act lists out a set of activities eligible under CSR. Companies may implement these activities taking into account the local conditions after seeking board approval. The indicative activities, which can be undertaken by a company under CSR have been specified under Schedule VII of the Act.

IMPACT OF MAHATMA'S PATH OF TRUSTEESHIP ON CSR PRACTICES IN INDIA

In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (l) of section 467 of the Companies Act, 2013 (18 of 2013), the Central Government framed the following amendments to Schedule VII of the Companies Act, namely :- (l) In Schedule VII, for items (i) to (x) and the entries relating thereto, the following items and entries shall be substituted, namely:-

i) Eradicating hunger, poverty and malnutrition, promoting preventive healthcare and sanitation and making available safe drinking water

Mahatma in his inspirational views on poverty has stated that 'Poverty is the worst form of violence'. Comparing poverty with violence, Gandhi said that a man's ability to think is deprived of in midst of poverty. The views of Gandhi on poverty and hunger have inspired the government to highlight the activities to be incorporated by the companies under CSR directed towards the eradication of hunger and poverty.

ii) Promoting education, including special education and employment enhancing vocational skills especially among children, women, elderly, and the differently abled and livelihood enhancement

projects. According to Gandhi: “*Literacy in itself is no education. Literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning. By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man-body, mind and spirit.*”

iii) Promoting gender equality, empowering women, setting up homes and hostels for women and orphans; setting up old age homes, day care centres and such other facilities for senior citizens and measures for reducing inequalities faced by socially and economically backward groups;

Gandhi believed that lack of education and information was the root cause of all the evils against women. He believed that education is therefore necessary for women as it is for men. He believed that education is essential for enabling women to assert their natural right, to exercise them wisely and to work for their expansion. He thought that low level of literacy among women had deprived them of socio-political power and also the power of knowledge. He stood for proper education for women as he believed that after receiving education they become sensitive to the glaring inequalities to which they are subjected. Gandhi had tremendous faith in women’s inherent capacity for non-violence. And his experience of participation by women in politics from his days in South Africa till the end of his life bears testimony to the fact that they never failed his expectations. With Gandhi’s inspiration, they took the struggle right into their homes and raised it to a moral level. Women organized public meetings, sold Khadi and proscribed literature, started picketing shops of liquor and foreign goods, prepared contraband salt, and came forward to face all sorts of atrocities, including inhuman treatment by police officers and imprisonment. They came forward to give all that they had — their wealth and strength, their jewellery and belongings, their skills and labour — all with sacrifices for this unusual and unprecedented struggle.

iv) Ensuring environmental sustainability, ecological balance, protection of flora and fauna, animal welfare, agro forestry, conservation of natural resources and maintaining quality of soil, air and water. Gandhi said: “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.”

Mahatma Gandhi never used the word environment protection, however, what he said and did make him an environmentalist. Although during his time environmental problems were not recognized as such, however, with his amazing foresight and insight he predicted that things are moving in the wrong direction. As early as in 1909 in his book *Hind Swaraj* he cautioned mankind against

unrestricted industrialism and materialism. He did not want India to follow the west in this regard and warned that if India, with its vast population, tried to imitate the west, then the resources of the earth will not be enough. He argued even in 1909 that industrialization and machines have an adverse effect on the health of people. Although he was not opposed to machines as such; he definitely opposed the large-scale use of machinery. He criticized people for polluting the rivers and other water bodies. He criticized mills and factories for polluting the air with smoke and noise.

v) Protection of national heritage, art and culture including restoration of buildings and sites of historical importance and works of art; setting up public libraries; promotion and development of traditional and handicrafts. In his pamphlet 'India of my dreams' he said:

Nothing can be further from my thought than that we should become exclusive or erect barriers. But I do respectfully contend that an appreciation of other cultures can fitly follow, never precede, an appreciation and assimilation of our own. It is my firm opinion that no culture has treasures so rich as ours has. We have not known it, we have been made even to deprecate its study and depreciate its value. We have almost ceased to live it (Young India, 17-11-'20).

This shows that Mahatma's broad view on cultural heritage also provided a justification of including India's cultural heritage as one of the component activities as prescribed by the Mahatma.

(vi) Measures for the benefit of armed forces veterans, war widows and their dependents; (vii) training to promote rural sports, nationally recognized sports, Paralympics sports and Olympic sports;

Mahatma always viewed the contributions of the armed forces for the protection of the country. In his principles, he has assumed that participation in sports was viewed as the vital ingredient that youth should perform.

(vii) Contribution to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund or any other fund set up by the Central government for socio-economic development and relief and welfare of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, other backward classes, minorities and women.

This area has been well represented by Gandhi before independence by considering the Scheduled Castes and tribes, marginalized and other poor sections of the society as 'Harijans'.

Mahatma Gandhiji played a memorable role in uplifting the untouchables. Gandhiji popularised the word "Harijan" meaning "the people of God" — a word which was first coined and used by a

Guajarati Brahmin saint by name Narasinha Mehta. According to Gandhiji, the practice of untouchability is “a leper wound in the whole-body of Hindu politic.” He even regarded it as “the hate fullest expression of caste.” He made it his life’s mission to wipe out untouchability and to uplift the depressed and the downtrodden people. As a servant of mankind, he preached that all human beings are equal and hence the Harijans too have a right for social life along with other caste groups.

(viii) Contributions or funds provided to technology incubators located within academic institutions which are approved by the Central government

(ix) Rural development projects.

The development of villages was viewed in his concept of nation building. He said: *“I know that the work (of shaping the ideal village) is as difficult as to make of India an ideal country... But if one can produce one ideal village, he will have provided a pattern not only for the whole country but perhaps for the whole world. More than this a seeker may not aspire after.”*

x) Investment and development of projects under Swachha Bharat Abhiyan.

Gandhi is the role model for the initiation of Swachha Bharat Abhiyan by the government. Government has extended the investments of CSR mandate amount on the schemes representing the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan from local to the nation level. The origin of Swachha Bharat Abhiyan is traced from his famous quotation that “everyone must be his own scavenger.”

“Cleanliness is Godliness” is the mantra of Gandhi. He demonstrated, propagated and insisted for individual and community cleanliness throughout his life. Following his footprints, the Government of Gujarat launched Nirmal Gujarat Abhiyan from the year 2005. The campaign achieved encouraging results.

The Government of India has launched Swachha Bharat Abhiyan on 2/10/2014 with a vision to dedicate Clean India on 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on 2/10/2019. Mahatma Gandhi Swachhata Mission is integrated with Swachha Bharat Abhiyan towards realizing this laudable vision.

5) CONCLUSIONS

Gandhi’s view of trusteeship is perfectly shaped into a form of law enforced by constitution in the form of Corporate social responsibility made the foundation of corporate social responsibility took its origin from the principles of Mahatma Gandhi. The development of the nation with the assistance of mandatory 2 per cent of net profit in the areas as prescribed in the Schedule VII of Corporate Social

Responsibility under the Companies Act, 2013 were perfect representations of Gandhi's vision on nation building. All the prescribed areas under CSR have represented Gandhi's vision on India. Finally, it is proper to conclude that the CSR is a true representation of Gandhi's vision and it is in the hands of corporate, government and people to visualize how far and how better the vision of Gandhi is reflected in the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives for the development of society and for reducing the problems that the nation is facing in different areas.

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Gandhi and the African American Interpreters of Non-violence

Meghna Chandra

MAHATMA GANDHI FAMOUSLY said: "...it may be through the negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world". Gandhi's words proved prophetic for the 20th century, as African Americans used Gandhian philosophy and methods in the American Civil Rights struggles of 1950s and 60s.

The foundation for the connection between India and Afro America was laid through the life and works African American visionaries W.E.B. Du Bois, Howard Thurmann, and Martin Luther King Jr. These three men were drawn to Mahatma Gandhi because he challenged the West and showed how the moral force of the oppressed could be a driving force of history. Interpreted by black America, these ideas changed the course of American history.

W.E.B. Du Bois

Perhaps one of the first prominent African American admirer of Mahatma Gandhi was W.E.B. Du Bois, the great American intellectual, civil rights crusader, and peace activist. Born just a year before Gandhi in 1868, Du Bois founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP), the Pan Africanist Movement, and the discipline of Sociology. Du Bois studied at Fisk and Harvard University, as well as Humboldt University in Berlin. He was the first black man to graduate with a PhD from Harvard in defiance of racial discrimination from the student and faculty there.

In his work *Philadelphia Negro*, he used social science to disprove the myth that black people were an inferior people, showing meticulously through sociological methods that blacks are an oppressed people who faced problems, not because they were an inferior race as the whites believed, but because of the cruelty of white society. Throughout his career, in works like *The Souls of Black Folk*, *Black Reconstruction*, *The World and Africa*, and *The Dark Princess*, Du Bois worked towards an understanding of the world that reflected the realities of the colonized peoples of the darker nations, as against white social science that was built on assumptions of the

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superiority of white people. Du Bois famously said that “The problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea”.

In 1929, Du Bois asked for a letter from Gandhi to the American Negroes, acknowledging that while Gandhi was busy struggling for the freedom of his people, “the race and color problems are world wide, and we need your help here”. In reply Gandhi wrote: “Let not the 12 million Negroes be ashamed of the fact that they are the grandchildren of slaves. There is no dishonour in being slaves. There is dishonour in being slave-owners”.

Du Bois saw in Gandhi a force that challenged the colour line by challenging the civilization that created it as a force of disruption, oppression and violence, rather than a force of civilization as it claimed to be. In his 1948 essay “Gandhi”, Du Bois writes that Gandhi was the “greatest man in the world” and the “Prince of Peace” among living leaders:

It is singular that a man who was not a follower of the Christian religion should be in his day the best exemplification of the principles which that religion was supposed to lay down. While the Christian Church during its two thousand years of existence has been foremost in war and organized murder, Mohandas Gandhi has been foremost in exemplifying peace as a method of political progress.

Du Bois admired Gandhi because he exposed the hypocrisy of Western Civilization which spoke of Christian and humanist values while lynching black people and perpetrating wars all over the world. He saw in Gandhi an example of how human beings should fight for peace to save the human civilization from the existential threat of nuclear war.

Du Bois, like Gandhi, would suffer greatly for his pro-peace positions. He was arrested in 1951 by the United States government for his opposition to the War in Korea and activism with the Peace Information Center. His works were censored in American Universities as a part of the McCarthyist purges of the 1950s. He went to Ghana in 1961 at the invitation of Kwame Nkrumah. He died while he was writing the *Encyclopedia of Africa* to shed light on the erased history of how Africa shaped the modern world.

Howard Thurman

Howard Thurman was born in 1899 as the grandson of freedmen.

Thurman went through poverty and Jim Crow in his childhood in Daytona, Florida, to valedictorian of Moorehouse College and Rochester Theological Seminary. He would become one of the greatest theologians of his times, laying the foundation for Martin Luther King's (Jr.) theology of liberation.

His first exposure to religion was through his grandmother who rejected the teachings of Paul in the Bible, because she remembered how white slave ministers read her texts from the book of Paul to justify slavery. Like Du Bois, Howard Thurmann looked to understand the moral values of Christianity, the religion of the masses of black Americans, through the lens of the darker nations.

In 1935, Howard Thurman went as head of a four member delegation to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), India, and Burma on the invitation of Reverend Augustine Ralla Ram. Thurman and the delegation met Gandhi in the last days of the delegation. Mahadev Desai records how Gandhi met the delegation with unprecedented warmth. They had a deep three hour conversation that spanned theology, philosophy, history, and sociology, as the group discussed the negro question in the United States and the relevance of *ahimsa* to their struggle. It was in this meeting that Gandhi said it was blacks who may be the greatest messengers of non-violence.

During the conversation, Gandhi questioned Thurman as to why blacks in America stayed Christian, as their oppressors were Christian and used Christianity to justify the oppression of black people. He asked why they did not become Muslim, because Islam was the most egalitarian religion in the world that guaranteed equality between slaves and masters.

In response to this line of questioning, Thurman wrote his magnum opus *Jesus and the Disinherited* in 1949 that delineated "the religion of the Church" from "the religion of Jesus". In the book, he describes the hounds of hell for the oppressed: fear, deception, and hate, and how each feeling is ultimately suicidal for them. He ends with a treatise on love as an eternal and universal force in human existence that has the power to transform the oppressor and oppressed by raising their spiritual consciousness and creating a new kind of human being.

In his book, Thurman quotes Gandhi's letter to Muriel Lester in his chapter on deception: "Speak the truth, without fear and without exception, and see everyone whose work is related to your purpose. You are in God's work, so you need not fear man's scorn. If they listen to your requests and grant them, you will be satisfied. If they reject them, then you must make their rejection your strength."

Thurman saw in Gandhi's philosophy an interpretation of the

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religion of Jesus. *Jesus and the Disinherited* was a book that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. kept at his side as he assumed leadership of the Civil Rights movement.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. is perhaps the best known interpreter of Gandhi, as well as the most famous leader of the African American freedom struggle. Born in 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia, King led the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, headed the Southern Christian Leadership, organized the March on Washington, opposed the Vietnam War, and pushed for a Poor People's Campaign for peace and justice. In his speech "My Pilgrimage to Nonviolence", Dr. King explains how he came to a Gandhian practice of non-violence after engaging with Western philosophers from Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Hobbes, and Rauschenbausch. As he says:

Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. Love, for Gandhi, was a potent instrument for social and collective transformation. It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and nonviolence that I discovered the method for social reform that I had been seeking for so many months. The intellectual and moral satisfaction that I failed to gain from the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, the revolutionary methods of Marx and Lenin, the social-contracts theory of Hobbes, the "back to nature" optimism of Rousseau, the superman philosophy of Nietzsche, I found in the nonviolent resistance philosophy of Gandhi. I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.

King found in Gandhi a method of understanding the world and living for change directly relevant to the realities of the oppressed in America. He engaged with the philosophy of Reinold Niebuhr that criticized Gandhi's philosophy as passively accepting evil, and made the distinction between "non-resistance to evil" that submitted injustice and "non-violent resistance to evil" that opposed evil courageously with the creative force of love.

In 1959, he made his celebrated trip to India, his trip to "the land of Gandhi". In a piece for *Ebony Magazine*, he was a keen observer of Indian society, noting both the great problems challenges post-independence India, as well as its enormous achievements and its civilizational heritage that upheld peace as a principle of life.

These three great interpreters of non-violence continue to inspire people in the United States to celebrate and study the works of

Gandhi. In Philadelphia in 2019, a group of African Americans, white Americans, Vietnamese, Chinese, Indians, Pakistanis, and others are organizing a Year of Gandhi to uplift these connections and understand how they can be the basis for a new movement for peace, freedom, and justice. A Resolution will be passed by Philadelphia City Council to honour the life of Gandhi, as well as Indian and African American interpreters of Gandhi.

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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.

The G.P.F. represents an attempt to synthesise the Gandhian imperative of truth, justice and nonviolence with the atomic age imperative of universal peace and human survival. It marks the beginning of a long quest – the quest for peace with justice through nonviolence.

The G.P.F. goes about this task in three convergent ways – through study and research, communication and action.

The G.P.F. is aware that the realisation of its objectives can take place only when these convergent modes become fused into one unified programme of work – and to that end its efforts are constantly directed.

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The G.P.F. develops and maintains a two-way contact with like-minded institutions and groups throughout the world, exchanging visits, materials and ideas and collaborating in common programmes.

The G.P.F. will be happy to begin and continue a dialogue with other individuals, groups and institutions willing to join with it in its quest for peace with justice through nonviolence.

Does Non-violent Resistance Have an Origin Story?

Joseph Geraci

YOU COULD SAY that the era of non-violent civil resistance began with a simple refusal. Indeed, you could also say that the US non-violent civil rights movement began with a similar refusal. Gandhi uttered the first, and Rosa Parks the second. Both refused to yield to racial injustice, to the lie of racial superiority, to assaults on their dignity, both refusals affirmations of equality. Importantly, they also refused to respond in kind, with aggression to aggression. How is it that two simple refusals, totaling no more than a handful of words, could set in motion vast non-violent resistance movements on two continents?

To understand Gandhi's watershed moment requires a stretch of the imagination, accustomed as we are to seeing him depicted as an emaciated ascetic wearing a loincloth. Winston Churchill, for example, thought it "alarming and also nauseating," to see Gandhi "striding half-naked up the steps of the Vice-regal Palace," and dubbed Gandhi a "seditious fakir", hoping through scorn and double entendre to render him powerless, which it did not. Indeed, there is an extensive literature on Gandhi's body and attire, or lack thereof, which is unprecedented in the biographies of other political figures.¹

But in 1893, the year of his refusal, Gandhi is still far from the Mahatma image. He is a well-dressed, prosperous, twenty-four year old lawyer (barrister) with a London degree. There are photographs of him from that year. He sports a full moustache, does not wear his famous gold-rimmed glasses; his thick, black hair is brushed back from a high forehead. He is dressed for his role, in an expensive three-piece suit, high-collared white shirt, black cravat, and a turban that will cause controversy when he tries to wear it in the courtroom. You can excuse Gandhi for a touch of narcissism at this young age, and perhaps naivety. He has only been in South Africa for a few days, to take up a job at a well-respected Durban law firm. Known as a stickler for neatness and cleanliness, perhaps it had not yet occurred to him that his expensive suit, white shirt, and tie would rile the South African white ruling class? How dare this man of colour dress so well!

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Indeed, Gandhi's life is meticulously recorded, and we can pinpoint his defining moment with great accuracy: to 9:00 PM on the evening of May 31, 1893. Although he has only been in the job for a week, his firm has asked him to travel from Durban to Pretoria to settle a difficult case, and has purchased a first class train ticket for him. When the train arrives that evening at Maritzburg (Pietermaritzburg) en route to Pretoria he is sitting in a first class carriage. Gandhi tells us in his *Autobiography* that Maritzburg is in an elevated position, around 2000 feet above sea level. May is a winter month in South Africa and Gandhi also tells us it is cold outside. We even know the weather.²

A white passenger enters his compartment and finding someone of colour in first class and not third, goes out to complain to the stationmaster. Two train officials arrive and tell him he must move to a third class carriage, but Gandhi objects that in Durban he was allowed into this carriage and that he has no intention of leaving. The officials tell him he must move and threaten to throw him off the train if he does not comply. Gandhi now utters his refusal, "Yes, you may (throw him off). *I refuse to get out voluntarily.*" (Italics added.) And he is thrown off the train.

It was not Gandhi's style to suffer in silence. Early the following morning he sent a telegram to the Railway Manager and to his employer. Although no apology was forthcoming, Gandhi was allowed to resume his journey in first class. In his *Autobiography* he makes light of the incident. He calls it a "hardship", which was "superficial", and observes that his treatment was "a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice." If he were to stay in South Africa, as he did, he would have to try "to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process." Four decades later, however, Gandhi was to add an important afterthought to this incident. In December 1938, during a conversation with an American missionary, John Mott, Gandhi told him, "My active non-violence began at this date." But why should he think that? And what does it say about non-violent resistance? ³

The moment of Gandhi's refusal is remarkable for its detail. We know the exact year, month, day, hour, and the weather outside. This expensively dressed, dapper lawyer, sitting in a first class carriage, when confronted with raw racial prejudice and the lie of inequality, remains calm and collected. He might have thrown a fit or at least cried injustice with righteous anger, but he does not. He is firm and polite, and vacates the train with dignity; he is turning the other cheek. But the next morning he protests by sending telegrams to the manager of South African railways and to his employer. If he has turned the other cheek the night before, the next morning he

asserts his rights, and his dignity as a lawyer on assignment for his firm. His “I refuse” harbours recognition of the power he holds and need not forfeit; his prestigious law firm has influence in South Africa, and Gandhi must know he can count on that.

By both turning the other cheek *and* actively protesting, Gandhi is affirming the double-sided necessity of non-violence protest, an understanding of non-violence that would later be articulated by Martin Luther King, Jr. as, “not non-resistance to evil, but non-violent resistance to evil.” King was to prefer the term, “active non-violent resistance”, to distinguish non-violence from pacifism or passive resistance, that is, as a form of action.⁴ Not responding in kind, in ways that would imitate that which we are protesting, was also to become a key principle of Gandhi and King’s active non-violent resistance, not only acting, but acting in such a way that means and ends conjoin. Gandhi rightly saw this first occurred in Pietermaritzburg.

Rosa Parks’s defining moment is no less significant and bears many of the same hallmarks. Here again we are able to pinpoint the moment. On Thursday, December 1, 1955 at 5:30 in the evening Mrs. Rosa Parks is leaving her work at Montgomery Fair department store in downtown Montgomery, Alabama. Her job title is “assistant tailor”; she does clothing alterations and after a long day of hard work her neck and shoulders are aching. It is cold and she is wearing a simple overcoat over her work clothes. She stops at a local drugstore to buy a heating pad. She doesn’t find what she’s looking for but she does buy a few things and is eager to get home. The buses are crowded and when she boards at Court Square she thankfully finds an aisle seat in the row behind the white section. The Montgomery bus company imposed racial preference rules on its black passengers; the first rows were reserved for whites and the remaining rows for blacks unless there was an overflow of whites, when blacks had to stand. No black could sit parallel to a white. A black man was sitting beside her by the window. Two black women occupied the two seats across the aisle.⁵

The bus stopped and a white man got on. The rows reserved for whites were now full, and the bus driver turned and said, “All right you folks I want those seats,” meaning all the seats in the row where Rosa Parks was sitting. Four seated blacks would have to stand to give one white person a seat. The driver was in violation of a Montgomery segregation ordinance that stated that a person could not be asked to give up their seat if another was not available, and there were no more vacant seats. But the ordinance was rarely enforced. The others gave up their seats but Mrs. Parks did not. She

had paid her fare, was minding her own business, and was tired and aching. The driver shouted at her, "Look woman, I told you I wanted that seat. Are you going to stand up?" Rosa Parks said, "No." The driver exited the bus to phone the police and when they arrived she was arrested and led off to jail. The driver was asked if he wanted to press charges and he said he did. If he had not, her case would not have gone to trial, or to the US Supreme Court.⁶

Mrs. Parks later told an interviewer that she was tired but not angry, that her refusal happened spontaneously, and that she had wanted "them" to know that she felt she "was being mistreated" and the only way she could let them know was to "resist the order." If she wasn't angry, she was fed-up. She was also aware of the possible consequences. In March of that year, fifteen-year-old high school student, Claudette Colvin, an acquaintance of Mrs. Parks, had been dragged off a bus. And three months previously fourteen-year-old Emmett Till had been murdered in nearby Money, Mississippi in one of the most brutal racist murders in US history. She could not have been sure of her safety.

Friends were notified of her arrest, and rushed to the jail to post bond. It was clear at the outset that a test case could be built around Mrs. Parks, described as "unassuming and modest . . . a shy person and a political organizer who believed in collective action over individual celebrity." A reporter wrote that she was "one of the most serene, one of the most beautiful women we've had the honour to meet." Photographs of her at that time show an attractive woman of forty-two; secretary of the local chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), co-founder of NAACP's Youth Council, a deaconess at her local church, and a Sunday school teacher, the sort of highly respected member of the Montgomery black community and "person of integrity" around whom to build a protest.⁷

The evening of Mrs. Parks's arrest friends in the Women's Political Council seized the opportunity and immediately produced a flyer to be distributed among the black community calling for a boycott of Montgomery's buses, beginning first thing Monday morning, December the fifth. It was feared that it might not succeed but early Monday morning only eight black persons were seen to be riding the buses; there would be virtually universal support for the boycott.

On that same Monday a meeting was called at Mt. Zion AME Church of several dozen black leaders "to discuss a course of action" for the boycott. Ralph Abernathy suggested the name Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) for the organizing body, which was adopted. The floor was opened to nominations for president. The

first and only name put forward was that of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., but it wasn't clear he would accept. At the time of the boycott, twenty-six year old Rev. King had only lived in Montgomery for fifteen months, as the pastor of a busy Baptist church, and the father of a month-old daughter. He had already turned down the presidency of the Montgomery NAACP chapter, and when asked the night of Mrs. Parks's arrest to hold a meeting at his church he had shown reluctance. When asked if he would accept the presidency of MIA, Ralph Abernathy expected King to decline. But after a thoughtful pause, King told his colleagues, "Well, if you think I can render some service, I will," that is, lead the Montgomery bus boycott.⁸

It was scarcely eight years since the assassination of Gandhi in January 1948, but on Dec. 5, 1955, when King rose to address the MIA as their new president, he did not mention Gandhi or non-violence and it was only through the persuasion chiefly of Ralph Abernathy and Bayard Rustin that by Christmas, "an emerging emphasis on non-violence was clear." Indeed, in the weeks that followed, King would not only sharpen and refine his commitment to non-violence but would also see in Gandhian non-violence the opportunity for a new non-violence synthesis. As he was to describe it, "I had come to see early that the Christian doctrine of love operating through the Gandhian method of non-violence was one of the most potent weapons available to the Negro in his struggle for freedom."⁹ The banner of "active non-violent resistance" had passed from Gandhi to Dr. King, from the struggle for national independence to the struggle for racial equality. As King also wrote, "Christ furnished the spirit and motivation, while Gandhi provided the method."¹⁰

These are origin stories. That May night in 1893, Gandhi was a stranger in a strange land. He knew no one, and was about to be cast out in darkness onto a train platform in a town he had never seen before, in a country he had been in for only a week. That December night, Parks was a black woman, sitting alone on a segregationist bus. Her seat and safety were precarious. Indeed, she could not be sure she would not be assaulted. Apartheid and segregation were dangerous and violent. Both remained calm, firm in the courage of their convictions, and both spoke only a few words, "I refuse," and "No." Nor did they respond in kind, with aggression to aggression; they were polite, cooperative. Both were saying, I am entitled to my seat because disenfranchisement is based on a lie and I will not be a party to that lie. To hold fast to the right to their seats was to hold fast to a truth. It was to put their bodies on the line as the agents of that truth; all the way to the Railway Manager and the subsequent decades

of Gandhian non-violent civil resistance, or, if necessary, to the US Supreme Court and its 1956 landmark ruling declaring the segregation of Montgomery's buses unconstitutional.

Both Gandhi and Mrs. Parks's protests were affirmations of the same set of principles: self-worth and dignity, justice over injustice, not only the rejection of racial inequality, but also the active assertion of equality, of equal rights and the determination to achieve them through non-violent civil resistance. Both Gandhi and Parks refused to obey racist orders, refused to accede to a lie. Upon reflection, Gandhi tells us that his "*active* non-violence began at this date," the emphasis being on "*active*." Likewise Rosa Parks's "No" coupled with King's "I will" were watershed moments, for the black community of Montgomery, and for the history of non-violent civil resistance, the moment not only when leadership passed to Dr. King and the black, US civil rights movement, but also the moment when non-violence demonstrated its adaptability and creativity with surprising force.

What large waves such small words had made.

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1. See for example, Joseph S. Alter, *Gandhi's Body: Sex, Diet, and the Politics of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); and most recently, Nico Slate, *Gandhi's Search for the Perfect Diet: Eating with the World in Mind* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019). Churchill's remark is from Slate, *Ibid.*, p. 4.
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4. Martin Luther King Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (edited by Clayborne Carson), (New York: Time Warner Books,

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5. There are innumerable accounts of Parks's protest, but the account here is based on Jeanne Theoharis, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000). pp. 61-94; and also, David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: Harper Collins, 1986), especially pp. 11-17.
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 9. Martin Luther King, Jr. *Stride Towards Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 85.
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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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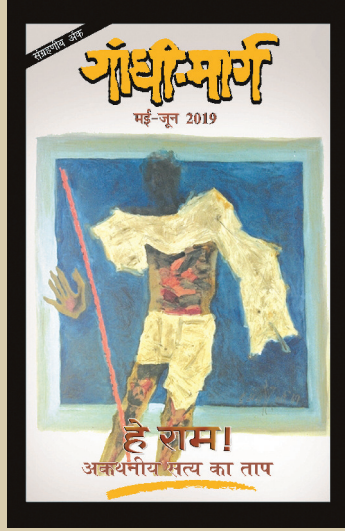
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