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Editorial

THE PASSING OF Archbishop Desmond Tutu on 26 December 2021 heralds the end of a generation known for the conscientious application of nonviolence in struggles against oppression and injustice. The world has lost one of the foremost champions of peace and justice. He was also the leading spokesperson of a form of justice built on reconciliation and forgiveness. Although his spiritual background provided the basis in one sense, its embeddedness in the Bantu culture and its world view of ubuntu was even more significant. Tutu always thought about the good of humanity based on the ubuntu philosophy that humans are connected, and this interconnectedness should inform the health and well-being of communities across the world.

The Arch, as he was called endearingly, did not desist from speaking his mind on several national and international issues fearlessly and forcefully. “I developed tremendous respect for his fearlessness. It wasn’t fearlessness of a wild kind. It was fearlessness anchored in his deep faith in God,” said F.W. de Klerk, who was the last among the apartheid rulers. He prided in calling the South Africans “the Rainbow People of the world”. His encounters with multiple faiths led him to move beyond Christianity to accept the universality of the religious message. A deep sense of spirituality and prayer always was there. But it was not contemplative, but one that wanted to wipe the tear from the oppressed and the poor everywhere. He was a prophet of justice and inclusion. God is not a man, nor a Christian, nor homophobic, nor white, according to him. Black oppression oppresses the whites, and black liberation liberates the whites also. These ideas have strong Gandhian overtones.

Winner of the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize, many compare Tutu with Martin Luther King Jr. for his fight against apartheid adopting the nonviolent path and call for economic sanctions against the South African government that practised it. But post-apartheid South Africa’s high hopes of democracy gave way to desperation with a high degree of crime, xenophobic violence, inequality, and corruption.

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The causes for which he devoted his life ranged from child marriage to Tibet to calls for trying western leaders over the Iraq war. He was a strong supporter of the Palestinian cause and for the right to die. His burial service also reflected all the values he stood for, such as inclusion, wholeness, and healing. A constant element of hope was there in Tutu. Any human being who claims his/her humanity needs to recognize the humanity of others. Every act of resistance of millions will bring down even the mightiest of oppressions. He was an advocate of civil society. His support to eradicate diseases and poverty and end human rights violations everywhere is noteworthy. He spoke truth to power. On top of it all, he always undertook all his activities with wit and humour intended not to humiliate anyone, but to recognize the humanity of all. He was an advocate of critical thinking. His legacy is upheld by the numerous organizations that he helped found.

This issue of the journal has five articles in the main section and three short articles in the notes and comments section. The first article by Teresa Joseph and A. M. Thomas examines how Gandhi looked at music. Prakash Khundrakpam and Jayanta Krishna Sarmah revisit Rawls's theory of justice from a Gandhian perspective in the 50th year of the publication of his magnum opus. The third article by N. Benjamin examines Gandhi's response to Militarism in Japan. The fourth article by Sanghamitra Sadhu examines the self-making and nation-making that Gandhi undertook simultaneously. Rachana Bhangaoakar explores the connections between Gandhian philosophy and youth civic engagement in India. There are short articles by Ravi Ranjan and Abdul Hameed P A, Anatakumar Giri, and Maneesha Pandey. We are happy to place this line-up of articles for the readers' attention.

JOHN S. MOOLAKKATTU
Chief Editor



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Mahatma Gandhi and the Harmony of Music

*Teresa Joseph
A.M. Thomas*

ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi had actively engaged with music in various ways throughout his life. He had a rather nuanced approach to music, art and aesthetics which can be seen as part of his larger philosophy of life. Drawing from his speeches, writings and interviews, this article discusses Gandhi's engagement with music. It unveils Gandhi's perspectives on art and music as well as music and religion, and his notion of the power of music to transcend sectarian boundaries. It also analyses Gandhi's social practice of music including his interventions in the conflicts relating to music and religion, and the question of democratising music as against its then existing exclusionary nature. The paper provides yet another pathway to understand Gandhi's life and thought, particularly with regard to universal fraternity and religious pluralism.

Key words: Gandhi, music, art for art's sake, music and religion, universal harmony

Introduction

MAHATMA GANDHI CAN be viewed and understood from diverse perspectives and vantage points and through different lenses. Gandhi's engagement with music is one such lens through which one can attempt to understand Gandhi the man and his message. However, such a perspective has rarely come to the fore in the large repertoire of documentation on Gandhi. A general notion is that Gandhi was antithetical to music. In fact, in 1924, when an interviewer commented that he was under the impression that Gandhi was against all art

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including music, Gandhi exclaimed “I! Against music!”¹ He is also reported to have stated that “if there was no music and no laughter in me, I would have died of this crushing burden of work.”²

Music was an intrinsic part of Gandhi’s life, beginning with his childhood days when his mother used to sing bhajans (devotional songs) and is also reported to have made young Gandhi do so. During his student days in London, Gandhi bought a violin and took violin lessons for a while, in his initial attempts to emulate the characteristics of an English gentleman. In South Africa, his close association with the Christian community introduced him to several Christian hymns. In Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm in South Africa, and later in all his ashrams in India, Gandhi’s favourite hymns were sung during the evening prayers. Gandhi’s secretary Mahadev Desai in his chronicle of the days spent with Gandhi, recounts having heard Gandhi sing alone on rare occasions.³

Lakshmi Subramanian points out that when Gandhi appeared on the political scene in India, “the social context of Indian music had been greatly communalized”.⁴ Historically, musical expression in India had a strong religious basis as it was largely drawn from devotional poetry and musical practices in temples and courts. By the late 19th and early 20th century, music had become important in defining a public sphere in India. There was an increasing public use of music and songs as religious practice in the form of processions and public rituals. The introduction of gramophone recording, public broadcasts and films were also important developments of the time and contributed to this process. During the 1905 Swadeshi movement, religious and patriotic songs articulated identities – sometimes transcending them, sometimes dividing them. One of the early advocates of music for social mobilization was Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, a leading exponent of Hindustani classical music, who was closely associated with Gandhi. According to Subramanian, he was instrumental in using religious songs/bhajans to redefine the role and social function of music.

Art, Music and the ‘Public Weal’

Anthony Parel, the well-known Gandhi scholar and one of the few to write on Gandhi and art has pointed out that in order to fully understand Gandhi we need to understand his interest in the arts.⁵ Gandhi had a very nuanced approach to art, as is evident from his numerous discussions, writings and interviews on the issue – particularly his interactions with Romain Rolland, Rabindranath Tagore, G.Ramachandran (an art student from Shanthinikethan) and Dilip Kumar Roy (an exponent of Indian music and inmate of the

Aurobindo Ashram, Puducherry). The importance he gave to notions of art and aesthetics were also evident in the fact that he included Leo Tolstoy's *What is Art?*, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, and John Ruskin's *'A Joy Forever': And its Place in the Market* in the suggested readings for further study in the appendix of his book *Hind Swaraj*, which was written in 1909. *What is Art?* had such a deep impact on Gandhi that he got it translated into Gujarati. Tolstoy argued that anything that communicates emotion was art. Art should be comprehensible to all and the function of art was to improve humanity. Similarly, Ruskin argued in *Unto This Last* that art should not be acquired by individuals for personal gain. It was a precious thing to be used for public good. Besides Ruskin and Tolstoy, Anand K. Coomaraswamy's *Essays on National Idealism*, which was published one month after *Hind Swaraj* also had its influence on Gandhi's views on art, and he recommended the book to his acquaintances. Coomaraswamy argued that national regeneration of the people of India could not take place without the support of music and the arts. In his speech at the Second Gujarat Educational Conference in 1917, Gandhi specifically refers to Coomaraswamy when he says that "music must get a place in our efforts at popular awakening."⁶

Gandhi revealed that while he was "a lover of music as well as the other arts," his values may be different from the accepted ones.⁷ He did not adhere to the concept of 'art for art's sake'. In a letter to K.M. Munshi in 1945, Gandhi argued that it had always seemed to him "a terrible thought that the end of art is for it to be made interesting. Leaving aside debauchery, even hypocrisy, violence and untruth can easily be made interesting. Would such writing be called art?"⁸ He felt that "Art is a means of bringing out the inner as well as the outer beauty of a thing."⁹ In an interview with Dilip Kumar Roy, Gandhi revealed that for him "An art is to be valued only when it ennobles life."¹⁰ He further elaborated that "my aim is ever and always that of public weal. Art is acceptable to me only to the extent that it tends to the welfare of the people at large."¹¹

This position was also reflected in his conversation with the French philosopher and Nobel laureate - Romain Rolland in 1931, where he clearly explained why he could not accept the dictum 'art for art's sake'. He did not see art as something distinct from truth. Created beauty had its source from uncreated beauty. Art had to be understood not only on its own terms but also in terms of other aspects of life.¹² He also felt that "art has a place in life, only when artists make their art helpful to human welfare and enjoyable even by the common man. I think the greatness and glory of art diminishes when it ceases to be a public place of recreation for all and becomes

the palace garden of a few."¹³ "The most sublime art is not one that only individuals with special talents can enjoy, but one which is capable of enjoyment by all."¹⁴

Gandhi argued that art including music could never be an end in itself.¹⁵ At various points of time, Gandhi elaborated that he perceived music to be an instrument of communication, a means to reach out to the people, a medium of spiritual development¹⁶ and a constructive activity¹⁷ that was "meant for service."¹⁸ He argued that real music is that "which uplifts the soul."¹⁹ According to him "music does not proceed from the throat alone. There is music of the mind, of the senses and of the heart."²⁰ To him music was not the

mere singing or playing on an instrument.... I would say that one understands music only if one's whole life becomes full of music. Therefore, a student of music ought to know how to make himself comfortable, how to communicate with others, etc., whether alone or in society. There should be sweetness in (whatever he does), in his movements, in his eating, drinking. A person who is full of music will be courteous and thoughtful in all his acts.²¹

In a speech at the annual function of the National Music Association in Ahmedabad in 1926, Gandhi pointed out that to know music was to bring it to life. He further differentiated between the ordinary or narrow, and deeper or broad interpretations of music. While in the narrow sense it meant "the ability to sing and play an instrument well while carrying a tune and marking the correct beats of time," in a wider sense it meant "union, concord, mutual help" which cannot be dispensed with in any aspect of life. He further elaborated that "true music is created only when life is attuned to a single tune and a single time-beat. Music is born only where the strings of the heart are not out of tune."²² He expressed the view that the deeper meaning of music was that "our whole life should be sweet and musical like a song.... life cannot be made like that without the practice of virtues such as truth, honesty, etc."²³

Gandhi's focus on art and music as the means to an end, and as reflecting union, concord, mutual help, is also evident from the kind of music that he enjoyed. It was not music for the sake of music. More than the tune, it was the lyrics that were of importance.

Music and Universal Harmony

Religious music appealed the most to Gandhi, as he felt that it had the power to create harmony in life and unite people, transcending sectarian barriers.²⁴ Bhajans had a special place in his heart. He was very much attached to it in his personal life and in his autobiography,

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he refers to the soothing effect of the name of Lord Rama to ward off ghosts. But he also enjoyed music of the vedas, the Bible and the Koran – all of which were sung in his ashrams. These were not only from different religions, but also from different countries and languages, throwing light on his religious persona. This was reflected clearly in his speech in 1926 where he pointed out that

The hymns of *Samaveda* are a mine of music, and no *ayat* of the Koran can be recited unmusically. David's Psalms transport you to raptures and remind you of the hymns from *Samaveda*. Let us revive this art and patronize the school of music.

We see Hindu and Mussalman musicians sitting cheek by jowl and partaking in musical concerts. When shall we see the same fraternal union in other affairs of our life? We shall then have the name of Rama and Rahman simultaneously on our lips.²⁵

In 1922 Narayan Maheshwar Khare – the resident musician in Sabarmathi Ashram, who was a disciple of Paluskar, together with Gandhi compiled about 250 devotional songs in different languages into the *Ashram Bhajanvali* which formed part of the morning and evening prayers at his ashrams. He translated these into English during his imprisonment in Yervada jail in 1930, and an adaptation of this work by John S. Hoyland was published in 1934 as *Songs from Prison* by George Allen and Unwin.²⁶ The Bhajanvali was predominantly Hindu oriented. But at the same time, it was open to suggestions and went through changes. For instance, on the suggestion of the Sikh community, Shahbads from the Guru Granth were included. It also had songs from Christianity, Islam, and by Guru Nanak and Kabir.

Some of his favourite songs and poems included that of Kabir, Tulsidas, Surdas, Tagore, passages from the Gita, Upanishad and others. Gandhi revealed that nothing elated him so much as “the music of the *Gita* or the *Ramayana* by Tulsidas.”²⁷ His specific favourites were of course Narsinh Mehta's ‘Vaishnava Janato Tene Kahiye Je’ and Tulsidas' ‘Raghupati Raghav Rajaram’, both of which were sung during Gandhi's daily prayer meetings.

‘Vaishnava Janato’ was written in the fifteenth century by Narsinh Mehta, an exponent of the Bhakti movement who Gandhi admired for disregarding the then prevailing common prejudices against ‘untouchables’. In the 5 December 1920 issue of *Navajivan*, Gandhi quotes the bhajan and also provides a translation which reads: “A true Vaishnava is he / who is moved by others' sufferings; / who helps people in distress, / and feels no pride for having done so....”²⁸ Gandhi further lists out twenty qualities of a Vaishnava as described

by Narasinh Mehta. These include him being respectful to all, speaking ill of no-one, being self-controlled in speech, action and thought, holding everyone in equal regard, being ever truthful and so on. The historian, Vinay Lal points out that Gandhi's unbound affection for this bhajan or devotional song is a reflection of his religious sensibility.²⁹ The song was so significant for Gandhi that it was sung by Khare at the commencement of the Dandi March in 1930.

With regard to the bhajan 'Raghupati Raghav Rajaram', Lal points out that villagers in the North Indian part of the subcontinent had for centuries greeted each other and strangers with the words 'Ram Ram' and 'Jai Siya Ram'. Popularly referred to as Ramdhun, Raghupati Raghav Raj Ram was originally composed by the poet Tulsidas. It affirms the presence of Sita and Ram and showers praises on them. While the precise origins of the Ramdhun are not entirely clear, Lal writes that it was reportedly Paluskar who "composed the Ramdhun for Gandhi with the hope that he would take it to the masses."³⁰ Gandhi had approached Paluskar to compose songs for his ashrams. The latter proceeded to set the tune for Ramdhun where Lord Ram's name is repeated. Gandhi found this very appealing. Later the words "Ishwar Allah Tere Naam." were included. That is, "God and Allah are your names / May God bestow wisdom on all." i.e. that the Ishwar of the Hindus and the Allah of the Muslims were one and the same. Thus, praising the oneness of the Supreme being and Hindu-Muslim unity. Most people believe that it was Gandhi himself who added these words. Rajmohan Gandhi³¹ argues that Gandhi did not actually create the words himself. In 1947, while in Noakhali, Gandhi's grand-niece Manu sang the words "Ishwar Allah Tero Naam" at a prayer meeting. Gandhi asked Manu to sing it every day henceforth. Today the words have become integral to the song, echoing Gandhi's message of unity of religions. Gandhi began most of his public meetings with this song. According to Lakshmi Subramanian, Gandhi also used it as a means to calm crowds and orient them to his discourse.³²

Both Vaishnavo Janato and Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram also reflected the spirit of protest, being very much a part of the freedom struggle. Satyagrahis sang them during the Dandi yatra or salt march against the imposition of salt tax by the British.

Several Christian hymns also formed a part of Gandhi's favourite songs. These included 'Abide with me' by Henry Lyte, 'When I survey the wondrous cross' by Isaac Watts, 'He who would true valour see' by John Bunyan, and so on. Emilsen writes that Gandhi revealed a continuous interest in Christian hymns. When he was a prisoner in the Aga Khan's Palace in Pune in 1943, he asked for a Christian hymn

book. He later wrote to a Quaker friend, that he was in “the midst of a raging fire” and often hummed to himself the hymn ‘Rock of Ages’.³³ In a letter to Narashinhrao, a Gujarati poet and Professor of Gujarati, Gandhi wrote that “the tunes and the verses of many English hymns are like amrit to me.”³⁴ Gandhi clearly stated:

Though I am a devout Hindu, or even because I am a devout Hindu, I have no difficulty in appreciating the devotional hymns of other religions, and having had intimate contact with many Christians I came to appreciate some of the Hymns even as a youngster.³⁵

He further elaborated that among these songs ‘Lead Kindly Light’ was his favourite. ‘Lead Kindly Light’ was written by Cardinal John Henry Newman in 1833. The first stanza of the hymn which appealed most to Gandhi read: “Lead, kindly Light /amidst the encircling gloom / Lead Thou me on /The night is dark and I am far from home / Lead Thou me on / Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see / The distant scene, one step enough for me.” Gandhi regarded the words “one step enough for me” as “the quintessence of all philosophy.”³⁶ One step at a time was enough, the rest was left to God. Many letters, articles and speeches of his also close with the hymn’s words: “one step enough for me.”³⁷

As Emilsen points out Gandhi used the hymn to break fasts, to chastise the press and also in difficult conversations with the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, during the Civil Disobedience Movement. From 1916 until a month before Gandhi’s death on 30 January 1948 ‘Lead, kindly Light’ was regularly referred to in his writings. The hymn is explicitly mentioned more than seventy times in the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. He meditated daily on the words of the hymn and he encouraged his supporters to do the same. Early in 1932 ‘Lead, kindly Light’ assumed a special place in the Ashram’s prayers, with Hindu, Muslim and Christian supporters of Indian independence, singing the hymn either in English or the Gujarati version ‘Premal Jyoti’ (Light of Love) every Friday evening, “the day of Jesus’s crucifixion,” as explained by Gandhi.³⁸ Less than a year before his death, Gandhi wrote to his closest associate, Vinoba Bhave, “In my daily prayers I earnestly pray to God to lead me from untruth to truth. Isn’t the same idea conveyed in ‘Lead kindly Light?’” In essence, as Emilsen argues, Newman’s hymn, “played an important role in bolstering the philosophical underpinnings of Gandhi’s satyagraha movement. The hymn also played a part in Gandhi’s developing commitment to religious pluralism.”³⁹

Gandhi’s interest in music was not restricted to the religious or

Indian. In a letter to Rathintranath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore's son in 1945, Gandhi suggested that although music in Shantiniketan was charming, it should not be focused only on Bengali music, Hindustani music – i.e. music before and after the Muslim period should also have its due place. He also added that western music should also blend with the Indian, pointing out that Visva Bharati University was conceived as a world university.⁴⁰

When he was in London to attend the Second Round Table Conference as a representative of the Indian National Congress, he stayed at the Kingsley Hall Community Centre and spent time listening to music and is even reported to have danced to the tune of the Scottish song Auld Lang Syne. Although the Congress representatives had reservations about this, Gandhi responded that what is needed is to connect to the people. Music was a means of communication for Gandhi.

It was soon after this that Gandhi visited Romain Rolland in Switzerland. He had discussions on art with the latter and also asked him to play a piece by Beethoven. Much later, in his reply to Mirabehn's letter which quoted Beethoven's motto – "through suffering, joy," Gandhi responded that such quotes from Beethoven were "good spiritual food."⁴¹ Incidentally, Mirabehn (originally Madeleine Slade) had been introduced to Gandhi by Romain Rolland, and shared Rolland's interest and love for Beethoven. Interestingly in a letter written in 17 June 1932, Gandhi reveals that "in the past, I used to get bored when listening to European music. It is only now that I can understand and enjoy it a little."⁴² In 1947, in a letter to a person who was hearing impaired, Gandhi, in an attempt to motivate him, wrote: "Do you know that Beethoven, the great musician was deaf?"⁴³

Music and Communal Conflict

In his perception of music as a means to an end, Gandhi firmly asserted that true music uplifts people and there was "no place in it for communal differences and hostility."⁴⁴ However, several controversies relating to music erupted during the 1920s and 30s. Gandhi's response to them reveal his perspectives on music and religion.

One controversy was related to Hindu processions playing religious music outside mosques when prayers were going on inside. This became an explosive political issue, sharpening the Hindu-Muslim divide and further alienating the Muslims during the 1920s. Between 1923 and 1928 there occurred 112 riots, of which more than 31 involved music outside mosques. While Hindus claimed music as an essential part of their religious observances and that they had the right to

play music at all times and places, Muslims stated that music disturbed their prayers and that they had the right to ask for silence outside mosques.⁴⁵ Gandhi spoke and wrote extensively on the issue. He was vociferous in his disapproval of music dividing people.

In a public speech in 1921, Gandhi stated: "Hindus may take it from me that it is no part, no essential part, of Hinduism that we should play music at any time. It is much less an essential part of my religion that I should play music, instrumental or vocal, passing by a mosque."⁴⁶ He further elaborated in an article in *Navajivan* in 1924 "To my knowledge, there is no religious injunction that requires the continuous play of music in a procession. I also think that it is the duty of Hindus to cease playing at certain times in order to avoid hurting Muslims. But I am equally convinced that to stop playing music out of fear of Muslim swords is wrong."⁴⁷ Gandhi questioned the importance given to music in this context and stressed the need for voluntary accommodation to resolve the issue. Writing in *Young India* of January 1928, Gandhi further reiterated: "If we are to reach unity of hearts, we must each be prepared to perform an adequate measure of sacrifice."⁴⁸

Another controversy was related to the song 'Vande Mataram' which was written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and included in his Bengali novel *Anandamath*. It was first sung by Rabindranath Tagore at the 1896 session of the Indian National Congress. It became part of the mobilization strategies of the freedom movement and was sung at conferences and Congress sessions. Gandhi initially did not equate it with religion, but viewed it as a hymn to the glory of the motherland and concluded much of his correspondence with the words – Vande Mataram. However, with increasing communal problems, the Muslim community made it clear that it was not comfortable with the song and felt a sense of alienation as they perceived it to have a Hindu cultural context and a religious connotation of the nation. Its religious connotation drew opposition, particularly in the context of the communal conflicts of the 1920s. Gandhi initially did not view the song in a religious context, but by the late 1930s he expressed his reservations for singing the song.⁴⁹ He wrote in *Harijan* of 1 July 1939:

No matter what its source was and how and when it was composed, it has become a most powerful battle-cry among Hindus and Mussalmans of Bengal during the partition days. It was an anti-imperialist cry.... It had never occurred to me that it was a Hindu song or meant only for Hindus. Unfortunately, now we have fallen on evil days.... I would not risk a single quarrel over singing Vandemataram at a mixed gathering.⁵⁰

Three weeks later, he further clarified in the pages of *Harijan* that “if at any mixed gathering any person objected to the singing of Vandemataram even with the Congress expurgations, the singing should be dropped.”⁵¹

During the 1940s Gandhi faced criticism from different quarters for the kind of songs that he selected, and the inclusion of readings from the Koran and the invocation of Ram as well as Rahim. His prayer meetings began to be boycotted by both communities. Some members of the Muslim community expressed their discomfort at the singing of the Ramdhun at prayer meetings.

But Gandhi refused to give up this practice. His justification was that the name Ram referred to the all-pervasive God known to millions and to evoke deepest feelings. He clarified in his writings that Ramanama was one of the many voices of God and so should not offend the Muslim community. He also elaborated that he read the Koran every night together with the Bhagvad Gita. He was ready to leave out anything that offended Muslims, but not Ramdhun – he considered it to be his lifeline, that gave him mental peace. At a prayer meeting in April 1946, Gandhi stated:

Is there one God for the Mussalmans and another for the Hindus, Parsis or Christians? No, there is only one omnipotent omnipresent God. He is named variously, and we remember Him by the name that is most familiar to us. My Rama, the Rama of our prayers, is not the historical Rama, the son of Dasaratha, the king of Ayodhya. He is the eternal, the unborn, the one without a second. Him alone, I worship, His aid alone I seek. He belongs equally to all. I therefore, see no reason why a Mussalman or anybody should object to taking His name. But he is in no way bound to recognize God as Ramanama. He may utter to himself Allah or Khuda so as not to mar the harmony of sound.⁵²

He used the name Rama as a metaphor for an all-pervasive divine being. Even when he was fighting communal violence in Noakhali in 1947, Gandhi did not abandon Ramdhun or the Koran.

Music of Tranquillity, Harmony and Swaraj

While Gandhi certainly considered music to be a means to an end, on certain occasions he revealed an interest and appreciation for the melody and rhythm of the song. In his autobiography, Gandhi recounts being invited to a celebration of the Brahmo Samaj while he was staying with Gopal Krishna Gokhale in Calcutta. He recalls listening to Bengali music and writes that since then he had been “a lover of Bengali music.”⁵³

Gandhi also writes of having had the privilege “of enjoying the

music of Bhai Ajmerji. His melodious voice and his knowledge of Hindi and Sanskrit gave me immense joy."⁵⁴ Speaking of the impact of hymns when sung melodiously, he recalls occasions when hymns "sank deep into me though the same thing expressed in prose had failed to touch me. I also found that the meaning of hymns discordantly sung has failed to come home to me and that it burns itself on my mind when they have been properly sung."⁵⁵ According to him "music has its own distinct effect apart from words."⁵⁶ He revealed that "music has given me peace... it has tranquilised my mind when I was greatly agitated over something. It has helped me to overcome anger."⁵⁷ He felt that "when a song was sung in a manner I found sweet, I fully enjoyed it and also understood its meaning. Sometimes I myself have been able to hum the tune of a song, and then I have both fully enjoyed the music and understood the meaning."⁵⁸ It is in this context that he sought the services of trained musicians to teach music in the ashram. Gandhi also asked people like M.S.Subhalakshmi to sing his favourite bhajans. Subhalakshmi popularized Gandhi's favourite devotional songs and Gandhi admired her musical genius. He asked her to sing Hari Tum Haro and All India Radio relayed this rendition after announcing Gandhi's death a few months later.

Gandhi also appreciated instrumental music. While announcing several new features of the forthcoming meeting of the Indian National Congress in 1921, Gandhi stated that there would be a musical concert in which musicians from all over India would take part. He pointed out: "We little know the wonderful results that the simple musical instruments of India yield.... There will be in connection with the concert an exhibition of Indian musical instruments."⁵⁹ Speaking to villagers in Pudukalayam in 1925, Gandhi expressed his preference for stringed instruments as they "produce a deeper melody and so far as I am concerned they have a far more soothing effect on me than a harmonium."⁶⁰ Similarly, writing about an exhibition that was to be organized in relation with the Congress session of 1946, he specifically stated that "village music, musical instruments and village dramas" were to be included.⁶¹ A few months later he further specified folk music.

Gandhi often discussed music in the context of noise and how this needs to be regulated and people disciplined. As early as 1920, Gandhi wrote in *Young India* of the need to evolve order out of the chaos of the mob-law that existed in India. He felt that "one great stumbling block is that we have neglected music. Music means rhythm, order. Its effect is electrical. It immediately soothes."⁶² In 1928, when asked why he gave so much importance to music, Gandhi responded:

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Music brings sweetness to the individual and to the social life of the people. Even as pranayama is necessary for the regulation of breath, so is music for disciplining the voice. Dissemination of the knowledge of music among the people will greatly help in controlling and stopping the noise which is a usual feature of public meetings in this country. Music pacifies anger and its judicious use is highly helpful in leading a man to the vision of God.⁶³

He clearly felt that “harmonious music has the power to soothe the anguish of the soul.” He argued that restlessness in large gatherings could be “arrested and calmed if a national song is sung by all.... We have an example of the power of music in the fact that boatmen and other labourers raise, in unison, the cry of Harahar and Allabeli and this helps them in their work.”⁶⁴ He felt that there can be no swaraj where there is no harmony or music.

Where there is discord and everyone striking his own tune, there is bad government or anarchy. Work for swaraj fails to appeal to us because we have no music in us. When we have millions of people singing together in harmony or taking God’s name in unison, making one music, we shall have taken the first step to swaraj.... The experiment with music will be regarded as a successful one when the crores of people in the entire country will start speaking with the same voice.⁶⁵

It is in this context that from the 1920s Gandhi began to emphasise the notion of the ‘music of the spinning wheel’. Gandhi considered the spinning wheel to be an ideal solution for social inequality. The spinning wheel was a means of upliftment of the poor and a symbol of the freedom movement. There was rhythm, order and melody in the spinning wheel. Writings on spinning compared it to playing music – in the sense that for both it was necessary to strike the right note.

In his speech during a prayer meeting Gandhi stated that: “The music of the charkha murmurs sweetly that we are all one, born to be equal sharers to the goods of the earth with no one higher or wealthier than the other.”⁶⁶ Gandhi pointed out that the music of the spinning wheel would be like balm to one’s soul. It is interesting to note Rabindranath Tagore’s statement about Gandhi in this context, that there was an aesthetic element in Gandhi’s seeming ascetism. He later added: “I have learnt to understand him as I would understand an artist.”⁶⁷

In fact, during the final years of his life, Tagore’s ‘Ekla Chalo Re’ had become another favourite song of his. It was a constant refrain in Noakhali, at a time when Gandhi was also being side-lined from the leadership of the national movement. The song was written in

1905 and calls upon the listener to continue with his/her good work notwithstanding any lack of support from anyone else. The song as translated by Tagore himself reads:

If they answer not to thy call walk alone / If they are afraid and cower mutely facing the wall / O thou unlucky one / open thy mind and speak out alone. / If they turn away, and desert you when crossing the wilderness, / O thou unlucky one, / trample the thorns under thy tread, / and along the blood-lined track travel alone / If they do not hold up the light when the night is troubled with storm, / O thou unlucky one, / with the thunder flame of pain ignite thy own heart / and let it burn alone.⁶⁸

Gandhi stressed the essence of the song that one “should have the strength to walk alone in the face of difficulties however great. If he realized that God was ever with him, he would not feel lonely.”⁶⁹ The song is reported to have motivated Gandhi himself during the last tumultuous days of his life.

Another song that reflected this spirit of protest, resistance and mobilisation and which Gandhi appreciated, but is not so well known – was the Urdu song ‘Uth Jaag Musafir’ by Kabirdas. In 1932, while in Yervada Jail, Gandhi decided to start a fast unto death against separate electorates. Before doing so, he is reported to have sung this song and his secretary Mahadev Desai joined him, followed by Sardar Patel. Subsequently almost all the inmates of the jail joined them in the singing. Roughly translated, the refrain was: “Oh traveller get up, it is dawn, it is not right that you continue sleeping.”

Democratising Music

During this period of history, music had become restricted to the elite sections of society, particularly upper-class religious devotees. Gandhi was aggrieved at this exclusionary nature of the music of the time. He wanted to democratise music and make it something of the masses. In his address to the Gujarat Literature Society in 1936, Gandhi spoke of the need for art and literature that could speak to the millions. He made it clear that since Sanskrit chants and verses were not easily understandable, he favoured the simple bhajan. Given the historical context of the time, his preference for bhajans rather than the exclusionary Sanskrit chants was a reflection of this desire to democratise music.

Gandhi felt that the study of music had been neglected in the country and highlighted the necessity of spreading music among the masses. He stated that if he had any influence with voluntary organizations, he would have made singing a compulsory activity.

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He would also have invited great musicians to attend every Congress or Conference and teach music to the masses.⁷⁰ He considered the entire educational system to be incomplete without music.⁷¹ Speaking at the second Gujarat Educational Conference in 1917, Gandhi mourned the fact that in the existing system of education, “nowhere do I find a place given to music. It exercises a powerful influence over us. We do not realize this vividly enough, otherwise we would have done everything possible to teach music to our boys and girls.... Music must get a place in our efforts at popular awakening.”⁷²

After the establishment of Sabarmati Ashram in 1915, one of the first things that Gandhi did was to appoint a music teacher – the well-known musician, Pandit Narayan Moreshwar Khare who was a pupil of Paluskar. Training in music was part of the regular ashram life. The ashram also played an important role in providing training in music to the entire region in Gujarat. Gandhi, together with Khare and Paluskar were responsible for organizing the All-India Music Conference held in Ahmedabad in 1921 as part of the Indian National Congress. Gandhi also played an active role in establishing music schools and enlisting support for them from luminaries like S.Radhakrishnan and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya.⁷³ For instance, in a 1928 issue of *Navajivan*, Gandhi expresses his opinion that compared to several other states Gujarat lagged far behind in respect of music and that there was a need to propagate music. He goes on to talk about the National Music Association that had been functioning in Ahmedabad for the last few years led by Pandit N.M. Khare and elaborates on the need for financial assistance for the Association. He even reproduced promotional matter about their new scheme.⁷⁴ Later in 1937, Gandhi reaffirms that music “should form part of the syllabus of primary education” pointing out that “modulation of the voice is as necessary as the training of the hand.”⁷⁵

Not only in his speeches and publications, but also at the personal level, Gandhi emphasized the importance of music lessons. He often asked parents to send their children to study music. Letters that refer to sending Manilal, Ramdas and Devdas for music lessons and asking them not to neglect music can be found in the *Collected Works*. There are also numerous references of having recommended students to Khare to teach them music as they evinced an interest in it, as well as letters to acquaintances encouraging them to send their children for music lessons, enquiring about the progress being made, and showing his appreciation.

At the same time, notwithstanding all the above, in May 1947,

Gandhi stated that if he was made Prime Minister of the country, he would “prohibit music and dancing which tend to pervert the minds of young men and women. I would stop the sale of gramophone records. That is, I would suggest to the Government that it should impose heavy taxes on all such life-killing activities.”⁷⁶

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi’s engagement with music needs to be seen in the larger context of his philosophy and views on art and aesthetics. For Gandhi art could never be an end in itself. It was based on truth – uncreated beauty, that contributes to human welfare and was enjoyable by all. It is in this context that one needs to understand Gandhi’s approach to music. His views on art and music clearly throw light on his philosophy, particularly with regard to the question of religion and ethical principles. His understanding of art as a means to an end rather than ‘art for art’s sake’, as well as his emphasis on music in the broad sense as meaning ‘union, concord, mutual help’ is a reflection of this. It is in this context of his perception of music as a means to an end that one needs to understand his special affinity for spiritual music. Yet, rather than reciting Sanskrit chants at a time when music was exclusionary, he chose the bhajan as his preferred mode as he wanted music to be accessible to the masses. He considered music to have the power to transcend sectarian differences. It was a means of communication to be enjoyed by everyone without any exclusions. He was drawn to music that was uplifting, that brought unity and that helps in one’s daily labour. Although he was faced with various criticisms with regard to his selection of songs, his intentions were faultless. He emphasized the need to transcend the music of one’s own culture and be open to the music of other cultures. His response to controversies over music and religion, and the songs that he sought to propagate reflected his commitment to religious pluralism and notions of universal fraternity, peace, harmony and non-violent resistance. Gandhi’s notion of music as well as his social practice of music provides lessons for today’s polarized and antagonistic world where sectarian differences are becoming even more entrenched. Gandhi saw music as a powerful and uplifting influence, a means to an end – to bring about peace, unity and harmony in society.

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Revisiting *A Theory of Justice* through Gandhi

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ABSTRACT

John Rawls and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi are two important political thinkers of contemporary times, who share a common concern for social justice. The paper revisits Rawls' A Theory of Justice and the Rawls-Sen debate through a Gandhian notion of justice. The paper highlights that the two of them share distinct similarities in their accounts of justice. It then presents the argument for a more 'complete' understanding of justice using Gandhian epistemology based on fallibility, perfectibility, and the notion of half-truths versus the 'Absolute truth'; in the form of the Sen-Gandhi-Rawls trinitas model.

Key words: Gandhi and Rawls, Sen-Gandhi-Rawls Trinitas model, Gandhian holism, Theory of Justice

Introduction

JOHN RAWLS (1921-2002) is one of the most discussed modern political theorists of the liberal tradition. Credited for single-handedly reviving political philosophy after its downfall, his *A Theory of Justice*¹ remains one of the most debated and discussed political writings of the century. It is a treasure trove; one enriched by later additive writings such as the publication of *Political Liberalism*² and the theoretical additions by Okin³ and Sen.⁴ Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), also referred to as Bapu (meaning father) and the *Mahatma* (Great Soul), was an Indian lawyer, political practitioner and the architect of modern-day independent India.⁵ Driven by what he referred to as *Satyagraha* and its dual aspects of truth and non-violence,

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Gandhi showed utmost concern for social justice.

This paper revisits Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* and the Rawls-Sen debate through a Gandhian notion of justice. The paper begins with a brief note on the method and process of inquiry adopted in this academic exercise. It then provides cursory summarizations of Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* and the Gandhian notion of justice. Having done so, the paper compares the Rawlsian idea of justice with the Gandhian notion of social justice to draw various similarities, while also noting deficiencies in the Rawlsian construct from a Gandhian vantage point. Consequent to this comparison, the paper argues that it is possible to arrive at a holistic, more "complete" notion of justice by employing the Gandhian notion of justice and Gandhian epistemology based on fallibility and perfectibility of individuals; and the notion of half-truths versus the "Absolute Truth"; in the form of the Sen-Gandhi-Rawls Trinitas model. The paper proceeds to argue why such a holistic reconceptualization of justice (and political philosophy in general) is needed.

A note on method

At the outset, it might erroneously seem a futile exercise to compare and contrast the ideas of Rawls and Gandhi. They lived during different times, in different places; and their actions and theories were shaped by the different events in their lives. However, the situation of a particular thinker at a particular point of time and/or space need not mean that he or she shares commonalities with the thinkers of that same point of time and/or space. Conversely, we find similarities between them. *Kautilya's Arthashastra*⁶ and Machiavelli's *The Prince*⁷ presents such a case. Kautilya wrote in 4th century Mauryan India while Machiavelli wrote in 15th century Italy. Nonetheless, both of them present a very similar case of a pragmatic, realist tradition that justifies absolute monarchy and nullifies ethics and morality; to steady the troubled political conditions of their respective times. A similar case could be made for the heliocentric model of the solar system. Philolaus, Aristarchus of Samos, Nicholas Copernicus, and *The Aryabhata* of Aryabhata⁸ all presented arguments for a heliocentric model of the solar system, despite the separation by space and time.⁹

The article is thus exploratory: a plunge into the realm of the comparative unknowns. Nonetheless, the starting point of the validity of an academic exercise that engages in a revisit of Rawls's theory of social justice and the resultant Rawls-Sen debate through a Gandhian idea of social justice could be premised on the fact that despite being situated in different historical epochs in political thought, their individual concerns of social justice was shaped by a common influence:

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religion. Only a few among the contemporary political scientists doubt that the Rawlsian theory of justice is uninfluenced by religious presuppositions.¹⁰ Recent developments have also heightened interest in the study of how much of an influence religion had on Rawls' political philosophy and life. This includes the discovery of two texts; Rawls' senior undergraduate thesis titled "A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith: An Interpretation Based on the Concept of Community" and an absorbing essay titled "On my Religion" that Rawls wrote in 1976 but was never published.¹¹ Likewise, Gandhi was deeply guided by Hinduism and The Bible in his philosophical premises and thought.¹² Gandhi essentially held that politics is an integral part of religion and that the former is to be deeply guided by the latter, for they both require a "purity of conduct"¹³ Gandhi publicly declared, "I claim that at least my politics are not divorced from morality, from spirituality, from religion."¹⁴ For Gandhi, the root of his politics, thus, lies in the spiritual- in a quest for the meaning of the "Absolute Truth."¹⁵

Pioneering work has been done in the context of comparing the political philosophies of Gandhi and Rawls, albeit not on the same topic of social justice that this article engages with. Haksar wrote about the similarities and dissimilarities of Gandhi's and Rawls' ideas on civil disobedience.¹⁶ Godrej's work¹⁷ on using Gandhi's notion of non-violence as a method of arbitration of competing truth claims is also noteworthy. In the process, Godrej goes on to argue, quite convincingly, why such a Gandhian approach, using what she calls "the civic virtue of non-violence"¹⁸ is more useful than a contemporary Rawlsian approach in matters of adjudication or arbitration. This article seeks to build upon the tradition of such existing comparative studies of Gandhi and Rawls, their accounts of social justice, and most importantly the Gandhian notion that arbitration of morally conflicting truths is possible (and desirable).

The article employs Rawls' theory as the skeletal framework and then counterpoises it against Gandhian ideas to draw similarities or dissimilarities. This methodology or nature of proceedings is adopted because the theory of normative justice that Rawls propounded is concrete and found in a single source; whereas, the Gandhian notion of justice (and other epistemological ideas) are found scattered across his works, practice, articles, and pamphlets. Rawls was a political theorist; Gandhi, a practitioner. Such an approach would thus be more pragmatic for this academic exercise. We thus start with a "comparative method;" by comparing and drawing similarities between the notions of justice of Rawls (and consequently Sen) and Gandhi. However, the "essence" of the approach that this paper adopts is decidedly Gandhian

(and therefore of a relatively novel nature), in that it does not stop at the mere comparative description and consequent analysis of the thinkers in question; but argue towards the evolution of a holistic, notion of justice through the Gandhian idea of reconciliation and arbitration. To dub this paper as a work in the spectral realm of “comparative political theory” would thus be self-defeating, for it seeks to evolve and engage with a notion of justice in political theory (and philosophy) in its totality by not halting at mere comparative assessments. In addition, is the extant, wide discipline of “political theory ever not comparative”?¹⁹

Rawls' Framework

Credited for single-handedly reviving Western (Anglo-American) political philosophy in the mid-20th century, John Rawls' ideas on justice were first published in 1958 in his essay *Justice as Fairness*.²⁰ Although the central tenets of his theory were laid down here, it was not until the publication of the commanding treatise *A Theory of Justice* in 1971 that Rawls received both widespread academic attention and scrutiny. To begin, a brief recap of his theory is in order.

Rawls' theory of justice, in essence, consists of three aspects: two principles of justice and 'The Original Position,' which is a hypothetical construct used as a method to compare and justify his principles of justice as being reasonable and 'fair.' The two principles are quoted:

1. First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others.
2. Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:
 - (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and
 - (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.²¹

Rawls argue that the aforementioned principles will be agreed to by everyone in the Original Position, a hypothetical construct, and remodeling of the social contract doctrine. The first principle is frequently referred to as the Equal Liberty Principle. Simply put, the first principle affirms that all citizens should have access to a basic set of rights and liberties. Rawls goes on to provide a crude list of such rights, mostly centered around basic political freedoms and what we would today refer to as “first-generation rights.”²² In providing such a list, Rawls necessitates a political constitution in which such a list of basic political rights and civil liberties would be entrenched. The

second principle is often divided into two parts for the sake of discussion. The first part of the second principle 2(a) is called the Difference Principle and the second part of the second principle 2(b) is called the Fair Equality Principle. The First principle according to Rawls has lexical priority over the second principle. And also, the Fair Equality Principle has lexical priority over the Difference Principle. In addition, Rawls states that the two principles form a special conception of justice. It is not ahistorical in that it is applicable only in societies that have achieved a certain level of economic growth thereby allowing the exercise of certain liberties. Additionally, this special conception of justice is but a manifestation of a general conception of justice which states that 'all social values are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all, is to everyone's advantage.'²³

One might ask a very simple question at this juncture. "So much for the principles but why must we accept these two principles of justice as the basis of organizing society?" According to Rawls, there are two arguments in favor of accepting these two principles. The first is that the principles appear reasonable in a modern setting wherein they imply policies and outcomes for individuals that match our thinking about these matters. The second is the thought experiment: the idea of the Original Position. Rawls opines that in the original position so constructed, which is a higher level of abstraction than the traditional social contract theory, the parties to it would choose a maximin outcome – an outcome that will make the worst possible outcome as good as possible; and this precisely makes the two principles of justice reasonable.

A Gandhian Notion of Justice?²⁴

Gandhi never bothered to formulate a "theory" of justice as such in a concrete form, and hence it would be preposterous to write of one. Gandhi was not a political theorist but more of a practitioner. Any attempt to summarize Gandhi's ideas on the topic of justice into some sort of a principled theory is impractical because Gandhi understood justice as "not merely an epistemology... (but) in a deeply philosophical sense, an undertaking of being itself-an ontology."²⁵ Notwithstanding this encumbrance in studying Gandhi as a "theorist" of social justice, a certain notion of Gandhian justice can be still arrived at, based on his political epistemology and practice, for this paper, however limited it may be. As Gandhi did not formulate or propose a "theory" of justice, it would thus be more appropriate to talk of a "notion" of justice, an idea of justice that he developed in the course of his life and work; rooted in his political epistemology and Gandhian

metaphysics.

“No man is an island”²⁶ and Gandhi is no exception. The Gandhian notion of justice is rooted in factors that shaped him as a political practitioner; the most prominent being religion and the realities of his time. Gandhi’s broad worldview, according to Rolland is thus based on a two-layered edifice consisting of a spiritual “crypt” and a superstructural “cathedral” of social and political action.²⁷ Realities that shaped the Gandhian notion of justice include but are not limited to his experiences of racism in South Africa, colonialism in India, and the resultant social co-morbidities that ravaged India during British rule. Western influences can also be identified in Gandhi’s notion of justice; particularly the likes of Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau, and the New Testament, most notably its Sermon on the Mount.²⁸ Such is the brief sketch of a Gandhian notion of justice; one that is deeply rooted in the spiritual but also molded by socio-economic and political realities. For Gandhi, every enterprise or human activity, and that would include a theoretical formulation of social justice, is to be guided by the search for the “Absolute Truth,” which can only be arrived at by “ceaseless striving.”²⁹ This Gandhian insistence that any human action (including that of conceptualization of theory and philosophy) needs to be guided by the “Absolute Truth” and his subsequent equation of Truth with God makes the influence of religion/spirituality in Gandhian political philosophy obvious and incontestable. Summing up, in a cavalier sense:

If (Gandhian) justice is the foundational norm of a society, then justice has to be grounded in some notion of the truth, which may possibly constitute a shared referral for political allegiance. Therefore, for Gandhi the concept of justice was inseparable from that of truth.³⁰

The Principles of Justice: Through a Gandhian lens

At the outset, regarding the First Principle, Gandhi echoes a stark similarity with Rawls’ concern for political equality and access to a set of basic liberties. He writes, ‘Every man has an equal right to the necessities of life even as birds and beasts have.’³¹ One might argue that underlying his conviction of the idea of equality, is his concern for the untouchables in the Hindu society, who had been mistreated for a long time. Gandhi tirelessly undertook several campaigns to advocate equal rights and liberties for the untouchables, whom he referred to as *antyaja* (meaning last-born) and later as *harijans* (meaning children of God).³² However, there is much to the First Principle than what meets the eye, as we shall see later.

The Fair Equality Principle presents a more intriguing case. While Gandhi does recognize the idea of fair equality of opportunity, he is at best, “uninspired” by it. Gandhi delves deeper and recognizes other constraints on enjoying such apparent equality of opportunity. In an illuminating paragraph in *Young India*, he writes:

My idea of society is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunities, all have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or color or degree of intelligence, etc.; therefore, in the nature of things, some will have ability to earn more and other less.³³

Gandhi thus recognized decades before Sen that individuals have different capacities to absorb and transform their primary social good allotments to realize their potential. Sen (2009) argues along the same lines as Gandhi, using the capabilities approach, in one of the most cited and well-known critiques of Rawls’ theory of Justice. However, Gandhi differs from Sen in that his dissatisfaction with the idea of equality of opportunity forms the very reason for the need for redistribution, his desire to bring an ‘equalization of status’³⁴ and an idea of distributive justice rooted in just institutions. In *Young India*, Gandhi writes:

People with talents will have more, and they will utilize their talents for this purpose. If they utilize their talents kindly, they will be performing the work of the State. Such people exist as trustees, on no other terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father go to the common family fund. They would have their earning only as trustees.³⁵

This is particularly fascinating on two counts. First, the level of similarity Gandhi shows with that of Rawls is striking. Like Rawls, Gandhi shares a deep concern for distributive justice. Similar to Rawls, Gandhi’s emphasis on ‘trusteeship’ shows his conviction of the role of just institutions in realizing justice for society.³⁶ In addition, while the arguments for Gandhi being an anarchist are somewhat established,³⁷ his acknowledgement here of the role of the state in the redistribution of money and by extension what Rawls calls ‘primary social goods,’³⁸ is indicative of the fact that Gandhi would have approved of Rawls’ list of basic political rights and civil liberties guaranteed by the Equal Liberty Principle (First Principle), albeit reluctantly. This is because Rawls assumed such rights and liberties to be embedded in a political constitution and that in turn requires a

stable, well-established state. Why reluctantly? Because Gandhi would have criticized that Rawls stopped at “the political.” For Gandhi, ‘necessaries’ do not merely mean basic political rights and civil liberties but also social and economic rights. This draws from Gandhi’s abhorrence of the compartmentalization of “the human life” into separate realms of theory and praxis. According to him, “we needlessly divide life into water-tight compartments.”³⁹ For Gandhi, “Politics, economic progress etc., are not unconnected matters; knowing that they are all rooted in religion.”⁴⁰ Gandhi’s list of basic necessities to be guaranteed by the equal liberty principle would thus have included not only mere political rights and civil liberties but also socio-economic rights and the right against exploitation based on caste, creed, color, gender, and religion, just to name a few. Rawls’ list of basic political rights and civil liberties thus falls short of constituting or ensuring what Gandhi prescribed as “true politics” which he repeatedly distinguished from power politics.⁴¹ For Gandhi, “true politics” must “be looked upon in terms of social and moral progress,”⁴² and not merely in the strictly political sense, which is characteristic of the political practice in western liberal states. Rawls’ list of basic political rights would thus ensure political participation and initiation of the individuals into what Gandhi called “power politics” but fall short to ensure what Gandhi termed as “true politics.” For Gandhi such social and moral progress would come through the Constructive Programme – a community-level project aimed at widespread social and political reform through a non-violent method, which engages various sections of the society.⁴³

The Rawls-Sen debate: A Gandhian Revisit of dual subjectivities

The Gandhian causal link, highlighted above, between the idea of equality of opportunity (and its deficiency of not accounting for capabilities of individuals) and the need for distributive justice, has profound implications for the Rawls-Sen debate on justice. Sen (1992) had argued, in one of the most significant critiques of Rawls’ theory that individuals have different capacities to absorb the allocated primary social goods and realize their potential. In other words, Sen criticized Rawls for focusing only on the means to achieve justice and for neglecting the ends; which he believes to be the enhancement of people’s capabilities. For this very reason, Sen opined that Rawls’ theory of justice which relies on just institutions (what he referred to as the Niti-centered approach) is at best partial and incomplete as it does not account for what happens to the people (what Sen calls the Nyaya-centered approach). Gandhi, however, has used the same aforementioned deficiency to argue for a case of redistribution on

the same lines that Rawls did. The implications of the above Gandhian causal link on the Rawls-Sen debate on justice are discussed below. But first, a clarificatory note is in order. Sen's capabilities approach to justice has been subject to varying degrees or camps of acceptance by Rawlsian rejoinders and in general, other political theorists. Some view it as a very strong critique of Rawls' theory and argue that Rawls' theory falls apart on being subjected to Sen's critique. Others are more forgiving and see it not as a critique or inimical to Rawls' normative theory, but merely as a valuable addition to it. The above Gandhian causal link has repercussions for both subjectivities.

In the case of the first subjectivity (wherein we view Sen's capabilities approach to justice as a humbling critique of Rawls' theory of justice and the two theories as being inimical to each other), it is possible and even tempting to argue that Rawls was, in the prologue, aware of the difference in the capabilities of individuals; and with that knowledge, he sought to remedy it (the difference in the capabilities and consequent injustices) by providing for a just society using his principles of justice. Bluntly put, Rawls did not lament nor stress the difference in the capabilities of the individuals in an unjust society but simply sought to rectify it. Seen from this perspective, it is thus possible to argue that Rawls is more concerned (than Sen and other capability theorists) with the 'ends of justice, it being a just society. Rawlsian rejoinders would be tempted to ask a moral question here, in the critique of Sen: Who is more concerned about 'what actually happens to the people?' Is it not Rawls, who attempts to right the wrongs by establishing a just society rather than Sen, who is more concerned about protesting that the capabilities of individuals in a pre-just society are being ignored to arrive at a just society? If the goal of politics is that of 'a good life,' is a better formulation not the one that arrives at it rather than the one that laments about the conditions of the prologue? Capability theorists can indeed counter this. It is possible to argue that even if Rawls did account for the difference in the capabilities of individuals in a pre-just society, it is never possible to arrive at such a just society from a pre-just society using Rawls' principles of justice. The different capabilities of the individuals and conversion factors would successfully hinder the transformation of the unjust society into a just one. Seen from this perspective, Rawls' just society seems a distant utopia at this point. Rawlsian rejoinders can however respond by saying that institutional justice, manifest in the modern-day state, has enough prowess to oversee the transformation. The argument at this point would then center around the ability of the state to oversee the transformation from an unjust society to a just one. Note that this brings back us to

the beginning of the argument where Sen criticized Rawls for focusing more on the means (the welfare state and other institutions) rather than on the ends of justice (enhancement of individual capabilities). Rawlsian rejoinders and capability theorists can thus continue to argue along the same lines, in a cycle, with no resolution of sorts. At this point, it becomes a matter of personal philosophical choice to believe or choose a side of the argument. However, there are certain limitations in doing so. Godrej (2006) highlights that the problems in making such a choice of adoption of a competing notion of truth, in theory, or practice, are threefold. Firstly, how do we know our epistemological arguments are true? In other words, how do we know our version of theorization or practice is true and not erroneous if the truth is so multifaceted? Secondly, what do we do when these conflicting truths collide with each other? Lastly, how do we justify any sort of political practice or policy, say, for instance, a scheme of distributive justice, if the theory does not ride on the premise that it has arrived at some portion of the "Absolute Truth?"

The following limitations signal that arbitration capable of reconciling the conflicting ideas of justice is crucial for a holistic understanding of justice.⁴⁴ How do we arrive at such a resolution – one that would help us in establishing a theoretical formulation of justice that would enable or at the very least, aid us, in acquiring a holistic understanding of justice? Is it even possible to arrive at one at this point of the argument; or is justice fated to be a construct, a notion that is to be debated and contested endlessly, and not understood in totality? Is political philosophy in general to remain an arena wherein different contested accounts of a concept of idea collide but never settle down; for there is neither a method nor "a way of looking at things" that facilitates the settling down of an idea into a holistic totality of a construct? Is this not a case of the infamously ignored *la face honteuse de la philosophie*?⁴⁵

Feminist thought, particularly that of Le Doeuff, provides a useful insight to understand this particular problematic in political philosophy. Le Doeuff identifies in her work that despite feminist thought and philosophy sharing the most fundamental character, that of critical assessment and questioning of the environs to arrive at theories and consequent practices that would eventually lead to "a good life;" the development of a certain narrative, The Philosophical Imaginary, has placed the two at odds with each other. Among other manifestations of this narrative, she identifies that a particular masculinist style of writing characterized by an authoritative tone with a lack of receptivity and respect for the opponent's discourse has been normalized as original contributions in political philosophy

while receptive works that take into account fallibility and gently respect for the opponent's work have been sidelined as not philosophical interventions but mere "commentaries." One might argue here that it is this very nature of "writing" philosophy that lends to it a very contested character. The lack of receptivity and non-acceptance of fallibility, conjoined with an authoritative style of writing philosophy and imposition of ideas has resulted in philosophy being a battlefield of fetal ideas; of half-truths, in a state of endless entropy and conflict, thereby making it impossible to understand philosophy as a "totality." This makes it difficult for philosophy to arrive at a holistic understanding of any concept or idea; let it be equality, freedom, gender, or justice, for that matter. Holism in philosophy has traditionally been treated as an "Eastern" notion and has not been granted much importance. *Au contraire*, philosophical confusion based on dualities and multiplicities and also, the development of compartmentalized subjectivities of an "idea" have been encouraged- based on the formulation of an "idea," critique and then consequent rejoinder groupism- with no or little efforts to arrive at a holistic understanding of an idea. For this way of writing philosophy makes "the vagueness of the concepts and the multiplicity of the criteria involved, aspects of the subject matter itself; and not of our inadequate methods of measurement nor incapacity for precise thought."⁴⁶ Holism is a new entrant into the realm of philosophy and owes much to eastern thinkers such as Gandhi. We argue, before addressing the second subjectivity, that the Gandhian notion of "Absolute truth" and "competing truths" provide us with a way to address this "shameful face of philosophy;" and arrive at theories that are more "complete" than the extant theories with distinct, factional rejoinder cleavages.

Gandhi's notion of truth is based on the *Advaita*⁴⁷ branch of Hindu Vedanta philosophy which professes that transient realities do not have an existence of their own, but are only manifestations of the Brahman- the ultimate being that underlies all phenomena. Citing the example of seven blind men who offered differing accounts when they were told to describe an elephant through their sense of touch, Gandhi believed that there exist multiple accounts of "competing truths" in this reality, which are not wrong but are only partially true.⁴⁸ These half-truths are thus impartial truths of the "Absolute Truth" that can be arrived at through "ceaseless striving."⁴⁹ However, Gandhi's stand on whether we could (and should strive to) actually arrive at the "Absolute truth" or rather arrive at a truth that is nearest to the "Absolute Truth," during our brief human lives, is scandalously inconsistent.⁵⁰ The main reason for such an inconsistency in his notion

of the possibility of the attainment of Absolute truth by human beings is because this conviction of the possibility of human perfectibility (which forms the basis for his notion of truth) is also inconsistent.⁵¹ Notwithstanding the inconsistency, this notion of truth helps arrive at a resolution of conflicting truth claims. Gandhi emphasized that the only way to arrive at a resolution of such conflicting claims is through non-violence.⁵² The problem however is that the notion of non-violence Gandhi espouses in these claims of resolution is “far too dependent on the stringent requirements of right living” and “intensive training of the conscience;” for a non-spiritual man or philosopher to adhere to.⁵³ This problematic is solved by Godrej, who establishes that we can utilize the notion of “Ahimsa as civic virtue” and not a creed, to excavate “a model of moral and political arbitration shorn of the Mahatma’s metaphysical framework,” which relies heavily on the assumptions of Hinduism. It is this notion of arbitration of morally competing for truth claims to arrive at the Absolute truth or at least a truth that is more “complete,” which assumes that humans are fallible but can be perfected; through ceaseless striving which uses non-violence, that makes the second subjectivity in this paper more “tempting,” holistic, coherent; and a necessity in the formulations of justice.

Now, the second subjectivity. In the context of the second subjectivity (wherein we view Sen’s arguments as an additive to Rawlsian ideas of justice and not inimical to it), it can be stated persuasively that the casual link that Gandhi so established between the difference in capabilities of individuals and the need for distributive justice through institutional mechanisms such as the modern-day state leads to a harmonious concept of justice linking Sen, Gandhi, and Rawls. This model of justice, which we would call, “The Sen-Gandhi-Rawls Trinitas model,” presents a holistic concept of justice, with the Gandhian causal link stated above serving as the missing link between the Rawlsian theory and the capabilities approach of Sen and others. If Sen provided Rawls Theory of justice with a valuable addition to the capabilities approach, Gandhi’s causal link filled in the glaring philosophical gap between the two.

The fact that the Gandhian causal link serves this purpose in an integrated theory of justice is appropriate in itself; for he was one of the few thinkers who rejected the sharp dichotomy between the means and ends.⁵⁴ In addition, as alluded to in the preceding sections, Gandhi subscribed to ‘organic holism’ which is a stance somewhere between strict individualism and a Vedantist pantheism wherein strict individualism is not well recognized.⁵⁵ Gandhi had always been a mediating, transitional, and median figure between philosophical

extremes. The fact that he serves as a connection, a causal link between Rawls and Sen, is allegorically appropriate.

The Difference Principle revisited

The Difference Principle is where Rawls and Gandhi share a similarity, which is the easiest to identify. Rawls, idea of assigning the greatest benefits to the least advantaged is mirrored by Gandhi's Talisman. Gandhi's talisman is one of the last notes left by Gandhi before his demise in 1948. The talisman is for a confused person in doubt who is unable to decide any further course of action. Gandhi advises the person to recall the face of the worst-off person and imagine if the work that is going to be undertaken will benefit the person and eventually lead to *Swaraj* (freedom) of the countless starving (literally and spiritually) millions. Gandhi believes that in the process, all doubts shall melt away and the person will be informed of what is to be done.⁵⁶ At the first glance, the similarity between the talisman and Rawls' Difference Principle is evident. Additionally, implicit in Rawls' Difference principle, is the assumption that the better endowed in a societal setting have a responsibility towards the worst off, to ensure that they have access to human needs and societal benefits. For Rawls, "a principle of paternalism is to guide decisions taken on behalf of others."⁵⁷ In this regard, Rawls says that this situation is comparable to "trustees acting to promote the interests of the beneficiaries they represent."⁵⁸ Such a conviction of the better off in society acting as trustees on behalf of the worst off is also shared by Gandhi. Gandhi believed that ensuring justice and social benefits for the *Harijans* (and other worst-off groups in the society), necessitates a premediated duty on the part of the higher castes to consciously devote themselves to this cause. Gandhi's quest for "an equalization of status" (discussed in the preceding section on the Fair equality principle) is therefore guided by his belief in two supplementary actions, namely, the power of "forgiveness in action" or active forgiveness⁵⁹ on the part of the then victims of social discrimination (lower castes and *Harijans*) and actions of compensation to rectify past wrongs on the part of the past offenders (higher castes). It is worth mentioning here that "Gandhi was particularly known for advocating forgiveness as a key element of his theory of social change based on a relational worldview."⁶⁰ Justice then for Gandhi is not merely distributive but also "restorative" in the quest for rectification of past injustices.

However, as stated above in the 'necessaries argument' (contained in the section on the Equal Liberty Principle), the definition of social 'benefits' might be radically different for Gandhi and Rawls. For Rawls, it is based on access to primary social goods. For Gandhi, it means

much more than that and includes the idea of *Swaraj* (freedom) of the self in all spheres of life – whether it be political, economic, social, spiritual, or cultural. A Gandhian acolyte would thus view Rawls' Difference Principle as a simplistic liberal restatement of Gandhi's talisman, to be applied in the domain of political economy and the welfare state, and he would not be wrong in doing so.

Conclusion

The paper analyzed *The Theory of Justice* and the resultant Rawls-Sen debates on justice through the Gandhian idea of justice and a broad Gandhian epistemology. Comparative studies of the philosophies of Rawls and Gandhi are scarce despite similarities in their central concerns such as social justice and civil disobedience. What is however scarcer, are holistic works that attempt to arbitrate and reconcile conflicting accounts of an idea; works that attempt to bridge gaps and bring about the understanding of an idea in its philosophical totality. Rejoinder groupism and a resultant ensuing battle of conflicting ideas have invaded the realm of philosophy, with little regard or respect for the opponent's discourse.⁶¹ The paper seeks to incite thinking in such directions of holistic conceptualization of justice and political theory through Gandhi and other "ignored" thinkers as a medium or frame of reference.

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24. In this section, we do not claim to espouse a concrete theory of justice based on Gandhi's political philosophy. We seek to only provide a certain cursory peek into the notion of "Gandhian Justice," for the sake of the arguments that are to follow. Other Gandhian epistemological takes on ideas such as Absolute Truth, equality, perfectibility, etc. that are of relevance to this paper, are presented along the course of the paper. For more on Gandhi's political epistemology and metaphysics, see, among others: Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*; Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy*; and Joan Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, (Princeton University Press, [1958] 1988).
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49. “What appear to be the different truths are like the countless and apparently different leaves of the same tree.” Gandhi, in CWMG, 49, p. 384.
50. Gandhi, on one hand, writes, “We must therefore be content with believing the truth as it appears to us,” Gandhi, in CWMG, 36, p. 14; “Finite human being(s) shall never know in its fullness Truth and Love which is in itself infinite,” Mohandas K. Gandhi, “Truth is One,” in CWMG, 38, p. 297; and, “But it is impossible for us to realize perfect truth so long as we are imprisoned in this mortal frame,” Gandhi, in CWMG, 49, p. 407. On the other hand, he writes, “He who strives.... will have his whole being filled with truth,” Mohandas K. Gandhi, “What is Truth?” in CWMG, 25, p. 137; and also, “One can realize Truth and Ahimsa only by ceaseless striving,” CWMG, 49, p. 407. While this may seem conflicting to readers of Western philosophy, this Gandhian stance is neither new nor original. Gandhi seems to have adopted a notion that human beings need to transcend certain worldly limitations and bindings to arrive at the “Absolute Truth,” a concept inherent in the Bodhisattva tradition of Buddhism.
51. Gandhi writes, “To say that perfection is not attainable on this earth is to deny God.” Mohandas K. Gandhi, “Letter to Esther Faering,” in CWMG, 16, p. 203. Conversely, he also held that, “Not one of us is perfect. Not one of us is able to realize the whole of our spiritual ambition.” Mohandas K. Gandhi, “Letter to K. Santanam,” in CWMG, 35, p. 212. Simply put, “The Gandhian search for truth required the seeker’s unreserved faith in the existence of absolute truth, while on the other, it also gave a strong nod of approval to the skeptic’s position regarding the difficulty of ever grasping *satya* (truth) in its fullness,” Manfred B. Steger, *Gandhi’s Dilemma: Nonviolent Principles*

- and Nationalist Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 116.
52. "Nonviolence can provide a solution to the moral and political dilemmas," Godrej, 2006, op.cit., p. 294.
 53. *Ibid.*, pp. 298-299.
 54. As stated above, capability theorists including Sen are considered to be more concerned about the ultimate ends (capabilities). Rawls' normative theory is considered to be more concerned about the means of achieving justice, provided the argument for Rawls being more concerned (than Sen) presented in the same paper is set aside. Doing so does not lead to inconsistencies nor is the work subject to *tu quoque* (fallacy of hypocrisy), for the subjectivities are to be considered as mutually exclusive. If one embraces the first subjectivity, one does not consider the trinitas model. In such a case, the argument that Rawls is more ends oriented than Sen holds. If one instead embraces the second subjectivity, one does not consider the first subjectivity and the argument that Rawls is less ends oriented than Sen holds.
 55. Nicholas F. Gier, *The Virtue of Nonviolence: From Gautama to Gandhi*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 42. For Rawls, the subject of justice was the structure of the society and not separate individuals. Sen, on the other hand focused more on the individual capabilities of humans. The paper therefore argues that Sen professed a stronger individualism than Rawls, who despite being a liberal showed sympathy for liberal socialism. For similar arguments on John Rawls' lean towards socialism, see William A. Edmundson, *John Rawls: Reticent Socialist*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316779934>. Gandhi's organic holism could then be placed somewhere in between the fierce individualism of Sen and comparatively milder version of Rawls.
 56. Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase: Vol. 2*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1958), p. 65.
 57. Rawls, 2005, op.cit., p. 209.
 58. Samuel freeman, "Original Position," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 27 February 1996, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/original-position/>, accessed on 15 January 2022.
 59. Hunter Alan and Andrew Rigby, "Gandhi and the Virtue of Forgiveness," *Gandhi Marg*, 12, 4 (January-March 2009), p. 437.
 60. John S Moolakkattu, "Remorse and Forgiveness: A Contemporary Political Discussion," *Journal of Social Sciences*, 26, 1, (2017), p. 17.
 61. For a visual representation of such a particularly disturbing "battle" of ideas, with faction-based cheers and jeers, see Jordan B Petersen, "Marxism: Zizek/Peterson: Official Video," *YouTube*, 15 May 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsWndfzuOc4>, accessed on 19 June 2021.

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Gandhi's response to Militarism in Japan

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ABSTRACT

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Japan modernized itself. It had imperial ambitions following the western powers. It waged war against China, defeated it, and made further demands on China. It fought against Russia and again emerged victorious. Then it fought against the U.S. and other countries, which ended with the atomic bombing on it. Gandhi was sympathetic to Japan, but its atrocities on China disillusioned him. He criticized Japan and then the U.S. for its militarism. He argued that the Japanese and the western powers were war criminals.

Key words: Japanese imperialism, China's sufferings, Japanese atrocities, Russo-Japanese War, Gandhi's response to Japan's militarism.

Introduction

FOR SOME CENTURIES, the Mikado (emperor) had little effective authority in Japan, and the shogun (military leader) held real power as a hereditary dictator. The country was divided into several regions controlled by daimyo (feudal lords) who controlled their lands with the aid of samurai (military class) who were granted land in return for military service to a daimyo. The Tokugawa family took control of the shogunate around 1600. The Tokugawas were suspicious of European influence. In 1636, the shogun announced the Act of Seclusion, making it illegal for westerners to trade in Japan. But on July 8, 1853, four American naval ships under Commodore Perry anchored in Tokyo harbour as a kind of "shall we trade or shall we

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fight?" message. Since the Japanese did not have a navy, they opened negotiations with the Americans, forcing Japan to open its harbours to U.S. trade, breaking the centuries-long prohibition against foreign trade. Japan had witnessed the Opium Wars in China and wanted to avoid a conflict with western powers. China had been the strongest and richest country in the Far-east but could not face the British. The Japanese believed that the Tokugawa shogun was endangering Japanese sovereignty by letting in foreign influence. So they used their loyalty as a weapon. They undermined the shogun by glorifying the Mikado. Their slogan was *sonnô jôî*—"Revere the Emperor, Expel the barbarian." These rebellious factions attacked foreigners at Japanese ports and caused local uprisings against the shogun, weakening him. Thus, the ground was clear for a radical change.

Section II of this paper presents a bird's eye view of the genesis of Japanese militarism and Section III on how Gandhi viewed it. The final section has the conclusions.

II. Emergence and Annihilation of Japanese Militarism

Samurai leaders from southern regions began to advise the 14-year-old new Mikado Meiji and used their influence over him to restructure Japan politically. Called the Meiji Restoration, it began in 1868. The Mikado's new samurai advisors hitherto controlled the government. Over the next two decades, he slowly stripped the samurai of many traditional privileges like stipends (bonus payment) and the right to carry swords.

Each region had its own military during the shogunate, controlled by samurai loyal to their *daimyo*. Now the regional armies were replaced by a national army. The new government embraced new ideas and technologies brought by western merchants and diplomats. French advisers came to Japan with two military missions. Japan enforced nationwide conscription in 1873, establishing a western-style conscript army. The government built military schools and arsenals to support the army. In 1885, Jakob Meckel, a German adviser, implemented new measures such as the reorganization of the command structure of the army into divisions and regiments, strengthening army logistics, transportation, and structures, thus increasing mobility. Japan instituted artillery and engineering regiments as independent commands. In 1886, it further reformed its army, imitating the German Army. Japan studied Germany's doctrines, the military system, and organization. By the 1890s, Japan had built a professionally trained western-style army, well equipped and supplied. The officers had studied abroad, learning the latest tactics and strategies. The Japanese discovered that an ordinary

citizen could serve as a soldier and become a hero, a position formerly reserved for mythic-historical figures like Empress Jingu or Katô Kiyomasa. Needless to add, it boosted Japanese militarism, and the country aspired for equal status with the Western powers.

Attention was paid to the navy too. Modeled after the British Royal Navy, at the time the foremost naval power, the Japanese navy developed rapidly. British advisors went to Japan to train it, while students went to Great Britain to study and observe the Royal Navy. Through drilling and tuition by Royal Navy instructors, Japan developed navy personnel skilled in gunnery and seamanship. It lacked resources to build battleships and adopted the "Jeune Ecole" (young school) doctrine, which favoured small, fast warships, especially cruisers and torpedo boats, against bigger units to compensate. The British and French built Japan's warships in their shipyards.¹

The general public was under the spell of militant nationalism. The People's Rights Movement claimed that the Chinese and Koreans had forfeited their right to be independent by not modernizing. It resented the heavy taxes imposed by the government to modernize Japan, demanding something tangible like an overseas colony as a reward for their sacrifices. Furthermore, the educational system was aimed to train the schoolboys to be soldiers when they grew up. Schools indoctrinated their students into Bushido ("Way of the warrior"), the fierce code of the samurai. The government faced people who clamoured for war and regarded diplomacy as a weakness. Thus, Japan was on the threshold of becoming a militarist and imperialist power looking for overseas expansionism. In the years 1869–73, the Seikanron (Conquer Korea Argument) bitterly divided the elite. One faction wanted to conquer Korea immediately, while another faction wanted to wait until Japan was further modernized. Significantly, no one accepted the idea that the Koreans had the right to be independent.

From their eyrie in Tokyo, the Japanese hawks cast their covetous eyes on China. The bone of contention between the two countries was Korea, its important client state, while Japan coveted its iron and coal reserves. The First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) became a natural corollary. The Chinese were no match for the Japanese, who won a string of victories. By the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895), China recognized the independence of Korea, but it came in the Japanese sphere of influence. It ceded Liaodong Peninsula, Taiwan and Penghu Islands to Japan. Besides, it gave a huge war indemnity. The centre of power in the East shifted from China to Japan. It heightened Japanese ambitions of military expansion in Asia, particularly China.²

The Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) was another landmark. The two countries had ambitions in Manchuria and Korea. It began when the Japanese navy attacked the Russian fleet in Port Arthur and captured it. Japan won every battle, the chief of them were the battles of Mukden and Tsushima in which the Russian army and navy were vanquished. It ended with the Treaty of Portsmouth, 1905. The War gave it confidence that it could successfully face European powers. Chinese historians have argued that the War led to Japanese militarism in the 1920s and 1930s.

During World War I (1914-18), Britain and her allies were preoccupied with Germany, and Japan tried to take advantage of it to expand in China. It presented the latter with Twenty-one Demands on January 18, 1915. They would give Japan a decisive voice in finance, policing, and government affairs making China virtually a protectorate of Japan, thereby reducing western influence in China. America and Britain forced Tokyo to drop them in 1916.

By the 1930s, the U.S presence in Asia, instability in China, and the Great Depression encouraged Japan to act aggressively in China. This was coupled with the Japanese belief that the only way to solve their economic and demographic problems was to expand there. In 1931 the Japanese invaded Manchuria and set up the puppet state of Manchukuo. Full-scale war between China and Japan began in July 1937. It was the Second Sino-Japanese War. On the one hand, technological supremacy and preparedness of the Japanese and China's underdeveloped industries incapable of supplying munitions led to a blitzkrieg of Japanese victories. Japanese troops moved in mainland China, while Japanese military planes bombarded regions where their infantry could not penetrate.

Japanese troops in China brutally treated civilians and military prisoners. Japanese occupation of Nanjing is often referred to as the 'Rape of Nanjing'. It was the most infamous example of Japanese brutality. Estimates suggest that they massacred 300,000 people in and around the city, many of them civilians. They reduced the city's inhabitants to the status of sub-humans who were murdered, tortured, and raped at will. Civilians were buried alive, machine-gunned, or used for bayonet practice. Females were taken as comfort women for the Japanese army. They also conducted human experimentation on the Chinese who were injected with germs of diseases like anthrax, smallpox, cholera, dysentery, and typhoid. Other experiments studied the effects of food deprivation and extreme cold, amputation without anesthesia, and the effects of chemical weapons. They also bombed cities with fleas carrying bubonic plague. Vast swathes of China were decimated by Japan's

'scorched earth' warfare slogan, "kill all, loot all, destroy all". By 1940, the Japanese controlled the entire north-eastern coast and areas up to 400 miles inland.³

However, in the midst of this War, Japan became involved in hostilities with the United States. This possibility existed since the 1920s. The Japanese had been wary of American territorial and military expansion in the Pacific and Asia since the late 1890s, followed by its annexation of Hawaii and the Philippines, which they felt were within their sphere of influence. They also intended to destroy the Pacific Fleet for it might interfere in the Japanese conquest of the Dutch East Indies and Malaya. Besides, they expected that the Japanese attack would undermine American morale so that the U.S. government would drop its demands contrary to their interests and would sue for peace. Japan suddenly attacked Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941. Japanese planes destroyed nearly 20 American naval vessels and over 300 airplanes. More than 2,400 Americans died, and another 1,000 people were wounded. Japan rapidly conquered South East Asia and also Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It was at the door of North-east India, triggering fears in India. But from here, the tide of the war changed. The Japanese were required to go back to defend their homeland.

This was the beginning of the end of Japanese militarism and also the Sino-Japanese War. Japan faced the weight of American military and industrial might. On August 6, 1945, the first atom bomb *Little Boy* was dropped on Hiroshima, and three days later, the second atom bomb *Fat Man* on Nagasaki. The two bombings killed between 129,000 and 226,000 people, mostly civilians. The Americans asked Japan to surrender or face complete destruction. When the Emperor announced the decision to surrender, some militarists rioted but were overcome. Japan's surrender took place on August 15. A principal object of the occupation forces was the disarming of the Japanese armed forces.⁴

At last, Japanese militarists faced the nemesis. The question of the prosecution of Japanese war criminals, headed by Tojo Hideki, nicknamed 'Razor', arose. He had been minister for war from 1940 to 1941 and then prime minister until 1944. He was regarded as a personification of ruthless militarism. The trial of twenty-five 'Class A' war criminals by an international tribunal with judges from eleven countries began in Tokyo in May 1946. Tojo shot himself but recovered and was then sentenced to death. Many others were tried and either executed or imprisoned. Tojo and six others were hanged in the Sugamo Prison. His remains were buried in the Yasukuni Shrine with more than 1,000 convicted war criminals.⁵ Thus, the curtain fell on Japanese

militarism and on one of the darkest periods in the history of the orient.

III Gandhi's Response to Japanese Militarism

While Gandhi did not react to the First Sino-Japanese War, he responded to the Russo-Japanese War through the columns of his paper *Indian Opinion*. He appreciatively reported about its progress for the readers. He said, "... the battle now being fought between Japan and Russia near Mukden bids fair to be considered the greatest in all ancient or modern history." But he regretted, "Nevertheless, we must point out that tens of thousands of men are now being annihilated on both sides in the battle. Japan has here attacked Russia from the east, west and south, that is, the attack is not frontal, but on the flanks of the Russian army. It is possible that, if the flanks succumb, the van also might give way." He added, "If Japan defeats Russia in this battle, there is strong reason to believe that the end of the war is near at hand.... The people in Russia have already begun to detest the war; if, therefore, the army at present in Manchuria sustains a defeat, it will not be necessary for Japan to make any further sacrifices."⁶

He further wrote, "Japan's star seems to be in the ascendant. She stormed the Fort of Port Arthur, captured Mukden and has done other deeds of valour. But all these pale into insignificance before her latest exploit. Not only did she defeat the great Russian fleet (in the Battle of Tsushima, May 27-18, 1905), but wounded its great Admiral and did not leave intact a single Russian man-of-war. No one ever imagined that Japan was capable of such bravery." He added, "It was also known that the Japanese Navy was not very strong, that is to say, it had fewer battleships than Russia. But in scouting and watchfulness, Japan surpassed all the others.... Russia, which only two years ago was considered to be almost invincible, has now very nearly fallen into the hands of Japan. It is said that history has nothing which can bear comparison with this naval battle." He raised the question about the secret of this success and the answer was unity, patriotism and the resolve to do or die. He commented, "This unity, patriotic spirit and heroic indifference to life [or death] have created an atmosphere in Japan the like of which is nowhere else to be found in the world."⁷ He attributed the Japanese conquest of Port Arthur to fighting with fervour.⁸

Gandhi also sought to explain the successes of the Japanese in terms of their physical culture called jiu-jitsu and that not much depended on the physique of a man. He wrote, "The fact that the Russians, though well set up and tall, have proved powerless before the short and thin Japanese, has put the English officials in a quandary.

They discovered that Europe was much behind in physical culture and knowledge of the laws governing the body. The Japanese understand very well how the various joints and bones of the (opponent's) body can be controlled, and this has made them invincible. Many of our readers must be aware of the effect produced when a particular nerve of the neck or leg is pressed during an exercise. This very science the Japanese have perfected." Hence, a Japanese coach was employed to train the English army, and thousands taught the art.⁹

There was another factor at work. Gandhi termed the corruption in Russia "astounding". Large sums of money were raised through subscriptions for the war widows, but it did not reach them, and bags of sugar despatched to the battlefield contained sand. Millions of roubles disappeared during the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway. As against this, the Japanese did not exploit the war situation for personal gain.¹⁰

Gandhi was also aware that Baron Komura (a Japanese statesman) disclosed that the Japanese were united. There was no corruption. Everyone did his duty, they were not indolent, did not shirk work, and lived in simplicity. As their needs of clothing and food were few, they could be transported in fewer vehicles. Consequently, it was not difficult to transport large numbers of men over long distances.¹¹

Gandhi appreciated that Japan generously waived some of her conditions for peace during peace talks. Firstly, she did not make claims for war indemnity but only asked for payment for keeping Russian prisoners and treating the wounded. Secondly, the Southelien Island should be divided equally between the two countries.¹² It may be added that on both these points, Gandhi was not correct as the Japanese conceded them under President Roosevelt's pressure. The War had bled Japan white and raised loans in America and Britain. The peace treaty was unpopular, resulting in riots in many cities as the masses were aware of the victories but oblivious of the difficulties from the extended military and supply lines.

Even though Gandhi was a pacifist, he looked at the War with interest and even veiled approval. He asked, "Is it not reported of the Japanese that when they came to a ditch their army could not cross, they filled it with human corpses?"¹³ He pointed out, "When Japan's brave heroes forced the Russians to bite the dust of the battlefield, the sun rose in the east. And it now shines on all the nations of Asia. The people of the East will never, never again submit to insult from the insolent whites."¹⁴ At the same time, he qualified his appreciation. A Korean could not bear to see Japan ruling Korea. Gandhi retorted, "It is said that Japan has killed nearly 12,000 Koreans

to teach a lesson to the people. This episode shows that power is an ugly thing and that, having once possessed oneself of a country, it is not possible to rest in peace.... Some things in Japan are commendable, but her imitation of Western ways does not deserve to be admired."¹⁵ At the same time, he warned, "It is the duty of every Indian to think of what India should do. Japan has shown one way, that of proving one's strength and defending one's land with [the power of] arms. Following that way, Japan has become like America and the imitation will soon be perfect, if it is not already so.... we had better refrain from training in the use of arms."¹⁶ In short, Gandhi's response was of critical appreciation.

While he did not express his opinion about the First Sino-Japanese War, he had strong reservations regarding the Second Sino-Japanese War. He came to have deep sympathy for China owing to what Japan and other powers had done to it. In his letter to Tan Yun-Shan from Sabarmati dated May 4, 1931, he sent a message to the Chinese students: "Know that the deliverance of China is through ahimsa pure and unadulterated."¹⁷ He wrote to Premabehn Kantak on March 13, 1932, "As regards Japan and China, our sympathy is bound to be on the side of the latter."¹⁸ He communicated to Gladys Owen from Wardha on September 5, 1937, "She (Muriel Lester) too wants me to do something for China. I must confess that I am fairly groping. China wants to give battle to Japan on her own ground. And in this kind of business I am totally at sea. I do not know how the message of non-violence can be delivered to China." He pointed out that his theatre of action was only India.¹⁹

Gandhi had discussions on the subject with Hengchih Tao (a Chinese professor) before August 15, 1938. The latter asked the former if he had any suggestions to offer to fight the war in China to a successful conclusion. Gandhi replied, "I do not know that I can throw any light on the problem at the present moment. My method is so radical that it is wholly inapplicable to your struggle. You cannot all of a sudden change the course of the struggle. A nation in arms cannot all at once give up arms and accept non-violence as its weapon." Tao mentioned that on May 20, Chinese planes had flown over Japanese towns, and they might easily have spread death and destruction in retaliation for the bombing of Chinese ports by Japan. Instead, they rained handbills and leaflets condemning the war. Gandhi replied, "But the self-inflicted restraint won't last when the real stress comes. The temptation will be irresistible. I shall not be surprised. It is inevitable. There is no love in war. We have got to come to the conclusion that either there is to be complete non-violence or undiluted violence."²⁰ Talking to Christian missionaries before

December 12, 1938, he pointed out, "If the Chinese had non-violence of my conception, there would be no use left for the latest machinery for destruction which Japan possesses. The Chinese would say to Japan, 'Bring all your machinery, we present half of our population to you. But the remaining two hundred millions won't bend their knee to you.' If the Chinese did that, Japan would become their slave."²¹ To Timothy Tingfang Lew (a Chinese preacher), Gandhi gave this message for his people, "If even a few of you took to non-violence, they would stand forth as living monuments of Chinese culture and morals. And then, even if China were overwhelmed on the battlefield, it would be well with China in the end, because it would at the same time be receiving a message which contains a promise of hope and deliverance. Japan cannot force drugs down unwilling throats at the point of the bayonet. It can only set up temptations. You cannot teach people to resist these temptations by replying to Japanese force by force." He additionally mentioned, "If China wins and copies Japanese methods, she will beat Japan hollow at her own game. But the victory of China will not mean a new hope for the world.... If China is defeated on the battlefield, your non-violence will remain undaunted and will have done its work."²²

He stressed, "... my sympathies are undoubtedly in favour of China and Russia."²³ He also reiterated, "I remain the passionate friend of China that I have always claimed to be. I know what loss of freedom means. Therefore, I could not but be in sympathy with China which is my next-door neighbour in distress." He went to the extent of saying, "And, if I believed in violence and if I could influence India, I would put in motion every force at my command on behalf of China to save her liberty. In making, therefore, the suggestion which I have made about withdrawal of British power, I have not lost sight of China. But because I have China in mind, I feel that the only effective way for India to help China is to persuade Great Britain to free India and let a free India make her full contribution to the war effort."²⁴ He prophesied, "India free and independent will play a prominent part in defending China. Today I do not think she is rendering any real help to China."²⁵ He believed, "... a Japanese domination of either India or China would be equally injurious to the other country and to world peace."²⁶

He disclosed, "I had in mind a treaty between United Nations and India for defence of China against Japanese aggression."²⁷ He was ready to allow foreign armies to stay in India for their own self-protection and for saving China.²⁸ He clarified, "The Allied troops, if they remain, will do so not to exercise authority over the people, or at India's expense, but they will remain under treaty with the

Government of free India at the United Nations' expense for the sole purpose of repelling Japanese attack and helping China."²⁹ He even offered, "Free India can send men and material that China may need. India has affinities with China being part of Asia which the Allies cannot possibly possess and exploit. Who knows that free India may not even succeed in persuading Japan to do the right by China?"³⁰

So strong was his support for the Chinese that he wrote an open letter to every Japanese stating, inter alia, "... I intensely dislike your attack upon China.... If I was a free man, and if you allowed me to come to your country, frail though I am, I would not mind risking my health, may be my life, to come to your country to plead with you to desist from the wrong you are doing to China and the world and therefore to yourself.... I would ask you to make no mistake about the fact that you will be sadly disillusioned if you believe that you will receive a willing welcome from India. The end and aim of the movement for British withdrawal is to prepare India, by making her free for resisting all militarist and imperialist ambition.... If we do not, we shall have been ignoble spectators of the militarization of the world in spite of our belief that in non-violence we have the only solvent of the militarist spirit and ambition."³¹ He sent another message to China, "Let China know that this struggle is as much for her defence as it is for India's liberation, for, in that liberation is involved her ability to give effective assistance whether to China or to Russia or even to Great Britain or America."³² He called himself "a passionate friend of China."³³ He warned, "China is still menaced by Japan and needs all the assistance that she can get before she can rise to her full height."³⁴

His opposition to Japanese militarism reached its zenith when it came to its possible invasion of India. He said, "I cling to my faith in non-violence. I have no enmity against the Japanese, but I cannot contemplate with equanimity their designs upon India. Why do they not realize that we as free men have no quarrel with them? Let them leave India alone. And if they are well-intentioned, what has China done to deserve the devastation they have wrought there?"³⁵ At Gandhi's instance, the AICC resolved before April 24, 1942, "India... does not stand in need of foreign military aid. India will attain her freedom through her non-violent strength and will retain it likewise. Therefore, the Committee hopes that Japan will not have any designs on India. But if Japan attacks India ... the Committee would expect all those who look to Congress for guidance to offer complete non-violent non-co-operation to the Japanese forces and not render any assistance to them. It is no part of the duty of those who are attacked to render any assistance to the attacker. It is their duty to offer

complete non-co-operation." This would imply that (1) Indians would not bend the knee to the aggressor nor obey his orders, (2) they would neither look to him for any favour nor fall to his bribes, and (3) if the attacker wished to take their fields, they would refuse to give them up even if resistance results in death, etc.³⁶ When questioned if asking the British rulers to withdraw not amounted to inviting the Japanese in India, he replied that the British presence was an incentive for the Japanese to attack and that the Japanese would make their plans independently of Indian opinion.³⁷ He feared, "It is today Englishtan and may be tomorrow Japanistan, if we do not take care."³⁸ He treated, "The presence of the British in India is an invitation to Japan to invade India. Their withdrawal removes the bait. Assume, however, that it does not; free India will be better able to cope with the invasion. Unadulterated non-co-operation will then have full sway."³⁹ Again, "She (Japan) wants to fight Britain. She has no concern whatsoever with India. What has India done to incur her wrath? It is Britain who has fought Japan and crossed her path. Therefore Japan wants to fight it. And therefore it is possible that when the British withdraw we shall be able to come to terms with Japan. And if even then she does not listen, then I have the same weapon against Japan that I have against Britain. Japan will not get a drop of water in India."⁴⁰ In addition, "Of course the people must not, on any account, lean on the Japanese to get rid of the British power. That were a remedy worse than the disease."⁴¹

He was convinced, "... the Japanese will not want to invade India, their prey having gone. But it is equally likely that they will want to invade India in order to use her ports for strategic purposes. Then, I would advise the people to do the same thing that I have advised them to do now, viz., offer stubborn non-violent non-co-operation..."⁴² He said, "People have to protect themselves against officials, against dacoits and possibly Japanese. If they do not, they are doomed."⁴³ He planned a set of actions if the Japanese came to India. He wrote to Mirabehn from Sevagram on May 31, 1942, "Remember that our attitude is that of complete non-co-operation with Japanese army, therefore we may not help them in any way, nor may we profit by any dealings with them..... If, however, the people have not the courage to resist Japanese unto death and not the courage and capacity to evacuate the portion invaded by the Japanese, they will do the best they can in the light of instructions. One thing they should never do - to yield willing submission to the Japanese. That will be a cowardly act, and unworthy of freedom-loving people. They must not escape from one fire only to fall into another and probably more terrible. Their attitude therefore must always be of resistance to the

Japanese. No question, therefore, arises of accepting British currency notes or Japanese coins. They will handle nothing from Japanese hands. So far as dealings with our own people are concerned they will either resort to barter or make use of such British currency that they have, in the hope that the National Government that may take the place of British Government will take up from the people all the British currency in accordance with its capacity."⁴⁴

Gandhi also said, "The Japanese broadcast every day that they do not intend to keep India - they only propose to help us win our freedom. I do not welcome their sympathy or help. I know they are not philanthropists I want for India a respite from all foreign domination."⁴⁵ He told the American journalists, "We have no army, no military resources, no military skill either, worth the name, and non-violence is the only thing we can fall back upon. Now in theory I can prove to you that our non-violent resistance can be wholly successful. We need not kill a single Japanese, we simply give them no quarter." He assured, "I do not want to help the Japanese—not even for freeing India." In other words, "So India's non-violence can at best take the form of silence - not obstructing the British forces, certainly not helping the Japanese." He concluded, "Remember I am more interested than the British in keeping the Japanese out. For Britain's defeat in Indian waters may mean only the loss of India, but if Japan wins India loses everything."⁴⁶ Gandhi wrote to Wavell (Viceroy), "The spirit of India demands complete freedom from all foreign dominance and would, therefore, resist Japanese yoke equally with British or any other."⁴⁷ He insisted, "I do not want to bring in Japan. I do not want a change of masters. I want to be free from all foreign control."⁴⁸ When asked if he favoured full entry of free Indian government into war against Japan, he answered "Yes".⁴⁹

While Gandhi was suspicious of the Japanese, Subash Chandra Bose saw an opportunity for his Indian National Army to free India with Japanese military assistance.⁵⁰ He urged Gandhi to be a party to this venture. He argued that the Japanese leaders had publicly stated that they had no ulterior motives. They gave assurances in the Japanese Diet and elsewhere to this effect. Hence, they could be trusted.⁵¹ But Gandhi was unconvinced and his stand was clear. First, the British should leave India and let her decide its own course of action. Second, the Japanese could not be allowed to meddle in India and if they came they had to be resisted. He did not doubt the patriotism of Bose but believed that the latter was under a delusion. Gandhi admitted, "Well, Subhas has risked much for us; but if he means to set up a Government in India, under the Japanese, he will be resisted by us."⁵²

On balance, it appears that Gandhi was correct. Established in 1942, some INA leaders soon thereafter became wary of the Japanese who, they felt, were making use of them for ulterior purposes. In December they ordered INA to disband after serious disagreements with the Japanese. The latter arrested an INA leader - Mohan Singh – and exiled him to Pulau Ubin, off the north-east coast of Singapore.⁵³ Subsequently, it was also found that the Japanese's military hardware was usable only for military ceremonies but was inconsequential for an armed conflict.

After atom bombs were dropped on Japan it believed to lay prostrate before the Allies. However, Gandhi thought otherwise and said, "America unleashed its atom bomb over Japan. That was the violence of the cowards. The non-violence of the brave is a thing worth seeing. I want to see that non-violence before I die."⁵⁴ His view was, "The atom bomb brought an empty victory to the Allied arms but it resulted for the time being in destroying the soul of Japan. What has happened to the soul of the destroying nation is yet too early to see." He continued, "A slaveholder cannot hold a slave without putting himself or his deputy in the cage holding the slave. Let no one run away with the idea that I wish to put in a defence of Japanese misdeeds in pursuance of Japan's unworthy ambition. The difference was only one of degree. I assume that Japan's greed was more unworthy. But the greater unworthiness conferred no right on the less unworthy of destroying without mercy men, women and children of Japan in a particular area."⁵⁵ While the War ended, a larger question remained. "Has it conquered the Japanese spirit? It has not and it cannot."⁵⁶

After the War was over, Ralph Conistan (a journalist) asked Gandhi about the war criminals. His reply was characteristic, "What is a war criminal? Was not war itself a crime against God and humanity and, therefore, were not all those who sanctioned, engineered, and conducted wars, war criminals? War criminals are not confined to the Axis Powers alone. Roosevelt and Churchill are no less war criminals than Hitler and Mussolini." He believed, "Hitler was "Great Britain's sin". Hitler is only an answer to British imperialism.... England, America and Russia have all of them got their hands dyed more or less red - not merely Germany and Japan. The Japanese have only proved themselves to be apt pupils of the West. They have learnt at the feet of the West and beaten it at its own game."⁵⁷

III. Conclusion

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed militarist Japan so much so that Kaiser William of Germany talked of 'yellow

peril.' Gandhi being a man of non-violence did not acquiesce to it. To begin with, he did not respond to the First Sino-Japanese War. But during the Russo-Japanese War, he felt a sense of gratification at the Japanese victories. And why he alone, that was the global reaction since the white man was after all not invincible and that Afro-Asians had the capability to hold against his domination. However, Gandhi was opposed not only to bloodshed but also to colonial exploitation. When Japanese militarism and imperialism were let loose in China, he supported this country in whatever way he could. He became vehement when Japanese militarism threatened India. In spite of his high regard for Subhas Chandra Bose, Gandhi refused to support the Japanese at his instance. On the other hand, he held on to his conviction that if the Japanese came, they would replace the British as masters. He laughed at the idea that he desired the British to quit India because he supported the Japanese.

He was unhappy with the dropping of atom bombs on Japan on the one hand and thought that all the belligerents perpetuated war crimes on the other. Subsequent research has vindicated Gandhi's view on both points. It looks at the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima as evidence of American arrogance. Japan had made a plea for peace through the Soviet Union. Still, the United States government ignored it, and used the atomic bomb to impress Russia and send a strong message to the international community that it would be the dominant player in the post-war world.⁵⁸ Barton J. Bernstein raises another dimension. He says that studies of A-bomb have neglected the heavy conventional bombing of Japan during the spring and summer of 1945, culminating in a thousand-plane attack with some squadrons dropping their deadly cargo after Japan's announced surrender.⁵⁹ After the bombing, the Americans reacted in a complex and contradictory manner. A vocal minority regarded it as atrocities comparable to the Nazi extermination camps.⁶⁰ It is common knowledge that the U.S. did not prosecute a number of Japanese war criminals in exchange for their data on biological weapons. This naturally raises the question: Will it use these data against its adversaries in the future? If so, will it not also become a war criminal? Will it not become liable for prosecution then?

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Performing the Self, Fashioning the Nation: Gandhi's Instruments of Political Imperatives

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ABSTRACT

The article attempts to revisit the philosophical praxis attributed to self-making in Gandhi and the parallel exercise of shaping the Indian nation. Focusing on auto-self-correction, self-denial, and swaraj – the three paradigms that largely contributed to the formation of the self in Gandhi and his politico-philosophical ideas, the article makes an analogy between self-making and formation of politico-moral imperatives, which for Gandhi became the modalities of forming the modern Indian nation. The article recalls the bearing of Gandhi's experiments such as Satyagraha, diet, khadi, and swaraj in the public life, which became instruments of his political strategy, encompassing the national life.

Key words: self, Indian nation, swaraj, self-denial, auto-self-correction

Introduction

THE PREOCCUPATION WITH the self at the ideational and pragmatic levels encompasses the oeuvre of Gandhi's life and philosophy. In Gandhi, there is always a tussle between the self that is given, the performative self, and the self that ought to be. Performance is a key trope to understand Gandhi, as he believed in practicing philosophy that combines 'mind, word, and deed.' Action becomes the *tour de force* in Gandhi's philosophy. Concepts that Gandhi worked with throughout his life are directed toward the self and its orientation. Concepts such as *swaraj* (self-rule), *ahimsa* (the absence of

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violence in the self), *anasakti* (non-attachment) *Satyagraha* (truth force or soul force), *aparigraha* (non-covetousness or trusteeship), *brahmacharya* (celibacy or sexual abstinence), *sarvodaya* (selfless service), *swadeshi* (self sufficiency), *abhaya* (fearlessness), *anrsamya* (non-cruelty), and so on capture the myriad practices – both performative and normative to know or search the self. In other words, for Gandhi, these are the parameters to achieve ‘self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *moksha*’ that remains his sole concern in his *An Autobiography* or *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*¹. This spiritual quest remains the guiding force in his everyday life and touches the sphere of politics in a significant way. The spiritual quest as a leitmotif underlines his key works: from *Hind Swaraj*², which is apparently a dialogue between the Indian civilisation and the civilisation of the West to *Satyagraha in South Africa*³, an account of the struggle to restore the dignity of Indian people in South Africa, from *Ashram Observances in Action*⁴ and *From Yeravda Mandir*⁵, reflections on ashram vows and ways of leading a life committed to these vows to *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*⁶, a prescriptive account for leading a non-violent and non-exploitative society in India; the primary concerns in these accounts are achieving self-rule, self-knowledge or largely the Truth of which all things are made, and therefore eternal. He urges the readers to read his autobiography not as a personal history but as a story of a soul in quest of Truth. Gandhi’s autobiography by narration of compulsive confessions and gradual self-revelation of the protagonist remains a unique piece of writing on its own. It needs to be mentioned here that the writing of autobiography, explicating the *Gita* along with the life of Christ, went on simultaneously at Sabarmati, and this had a tremendous influence on Gandhi’s self-realisation.

Auto-self-correction and making of Self

Gandhi conducts his ‘experiments’ at an empirical level to arrive at the ontological understanding of the self. Writing about his numerous experiments with truth, of which the story of his life is made of, Gandhi cogently gives them a scientific treatment; as he clarifies in the introduction of his *Autobiography*:

I claim for them nothing more than does a scientist who, though he conducts his experiments with the utmost accuracy, forethought and minuteness, never claims any finality about his conclusions, but keeps an open mind regarding them⁷.

Gandhi employs ‘experiments’ as the trope of Western

Enlightenment that postulates rationality/science to depict the nature of his self-searching and self-understanding, which is spiritual, moral, and ethical at the same time. In writing the story of his life, Gandhi conducts various experiments in the 'science of satyagraha', akin to that of a scientist's method of testing, observation, and constant revision. Making his self an object of experiments, tests, and trials, Gandhi engages himself in self-creation, "finding his way to a grounded sense of himself and his mission"⁸. Writing about his 'experiments', B R Nanda, one of the early biographers of Gandhi, finds a formula of Gandhi's auto-self-correction by making the pledge 'never again' in his boyhood:

...What was extraordinary was the way his adventures ended. In every case he posed for himself a problem for which he sought a solution by a framing a proposition in moral algebra. "Never again" was his promise to himself after each escapade. And he kept his promise⁹.

Guilt and remorse, which afflicts him in his personal life as he fails in his duty to his dying father while being overpowered by his carnal desire for his wife, continues in his life of *ashram*. Gandhi owns guilt and moral responsibility for any wrongdoings of his ashramites and takes recourse to fast as penance. He attributes his eldest son Harilal's misdemeanour to his (Gandhi's) own culpability of early life. As he admits, "I have always felt that the undesirable traits I see today in my eldest son are an echo of my own undisciplined and unformulated early life"¹⁰. The autobiography in this sense becomes a truly confessional and a self-rectifying text in recording his failing as a son in his duty to father, his failure to educate his child-wife Kasturba as lust overpowers him, his guilt of causing her pain on acting on a friend's misinformation and his inability to devote time to his children. He revisits his earlier mistaken notions about the wife's duty and role, which was largely drawn from his initial unequal relationship with Kasturba. Gandhi acknowledges in his autobiography that *brahmacharya* as a means of self-realisation enables him to rectify such notions: "I saw then the glory of *Brahmacharya* and realized that the wife is not the husband's bond slave, but his companion and his helpmate, and an equal partner in all his joys and sorrows – as free as the husband to choose her own path"¹¹.

Thus auto-self-correction continues in the form of moral and spiritual experiments throughout Gandhi's life. The normative in Gandhi always followed a sequel of praxis; self-discipline as auto-self-correction started at the individual level and later encompassed the community as he set up ashram to cultivate the moral and ethical

values like voluntary poverty or non-possession, chastity, fearlessness, truthfulness and so on at the collective level to achieve Swaraj for the nation, which underlines that the moral and the political praxis can operate in tandem. The imperative of the ashram as a place of character building for a community began in his South African years when he set up Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm – the two Satyagraha institutions — with the objective to lead a religious life with “purity of body and mind as well as economic equality,”¹² The foundation of Satyagraha for Gandhi was laid in religion and unshakable faith in God. The term Satyagraha was coined by Gandhi conjoining two words: *satya* meaning truth and *agraha* meaning adherence or firmness. On his return to India, he set up an ashram proper at Kochrab in Ahmedabad in 1915, which was afterwards shifted to the Sabarmati riverbank in 1917 and named as Satyagraha Ashram. It was a conscious decision to merge the individual with the community on adherence to Truth. It is important to understand the conscious performance of the self both at the individual and community levels through the institution of the ashram, which Gandhi defines as “a community of men of religion.”¹³ He uses the word religion in a broader framework – religion as a link between different religions, finally emerging as the *religion of man* that can lead an individual towards absolute Truth. Gandhi writes that “the Satyagraha Ashram owes its very existence to the pursuit and the attempted practice of Truth,”¹⁴ In his works, *Ashram Observances in Action* and *From Yeravda Mandir*, Gandhi prescribes the ashram observances necessary for the pursuit of Truth in totality, i.e. in thought, speech, and action. The correlation between an ashramite and a Satyagrahi is based on a mutual logic, as the former was necessary for the latter. He identifies five primary ashram observances i.e. truth, non-violence, celibacy, or chastity, along with non-stealing and non-possession for attaining self-realization. In Gandhi’s philosophy, these observances are so intricately intertwined that it is impossible to separate one from the other in the ultimate quest for Truth. He believes that truth as an object of the quest is not to be found outside, but within one’s own self, and all observances are deducible from Truth. It needs to be mentioned that the concepts of truth and *brahmacharya* in Gandhi’s lexicon have a wider connotation: truth in the ashram stood for “Truth in thought, Truth in speech, and Truth in action”¹⁵.

Similarly, the meaning of *brahmacharya* goes beyond the mere practice of celibacy or sexual abstinence, as he clarifies: “Charya means course of conduct; *brahmacharya* conduct adapted to the search of *Brahma*.”¹⁶, i.e. Truth. Explaining this Akeel Bilgrami writes, the personal experience of the truth in epistemological terms “is... to be

understood in how truth surfaces in our practical and moral relations. That is why truth itself will have no value for us other than the value of such things as truth-telling, which does involve our practical and moral relations"¹⁷. In Gandhi, the quest for Truth through auto-self-correction, which begins at the individual level, has greater ramifications as it encompasses the community and institution in the form of the ashram, while reaching out to the broader category of the nation. The observances at the ashram were oriented towards preparing the ashramites for a new national life. In *Ashram Observances in Action*, he writes, "...the Ashram set out to remedy what it thought were defects in our national life from the religious, economic and political standpoints"¹⁸. Gandhi's trajectory of ideas always advanced from a micro to a macro level, the prescription for the individual self always had a collective or national parallel.

Self-making through self-denial

It needs to be underscored that underlying all his experiments is *self-denial*, or what is termed as Gandhi's 'eternal negative' by the psychoanalyst Erik H Erikson¹⁹, that paradoxically constitutes Gandhi's self. In other words, self-identity is based on the rhetoric of negation through which Gandhi performs his self. The *Autobiography* records many experiments with self-denial of different types, particularly in the context of his experiments with saltless and pulseless diet, where Gandhi is convinced that "all self-denial is good for the soul."²⁰ This aspect of self-denial in the formation of Gandhi's self has to be understood in an affirmative sense, i.e. the logic of self-overcoming, which subsequently would lead him towards attaining *swaraj*. At this point, Gandhi's autobiography may be considered conforming to a Christian autobiographical mode in terms of confession and guilt but marks a significant departure from the Western autobiographies where self-exhibition or self-praise is commonly manifest. Contrarily, Gandhi's autobiography concludes on a self-effacing note: "I must reduce myself to zero. So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him. *Ahimsa* is the furthest of humility."²¹ For Gandhi, humility connotatively points towards self-effacement, leading to salvation or *moksha*.

Self-denial, i.e., denial of the palate (and occasional fasting), sex, violence, covetousness, possession, and so on, continues in all spheres, at different stages of Gandhi's experiments, which become the modes to reaffirm his self. Beyond self-denial, philosophical concepts like *ahimsa*, *Satyagraha*, *brahmacharya*, and so on are imbued with spiritual, moral, ethical, even psychological meaning. Erikson underlines the

aspect of self-denial while projecting Gandhi's emergence as a leader: "...Gandhi insisted on entering into the mission of liberating his country with a set of demands on himself which represented his unique combination of political leadership with *selflessness* and even *sexlessness*."²² Self-denial to the extent of self-sacrifice was the principle that shaped events like Satyagraha in Gandhi's life. In 1906 soon after his monumental *Satyagraha* ("adherence to Truth") movement in South Africa, Gandhi wrote that "sacrifice" was the "law of life." He abandoned his life as a British barrister, gave up sexual relations with his wife and other worldly pleasures, and vowed to give selfless service to the Indian community living in Natal and the Transvaal and win freedom from racial prejudice and discrimination. Explicating the self-sacrifice implicit in Satyagraha, Gandhi writes: "Satyagraha postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person"²³. Further, he explains, "The very nature of Satyagraha is such that the fruit of the movement is contained in the movement itself. Satyagraha is based on self-help, self-sacrifice and faith in God."²⁴

In consonance with his 'experiments with Truth', Satyagraha as a philosophy of pursuing Truth towards attaining self-knowledge was devised in earlier years of his struggle in South Africa. Satyagraha as a philosophy, which Gandhi develops from his reading of the *Gita*, meets its praxis in the South African struggle. In order to establish a direct connection between his methods and the goal, Gandhi wanted his autobiography to be read as a companion volume to *Satyagraha in South Africa*: "I need hardly mention that those who are following the weekly chapters of *My Experiments with Truth* cannot afford to miss these chapters on Satyagraha, if they would follow in all details the working out of the search after Truth."²⁵ In the preface to *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Gandhi writes that "to realize this Truth Satyagraha in South Africa will be helpful to us."²⁶ In fact, South Africa becomes a testing ground to his self-experiments; he concludes *Satyagraha in South Africa* on the note that it was South Africa where "I had realised my vocation in life"²⁷. In Gandhi, the spiritual striving and the political struggle, the moral and the medical cure are all fused together because he recognized these spheres are directed towards one goal, i.e., pursuit of Truth. It needs to be highlighted that the self-making in Gandhi at the ideational levels obtains its base from his London and South African years. Gandhi's London experience and his South African years prepared him towards austerity, self-discipline, and political maturity. London and later South Africa became the veritable laboratories to experiment with his self that would orient him to fight for India's anti-colonial struggle with his philosophy of non-

violence that instituted his mahatmahood in the social imaginary. In the years in England and South Africa, Gandhi became conscious of the nature of imperialism and racism. Gandhi imbibed vegetarianism from his family by custom and tradition, but it was in London that he became motivated toward vegetarianism after reading Henry Salt's *A Plea for Vegetarianism* and became 'a vegetarian by choice' and an advocate of the principle after his association with the London vegetarian society. Gandhi's experiment in simple living was deeply inspired by the book called *How to Live on Six Pence a Day* by Dr. Nichol. If the London years trained him in his food habits and voluntary poverty choices, the long South African experience was fundamental in shaping the activist, social reformer, political thinker, and leader in Gandhi. His struggle in Natal and Transvaal was crucial to set the stage for nationalist politics later in India. The hostility and physical violence on his arrival at Durban port and later his humiliating encounter when he was ejected from a first-class carriage at Pietermaritzburg Railway Station were instances of highest racial discrimination that made Gandhi harness the spiritual power against the colonialists, and importantly, rely on the supremacy of Satyagraha. A strong urge for self-improvement and community welfare preoccupied Gandhi. With his association and interactions with Tolstoy, Raychandbhai, C F Andrews, Hermann Kallenbach, Joseph Doke, Pranjivan Mehta, and others, Gandhi emerged as a seeker of higher values in life. Ramachandra Guha writes that "Gandhi's South African campaigns were an early example of 'diasporic nationalism'"²⁸, a nationalism which many nationalities and communities would practice later for the rights and freedom of their compatriots. In South Africa, Gandhi took the vow of *brahmacharya*, eschewing sexual relations with his wife at the age of thirty-seven. The idea of celibacy, which Gandhi directly linked to ahimsa or non-violence is believed to have been derived from his association with the Jain sage Raychandbhai and Tolstoy's notion of abstinence of and overcoming baser passions like carnal love. The settlements at Phoenix and Tolstoy that hosted diverse communities of religious distinctions demonstrated his conviction for religious plurality and cosmopolitanism essential for the future Indian nation. The political and the spiritual Gandhi merges into one in the South African struggle; his role as the father of a whole community in South Africa analeptically entails the future epithet he would be conferred with — the father of the (Indian) nation. The South African experiments and struggles extended his life to India; the reform initiatives introduced at Phoenix and Tolstoy settlements were replicated in his Sabarmati ashram in India. Mira Behn, one of Gandhi's foremost

disciples, in her autobiography *The Spirit's Pilgrimage* comments on his ashram: "... the ashram was not at all of the monastic type, but was a miniature cross-section of the everyday world, on which Bapu was experimenting with the most lofty and drastic conceptions of moral, physical and economic reforms"²⁹. The long twenty-one years of South African episode was a turning point in Gandhi's life that gave him leverage for shaping the destiny of the emergent nation in India with die-hard conviction in the philosophy of Satyagraha and *ahimsa*.

Performing the Self

The self in Gandhi is *performed* in heterogeneous carnivalesque ways, i.e., through protest march, non-cooperation, Satyagraha, and so on, and the most common of them remains his frequent fasts, again a self-denying mode, all of which, however, facilitate him to delve into the national self. The performative aspect of nationalism forms a crucial significance in Gandhi's political philosophy and the numerous 'experiments' that directly bear the nation and its body politic. The experimental theme touches on the broad spectrum of Gandhi's private and public life: he writes of 'experiments in the political field' and 'experiments in the spiritual field,' 'experiments on my body' and 'experiments in dietetics' and 'principal' and 'current experiments.' In conducting numerous 'experiments with truth', Gandhi establishes a crucial link between his individual body and the wider 'Body Politic,' where fashioning the individual body and the nation's 'body' inhabits a continuous space. The intimate link between the individual body and the wider 'Body Politic' is implied in Gandhi's acknowledgement that his experiment with the body has given him the power "for working in the political field"³⁰. For Gandhi, the body becomes the laboratory within which he conducts the 'experiments' with the strong belief that one way to attain Truth can be through disciplining the body.

In *Gandhi's Body: Sex, Diet, and the Politics of Nationalism*, Joseph S. Alter observes that Gandhi's autobiography maintains a thin line of demarcation between his personal experiments with dietetics, celibacy, hygiene, and nature cure and his search for Truth. The body is the crucial site on which Gandhi performs the somatic nationalism as he viewed, "*swaraj* to be a metabolic principle as well as a principle of political action."³¹ The somatic experiments correspond to Gandhi's awareness through the corporeal experience of his status as a colonised subject. The humiliating injustice of colonial rule accompanies a deep sense of shame as his feeble body is in stark contrast to the 'white body' of colonial authority³². From the beginning

of his autobiography, Gandhi interrelates empowering the individual body and attaining swaraj by establishing an indelible link between his obsession with health, his faith in non-violence, and his programme for socio-political reform. Gandhi's *Key to Health*³³, a reformist and political tract on human health, cogently relates the interconnections among these issues. Joseph Alter effectively reads Gandhi's *Autobiography* "as a kind of intimate politics of the body – a more nitty-gritty and frankly hygienic commentary on the fundamental mechanics of self-discipline, self-overcoming, and self-rule."³⁴ In Gandhi, self-denial through fasting/abstinence becomes a means of his philosophy of self-restraint, and there is an intimate connection among sensuality, self-restraint, Truth, and production of certain energy by self-overcoming, which is explicated in the chapter "More Experiments in Dietetics" in his autobiography. Fasting in Gandhi's philosophical practice acquires a bio-moral politics. He adopts fasting as a technique of individual bodily purification that evolves into one of his most effective weapons of anti-colonial resistance. The fasts had two purposes: at the quotidian level, they were concerned with spirituality and bio-moral health. At the national level, they overtly exhibited a political strategy and his concern for public, national health. It is important to mention that his periodic fasts, along with his experimentations with vegetarianism, dietetics, naturopathy, *brahmacharya* were an integral part of Satyagraha. Commenting on Gandhi's dietetics, Bart Moore-Gilbert observes that "his desire for mastery of bodily appetites provides a template for developing the self-control and self-discipline necessary not just to attain self-rule in the political sphere, but to remain worthy of it."³⁵ In the chapter called "Heart Searchings",³⁶ Gandhi illustrates how during his medical service in the background of Boer War he came to realize that *brahmacharya* was the means to Truth. In the following chapter, "The Birth of Satyagraha", Gandhi writes, "I can now see that all the principal events of my life, culminating in the vow of *brahmacharya*, were secretly preparing me for [Satyagraha]."³⁷ Satyagraha had a private dimension too; Gandhi learnt through illness how to exercise Satyagraha at the domestic front in establishing his own body as 'an autonomous entity'.

What appears in Gandhi's experiments and observances is an attempt to distance the mind from the bodily indulgences and create a sovereign mind in the spiritual, economic, and political spheres so that the individual and the national are conjoined in the attainment of swaraj. The mind has to first meet its spiritual strivings, which subsequently can bring forth swaraj in politics, economics, etc. In his apparent physical experiments with dietetics and observances like

fasting and *brahmacharya*, Gandhi underlines the indispensable role of the mind in conducting these experiments and achieving the spiritual strivings of the self. Writing about fasting, Gandhi emphasizes that “fasting is futile unless it is accompanied by an incessant longing for self-restraint if physical fasting is not accompanied by mental fasting, it is bound to end in hypocrisy and disaster.”³⁸ Similarly, the test of *brahmacharya* lies not simply in the observance of celibacy but in eradicating all sensualities from the mind because “mind is at the root of all sensuality”³⁹ and hence the rationale of practicing *brahmacharya* in thought, word, and deed. Gandhi believed that fasting or modifications in diet could not cleanse a consciously unclean mind and thus focused on rescuing the mind from being a slave of the senses and prescribed for the body non-stimulating foods and periodic fasting. On the discussion of *brahmacharya*, Gandhi explains that although there is a connection between diet, self-restraint, and *brahmacharya*, the mind has a central agency behind achieving the spiritual goal. Thus, liberating the mind from all physical inducements and empowering it from within remains the constant engagement in Gandhi’s life; it becomes the foundation upon which the nation’s discourse is built.

Self/nation-making: The idea of Swaraj

In his *Autobiography* as well as other writings, particularly in *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi’s formulation of the Indian nation relies on the idea of *swaraj*, which connotes both self-determination and self-rule. Gandhi’s idea of *swaraj*, which encompasses the political, economic and spiritual, is underlined with the fact that it is the spiritual *swaraj* that becomes a prerequisite to achieve *swaraj* in other fields. Unlike his other interlocutors for whom *swaraj* mainly existed in the political form, Gandhi viewed that such an approach would end up continuing “English rule without the Englishman.”⁴⁰ Parel, in his introduction to *Hind Swaraj*, writes that “spiritual *swaraj* has two component elements: self-discipline and self-transcendence.”⁴¹ Self-transformation, which is a prerequisite to self-rule, happens through self-discipline and self-transcendence, i.e., through the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. Gandhi emphasizes the experiential element in the spiritual *swaraj* that each self has to undergo in the pursuit of *swaraj* that comprises all other spheres like politics, economics, aesthetics, and ethics. As Gandhi says:

It is *swaraj* when we learn to rule ourselves. It is therefore, in the palm of our hands...The *swaraj* that I wish to picture before you and me is such that, after we have once realised it, we will endeavour to the end

our lifetime to persuade others to do likewise. But such swaraj has to be experienced by each one for himself⁴²

Swaraj as self-rule which is an inevitable corollary to swaraj as self-government, implies that “individual regeneration and national regeneration constitute one continuum.”⁴³ *Hind Swaraj*, which Gandhi wrote on the Kildonan Castle to demonstrate the sublimity of Satyagraha, arguably built up philosophy to integrate the personal and the national so that India can attain swaraj in the true sense. Good self-government is only possible if Indians are capable of self-rule, but “self-rule can flourish only within an appropriate political community” and “that community in modern times is the nation-state.”⁴⁴ *Hind Swaraj*, espousing Gandhi’s political philosophy and reflecting the ideological character of Indian nationalism, strongly advocates the view that India is a nation deserving self-government. India’s status as a nation was a debated issue at the time when Gandhi was writing *Hind Swaraj*, and he substituted the word *praja* for nation. India was a *praja* in the pre-Islamic period that was liberal in accommodating diverse religions and cultures. Gandhi’s preference to use *praja* can be understood as a rationale to build an edifice of a modern nation-state that is non-imitative of the West. The imperative to achieve *swaraj* for the nation was felt from all corners — political and economic empowerment along with moral development. Gandhi’s anti-colonialism found its outlet in the swadeshi (economic nationalism) movement, which aimed to attain swaraj *in the economic field* by resisting foreign goods and creating a new form of *swadeshi* politics that encouraged the production and consumption of hand-spun, hand-woven cloth called *khadi*. In his *Autobiography*, Gandhi records his struggle to establish the spinning wheel at Sabarmati that he saw as “the panacea for the growing pauperism in India.”⁴⁵ The main purpose was, as Gandhi noted, to “be able to clothe ourselves entirely in cloth manufactured by our own hands. We therefore forthwith discarded the use of mill-woven cloth, and all the members of the Ashram resolved to wear hand-woven cloth made from Indian yarn only.”⁴⁶ Khadi’s permeability in the nationalist politics created a new register for national imagining, as khadi became “a visual vocabulary of nationhood”⁴⁷ as Sandria Freitag has termed it. The meaning of the cloth assumed a new significance in the hands of the nationalists who challenged colonial domination by creating what Arjun Appadurai calls the “language of commodity resistance.”⁴⁸ Thus *khadi* became a symbol of the nation’s potential economic self-sufficiency. Dipesh Chakrabarty voices its symbolism in the nationalist rhetoric in his essay “*Khadi* and the Political Man.” *Khadi*, as

Chakrabarty writes, “stands for the politician’s capacity to renounce his own material well-being, to make sacrifices (*tyag*) in the public/national interest. *Khadi* indicates the person’s capacity to serve the country.”⁴⁹ Benedict Anderson⁵⁰ no doubt gives primacy to ‘print capitalism’ and ‘rising literacy’ as a corollary to the imagining of a national community, but he also acknowledges the importance of the visual in national imaginings. Apart from being a powerful visual in the national imaginings, *Khadi* also became a mode of political performance in All India Spinners’ Association (AISA), a national organisation founded in 1925 that contributed to the development of swadeshi politics. AISA endeavoured to propagate a new visual vocabulary to communicate with the Indian masses separated by language, religion, region, etc. The khadi exhibitions created a certain sense of familiarity with the national geography across the subcontinent by use of photographic representations and lantern slide shows. They transformed the visitors into the ‘tourists of the nation’. Lisa N Trivedi notes:

Unlike the national symbols associated with the nations of the West, which emphasized a shared natal land, the goods of the swadeshi movement defined the Indian nation by consciously bridging otherwise disparate regions with a consumer good whose production would legitimise the nation⁵¹.

The use of visual symbols elicited a sense of nationalism that mobilized the people in building one unified India that transcended class differences. One of the images employed for the purpose was a poster of ‘Gandhi and woman spinning India’ that best represented the visual medium’s attempt to build the nation. At the centre of the portrait is Gandhi dressed in khadi shirt and hat, at the bottom left corner is the image of a map labelled in the Hindi script “Bharat” and on the far right of the image is a woman, identified as *Bharat Mata* holding the spinning wheel (khadi charkha) embossed in the flag over the image of Gandhi and spins with her other hand. The image reinforces Gandhian principles that swaraj can only be won with women’s participation in national regeneration. Similar other visual narratives tell the tales of the creation of Indian nationhood by taking recourse to the mythological and religious components. Nehru has recognised Khadi’s role in the nation building activities in his *Autobiography*. Gandhi constantly reminded the Congressmen that they must engage themselves in the nation-building project through “the spread of khaddar through personal hand-spinning and hand-weaving, the spread of communal unity of hearts...”⁵². Besides khadi’s

primary role in achieving economic swaraj, it embarked on the vision of making India 'one nation', eliding the distinction among people belonging to different economic strata, religions, and cultures. The rhetoric of anti-colonial politics found its manifestations in different ways; such one was through the sartorial semiotics implied in his use of loincloth that earned him the epithet 'half-naked fakir'. Robert Young observes that Gandhi "used his dress in the same manner that, according to Fanon, Algerian women used the veil, that is, instrumentality."⁵³

Gandhi's advocacy for celibacy, which in turn envisions a celibate nation, has much significance in extending the bodily relationship with the nation as one is just wedded to the nation. In his *Collected Works*, Gandhi expresses such an opinion in a hyperbolic way while promoting khadi: "Fix your thoughts exclusively on khadi [homespun cotton]; countless men may be wedded to her and yet she always remains a virgin. And a man who takes her alone as a wife will still be an inviolate *brahmachari*"⁵⁴. Gandhi's views on celibacy, vegetarianism, mud packs, and hip baths give a rationale for the moral health of the nation. The geopolitical state of the nation is imagined in its smallest parts connecting to the whole, thus rendering a synecdochic representation of the nation:

As with the individual, so with society. A village is but a group of individuals and the world, as I see it, is one vast village and mankind one family. The various functions in the human body have their parallel in the corporate life of society. What I have said about the inner and outer cleanliness of the individual, therefore, applies to the whole society⁵⁵.

Thus, the metaphoric/metonymic associations between the individual self and the self of the nation are variously established, signalling a symbiotic relation between the two. Elsewhere, Gandhi in a letter to Maganlal Gandhi writes: "Nobility of soul consists in realizing that you are yourself India. In your emancipation is the emancipation of India. All else is make believe."⁵⁶

Conclusion

To reiterate, auto-self-correction, self-denial, and swaraj, the three core ideas that defined Gandhi's self, also became the parameter to define the civil society and the nation. The reformative aspect that underlines the individual self in the process of transformation is contained in the critique of the civil society. The anti-colonial politics in Gandhi was not one-dimensional; it was as much directed

against the British rule as it came from critiquing the civil society. It also surfaced in decrying modernity, a manifestation of the European Enlightenment, and devising an alternative modernity that could sustain the 'national life' in a distinct way. Ashis Nandy⁵⁷ terms Gandhi as a counter-modernist in postulating swadeshi as a mode leading to swaraj and inventing the myths and metaphors of Hinduism while giving it a political currency for spiritually awakening his countrymen. Gandhi's alternative modernity or radical modernism is distinctly couched in traditional and mythical ideas in rationalising his alternatives as being traditional and modernist in formulating the concept of the ideal nation as *Ramrajya*. Characterizing the intervention of Gandhi in India's nationalist politics as the 'moment of manoeuvre' in the 'passive revolution of capital in India', Partha Chatterjee⁵⁸ reads *Hind Swaraj* as a text that explicates Gandhi's nationalism underlining a fundamental critique of the civil society. The answer for India being a subject nation, according to Gandhi, lies in the moral and civilizational failure of the people as "it is not the physical presence of the English which makes India a subject nation: it is civilization which subjects."⁵⁹ Launching a trenchant critique of Western 'modern civilization', Gandhi is at the same time highly critical of the fundamental aspects of Indian civil society. Partha Chatterjee explains that Gandhi's conceptualisation of the Indian nation goes beyond the thematic of nationalism or the framework of Enlightenment thought i.e. rationalism, scientism and historicism adopted by the nationalists of his time. Chatterjee comments, "as early as in *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi dismisses all historical objections to the project of freeing India, not by the strength of arms but by the force of the soul."⁶⁰ By critiquing civil society, Gandhi formulates the edifice of the nation-state outside the Enlightenment paradigm, although the foundation is often marked with contradictory ideologies. In Chatterjee's words, it evokes

a nationalism which stood upon a critique of the very idea of civil society, a movement supported by the bourgeoisie which rejected the idea of progress, the ideology of a political organisation fighting for the creation of a modern national state which accepted at the same time the ideal of an 'enlightened anarchy'⁶¹.

The discourse of nation in Gandhi makes a departure from both Western and the dominant Indian modes of thinking where everydayness of politics influences the self in such ways that it becomes difficult to say where the story of the self ends and the

discourse of the nation begins. In the recognition given to the self as a national subject or the self assuming a national identity, the subject becomes *nationalised* as it participates in the dream, imagining, or in the fantasy of the nation. What is involved in the process is the complete identification of one's self with the entity called nation or metonymising the self for the wholeness of the nation. The Congress facilitated such a national fantasy, and Gandhi, under whose leadership it came into being, was also embodied in the national dream as *Mahatma* (an address bestowed upon Gandhi by Rabindranath Tagore, meaning 'great soul'). Shahid Amin⁶², in his essay "Gandhi as Mahatma", explains that Gandhi's institution as Mahatma in the national dream was so *real* that it could soon be translated into colonialists' nightmare. However, such practices had a strong impact on the social imaginary; Nehru, in his autobiography, underlines Gandhi's metonymic identification with the nation:

He (Gandhi) came to represent India to an amazing degree and to express the very spirit of that ancient and tortured land. Almost he was India and his very failings were Indian failings. A slight to him was hardly a personal matter; it was an insult to the nation⁶³.

If at the individual level Gandhi came to be identified with India, it was Indian National Congress along with khadi that sustained the nationalist impulse at the collective level. The Congress became the life force of the nation to the extent that it came to stand for the nation. As an organisation, Congress could mobilise the masses in awakening their nationalist urge. The goal of the Congress, as Gandhi specified, was the attainment of swaraj, which coincided with the individual self as well as the self of the nation. Nehru mentions the impossibility of decoupling the Congress from the nation: "To desert the Congress seemed to me thus to cut oneself adrift from the vital urge of the nation, to blunt the most powerful weapon we had, and perhaps to waste energy in ineffective adventurism."⁶⁴ Just as khadi, the Congress too was committed to the task of unifying the nation by diminishing the Hindu-Muslim division and other such gaps, most notably the evil of untouchability. Gandhi coins the term *harijan*, meaning 'children of God', to refer to the untouchables. Gandhi's address of untouchability with the trope of Hindu religion generated a lot of debate between him and Ambedkar, who viewed the problem with socio-economic and political matrices. The naming of the untouchables as *harijan* and the tribes as *giriyan* in religious terms

had a political implication that India should stand united in transcending social/caste division and religious bigotry. In his autobiography, Gandhi records such a mission: "The Hindu members of the Congress have taken upon themselves the responsibility of ridding Hinduism of the curse of untouchability, and the Congress has established a living bond of relationship with the 'skeletons' of India through Khadi"⁶⁵. Khadi helped the Congress realize its nationalist dream as it became the 'uniform of national freedom'.⁶⁶ It needs to be mentioned that like other concepts in Gandhi's lexicon which have direct bearing on the self, untouchability too was viewed as part of the self. The eradication of untouchability was viewed as a sacred ritual of self-purification, and Gandhi advocates this in the *Harijan* weekly, "The movement for the removal of untouchability is one of self-purification."⁶⁷ Commenting on it, D R Nagaraj expresses that such formulation "had placed a great deal of moral responsibility on the caste-Hindu self".⁶⁸ The spiritual cleansing of the self, which was an utmost necessity in eradicating untouchability from the Hindu orthodoxy, was central to the agenda of producing an ethically cleansed nation. It is to be underlined that behind Gandhi's basic theoretical pronouncements on the nation are the performative modes of nationalism which happen vis-à-vis the self, reinstating the idea that nation is not an abstract category to be imagined or dreamt about, but the making of a nation is a willful act that involves a continuous process containing pragmatic behaviour and action, the articulation of which is manifest in *Hind Swaraj*: "Nations are not formed in a day; the formation requires years."⁶⁹

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Gandhian Philosophy and Youth Civic Engagement in India

Rachana Bhangaokar

ABSTRACT

Gandhian ideas of self-development and social transformation are interdependent. Based on a qualitative study, the paper illustrates the efficacy of a Gandhian approach for civic engagement through experiences of youth and their mentors volunteering at Gandhian institutions in different parts of Gujarat. Two case profiles elucidate the process of self-transformation through civic engagement that led participants to 'be the change' they wished to see. As youth participated in various Gandhian practices like community service, prayers and meditation, they became more self-aware and introspective. Their understanding of money and its salience for personal well-being moved from greed for abundance to need for contentment. Gandhian mentors inspired youth by practicing simplicity, compassion, kindness and equanimity in their own lives, without any preaching or wanting to "create" Gandhians. By participating in civic engagement activities in a Gandhian context, youth and mentors rejuvenated connections with self and others and created strong trust networks, both real and virtual, which ensured organic and sustainable social initiatives.

Key words: Gandhian philosophy, youth, civic engagement, volunteering, India

Introduction

INDIA WILL SOON become the most populous country in the world with the greatest number of young people. In 2017, the median age of an Indian is estimated to be 29 years¹. India's youth between the ages of 13 to 35, constitute 40% of its total population². 'Indian youth'

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represents tremendous diversity along the boundaries of gender, caste, class, education, region and language, highlighting also stark inequalities in access to health, education, income, employment and opportunities for upward mobility³. Across these dimensions, ensuring positive youth development that harmoniously mobilizes into voluntary action for nation building remains a challenge. Developmentally, all young people can optimize their potentials and be beneficial to their communities, provided they have adequate opportunities to do so. Millions of Indian youth can be honed for future progress towards stable democratic governance, economic growth, improved access to education, and better health. Civic engagement is proposed as a potential avenue that channelizes youth energies constructively.

Voluntary action was central to Gandhi's vision of a self-reliant and non-violent society that aimed for *sarvodaya* - greatest good of all⁴. Gandhian ideas of social transformation and self-development are interdependent and inseparable. Chabot⁵ emphasized that the Gandhian repertoire was a unique transformative invention that had elements of pragmatism, principle, reform and revolution in balanced proportions. When every generation discovers and appreciates a symbiotic connection between self and society, and reiterates the same to the next, Gandhi becomes relevant. This paper illustrates the processes of self-transformation and sustainable social change caused by youth civic engagement and mentoring in Gandhian contexts.

Gandhian Philosophy: Insights for Civic Engagement

Gandhi envisioned a synergistic relationship between the individual and society, firmly entrenched in the moral principles of truth and non-violence. The moral underpinnings of *sarvodaya* (greatest good of all) make it an important ethical perusal, for the well-being of self and others. Voluntary action and decentralization were central to Gandhi's idea of a (non-violent) society that aims for *sarvodaya*⁶. He believed that society should facilitate individual freedom and support the development of individual capacities, so that individual citizens, in turn, can become capable of efficiently managing society⁷. This means individuals must understand their responsibility of rightful, voluntarily action to sustain this symbiotic societal structure and ensure their own survival. Gandhi emphasized the spirit of practice more than the form, specifying that the spirit be consistent with the basic belief in truth and non-violence. The behavior then would automatically follow⁸. Gandhi's focus was on the welfare of human beings minus the systems and institutions. He advocated that both self and society should develop simultaneously and not one after the

other. Voluntarism was thus at the heart of many Gandhian endeavors, providing the necessary fuel to convert these principles into practice.

According to Pande⁹, Gandhi's philosophy of social transformation stems from the understanding of *dharma* (righteousness) and *atma-nigraha* (suppression of the lower self). He draws heavily from the Advaita philosophy to explain the concept of *ahimsa* and also engages deeply with the ideas of *aparigraha* (non-possession), *samabhava* (equability) and *sarvabhutahita* (good of all living beings) from the Bhagavad Gita, alongside the holy books of other religions. The four pillars of Gandhian thought were truth, non-violence, *satyagraha* and *sarvodaya*. Each contributed uniquely to Gandhi's vision of a new social order. Truth and non-violence were more basic and foundational aspects while *satyagraha* and *sarvodaya* were more action and outcome-oriented aspects.

Summarizing from Prasad¹⁰, Sarkar¹¹ and Bhatia¹², Gandhi's philosophy rested on a few other principles. He maintained that competition and economic exploitation should be minimized and replaced with the spirit of cooperation. Production, of any good and services should be need-based and not driven by greed. Any form of work - intellectual, social and physical, should have equal importance and one should not be weighed more than the other in terms of status or power. Dignity of labor, especially related to rural and agrarian life, was strongly linked to this thought. Sustainability and the practice of self-reliance or independence for people, villages, regions and the nation were a common feature of his ideologies. A deep respect and acknowledgement of nature was significant to devise a system of work and production that was geared towards preserving the natural environment rather than destroying or controlling what nature provided us. An overarching goal or an undercutting principle was the absence of oppression and force or coercion in all attempts at establishing systems of production or even the state. With reference to volunteerism, Kapuria¹³ explains that for Gandhi, moral conscience was the source of all voluntary action. Volunteering was a selfless act done in the spirit of service (*seva*) that began first with oneself.

Gandhi's Constructive Programs

Gandhi's Satyagraha consisted of two parts – Constructive Programs (CP) and non-violent civil disobedience¹⁴. From the 1920s to 1948, Gandhi's emphasis on CP remained strong and parallel to his efforts for non-violent resistance¹⁵. Considering the CP as a means of attaining *purna swaraj*, he first presented his ideas for CP in 1941 and in a revised edition in 1945, he gave a list of 19 social issues of critical importance.

For Gandhi, CP was a roadmap to ensure individual development that would eventually lead to social change in many aspects of Indian society¹⁶. Many of these issues like communal unity, women's emancipation, promoting local languages, hygiene and sanitation, upliftment of villages remain relevant even today. Encouraging students for service for non-political purposes is significant in the context of youth civic engagement in India. Across global societies, rising inequalities make the CP agenda extremely relevant even today.

Few exemplars of large-scale efforts in creating sustainable decentralized programs built on principles of self-governance and grassroots democracy exist today. Among them, Elaben Bhatt's SEWA initiative in Ahmedabad, Gujarat is noteworthy¹⁷. As a 'gentle revolutionary' Elaben used Gandhian principles to mobilize millions of poor women, emphasizing that poverty was not powerlessness and they could assert their collective identity through sheer numbers. Similarly, Prof. Anil Gupta draws inspiration from Gandhi's faith in innovation as transformative force¹⁸. His efforts in leading innovation and documentation of local techniques in agriculture and other sectors in India through the HoneyBee Network and SRISTI are also praiseworthy.

The next section focuses on volunteering and youth civic engagement in the contemporary Indian context.

Youth Civic Engagement in India

Civic engagement can be a mixture of civic action, civic skills, social connections, and duty¹⁹. Non-political forms of civic engagement could be diverse including, community service, volunteering, unpaid, legal, and non-violent ways of addressing social problems and issues²⁰. Civic engagement is understood as active and engaged citizenship²¹ where individuals volunteer in formal or informal ways through legal and nonviolent ways of addressing social problems and issues. Number of studies show that civic engagement has benefits for adolescents and leads to positive youth development²².

The National Youth Policy²³ considers youth civic participation as one of the key concerns for youth mobilization in nation building. Unfortunately, India presents a rather skewed picture of youth participation for civic causes. A study by the International Institute for Population Sciences and Population Council²⁴ conducted in six Indian states reported less than 30% youth participation in civic and social causes. The participation of women and girls is even lesser. Streaked with a number of issues like funding dependence and lack of mentors²⁵, volunteering in the non-government sector is slightly better yet largely inadequate. Similarly, youth volunteering in urban

areas is less than that in the rural areas²⁶. Inspired by Gandhian ideas, the National Service Scheme (NSS) remains the only country-wide youth volunteer program in the formal education sector. Recent restructuring of youth programs by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has enabled new campaigns on cleanliness, fitness and healthcare to be included under the NSS²⁷. Overall, it can be concluded that civic engagement in India is not a popular choice for youth, but it is not entirely absent either.

In the Indian tradition, volunteering is firmly rooted in the values of *aprigraha* (non-possession beyond the necessities) and *seva* (selfless service), underlining the benefits to both self and society²⁸. Tracing the history of philanthropy and volunteering in India, Cherian²⁹ highlights the role of various religious and faith-based traditions that have encouraged volunteering. Even today, many spiritual leaders like Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev uphold volunteering as a tool to cultivate willingness, without which no spiritual process can begin³⁰. Thus, self-development and civic engagement in India are akin to soul and body, inner and outer dimensions of one's being.

Although civic engagement promises to be an important avenue for youth development in India, a systematic study of its nature has not commenced and available evidence in the area is rather sparse³¹. Baring few studies, the effects of civic engagement on the personal development of youth remains largely unexamined. Through case studies of unemployed youth in Bemni, Uttarakhand, Jefferey and Dyson³² document processes of generative politics possible through *seva* and self-conscious civic engagement. Although these unemployed youth considered themselves useless (*bekaar*), through their efforts in the community, they could give hope and infuse optimism in other youth and children to contribute to social development initiatives for education, health care and the like. Other qualitative studies on civic engagement experiences brought forth the importance of mentors in the process of civic engagement³³. This paper is drawn from a larger funded project on Gandhian philosophy and youth civic engagement awarded to the author. The next section describes components of the study.

The Study

The study focused on institutions within Gujarat where volunteering took place within a clear frame of Gandhian philosophy. Research participants were identified from voluntary organizations or NGOs and ashrams embracing Gandhian philosophy and providing services in the social development sector. Within well-defined boundaries of Gandhian philosophy, these institutions were involved with issues

like sustainable development, environmental conservation, poverty reduction, gender equality, education, removal of untouchability. One of the objectives of these institutions was to sustain and propagate Gandhian ideals through their activities. Participants of the study were identified using snowball technique and participation in the study was voluntary. Informed consent was taken from all participants. It was assumed that consistent volunteering and close interaction with the institute helped volunteers to internalize as well as reflect on Gandhian ideals and practices in their civic engagement activities and other spheres of their life. Thus, participants with minimum one year of consistent volunteering experience at Gandhian institutions were included in the study.

Nine urban upper middle-class youth, both men and women, from Ahmedabad and Vadodara between 21-25 years of age, participated in the study. They were involved in diverse causes like education, music for change, film making, cleanliness, community development, vocational empowerment, organic farming and rural self-reliance activities. From the same institutions, nine Gandhian mentors, eight men and one woman, in the age range of 35-75 years identified by the youth participants as their mentors also participated in the study. Five of them worked in the urban areas while four of them were engaged with rural development activities. As the term suggests, the Gandhian mentor believed in Gandhian philosophy and was proactively involved in extending this philosophy through his / her work by training youth volunteers in the institution. Mentors were associated with the institution for a greater number of years than the youth volunteers and their role as mentors was inspirational and not merely demonstrative. The mentors were crucial to the study in determining whether and how youth volunteers understood Gandhian philosophy.

In depth interviews were conducted separately with both youth volunteers and their Gandhian mentors. Interviews were tape recorded, transcribed verbatim and translated into English after retaining phrases in Gujarati or Hindi. Inter coder reliability was established and a common set of codes was derived for consistency in qualitative analysis of all interviews. Case profiles of Gandhian mentors and youth volunteers were prepared using qualitative data analysis methods to trace their journeys of civic engagement and its impact on self-development. The next section has two illustrative case profiles of one youth volunteer and one Gandhian mentor to describe the process of transformations in the course of civic engagement.

Case Profile - SB, 23, Male, Vadodara

SB was an English graduate and a certified animator who wanted to become a filmmaker. Introduced by one of his friends, he joined Sabarmati Ashram complex in Ahmedabad as a volunteer with a media house working on projects documenting social transformation. Nested in the Gandhian ecology, this media house was part of a larger network of Gandhian organizations working for social development. SB was involved in a project in which he handled production, coordination and film compilation of stories of social change. In the course of volunteering, he met many other youth volunteers and Gandhian mentors.

Understanding Gandhi

When asked about his understanding and learning of Gandhian philosophy, SB referred to some Gandhian practices like wearing khadi and cleaning toilets that were part of the daily routine at the Gandhi ashram. Understanding them first hand left a deep impact on him. In his words,

My exposure to Gandhian philosophy was rather indirect...I mean the whole environment here is so Gandhian, that you automatically learn many things. For example, I was not used to cleaning toilets at home, let alone public toilets. But when JB (another mentor) said that 'when we are cleaning toilets, we are actually cleaning our inner souls', it changed my perspective...I never ever felt anything dirty while cleaning toilets...I have started cleaning toilets at home. Similarly, it is one thing to wear khadi and another to spin it. When you actually experience the way khadi is made, how one big thread (*dhaga*) is made by combining so many small threads...how all fingers have to come together to spin, it teaches you the concept of unity and cooperation. Just because you are part of that environment, in your own way you experience and know about Gandhiji and his philosophy.

Experience and Practice Compassion

Referring to interpersonal relationships at the workplace, SB highlighted the difference between corporate organisations and Gandhian institutions. His Gandhian mentor inspired him to express core human values of simplicity and compassion.

Earlier I was working with a corporate, when I went home after a 9-6 job, I felt exhausted....it was burdened life style because people were always focused on competition, politics and how to impress each other. You can't concentrate on your work as you are busy in planning

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strategies against other people. Here in Ashram, it is totally different. No one is interested in competition. The way this organization is treating people is most influenced by Gandhian philosophy. They believe that *yeh hum sab ki zindagi ek journey hai.. aur hum ek dusre ke saath chalte jayenge*" (life is a journey and we should all walk together to help each other so that we can progress further). In the corporate culture, I would have definitely learned about politics, strategies, being smart (laughs...) but here I am learning how to be content...and happy like MA (mentor). MA is a very simple person, he aligns head, heart and hands like Gandhi...there are no pretensions. Knowing his approach to work has helped me in deepening my volunteering experience...and I think this will stay with me.

In the corporate world, an impersonal atmosphere of cut-throat competition and unidimensional ideas of success threatened SB. They pressurized him to succumb and 'fit in' at the cost of self-expression. Referring to these he says,

We all have compassion, care, and love inside us but somehow we feel scared to show that part of our selves. We have this fear of not being accepted in the corporate world if we show our soft side and that is why, we make a shell around us. But here (in the ashram) you won't feel that wall which stops your emotions and feelings. If I feel something for someone, I can easily express it. The environment is full of gratitude, compassion, love, care, happiness and people accept your feelings. My shell has broken after I came here. I have understood the meaning of happiness after I became part of this (ashram).

Summarizing his experiences at the Ashram, SB referred to increased self-awareness. In his words,

What has changed is the SB inside. After I started volunteering at the Gandhi Ashram, I see more benefits inside me than outside. My perspective on material possessions has changed, and even the way I treat people has definitely changed. This happened because someone here paid attention to what I wanted to do and supported me...without any expectations. I have become much more compassionate, even with animals. If someone asks me to play the guitar and it makes them happy, I will do it anytime, anywhere now (earlier...I would not think beyond my own preferences). Similarly, 2 years ago after a fight, I would have not treated the person in the same way I am treating others now. I still feel anger but I have learned how to channelize it. I am now able to realize and reflect on my own emotions which I think is very good.

SB was gradually transcending the insecurity that came with accumulating and owning things. He also acknowledged that because

the context in the Gandhi Ashram was supportive, he continued to work selflessly and live by his values, but outside the Ashram, it might be very difficult to follow Gandhian philosophy. But volunteering had now become a part of his life, even if he chose to work elsewhere for a career. In his message to other youth who may want to take up volunteering, he says,

Yes, there are dilemmas, especially when you see people earning so much around you, your friends buying cars from their own salary, you feel little odd that am I really on the right track? Yet, I would say just listen to your heart. Don't think of volunteering as doing something to make others happy. Instead, be selfish and volunteer.... because it will make you happy. I volunteer because it has given me inner joy and satisfaction. No amount of money can buy me this happiness and satisfaction. Volunteering is an opportunity and to get this feeling, you should take it.

After graduating from a renowned film institute, SB currently works in Mumbai. He has seamlessly interwoven Gandhian values in his new life. He travels a lot and constantly reminds himself to embrace simplicity and be happy by doing good work for others.

Case Profile - NM, 45, Male, USA

NM was born to Indian parents who migrated and settled in the USA. He was introduced to Gandhi when he was in primary school. Deeply influence by Gandhi's life and work, he read more about him as he grew up. Gandhi's simplicity and consistent cultivation of inner strength through the practice of spirituality and human connection appealed to NM the most. A graduate in computer science and philosophy from a renowned university, NM chose experiments in generosity and kindness over a lucrative career in the Silicon Valley. In 2005 as a radical experiment in service, he and his wife undertook a walking pilgrimage of 1000 kilometres from the Gandhi Ashram. Deciding to spend less than a dollar a day, they offered service wherever they saw a possibility, slept where they found space and ate with whoever offered food. These experiences deepened their commitment to spread the power of generosity and kindness to others. Like upgraded versions of computer software from the Silicon Valley, NM mentioned Gandhian volunteerism in the new age as *Gandhi 3.0*.

Gandhi 3.0

Efficient and adequate during India's freedom struggle, Gandhi 1.0 was a 'one-to-many' connection, when Gandhi led by humility and many others followed. Gandhi 2.0 happened during the Bhoodan

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movement when Vinoba Bhave, Gandhi's spiritual successor, walked across the nation creating many 'one-to-one' connections. At that time Vinoba had envisioned what was to emerge in future - a connection of 'many-to-many' like droplets of water that fall far and wide, from their originating fountain. Today, with our 'many-to-many connections' on the internet we have Gandhi 3.0, a version of volunteering that need not be restricted to any single geographical space. In NM's words, Gandhi 3.0 is "*a transition, this bridge from the internet to the inner-net*" that will take Gandhi's message forward. Built firmly on the principles of 'pay it forward' and giftivism, NM's organisation has created an online volunteer community of more than 500,000 individuals. Firmly rooted in a service-oriented approach, all their projects are volunteer-run and depend on digital technology to connect many to many, across the world. Some of their innovative projects include walking pilgrimages, karma kitchens, weekly meditation circles and online laddership pods to engender others into the sentiment of servant-leadership.

As a mentor, NM was closely associated with the Gandhian ecology and network of Gandhian institutions in Ahmedabad. He loved interacting with volunteers in the Ashram complex during his regular visits to India. He ensured that the Gandhian values held by the Ashram community rippled out to many others through the internet. His enthusiasm and "hug-therapy" inspired youth to effortlessly step up their kindness quotient. Simplicity coupled with an extremely mindful grip on internet technology, NM's life was like a web page accessible to all. Known to follow the practice of *vipassana* or insightful meditation regularly, NM brought immense stillness and equanimity to his being, transforming the lives of many youth volunteers like SB. The 'ripple effect' of his work and his persona continues. Kapuria (2013)³⁴ mentioned Gandhi's idea of communal living to sustain volunteering efforts of *satyagrahis*. With NM's initiatives, new models of a virtual, ashram-like community have emerged. In the midst of a 'glocal' hub of like-minded volunteers, Gandhi thrives on the internet and the inner-net in the form of these New Age Gandhians.

Discussion

In light of these illustrative case profiles, some pertinent questions concerning youth, Gandhi and mentoring in the 21st century are discussed. The results of the larger study are also summarized here.

Can the Mahatma thrive in the 21st century?

This question was a driving force for the research, incorporating

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theoretical and empirical concerns about youth in contemporary India. Chandra (2020)³⁵ highlights Gandhi's emphasis on individual and community effort through 'heart-cleansing' (pp. 22) more than state intervention to enable sustained peace or rehabilitation. The activities of these Gandhian institutions were varied, like some were into film making while others were engaged in social development and education sectors. But their aims coalesced. They were all using similar methods of reaching out to others through love, compassion and service. Through their active engagement in the Gandhian institutions, youth participants gathered positive experiences and their perspectives on life had changed dramatically. While they continued to work in their chosen fields, many of them reported redefining success in their own lives by non-materialistic parameters. Similarly, practicing of random acts of kindness and tolerance were now an inseparable part of their lives. They prioritized trust and connection over other considerations leading to improved interpersonal relationships. Volunteering in Gandhian institutions thus became a process of personal transformation for youth participants, and they tried to align what they had learnt from these experiences with other aspects of their life.

Mentors – The New Age Gandhis

The study included Gandhian mentors who had their own unique stories of self transformation. They had taken up voluntary activities at the Gandhi Ashram, Ahmedabad and were now heading institutions that embraced Gandhian philosophy. The strategies they used in running these institutions or training youth incorporated Gandhian ideas. However, they never used any coercion to reinforce Gandhian ideologies that they followed in their own lives. Instead, they did the exact opposite. They only focused on practicing Gandhian ideas in their own lives, without any aim of transferring the same to the other. In this way, they were focused on 'being' Gandhians rather than 'creating' Gandhians. They practiced principles of simplicity, compassion, kindness and equanimity in their own lives and were down to earth in their approach to work or people they interacted with. Youth felt inspired and in awe of these mentors because it gave them the confidence that following Gandhian principles was feasible. Youth participants felt that they were constantly learning, rather effortlessly, in the presence of these mentors who were silently propagating the true essence of what it meant to be a Gandhian. These mentors represented the New Age Gandhi.

Conclusion

The Gandhian approach is truly Indian, has timeless appeal and is relevant for humanity, transcending all boundaries of discrimination. As a nation, we cannot afford to ignore Gandhian philosophy, its core values and its potential for individual and social transformation. The values of love, compassion and equanimity that he stood by are not new. However, Paranjape (2000)³⁶ mentions that neo-Gandhian praxis demands that we align our current lifestyle to include a concern for all as a matter of personal and social responsibility. Without the practice of self-restraint, communitarianism, spirituality and moderation, a neo-Gandhian praxis is impossible. According to NM, if we truly understand the *tatva* (essence) of Gandhi's awe-inspiring life and work, new and innovative *tantra* (methods) of implementation for each era will organically emerge. Today, one centralized leader will neither be perfect nor sufficient to bring about social change in any sphere. What we need is a Gandhi 3.0 approach to volunteering and service in many small but sustainable ways. But in the true Gandhian spirit, we must first begin with our self. Perhaps, this is the bridge youth volunteers will cross with the help of Gandhian mentors for enabling social change.

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Notes & Comments

Exploring Mahatma Gandhi's Educational Vision in NEP2020: A Policy Initiative for Decolonization of Knowledge Production

Ravi Ranjan

Abdul Hameed PA

MAHATMA GANDHI'S IDEAS are not only for international and national celebrations on his birth and death anniversary year after year, but his practices need to be examined and adopted in policies in order to decolonize the knowledge production system. The pedagogical relevance of Gandhi's idea of satyagraha and swaraj in our school and higher education reflects the philosophy of Gandhi and its impact on teaching our youth in educational campuses to become creative and constructive human beings. Three fundamental elements of Satyagraha consist of appeal to oppressors, non-cooperation, and civil disobedience. They suggest that the idea of constructive and creative education policy is required to understand swaraj and satyagraha as a strategy, epistemology, and methodology, for creating a space for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and worldview in curriculum and pedagogy. Although Gandhi hardly finds

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any reference in National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, his ideas can be searched through indigenous ways of learning different disciplines, including yoga and sports.¹

Mahatma Gandhi is undoubtedly a national touchstone for the Indian Republic. So, any great national event in the country must be analyzed in the context of Gandhian principles. The National Education Policy 2020 is a landmark policy document regarding governmental intervention on education in India. Hence, the NEP document must be analyzed with reference to Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of education. This paper is a humble attempt towards this goal. This paper has two parts: a brief survey of Gandhian perspectives on education in general and education of Indians in particular, followed by an analysis of the National Education Policy 2020 to explore the influence of Gandhian philosophy in its framework and proposals. However, it is true at the same time that the models of educational development visualized and experimented with by great educators like Rousseau, Dewey, Tagore, and Gandhi have not been pursued by any country as the mainstream of education.²

Let us identify the basic tenets of Gandhian views on education at the outset. Here, one should not lose sight of the fact that Gandhi's ideas on education were a response to modern education systems, inherently British with English as its medium of instruction, introduced by the colonial administration in India which had, by the end of nineteenth century, replaced various native modes of education. There was an urgency to offer a native response to the English education system and provide remedies for the perils it had brought forth for the Indian society and culture. It is important to note that Mahatma Gandhi did not write a single book as a specific treatise on education in general or education of Indians in particular. Gandhi's views on various aspects of education in general and education of Indians in particular are spread throughout his various writings and are often articulated in different contexts. For the purpose of the present study, an attempt is made here to present together the major aspects of Gandhian educational philosophy.

Mahatma Gandhi's concept of Swaraj revolved around the idea of model villages. He considered the village as the nucleus of his ideal society. Hence, his conceptualization of Swaraj and education in and for the Swaraj necessarily focuses on the village locale. Gandhi's idea of 'true education' of the village emphasized "a harmonious development of three Hs—Head, Heart and Hand."³ This 'true education', Gandhi hoped, could be achieved through what he called the 'education of the body and mind' in the system of education he proposed. Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* (1937):

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By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man - body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education.⁴

For more than a decade, even after independence, most of the Indian educational policies struggled between traditional and progressive and scientific approaches. It was always difficult to challenge the orthodox education system based at the beginning of the 20th century. However, based on his South African experiences on educational practices, Gandhi quickly noted that ancient educational practices were inadequate for rebuilding the country. There is little evidence that Gandhi's 'Nai Talim', which resembles Dewey's system, ever had direct influence from the American philosopher. Friends who knew the Mahatma will say that his mind was stimulated by the experiences in frontier-like South Africa and his work with the Tolstoy farm educational project. Most of all, perhaps he was faced with the immediate realization that something 'practical' must be done to lift the masses of India.⁵ He realised that literacy is not an end in itself but only a means to larger ends. Literacy in Gandhian view is only a tool of education and not education itself. While literacy will help the education of the head, there certainly are other means whereby Gandhi conceptualises education of the heart and hand. Complete development of the head is not possible through mere literacy. As Sadgopal observes, "Gandhi's struggle for *swaraj* was to be founded on *civilisational, philosophical and moral* awakening of the Indian people. This enlightenment of the masses, therefore, was the purpose of education."⁶

In his *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*, Gandhi proposes "New or Basic Education," commonly known as 'Nai Talim'. He elaborates his idea of New Education in the following words: "This education is meant to transform village children into model villagers. It is principally designed for them. The inspiration for it has come from the villages."⁷ He argues that in the English education system under the British administration, "primary education is a farce designed without regard to the wants of the India of the villages and for that matter even of the cities."⁸ However, in contrast to this imposition of an alien knowledge system, Gandhi proposes that his idea of basic education will be the right way of educating Indian children. According to him:

Basic education links the children, whether of the cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India. It develops both the body and the mind, and keeps the child rooted to the soil with a glorious vision of the

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future in the realization of which he or she begins to take his or her share from the very commencement of his or her career in school.⁹

Marjorie Sykes observes that “for Gandhiji, Nai Talim was the expression of the principle of nonviolence in the educational sphere. It was the preparation for, and practice of, the peaceful organisation of a co-operative human community.”¹⁰ Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari, in his contemplation on Gandhian educational thought, argues:

The philosophy of Nai Talim does not accept the unequal values assigned by our present society to physical and mental work. It takes the position that every kind of service rendered by a man, whether it is physical or mental, is ethical in its nature. The value of an ethical act cannot be calculated in economic terms.

The spiritual principle of Nai Talim is that knowledge and work are not two separate things. They are the same thing. It is a mistake to say that knowledge is higher than work or work is higher than knowledge. Nai Talim is based on the concept of unity of knowledge and work.¹¹

“Fundamentals of Basic Education”, in Gandhian framework, are the following as Gandhi delineates them in *Harijan* (1947):

1. All education to be true must be self-supporting, that is to say, in the end, it will pay its expenses except the capital, which will remain intact.
2. In it the cunning of the hand will be utilized even up to the final stage, that is to say, hands of the pupils will be skillfully working at some industry for some period during the day.
3. All education must be imparted through the medium of the provincial language.
4. In this, there is no room for giving sectional religious training. Fundamental universal ethics will have full scope.
5. This education, whether confined to children or adults, male or female, will find its way to the pupils’ homes.
6. Since millions of students receiving this education will consider themselves as of the whole of India, they must learn an inter-provincial language. This common inter-provincial speech can only be Hindustani written in Nagari or Urdu script. Therefore, pupils have to master both scripts.

Harijan (1947)¹²

Gandhi is establishing a direct link between knowledge and work. The way knowledge must be imparted and acquired, according to him, is through work. Hence, Gandhi’s idea of basic education is also, necessarily, vocational. Even though the idea of integrating

manual labour with literary training is not purely of a Gandhian origin, he proposed what can be called a purely Indian way of this integration by suggesting ways to educate children through traditional Indian handicrafts and vocational skills. His examples in all his speeches and writings on education are, one can observe, Indian. He puts forth this vocational framework in *Harijan* (1937):

I would therefore begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. [...] I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically, i.e. the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process.¹³

He further adds that:

I am a firm believer in the principle of free and compulsory primary education for India. I also hold that we shall realize this only by teaching the children a useful vocation and utilizing it as a means for cultivating their mental, physical and spiritual faculties.¹⁴

The rationale behind Gandhi's insistence of vocational training is double-fold. A vocation is both means and an end of the schooling process, but schooling through vocational training helps in achieving the true aims of education in the Gandhian framework, which, as Gandhi hoped, included eradication of labour-based caste stratification and discrimination. As the country is gearing up to create world's largest pool of skilled human resource at present, an agenda set in motion by the union government through national skill development mission,¹⁵ India urgently needs to turn its focus towards Gandhian thoughts on education. Gandhi asserts that:

For the all-round development of boys and girls all training should so far as possible be given through a profit-yielding vocation. In other words vocations should serve a double purpose—to enable the pupils to pay for his tuition through the products of his labour and at the same time to develop the whole man or woman in him or her through the vocation learnt at school.¹⁶

It is often pointed out that Gandhi's educational philosophy is known globally for his views on basic education and not for higher education. It should be noted that there are pointers to take from Gandhi's writings for adult education and higher education as well. In *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*, Gandhi offers

a brief suggestion while pointing out the urgency of adult education. "My adult education means" writes Gandhi, "true political education of the adult by word of mouth."¹⁷ And, "side by side with the education by the mouth will be the literary education."¹⁸ Even though Gandhi attached "greatest importance to primary education" which, according to his conception, "should be equal to the present matriculation less English", he is not without his proposals for higher education.¹⁹

Gandhi proposed what could be seen as an integrated and cooperative mode of the college educational system. *Harijan* (1937) offers an elaborate explanation of his vision for higher education:

I would revolutionize college education and relate it to national necessities. There would be degrees for mechanical and other engineers. They would be attached to the different industries which should pay for the training of the graduates they need. Thus, the Tatas would be expected to run a college for training engineers under the supervision of the State, the mill associations would run among them a college for training graduates whom they need. Similarly, for the other industries that may be named. Commerce will have its college. There remain arts, medicine and agriculture. Several private arts colleges today are self-supporting. The State would, therefore, cease to run its own. Medical colleges would be attached to certified hospitals. [...] And agricultural colleges to be worthy of the name must be self-supporting.²⁰

From this, it can be construed that Gandhi's framework for higher education necessarily involved a public-private partnership where, under the supervision of the government, private industries will fund and develop the required human resources for their respective industries. However, one must hasten to add that Gandhi's idea of private (self-financing) institution should not be mistaken for the contemporary trend where education has been turned into profit-making business in the private sector. For him, the basic idea of private institutions seems to be self-sustaining and not profiteering. The emphasis on vocational courses and vocational training of the students continues to be the backbone of higher education as well in the Gandhian framework.

NEP's Promise of Multilingualism and Possibility to Decolonize the Knowledge Production

Gandhian educational philosophy considers it important to educate the masses of citizens in their native languages. Gandhi disliked English education and considered it anathema for Indian society and India's freedom. In "Monoculture in Education," Gandhi squarely

criticises the adoption of English as the lingua franca by Indians. He writes:

Hundreds of youths believe that without a knowledge of English freedom for India is practically impossible. The canker has so eaten into society that, in many cases, the only meaning of Education is a knowledge of English. All these are for me signs of our slavery and degradation. It is unbearable to me that the vernaculars should be crushed and starved as they have been.²¹

The NEP 2020 has realised the dominance of English over other Indian languages that hinder learners from having a sense and feel of the concepts. Under the section on multilingualism and power of the language, NEP has strongly argued that young children learn and grasp nontrivial concepts more quickly in their home/mother language. The NEP document emphasizes that whenever possible, the medium of instruction until at least grade 5 but preferably till grade 8 and beyond should be mother-tongue/local language/regional language, and both public and private schools will follow this to expand the ambit of mother tongue. NEP also stressed that all efforts will be made to prepare high-quality bilingual textbooks and teaching-learning materials for science and mathematics so that students can think and speak about the subjects both in their home language/mother language and in English.

Gandhi wanted Indian languages to take the lead in the construction of Swaraj in such a way that every citizen contributes to its development through his/her language. But Gandhi realised that for the masses to follow ideals of Swaraj and of modernity, they must be explained in their provincial languages. The problem, he found, was in the politically minded educated class who spoke more English than Indian languages. He laments that “our love of the English language in preference to our own mother tongue has caused a deep chasm between the educated and politically-minded classes and the masses. The languages of India have suffered impoverishment.”²² He argues that political education of the masses must be done through Indian languages:

It is inherent in Swaraj based on nonviolence that every individual makes his own direct contribution to the Independence movement. The masses cannot do this fully unless they understand every step with all its implications. This is impossible unless every step is explained in their own languages.²³

In the NEP, higher education policy envisaged that higher

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education institutions and more programmes in higher education would use the mother tongue/local language as a medium of instruction and/or offer programs bilingually, in order to increase access and gross enrolment ratio and also to promote the students' use and vocabulary of Indian languages. Private higher education institutions will also be encouraged and incentivized to use an Indian language as a medium of instruction and/or offer bilingual programs²⁴. Following this, the Government of India has decided to get engineering course materials translated into Indian languages. Such initiatives of NEP will boost Gandhi's idea of swaraj in learning with the help of pedagogical attempts in the local language and having education in the local language; it will facilitate the process of decolonization of the knowledge production system.

However, Gandhi believed that India should have a national language, which should be one of the Indian stocks. In *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*, he proposes the following to the nation:

And then for all-India intercourse we need, from among the Indian stock, a language which the largest number of people already know and understand and which the others can easily pick up. This language is indisputably Hindi. It is spoken and understood by both Hindus and Muslims of the North. It is called Urdu when it is written in the Urdu character.²⁵

Yet, Gandhi realised that the hegemony of English is so deep that educated Indians who are responsible for educating and enlightening their fellow citizens insist on speaking in English and have turned a blind eye towards learning and using a common Indian language. In 1945 Gandhi was pessimistic about the potential of English to be of any good to India. He sighs that "the spell that English has cast on us is not yet broken. Being under it, we are impeding the progress of India towards her goal."²⁶ In his rules for students, Gandhi insists that "they will learn the national language, Hindustani, in its present double dress, two forms of speech and two scripts, so that they may feel at home whether Hindi or Urdu is spoken and nagari or urdu script is written" and that "they will translate into their own mother tongue everything new they may learn, and transmit it in their weekly rounds to the surrounding villages."²⁷ From this, it is apparent that Gandhi puts significant emphasis on the development of Indian languages and uses Indian languages as mediums of instruction in education. Against the English hegemony, deeply rooted in the education system under British

administration, Gandhi consistently presented his nativist view. He earnestly believed that a native educational system has to fully replace the alien model which was implemented by British administration.

The curriculum and pedagogic ideas which form the fabric of modern education were imported from Oxford and Cambridge, Edinburgh and London. But they are essentially foreign, and till they are repudiated, there never can be national education. [. . .] The fact to be realised is that India by the very fact of her long-established and elaborated civilisation had once the advantage of an educational system of her own, the only thing entitled to be called "national." But it was fundamentally distinct from the Anglo-Indian type and from the pseudo-national type that is its descendent. The question then is this: The choice must be clearly and finally made between national and foreign education, the choice of type and archetype, of meaning and purpose, of ends and means.²⁸

Based on his philosophy of *swaraj* and *satyagraha*, we can see that Gandhian thought on education was fundamentally a nativist proposal to replace the foreign educational system in practice in India. Gandhi's conception of education is based on his metaphysical and ethical ideas and purely guided by his understanding of two foundational principles of Truth and nonviolence²⁹. It included an emphasis on basic education while also suggesting potential models for higher education. In both basic and higher education, Gandhi lays significant stress on the indigenous knowledge system and on the vocational training of the students. By connecting productive labour with intellectual training, Gandhi offered a genius solution to a pedagogic problem in modern education systems regarding education through literacy versus education through skill training in manual labour. It is a pragmatic proposal that could show the nation a way to deal with the issue of 'educated unemployed youth' whose number is growing every day in the country.

Gandhian philosophy rejects the predominance of English both as a medium of instruction in educational institutions and as a *lingua franca* among educated Indians. Much as he detested its hegemonic influence among Indians, he considered it useful only to communicate with English-speaking foreigners and not for communication among Indian natives, educated or otherwise. As Ngugi WaThiongo argued, in the colonial education system, "the language of ... education was no longer the language of ... culture" which results in a break for the child to be educated a connect with his/her own culture and civilisation.³⁰ One can see that it is because of a similar realisation that Gandhi insists on education of the Indian students in their mother tongue or provincial/regional language. He also vouches for a

common language of communication among all citizens, which, he argues, should be Hindustani, and all students must acquire this language and be proud of their national language. Gandhian framework proposes self-sustainable educational institutions with an emphasis on public-private collaboration in education, and absolute government control is discouraged.

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Truth, God and Justice: Walking and Meditating with Gandhi

Ananta Kumar Giri

TRUTH IS GOD is an enriching collection of writings of Mahatma Gandhi¹. It contains pearls of Gandhi's thoughts on many aspects of our life related to faith, God, Truth, justice, Ahimsa, etc. It shows us the deep spiritual journey of Gandhi as it is related to ethics, morality, and politics.

To begin with, Gandhi invites us to realize Truth as God, which is not the same thing as God as Truth. Gandhi begins with God is Truth and then realizes Truth as God. Truth touches the reality and faith in God but is not confined to it. Truth has a demanding quality; it calls upon us to realize Truth in our personal, interpersonal, social, worldly, and cosmic lives. Realizing Truth calls for us to realize nonviolence and Ahimsa in our daily lives as well as in our interlinked wider ways of self and social institutions. For Gandhi, '[..] without Ahimsa it is not possible to seek and find Truth'². Gandhi tells us that "One can realize Truth and Ahimsa only by ceaseless striving."³. Gandhi continues: "The path of Truth is as narrow as it is straight. Even so, is that of Ahimsa. It is like balancing oneself on the edge of a sword. By concentration, an acrobat can walk on a rope. But the concentration required to tread the path of Truth and Ahimsa is far greater"⁴. But in this difficult journey, prayer, faith in God, and each other help us.

For Gandhi, Ahimsa and Truth are related. Ahimsa is the means, Truth is the end. For Gandhi, "Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so Ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. When once we have grasped this point, final victory is beyond question. Whatever difficulties we encounter, whatever apparent reverses we sustain, we may not give up the quest for Truth which alone is, being God Himself"⁵.

Realizing Truth as God calls us to lead a life of justice. Gandhi writes: "Nothing can be grander than to ask God to make us act justly towards everything that lives"⁶. Acting justly towards everything that lives is a call to us: to act justly to all irrespective of

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all known distinctions. For example, acting justly not only to self but also to the other, not only to members of our own family but to the human family and to both animate and inanimate objects in the Universe. Our prevalent theories of justice such as that of John Rawls, the influential theorist of justice of our times whose classic *A Theory of Justice* is being celebrated this year on its 50th anniversary, is limited to a nation-state. But Gandhi's journey with Truth, God, and justice is not confined to nation-state such as citizens of a nation-state. Gandhi urges us to act justly to all whether or not they are members of our nation-state, our village or tribes. Acting justly here becomes part of global justice, as Amartya Sen argues. For Sen, in realizing global justice, we need to go beyond Rawlsian conception of "international justice" as "laws among peoples" as realization of global justice involves "person-to-person relations" not only "inter-societal relations"⁷. As Sen challenges us: "[...] justice across borders must not be seen merely as 'international justice' [...] A feminist activist in America who wants to help, say remedy some features of female disadvantage in Africa or Asia, draws on a sense of identity that goes well beyond the sympathies of one nation for the predicament of another"⁸.

Justice here also becomes part of transnational justice as "non-domination" which overcomes national barriers, as suggested by Rainer Forst, a key thinker in this field⁹. Justice and transnational justice as non-domination calls us to overcome domination over humans, nations, and nature. Non-domination here can be related to Gandhian vision and practice of Swaraj or self-rule not only as recipient but as a maker of rules. Here Forst building upon both Marx and Kant, which resonates with the spirit of Gandhi, tells us:

The dignity of a free person can never be understood merely in terms of the 'enjoyment' of freedom or of certain liberties; it is always also a matter of the freedom of giving laws to oneself, the freedom of normative self-determination. This is a kind of freedom that comes in two modes—one moral and one political—but its *modus operandi* is the same, despite the difference between these two modes. The laws that constitute this practice and laws that are generated through it do not only protect freedom—they also express freedom¹⁰.

Furthermore,

[...] Justice articulates the fundamental claim not to be determined but instead to be an agent and equal authority of justification that no one should be subjected to norms and social relations that cannot be justified in appropriate terms towards him or her¹¹.

Gandhi also invites us to act justly not only towards human beings but also to all beings such as plants and animals. This helps us overcome human-centeredness and arrogance and realize ourselves as part of Nature and our vast cosmos, which includes both human beings and other beings, animate and inanimate. It helps us realize justice with meeting of species going beyond the species dominance of human beings as Donna Haraway¹², a deep thinker of our times tells us. For Martha Nussbaum¹³, another thinker of justice, it urges us to realize justice as “cross-species dignity.”

Justice includes both social justice and justice with Nature. In our times, the latter confronts us squarely as climate justice. The UN’s recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report released on August 9, 2021 tells us that our planet is the hottest in the last 125,000 years. This gives rise to temperature rise and many natural calamities such as floods, forest fire, and extreme weather, leading to displacement and creating climate refugees. Climate change is caused by mindless industrialization and consumerism, especially fossil energy consumption, and the people of affluent countries have a major role in this. But the victims of climate collapse who usually come from resource-less countries are not responsible for this. Here how do we act justly? In another talisman, Gandhi urges us to always look up to the poorest of the poor while making our decisions. In the context of current climate change, we need to look at the face of the poorest of the poor and act justly towards our brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, and children who are victims of our actions and decisions. In our current condition, Anthropocene, where human impact on Earth impacts upon the geology of the Earth, there is an epochal need to move from human dominance to living justly with all beings in Nature and our planet. Here, as Dipesh Chakrabarty¹⁴ tells us in his recent important work, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, Gandhi is an exemplar. Gandhi shows us an example of how to live justly with all beings. Gandhi also shows how we can walk lightly with Light with our Mother Earth becoming her worthy children and custodians. In his *Carbon Yoga*, Sailesh Rao invites us to understand the distinction between caterpillars and the butterflies, the former swallowing up everything into themselves, while the latter coming out of the caterpillars and spreading pollination of new possibilities from one flower to the other. Our climate collapse is being caused by the caterpillars, the caterpillar dimension of ourselves, and here Gandhi helps us to realize and awaken the butterfly dimensions of our self and society and be butterflies¹⁵

Justice is not just a political act. It is an act and imagination of love. Deep thinkers of our times, such as Paul Ricouer¹⁶ and Fred

Dallmayr¹⁷ urge us to realize the integral link between love and justice, which resonates with Gandhi's spirit. Dallmayr is a creative savant of humanity who has deeply walked and meditated with Gandhi, including Gandhi's Truth where Truth calls us upon us to embody love, justice, and truthfulness in our lives, society, and the world. With Gandhi, we act justly with our actions and intentions of love. Love is part of nonviolence and Ahimsa. We need to embody love and Ahimsa to act justly to all beings. We need to embody nonviolence and Ahimsa in our myriad relations—personal, interpersonal, and institutional. We also need to practice non-injury or Ahimsa in our thinking. Just outward nonviolence is not enough if it is not accompanied by inner Ahimsa and non-injury in our modes of thinking to self, other, and the world¹⁸. Gandhi helps us in both relational Ahimsa, inner Ahimsa, cognitive Ahimsa, epistemic Ahimsa, and ontological Ahimsa. Violence is not only part of our thinking but also our modes of knowing and being what is called epistemology and ontology. Much of modernist ways of knowing and being are saturated with violence, such as modernist science with its violent methods of vivisection and modernist ontology, which is tinged with an ontology of mastery and domination over others, including Nature. Gandhi here helps to realize Ahimsa in our epistemology and ontology, which resonates with new non-violent ways of knowing and being as cultivated by contemporary seekers such as R. Sundara Rajan¹⁹, who tells us not only to “know of” but to “know with,” Giani Vattimo²⁰ who urges to practice “weak ontology,” not only “strong ontology,” and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni²¹ who urges us to practice onto-decolonial turn in our thinking and practice. Gandhi encourages us to challenge and transform still entrenched colonial violence in our epistemology, ontology, and apparatus of justice.

Gandhi has a participatory view on realization of God. God or Divine is not just out there or inside; we think of and relate to God in order to be Godlike and Divine. Therefore Gandhi tells us, “The meaning of divinity is that I want to invoke that Divinity within me.” And *Ahimsa* is a way of being Divine as Gandhi tells us: “We become God like to the extent we realize nonviolence [..]”²². In the same spirit, we can also realize that we become God like to the extent that we become just, we are just. Being just means to share and not be bound by possession²³. Ahimsa calls for non-possession or *aparigraha* and renunciation as renunciation calls for Ahimsa. Gandhi tells us: “[..] perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observation of Ahimsa in every shape and in every form”²⁴.

And for realizing Ahimsa, we need to realize God within and around. For Gandhi, “Nonviolence is an active force of the highest

order. It is soul-force or the power of Godhead within us"²⁵. Nonviolence calls for ceaseless striving. Gandhi here likens nonviolence to "radium in its action"²⁶. "An infinitesimal quantity of it embedded in a malignant growth, acts continuously, silently and ceaselessly till it has transformed the whole mass of the diseased tissue into a healthy one. Similarly, even little of true nonviolence acts in a silent, subtle, unseen way and leavens the whole of society"²⁷. Similarly, we can also realize that even a little true step of justice acts silently and sometimes demonstrable way and leavens the whole of self and society.

And this calls for courage, persistence as well as humility. Realization of Truth, Ahimsa, justice, and God calls for humility and humility then becomes the mother of courage and gentle indomitable spirit and strength. For Gandhi, "He wants to practice Truth knows how hard it is. The world may applaud his so-called triumphs. Little does the world know his falls. A truthful man is a chastened being. He needs to be humble. A man who wants to love the whole world, including one who calls himself his enemy, knows how impossible it is to do so in his own strength. He must be as mere dust before he can understand the elements of Ahimsa. He is nothing if he does not daily grow in humility as he grows in love [..]"²⁸. Similarly, in our striving for justice, we realize how impossible it is to be just, as philosopher Jacques Derrida, among others, urges us to realize. But our impossibility is not our fate. We overcome this by taking steps towards justice, humble and steadfastness, which then become sources of new awakening, strength, and transformations. In taking this step in sharing and our shared transformations, we can read the following lines of Paul Ricoeur along with the living works and lives of Gandhi and fellow travelers and fighters for Truth, God, and Justice:

The question is worth asking: what is it that makes society more than a system of distribution? Or better: What is it that makes distribution a means of cooperation? Here is where a more substantial element than pure procedural justice has to be taken into account, namely, something like a common good, consisting in shared values. We are then dealing with a communitarian dimension underlying the purely procedural dimension of the social structure. Perhaps we may even find in the metaphor of sharing the two aspects I am here trying to coordinate in terms of each other. In sharing there are shares, that is, these things that separate us. My share is not yours. But sharing is also what makes us share, that is, in the strong sense of the term, share in [..]

I conclude then that the act of judging has as its horizon a fragile equilibrium of these two elements of sharing: that which separates my

share or part from yours and that which, on the other hand, means that each of us shares in, takes part in society²⁹

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Challenges to Swachh Bharat Mission: A Socio-Historical Perspective

Maneesha Pandey

*"I learnt 35 years ago that a lavatory must be as clean
as a drawing-room. I learnt this in the West"*

-- M.K. Gandhi

MAHATMA GANDHI HAD realized the importance of developing cleaning habits among the citizens of this country. Since 1919, M.K. Gandhi had been the editor of a weekly newspaper, *Navajivan*, and in one of the editions in May 1925, he emphasized keeping the lavatories clean. Throughout his struggle for India's independence, he never lost his vision of hygiene and cleanliness. In one of his speeches in New Delhi in September 1946, he stressed that the levels of hygiene in bungalows that ministers lived be equal to the servants' quarters tucked away in these massive houses. Gandhi quoted, "What is so distressing is that the living quarters of the menials and sweepers employed in the viceroy's house are extremely dirty...I shall be satisfied only when the lodgings of the ministers' staff areas are neat and tidy as their own". During his first homecoming, after a three-year stay (1893-96) in South Africa, for his first Global Satyagraha against 'Colour Bar', when a plague broke out in Rajkot, Gandhi volunteered his services and visited every locality, including the quarters of the untouchables, to inspect the latrines and teach the residents better methods of sanitation.¹

It is true that toilets with common sewer lines have been discovered in the excavations of the Harappa civilization, but the Truth is that the current civilization is practically disconnected with such advanced civil technologies that existed in that 'lost' civilization.² Chronologically, the evolution of the Toilet System can be traced to Mohenjo-daro (2500 BC), as there existed a highly developed drainage system where wastewater from each house flowed into the main sewer; but the civilization discontinued. Around 2000 BC, a toilet

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with a long drain was discovered in the tomb of the King of the Third Ur dynasty to the South - East of Témenos. A flush-type toilet was discovered in the Bahrein Islands in the Persian Gulf in 1000 BC. As found in Agra Fort, in Persia too (480 BC), a well was dug, and the human waste was mixed with soil. The Baths of Antoninus or Baths of Carthage are the largest set of Roman *thermae* dating back to the Roman Empire's era, with sixteen hundred holes for defecation, and water flowing underneath. In the "Fourth Book of Kings" in 200 BC, the believers of Jehovah destroyed the shrine of the Pagham and constructed a toilet. The Ottoman Empire (Vespasianas, AD 69) levied taxes on toilets for the first time. Around the early medieval period, particularly in Europe, it was slowly realized that the toilet was not to be despised as it was closely connected with human health and comfort. As a result, toilets started coming closer to the residential areas. In AD 1088, toilets were constructed in the Rochester Fort castle wall with the human excreta sliding along the wall through a hole. Industrialization and growth of modern cities witnessed a proper collection of human excreta from the streets of Cambridge, Paris (AD 1088). A similar system was in Vogue at the Viole Lu Duke Castle, and for the first time, public toilets manned by scavengers were constructed in Europe (AD 1214). In AD 1513, an edict was passed in PARIS to make URINAL in houses compulsory - but it could not be implemented. Many poets highlighted this issue, the likes of Woosloque - de - Bolyu (AD 1544) and John Harrington (AD 1596), who became famous for their narratives on human waste. Later, in the early 17th century, horrific events like the Kings (Louis XIII, and Louis XIV) gave audiences while using toilets; pigs let loose in cities to eat human waste (AD 1641) and ladies wearing overshoes as protection from human waste on the roads (AD 1666) led people to realize the importance of a dedicated place for human excreta. Thus in AD 1668, an edict was issued by the Police Commissioner of Paris to construct Toilets, and by AD 1700, construction of the urinal was made compulsory in all houses in Paris.³

There is not much evidence of any form of 'in-house' toilets in India for a long time. Open fields were used for defecation and were either left open or were covered with soil after defecation. This is only reaffirmed by the fact that 'defecation' is still referred to as 'going to fields' in India. "In India alone, out of 1000 million people, more than 630 million either use dry latrines, manually cleaned by scavengers, or they use the surrounding area for open-air defecation".⁴

The cleaning assignment has since then remained a forced assignment in India. Later, the British brought the technology, and Water Closets were installed in India in the twentieth century.

Unfortunately, despite progressive technological improvements, the job of cleaning toilets has never been traditionally considered as everyone's responsibility. While one school of thought explains such a division of work originated in ancient Indian society by citing 'Manusmriti' and 'Narad Samhita', another school of thought appears to be more convincing. In this argument, division of work is attributed to the centuries when we became enslaved people in our own country.⁵ K.R. Malkani argues that in the medieval period during the era of Islamic invasion, latrines moved inside the walls of forts and castles first and then inside the house of other influential officials in India too who collectively must have had used their power to force people belonging to some community to clean excreta. This system created a divide between the communities assigned the cleaning job and others who never considered this their responsibility. According to K. R. Malkani, the Muslims had brought with them some women who used the 'Burqua' (veils) to cover their bodies, and they did not like to defecate in the open (as it was normal those days in India). Thus, the bucket privies were designed and constructed for defecation within the 'Purdah' system. The slaves or captives were forced to clean these bucket privies and throw the night-soil at distant places. After those captives were released, they were not accepted by their caste men, and hence they formed a separate caste of 'Bhangis' who was renamed as 'Mehtar' by Emperor Akbar.⁶

Such a division of work on the basis of caste or birth is attributed to the flawed practices in the Hindu community. However, a close analysis would only confirm that such divisions exist in other religions in Indian society.⁷ To dig deeper into the issue, one must not ignore the fact that India has been a place where traditionally almost everyone used to defecate in the open till the beginning of the Christian era. In a case study of Sulabh International Social Service Organisation⁸, it is stated that, "The 1999 Status Report for South-East Asia says that 733 million Indians (590 million in the rural areas and 143 million in the urban areas) lack basic sanitation. In other words, 80% of rural India and 50% of urban India do not have toilets for its citizens. According to the Census of India 2001, 63% of households do not have a lavatory (78 % in rural areas and 26 % in urban areas). The practice of defecation in open spaces is very prevalent, especially in rural areas. The humiliating practice of manually cleaning the dry toilets and carrying human excreta by the human scavengers on their heads had been there for generations; thus, they were treated as untouchables. "Adoption of the employment of manual scavengers and construction of dry latrines (prohibition) act" was passed by the Indian parliament

in 1993. This law prohibited the construction of dry toilets and human scavenging.

Recently, a very innovative and revolutionary initiative was taken up by the government of India under 'Swachh Bharat Mission' on October 2, 2014, to commemorate Gandhi Jayanti. One of the main challenges of this mission is to build enough latrines to make our country Open Defecation Free (ODF). The SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of this ambitious initiative by the government clearly shows that in 54.9% of the villages having community toilets, cleaning is being done by the persons employed by the panchayat or on contract payment. In comparison, in 17.0% of villages, it is being done by the residents themselves.⁹ However, a considerable percentage of about 22.6% of these community toilets were not being cleaned at all. Data from urban areas showed 73.1% cleaning of community/public toilets is done by the persons employed by the local municipal body, and only 12.2% of wards were cleaned by the persons employed by the residents' welfare association. However, about 8.6% of wards community/public toilets were not cleaned by anybody. This is only indicative of the alarming scenario if corrective measures are not taken to develop cleaning habits among all the users of toilets.¹⁰

While large-scale construction of toilets has been done in the last few years¹¹, the mission lacks due to focus on spreading awareness among their users on keeping these latrines clean and hygienic. Since ordinary citizens never had the habit of cleaning toilets, there is a danger that users will convert latrines into unusable and unhygienic places. The scale at which toilets are being built under this revolutionary initiative carries a danger of defeating the very purpose if it is not ensured that these toilets are kept clean and hygienic. Suppose the sanitary conditions of latrines near (inside or outside) the houses are not maintained. In that case, these places are sure to become breeding places of air and water-borne pathogens that will only help spread diseases around them. Our society believes that certain segments of the community are traditionally responsible for undertaking cleaning tasks. Our society believes in such an inexplicable division of work that automatically gets decided by a person's caste or community identity. It is 'traditionally' considered that 'bhangis' or 'mehtars' are 'born' to clean the excreta of others in society. Manual scavengers belong to such communities in India. Unless we understand this division in our society, it will be difficult to address the issue sensibly.

Additionally, irresponsible media coverage had strangely discussed such issues in a completely negative way. Analysis of recent

news headlines and media reports like “This is India! Dalit school students forced to clean toilets”¹², “Govt. Teachers force Dalit kids to clean toilets”, “Children belonging to the Valmiki caste are forced to clean toilets by their teachers at government schools in rural Gujarat”¹³, “Students forced to clean school toilets in Odisha’s Jagatsinghpur, Parents and local villagers seek action against teachers of Tulang Project UP school for making students clean toilets”¹⁴; further deepens our feudal mentality. Instead of asking to engage every student in cleaning the toilets, all the reports advocate hiring professionals for the job and keep warning the schools against asking the students to clean the toilets. Such discussions only encourage a child to believe that cleaning toilets are others’ responsibility.

However, a pleasant angle could be noticed in the following media report that carries the right attitude in reporting such events like, “Students in Japan clean their own classrooms and school toilets and the reason is incredible. Cleaning practices followed by students in Japan help build their character to develop them into model citizens”.¹⁵ Unless we follow this, we will never be able to honestly ensure clean and hygienic toilets and the real success of Swachhhta Mission. We must introduce the theory and practical classes on using toilets and keeping them clean.

While the task of building toilets is being addressed now very effectively by providing funds required for such purposes under the government’s initiative, the issue of keeping them hygienic is altogether a complex problem that is not as easy to address. There are two aspects to this problem that needs to be addressed. The first among these is to identify those who can be made responsible for the maintenance of these units. Obviously, for in-house toilets or toilets meant for personal usage, the responsibility will lie on the users. However, for community toilets, the responsibility will rest on the community leaders and organizers.

The second problem is that after identifying the responsible set of people, they must be provided with a clear guideline on executing their responsibility. The ‘usual Indian’ approach will be to engage ‘professionals’ to execute this responsibility. This paper discusses the ineffectiveness of such a strategy as it is bound to fail to address the problem’s root cause. The problem lies in the flawed understanding that ‘cleaning’ is not the responsibility of ‘users’; rather, it is the responsibility of the ‘professionals’ assigned (or paid) for the job. It must be easily realized that unless all citizens and each family member start considering cleanliness to be their first responsibility, it will be impossible to maintain the hygienic conditions of such facilities by relegating the responsibility to others. However, implementation of

such a strategy is bound to face resistance in our society due to social and historical reasons.

To realize the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi and follow the example of Japanese schools, India must start teaching cleaning habits to secondary and higher secondary school children. The teachers must teach them correct and effective ways to clean toilets through practical sessions. All students, without exception, must be taught and made to practice this by carrying out duties in rotation, to keep the toilets. Without such an initiative, building toilets will fail to serve the purpose. This paper analyses the scale of this problem and suggests ways to address it by introducing a subject in the primary school stage wherein a hands-on approach to keeping a toilet clean could be demonstrated and taught. Unless citizens begin to consider the job of cleaning toilets as their responsibility, a noble initiative such as “Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan” will never achieve its desired goal.

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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.

The G.P.F. has its head quarters in New Delhi and 18 peace centres in urban areas through out India. Housed in its headquarters building, besides the administrative office, are: a specialised library on peace, disarmament and conflict resolution; guest rooms and an auditorium.

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.



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Obituary

Professor K. Ramakrishna Rao

B. Sambasiva Prasad

BORN IN 1932, Professor Koneru Ramakrishna Rao was a distinguished teacher, researcher, educationist and administrator. He passed away in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh (AP), on 9th November 2021 at the age of 89. His areas of interest are Gandhian Studies, Parapsychology, Consciousness Studies and Yoga and published extensively in these areas. Whether it was his involvement in parapsychological research or the study of yoga or consciousness, the backdrop was always Gandhi.

Prof. Rao is one of the leading Gandhian scholars. His work began with his doctoral dissertation on Gandhi. Subsequently, this was published under the title *Gandhi and Pragmatism: An Intercultural Study* (1968). His later works *Gandhi and Applied Spirituality* (2011) and *Gandhi's Dharma* (2017) are outstanding works. He was responsible for the establishment of the Gandhi Centre in GITAM University, Visakhapatnam. He was also the Chairman of the *GITAM Journal of Gandhian Studies* (GJGS).

In his book *Gandhi's Dharma*, Rao wrote: “ My interest in Mahatma Gandhi goes back to my school days. This is in part due to the influence of my father. In high school, I was a kind of student leader and was associated with a number of functions relating to Gandhi. Gandhi's image was so strongly imprinted in my mind even then that the news of his death left me bereaved. On that day I cried as if

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I had lost a parent”.

Professor Rao served as Professor and Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, India. He worked at Duke University and taught at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and the California Institute of Human Science. He also served as the Executive Director of the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man in USA.

Professor Rao was Advisor to the Government of Andhra Pradesh on Higher Education. He was also the Vice-Chairman of the A.P. State Planning Board during 1994-95. Other positions held include Chairman, Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR) , Chancellor of GITAM University, Chairman of the GITAM Centre for Gandhian Studies and National Fellow of Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR).

Prof. Rao published 20 books, 50 book chapters and 300 research papers , and several of his books were translated into Japanese, German, Italian and Spanish. Prof. Rao was honoured with numerous academic awards like Fulbright and Rockefeller Foundation Fellowships and honorary doctoral degrees by Andhra University, Acharya Nagarjuna University and Kakatiya University. He received the “Padma Shri Award” from the President of India in 2011.

Prof. Rao’s contributions to higher education are noteworthy. He left an indelible imprint as a crusader for reforming education for all round development of the person and to make education reach all sections of society. His demise has left a big vacuum in the fields of Gandhian Studies, parapsychology and higher education.

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