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THOMAS WEBER



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Editorial

THE INTER-ETHNIC VIOLENCE in Manipur is a matter of very serious concern comparable to the days of the partition and reminiscent of ethnic cleansing. Although many have described it as religious, and some events seem to have rendered such an argument credible, it should be seen as the result of a lack of trust between the majority community of Meiteis and the Kukis amid competition for scarce resources, especially land, and jobs. Although it may have been a fallout of the State's long-standing hill-valley identity problem, the mass displacement, the loss of lives, vandalism of homes, churches, and temples, as well as arson in five districts that took place have created deep ruptures in inter-community relations. The trigger was the All-Tribal Students Union's demonstration on the 3rd of May 2023 to protest the move to grant the Meiteis ST status following a High Court judgement. This demand, which all the Meiteis do not support, is resisted by the tribal groups, especially the Kukis, the more advanced among the tribes, for whom granting ST status to the Meiteis would reduce their share of the reservation pie and land. The conflict was partly a result of simmering unrest over what tribal groups viewed as partisan activities by the State government and the law-enforcing machinery. Had the BJP-led government of the State reacted swiftly to dispel the notion that it was biased towards the majority Meitei community, things would not have come to this pass. The government's overzealous "war against drugs" in the hills and eviction drives in a border state with incessant illegal migration from Myanmar should have been more graduated and consultative to enhance its legitimacy and prevent a violent backlash.

The violence has not died down even after a month despite intervention by the central forces. The country never witnessed a total collapse of the law-enforcement machinery anywhere, as seen in Manipur. It suggests that the conflict is more complex and deep-rooted than meets the eye, and the Kukis increasingly advance suggestions for the dismemberment of Manipur as the only way out. It is important

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that political leaders have conflict sensitivity before they make decisions and resort to actions in such volatile regions. Our political class must tread a cautious path on sensitive issues like granting tribal status. Adopting the dictum, 'Do no harm', is the most prudent course to follow in such circumstances.

This journal issue has five articles in the main part and one in the notes and comments section. The first article by Jungmin Choi examines the connections between Gandhi and Korea reflected in books published and movements in that country. The second article by Prashant Kaushik is on Shanti Tseng, Mahatma Gandhi's Chinese Disciple, and his literary pursuits. The next article by Naseeb Benjamin discusses Gandhi's views on Jews and their quest for a homeland. The fourth article by Chandan Bordoloi analyses the role of the government in ensuring elementary education in Assam. The final article in this section by Sreelekha RG is on reconstructing development in COVID-affected India from the perspective of a Gandhian model. There is a short article on the political implications of the inauguration of the new parliament building in New Delhi on the 140th birth anniversary of Savarkar by Shamsul Islam and Anil Sadgopal. In addition, we have a book review by Thomas Weber.

JOHN S. MOOLAKKATTU
Chief Editor



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Gandhi in South Korea: Books and Social Movements

Jungmin Choi

ABSTRACT

Various books on Gandhi's life and ideas have been published in South Korea, but their diversity is limited. So far, Gandhi's autobiography and biographies of Gandhi form a large part of the output. Pro-democracy activists and thinkers Seok-heon Ham and Il-soon Jang are said to have been heavily influenced by Gandhi. Very few books compare and analyze South Korean social movements from a Gandhian perspective; these are only briefly introduced in a few books. The most compelling evidence of Gandhi's influence is found in books that compare and analyze the ideas of Seok-heon Ham and Gandhi and a book on the Hansalim Cooperative started by Il-soon Jang.

Key words: *Gandhi, Seok-heon Ham, Il-soon Jang, Hansalim, Nonviolence Resistance*

1. Introduction

GANDHI WAS A major figure in social movements, and even now, a century later, his philosophy of nonviolent resistance has been passed down and developed by future generations. In addition to India, where Gandhi was born and led the independence movement, Gandhi's legacy can be found in the U.S., Europe, South Africa, and other parts of the world.¹ In my case, before I met foreign nonviolent activists in the conscientious objection campaign, Gandhi was someone I had rarely heard of in social movements. All I had encountered about Gandhi was from biographies for children when I was young. Like Jesus, who said, 'If you are slapped on the right cheek, turn the other, too', Gandhi from those books, was, at least for me, a saint. As I met foreign nonviolent activists or read their writings about Gandhi,

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I got to know him anew and wondered how Gandhi affected South Korean social movements.

In South Korea, the most influential figures in social movements have been Marx-Lenin and Kim Il-sung of North Korea. The majority of labour, reunification, and student movement activists who were strong during the pro-democracy movement in the 80s and 90s were directly or indirectly influenced by them. In particular, Kim Il Sung's Juche (self-reliance) ideology² was accepted by South Korea's social movements and soon became mainstream after the 1980 Gwangju Democratization Movement³ when activists were disappointed with the U.S. condoning the brutal crackdown on the demonstrations by the South Korean military. Since then, the South Korean social movements have been divided into two broad branches, one that accepts Juche ideology and puts reunification with North Korea as a top priority, and one that focuses on the class strife between labour and capital, and has been at odds with who are the exploiters and exploited, and who should struggle against whom? Gandhi, on the other hand, was also introduced to the Korean Peninsula during the Independence Movement under Japanese colonial rule,⁴ but it was not adopted as a line for the national liberation movement.⁵

This does not mean that Gandhi does not influence South Korean social movements. Seok-heon Ham (1901-1989), a thinker and religious leader during the Independence Movement and pro-democracy movement from the early 1920s to the 1960s and 1970s, is known to be deeply influenced by Gandhi, and there are several books and papers on him and Gandhi. It is said that Il-soon Jang (1928-1994), founder of the Hansalim Movement represented by the Hansalim Cooperative, also had a deep understanding of Gandhi's thoughts. However, there is no specific information about whether and how Gandhi's social movement strategies and tactics influenced Seok-heon Ham's independence movement and the pro-democracy movement, whether Il-soon Jang considered Gandhi's constructive program when he started the cooperative movement, or whether Gandhi's approach influenced the long history of the South Korean resistance movement as a whole.

Curiosities about such matters triggered this study. As a social movement activist, I think there have been quite a few movements in South Korea that can be interpreted as following Gandhi's civil disobedience or constructive program. Analyzing Gandhi's ideas and activities by applying them to South Korea's social movements is not to blindly follow Gandhi, but to get inspiration to learn from Gandhi and help the current South Korean social movements: What is real social change, and what means will be used to achieve it? Gandhi's

time and culture differ from South Korea's, so what will be inherited and transformed? To this end, I would like to find out how Gandhi has been introduced in South Korea so far and what discussions are underway, especially in social sciences. Through this, it is expected that the current location of related research can be identified and the direction of future discussions can be measured.

2. Gandhi in Books

The first thing I did to find out how Gandhi was introduced to South Korean society was to search the National Central Library and the National Assembly Library, the representative libraries of South Korea, with Gandhi as a keyword.⁶ A total of 323 materials were identified at the National Central Library, including 209 books, 75 magazine/academic journal papers, 15 theses, 21 multimedia materials, and three newspaper articles. In the National Assembly Library, 577 items were found, including 197 books, 39 theses, and 326 serials/academic articles. Since the National Assembly Library is more responsible for storing knowledge in specialized fields than the National Central Library in South Korea, the number of academic papers stored was much higher.

After skimming through the libraries' materials, I decided that the books would be more appropriate than dissertations to examine the perception of Gandhi and the nonviolent movement in society Caas a whole. In addition, some of the papers that stood out were revised and published as books, which also influenced my decision. The table below is based on the National Central Library.

Figure 1: Classification by institution holding the books

Category	Volumes
Main building	99
National Library for Children and Young Adults	85
Digital Library	25

Since the National Central Library has a particular branch for children and adolescents, it provides a classification by institution holding the books, allowing the target readers to be identified for each book. The result is shown in Figure 1. Of the 25 books in the digital library, 22 were historical biography for children published long ago and remained digital only. Therefore, when classified by

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readers, 107 out of 209 books are for children and teenagers. Most books for children and teenagers were one volume from the complete biography series of the world's great men in history. There were also picture books for the lower elementary grades.

Figure 2: Classification by a period of books

Year	Volumes	Regime
Dec. 1963 ~ Dec. 1972 (about nine years)	16	Third Republic (Park Chung-hee Military Dictatorship)
Dec. 1972 ~ Feb. 1981 (about eight years)	25	Fourth Republic (Park Chung-hee, Chun Doo-hwan Military Dictatorship)
Feb. 1981 ~ Feb. 1988 (about seven years)	33	Fifth Republic (Chun Doo-hwan Military Dictatorship)
Feb. 1988 ~ Feb. 1993 (five years)	29	Sixth Republic (Roh Tae-woo Government, Conservative)
Feb. 1993 ~ Feb. 1998 (five years)	18	Kim Young-sam Government, Conservative
Feb. 1998 ~ Feb. 2003	38	Kim Dae-jung Government, Liberal
Feb. 2003 ~ Feb. 2008 (five years)	44	Roh Moo-hyun Government, Liberal
Feb. 2008 ~ Feb. 2013 (five years)	1	Lee Myung-bak Government, Conservative
Feb. 2013 ~ Dec. 2016 (about four years, impeached)	2	Park Geun-hye Government, Conservative Acting Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn

Dec. 2016 ~ May 2017 (about six months)		
May 2017 ~ May 2022 (five years)	3	Moon Jae-in Govern- ment, Liberal

Books on Gandhi began to appear in the mid-1960s. Many books were published during the military dictatorship, but since 1987, when the presidential election system changed to a direct election due to the June Democratic Struggle, it has slowed down. Many books began to be published again during the Kim Dae-jung government in the late 1990s and peaked during the Roh Moo-hyun government in the early 2000s.⁷ According to the Encyclopedia of Korean Culture, published by the Academy of Korean Studies, an educational institution under the Ministry of Education, the publishing industry in South Korea began to take hold in the 1960s. It continued to grow until the mid-1990s despite the military regime's repression. In terms of the annual number of publications, it maintained at 2,000 for ten years in the 1960s, but it rapidly increased in the 1970s, exceeded 10,000 in 1976, and gradually expanded to 20,000 in 1980 and 30,000 in 1983, maintaining the same level and entering the stable period of publication.⁸ Likewise, books about Gandhi have been published steadily under the military dictatorship. It can also be seen that there were relatively more books on Gandhi during the liberal governments than the military dictatorship and the succeeding conservative governments. It is not known precisely why the publisher/translator/author tried to publish books about Gandhi at that time, but there were clues in the notes of the translators or authors of the books.

Cha Ki-pyok wrote a biography titled *Gandhi* in 1965. In the preface to the third edition in 1989, he wrote, "At the time of the first edition in 1965, authoritarian politics by the military or the one-party rule were prevalent in the new nations of Asia and Africa, but democratic politics managed to be maintained in India. ... We are interested in India's democratization process because its footsteps had fewer ups and downs. I think India's ability to leave such a footpath is largely due to the national liberation movement against the colonial policies of the past".⁹ Hyun Choi, a translator of Romain Rolland's *Mahatma Gandhi*, published in 1983, wrote, "I would say that this book is meant to be presented in a cold-hearted society that is heavily contaminated by the ills of Western civilization today".¹⁰

Those who translated and published the books about Gandhi during the military dictatorship seem to have wanted to learn about

Figure 3: Classification by the subject name of books

Classifications	Volumes
History	109
Social Sciences	45
Philosophy	31
Literature	8
Religion	6
Arts	4
General Works	4
Language	1

the national liberation movement, Asian democracy and civilization from Gandhi, the most famous foreigner from the Japanese Colonial Period.¹¹ It also seems to have seen Gandhi as a symbol of overcoming Western-style materialism and achieving personal spiritual maturity.

During the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun Liberal governments, when new books on Gandhi appeared most frequently, most of the books published were Gandhi's autobiography or biographies of Gandhi; attempts to retranslate Gandhi's autobiography from a different perspective were particularly noticeable. Hong-kyu Park, who translated *Gandhi: An Autobiography — The Story of My Experiments with Truth* in 2007, said in a translator's note, "Why I'm talking again about Gandhi here is ... because I question the conventional interpretation of Gandhi in South Korea".¹² Park argued that Seok-heon Ham, a Gandhian and the first to translate the same autobiography into Korean, translated the book with a misconception of Gandhi: Gandhi was, in fact, a proponent of the third path, neither capitalist nor communist, and valued local autonomy.¹³ Tae-un Kim, who translated Gandhi's *Village Swaraj* in 2006, also said in his translator's note, "Perhaps many people still understand Gandhi as the 'father of Indian independence' who advocated non-resistance and sought to liberate the nation from British colonial rule. However, seeing Gandhi simply as a patriot is sure to miss the heart of his ideas and practices. In fact, the idea of village-centred 'swaraj' has long been accepted and belittled by many people in India and around the world as a medieval conservative economic idea".¹⁴

In addition, more books focused on specific topics, such as politics,

religion, or education, as opposed to chronological arrangements of his life as in the past. Byung-hun Ko, who translated Gandhi's *My Views on Education* in 2006, said, "It has already been more than a decade since I happened to 'meet' *My Views on Education*. ... However, in such a situation where the number of 'famous' people who were deeply influenced by Gandhi is incalculable, I decided to introduce a new translation of *My Views on Education* because although many of Gandhi's ideas have been introduced, a book summarizing only Gandhi's thoughts on education has not yet been introduced into our society".¹⁵ It seems that people were trying to find a clue from Gandhi about what true education is as the basic policy condition shifted from the competing neoliberal education policies of the previous conservative governments to communitarianism, emphasising equity and public interests.

The library categorized books by subject as shown in Figure 3, but books in the categories of history, social science, and philosophy, in which most of the books are located, were stories about Gandhi's birth, life and death, achievement-oriented biographies, or Gandhi's autobiography. Gandhi's autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, was first translated by Seok-heon Ham in 1965. Since then, it has been translated and published 37 times in total, including revised editions, by other publishers and translators.

Since the mid-1980s, books focusing more on the period of Gandhi's nonviolent resistance began to be published, breaking away from Gandhi's biography, which chronicled Gandhi's birth to death. In the 1990s, more detailed books about Gandhi's religion, thoughts and practices began to appear. These include books outlining Gandhi's ideas about law and education, books focusing on leadership in Gandhi's life, self-help books, and books on economic management. Gandhi's life also inspired books about the Gandhi School.¹⁶

In addition, there were books on Gandhi's lifestyle and health in the category of philosophy, Bhagavad Gîtâ,¹⁷ Gandhi's Meditation and Zen, and comparisons between Gandhi's religion and other religions in the religion category. I found a few translations that offered glimpses of the influence of Gandhi's philosophy on social movements, such as *Village Swaraj*¹⁸ and *Satyagraha in South Africa*¹⁹, but not many.

3. South Korean Social Movements and Gandhi in the Books

As mentioned, there were books on various aspects of Gandhi's thoughts, practices, and religion in South Korea. Still, it was not easy to find studies of the impact of Gandhi or his ideas as a social movement strategist on South Korean social movements. In order to carry out this task, new articles must be written by people familiar

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with or interested in South Korean society or South Korean social movements. However, most of the books about Gandhi published in South Korea were translations of books written by Gandhi or books written by foreigners who did not know much about the situation in South Korea. Seventy-nine of the ninety-nine books for adults in the main building category in Figure 1 were those kinds of translated books. Given this significant gap in understanding Gandhi's impact on South Korean social movements, there are two starting points. One is the book *Seok-heon Ham and Gandhi: The Same and Different Path to Peace* written by Hong-kyu Park, which combines several academic papers he published on Seok-heon Ham and Gandhi into a book. The other is Jong-chul Kim's essay collection *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel*, which is not detailed but can be traced back to the Hansalim Cooperative and Gandhi.

3.1. *Seok-heon Ham and Gandhi: The Same and Different Path to Peace*

This book is the result of a series of writings by progressive legal scholar Hong-kyu Park of Yeungnam University on how Ham embraced Gandhi's ideas. This is the first book in South Korea to compare, critically examine and analyze the lives and ideas of the two men. The author recounts the process of Seok-heon Ham's acceptance of Gandhi's ideas, who walked the path of nonviolent peace, and re-examines similarities to and differences from Gandhi's path.

Seok-heon Ham was an independent activist under Japanese colonial rule. Ham was also a pro-democracy/reunification movement activist, a religious thinker, and a poet under the military dictatorship after liberation, and he was always addressed as the 'Gandhi of South Korea' whenever he was introduced. This is because he always emphasized nonviolence when he resisted the dictatorship by advocating the *Ssial* thought.²⁰ Ham joined the March First Independence Movement²¹ in 1919 while in high school, which drew his attention to social participation.²² Since then, he participated in the founding of the nonchurch movement monthly magazine *Bible Joseon*,²³ gave lectures and published several articles criticizing the military dictatorship. Recalling Gandhi's Tolstoy Farm, Ham opened a *Ssial*'s Farm in Cheonan in 1957 and Gangwon Province in 1961, functioning as a religious, educational, and farming community until it was closed in 1973 due to repression by the military dictatorship and financial difficulties. In April 1970, Ham founded the news review magazine *Voice of the Ssial* to promote democracy and freedom of the press, and in 1974, he continued the pro-democracy movement by founding the

National Congress for the Restoration of Democracy.²⁴ Ham was imprisoned eight times during the Japanese colonial era and during the dictatorship of North Korea's Kim Il-sung and the dictatorship of South Korea's Syngman Rhee, Park Chung-hee, and Chun Doo-hwan.

In the book's second chapter, Park makes a chronological comparison between Gandhi's and Seok-heon Ham's lives and introduces the people or ideas that influenced theirs. In chapter three, the author explains in more detail the process by which Ham came to know Gandhi and accepted his ideas. From chapter four onwards, Park examines the differences between the two in how they look at people, freedom and democracy, self-government, socialism, the perception of history, religious views, the critique of civilization, nationalism, capitalism, educational thought, and nonviolent activism.

Park points out that both Gandhi and Ham emphasized the importance of religion and criticized civilization, capitalism, and nationalism in general; However, unlike Gandhi, Ham misinterpreted Gandhi's nonviolent ideas as the unity or harmony of church and state and had an abstract and ideological religious view that explained history as 'divine providence.' In addition, Park explains that Ham admired Western civilization: he advocated using Gandhi's idea of nonviolence to reshape the national character of the Korean people and overcome hardships. "Ham, based on Western Christianity, was an orientalist who thoroughly distinguished the East and the West and had an inferiority complex about Korea and the East".²⁵

The author makes it clear that he has developed the book on the dimension of Ham's acceptance of Gandhi's thought, noting that while the section on the nonviolent movement is very brief, and says Ham never described in detail Gandhi's nonviolent movement. Park introduces the different analyses of Sung-soo Kim and Young-ho Kim to explain this. Sung-soo Kim, who wrote the *Biography of Seok-heon Ham*, says that Ham "doesn't seem to have been as active as Gandhi in organizing and mobilizing a pan-national social movement".²⁶

On the other hand, in his paper "Seok-heon Ham and Indian Thought", which he contributed to the book *In Search of Seok-heon Ham's Thought*, Yong-ho Kim sees Seok-heon Ham as "a man worthy of discussion simply by discovering Gandhi and his principle of nonviolence".²⁷ He said Ham's nonviolent activism "has been ended in mere gesture because there were few people who understood him and even fewer wise followers unlike Gandhi", and that there may be "a difference in the level of grasping the spiritual values between Indians and Koreans".²⁸ Young-ho Kim also stated South Korean activists "had Ham in the lead and took him as the starting point for a public idea, but they refused to see or take his whole thought,

accepting only what they needed".²⁹ The activists "justified violence by saying 'violence of love' or 'defensive violence', and even in favour of nonviolence, they put conditions on it".³⁰ Young-ho Kim suggested that the activists "missed an important element of the nonviolent movement of self-sacrifice or self-purification, which led to violence, and were class struggle oriented and resulted only in an extreme confrontation".³¹

Park also introduces Ok-soon Lee's analysis to explain how the Korean people received Gandhi under Japanese colonial rule, saying that independent activists also misunderstood Gandhi. According to Ok-soon Lee, the Dong-A newspaper has frequently reported Gandhi's nonviolent movement since its inception in 1920 and published more than 150 articles about it in 1921. The trend between 1930 and 1931, which covered the most articles about Gandhi, is similar. But since then, the number of articles has decreased.³² In analyzing these news articles, Lee wrote that the Korean articles revealed disappointment and prejudice against Gandhi. "It was because the Korean intellectuals did not understand Gandhi's swaraj and his leadership in the use of nonviolence and were familiar with the power-based confrontation, the formula of victory and defeat, which the ruler could foresee and thus controllable".³³

Although Ham was called Gandhi of South Korea for advocating nonviolence, his activities as a social movement organizer do not seem to stand out compared to Gandhi. It seems necessary to study whether this was because Ham focused more on his activities as a scholar or thinker, or whether the times did not follow his challenge as suggested by Hong-kyu Park, the book's author. What is clear is that Ham's life and thoughts influenced many people of his time and future generations. The activities of institutions that directly connect his achievements, such as the Ssial Thought Research Institute, the Voice of Ssial, and the Seok-heon Ham Memorial Organization, and the presence of many poets, novelists, and politicians who claim to be disciples prove this.

3.2. *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel*

This book is a collection of essays by Jong-chul Kim, a literary critic who majored in English literature and a practitioner who spread ecology by launching the bi-monthly magazine *Green Review*. As evidenced by the fact that one of the essays in the book, "Gandhi's Spinning Wheel", is the title of the entire book, the book contains lessons that are given to us today, based on the life of Gandhi, a thinker, and leader, and his attitude toward the world.

Kim diagnoses that the current ecological crisis is a total crisis in

human life itself across the economy, society, morality, and philosophy. He asserts that the problem is that people nevertheless insist that they cannot give up the convenient and comfortable life, enabled by industrialism, they enjoy now; therefore, the current crisis can be overcome only by the overall self-renovation of human beings and the fundamental shift of civilization, which the development of scientific technologies or the power of capital cannot repair. The author argues that in order to open up a decent human life and a civilization of sustainable alternatives, one must acquire the skills to renounce the benefits of industrial culture voluntarily.

Kim uses Gandhi's spinning wheel to symbolize this voluntary poverty and self-sufficiency. He claims that practising voluntary poverty and self-sufficiency is the task of breaking down the structure of domination, exploitation, and oppression and changing the psychological habits and desires tamed by this structure from the root: more specifically, self-sufficient peasants and rural communities should be the basic units and autonomy by grassroots democracy should be realized. This is also the embodiment of human self-completion in nonviolence, love, and bonds, without violent profit-seeking and blind greed for possession and domination, the author says.

Kim points out that modern industrial society results in excessive consumption, loss of humanity, and a structure of domination and control and emphasizes that Gandhi's ideas contain a way to resolve it. Since the book is a collection of essays, it is not logically explained what specific solutions can be derived from Gandhi's ideas, but the author introduces some examples of social movements and personal practices that indicate possible solutions.

One example is the Hansalim Cooperative. It does not describe the theoretical context in which this movement originated, the methodologies, its social influences, etc., from the strategic and tactical point of view of the social movement, but the author says, "what's particularly new about this movement compared to the conventional mainstream social transformation movement is that it aims for an autonomous and cooperative symbiotic order beyond the power-seeking and exclusive competition that has dominated our lives by thoroughly nonviolent means. That is why it takes the form of an alternative life-culture movement to secure and expand the space for autonomy and cooperation in our daily lives, which is very far from the competitive power struggle we have seen".³⁴ Kim does not directly use Gandhi's term, the constructive program, but he does explain that the movement should be seen as part of it.

Il-soon Jang, the founder of the Hansalim Movement represented

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by the Hansalim Cooperative, was a Catholic, but it is said that he was also well-versed in Eastern ideas such as Donghak (Eastern Learning), Lao-tzu, and Gandhi. He used to say, “what people want is life, not an empty theory. There is a limit to political parties or politics. We have to learn the practice of Gandhi”,³⁵ revealing that Gandhi was part of the ideological background of his Hansalim Movement. After dropping out of college due to the Korean War, he returned to his hometown of Wonju, Gangwon Province, where he began his career as an educator and politician.³⁶ He was imprisoned for three years in 1961 for advocating the peaceful reunification of North and South Korea, and after his release, he began to be thoroughly monitored for all activities under the Political Activity Purification Act³⁷ and the Social Safety Act³⁸ during the Park Chung-hee military regime. As his activism became almost impossible, he devoted himself to farming and began to carry out a credit cooperative movement to revive impoverished rural and mining villages in the late 1960s.

In 1971, when Park became president for a third term, misuse of the national budget and government authority, which had not been well known until then, was exposed, and public sentiment became increasingly bitter. The regime’s repression became more and more severe, and Wonju was a place to initiate the anti-dictatorship movement during such a hard time. Jang, Bishop Ji Hak-sun, and others campaigned to eliminate corruption. The campaign’s central argument was that their own laziness or incompetence did not cause the poverty of workers and peasants but the corruption of the dictatorship and the business owners who colluded with it. This campaign played a major role in triggering the anti-dictatorship pro-democracy struggle in the 1970s. Jang was dubbed the godfather of the movement among pro-democracy activists in the 1970s, and Wonju was the centre of the struggle against the military dictatorship, serving as a hideout and shelter for oppressed opposition figures and dissidents.³⁹

From the end of the 1970s, Jang began to feel that the existing pro-democracy movement was not enough, and in 1985 founded the Wonju Consumer Cooperative, the predecessor of Hansalim Cooperative. At a cooperative education meeting in the late 1970s, he said, “As I continued the anti-dictatorship movement, I felt that I needed to break away from the old Marxian paradigm. Not only could it not solve the problem, but the vicious cycle would continue. Seeing the agricultural chemicals and fertilizers being sprayed and trying to industrialize the city, the entire river was going to be devastated. I came to think that we have to go in the direction of

saving the environment and saving ourselves".⁴⁰ In his posthumous collection of writings, lectures, and talks, *The Universe in a grain*, he said, "What is Hansalim? It means life. It's one. I mean, it's indivisible. ...We can't live without land, can we? We can't live without the sky... All beings cannot be separated from heaven, earth, and the universe. So, in that perspective, what is the relationship between us and all sentient beings, grass, worms, even stones, and things like that? It's the same".⁴¹

Founded in 1986, Hansalim Cooperative has established itself as an organic agricultural products direct trade movement based on the mutual trust between producers and consumers, a livelihood movement that fosters cooperative values and communal lifestyle in the region, and a life movement that saves rural areas and preserves the environment and ecology. The cooperative has continued to develop quantitatively and qualitatively. As a result, it currently operates 239 stores nationwide with about 800,000 union members, expanding its scope of activities to public trust, an educational institution, a training Centre, a research institute, and a book publisher.⁴²

The Hansalim Declaration,⁴³ issued in 1989, attracted attention as an important document that indicted both capitalism and socialism as implicated in industrial-based modern civilization and presented a new vision of social movements in South Korea. This declaration embodied the worldview and movement view of the Hansalim Movement and believed that the crisis of modern civilization stemmed from the West's dualistic rationalism and mechanistic industrial civilization, which enabled the imprudent development and use of nature by dividing self and others, people and nature. The Hansalim Declaration analyzes that both capitalism and communism are rooted in the industrialist worldview and that the harmonious coexistence of man and nature is inherently impossible in this worldview. It also proposes the Hansalim Movement, seeking a reciprocal relationship in which people and nature harmonize, coexisting as members of life in the universe and cities and rural areas help each other.

In 1992, when the essay was written, Jong-chul Kim acknowledged that "it is difficult to conclude how and to what level the Hansalim Cooperative will continue to develop in the future"⁴⁴ Yet, in 2022, the Hansalim Cooperative has achieved considerable organizational and business results, presented new possibilities for foodways and agriculture, and evolved into a somewhat powerful social force. In 2016, the 30th anniversary of its founding, Hansalim established the 30-Year Vision Committee and presented a vision that if the previous 30 years were the integration of production and consumption through rice, the next 30 years will be expanded to holistic life solidarity and

become a social alternative space for the socially disadvantaged and minorities. For this, internal innovation plans such as improving the organizational structure and expanding participation and communication were also presented as practical tasks.⁴⁵

4. Conclusion

Books on Gandhi began to be published under the South Korean military dictatorship in the 1960s and have been regularly published since then. In the late 1990s, following a change of government by free elections for the first time in modern Korean history, Gandhi-related book publishing increased. The majority of these are biographies for children and adolescents, mainly about Gandhi's simple and truth-seeking life, helping to establish a balanced view of history and the world for children and adolescents. Most books aimed at adults were translations, and in the early days, books by Gandhi and biographies by various authors dominated. Since then, the types of Gandhi-related books have gradually diversified and become specialized. Social science books have addressed Gandhi's independence movement, Asian democracy, and civilization, law, education, religion, meditation, etc. However, few books have focused on Gandhi's nonviolent resistance, and no book was written to analyze Gandhian methods in connection with South Korean social movements.

A brief connection can be found in two of these books: *Seok-heon Ham and Gandhi: The Same and Different Path to Peace* and *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel*. *Seok-heon Ham and Gandhi* analyzes the ideas of Gandhi and thinker and pro-democracy activist Seok-heon Ham. *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel* is a collection of essays, one of which evaluates the Hansalim Cooperative, founded by Il-soon Jang, as a movement based on Gandhi's ideas. In addition to this book, other materials show a connection between Seok-heon Ham and Gandhi, such as a book comparing Seok-heon Ham's religious ideas with Gandhi's. On the other hand, there are quite a few books about the Hansalim Movement and Il-soon Jang, but with few references to Gandhi.

Three implications can be drawn. First, there seems not to be much Korean research or literature on social movements as a whole, and even less on Gandhi-influenced movements. Does this suggest that South Korean researchers and writers do not attach much importance to social movements?

Second, Gandhi's influence on South Korea's social movements seems small. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, Hong-kyu Park described how Gandhi's nonviolent resistance was introduced to Korea during the independence movement under Japanese colonial rule, but it was not adopted as a major strategy for the Korean independence

movement. It is currently unknown what influence Gandhi had on South Korea's social movements since liberation, including pro-democracy, labour, reunification movements, etc.

Third, studies of South Korean social movements may not have been conducted in a way that could reveal a Gandhian influence or orientation. Although not many contemporary South Korean movements or activists say that Gandhi's nonviolent resistance is the principle underlying their movements, there seem to be quite a few campaigns that align with it. Being unaware of the possibility of an influence from Gandhi narrows the opportunities for movements to learn from each other across different times, cultures, and regions. Research on the connection between Gandhi and South Korean social movements is limited and mainly centres on Seok-heon Ham. This makes it difficult to assess the impact (if any) on South Korean social movements.

This paper aimed to look at the books on Gandhi that have been published so far to see how Gandhi is understood and interpreted in South Korean society, especially in relation to social movements, and to see what additional research is needed in the future. Many books have been published, but there is a lack of diversity in terms of subject matter so there is not much content for social movement-conscious citizens or activists to refer to and learn from. In the future, it would be worthwhile to study how Gandhi's ideas and methods might have had a concrete impact on social movements in South Korea and how his influence compared with that of other thinkers/activists in order to better understand the present state of South Korean social movements.

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Notes and References

1. Gandhi's ideas and methods of resistance have since had a profound influence on the Civil Rights Movement in the United States (led by

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Martin Luther King, Jr.), the campaigns for the abolition of apartheid in South Africa and nonviolence researcher Gene Sharp, as well as Arne Næss' deep ecology, Johan Galtung's theory of active peace, and E. F. Schumacher's human-centred economics. In the book *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor*, Thomas Weber describes Gandhi's ideas and struggles in a very interesting and in-depth way by talking about those who played an important role in Gandhi's spiritual and ideological growth and practice and those who pioneered new disciplines and practices in later life under the influence of Gandhi. See Thomas Weber, *je-ja gan-di, seu-seung-eu-lo jug-da (Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor)*, Trans. Byung-soon Kim (Seoul: Little Mountain Publishing Co., 2013), original work published 2000.

2. According to the Standard Korean Language Dictionary of the National Institute of Korean Language, the Juche ideology is the basic policy of domestic and foreign policy announced by North Korea's Kim Il-sung at the Supreme People's Assembly in December 1967, focusing on political independence, economic independence, and self-defence (National Institute of Korean Language 1999). <https://stdict.korean.go.kr/search/searchResult.do>, accessed on 10 May 2022.
3. It is a pro-democracy movement that took place in Gwangju region in protest of a military coup led by Chun Doo-hwan. The military deployed airborne troops to violently suppress the protesters, resulting in the loss of many civilians. It is considered to have been the mother of many pro-democracy movements that emerged in the 1980s.
4. Kim Sung-soo, who was the president of Dong-A newspaper at the time, asked Gandhi for advice on the direction of the nation and the media under severe Japanese colonial rule, and Gandhi's recommendation to focus on the nonviolent struggle in response was published in the second page of Dong-A newspaper on January 5, 1927. See <https://www.donga.com/archive/newslibrary/view?ymd=19270105>, accessed on 17 May 2022.
5. Hong-kyu Park, "ham-seog-heon-ui gan-di sa-sang su-yong (Seok-heon Ham's Acceptance of Gandhi Thought)," *Journal of Seokdang Academy*, 53, 2 (May 2012), pp. 47-81.
6. See <https://www.nl.go.kr/> accessed on 26 June 2022; <https://dl.nanet.go.kr/index.do>, accessed on 26 June 2022.
7. Even considering that the National Central Library only allowed the search of publications until 2018, somehow there have been few publications since the Lee Myung-bak government. Although the National Assembly Library has 197 books on Gandhi, which is smaller than the National Central Library, 24 books were published during the Lee Myung-bak government, 24 during the Park Geun-hye government, and 17 books during the Moon Jae-in government. The National Assembly Library was available for search until 2022. The number of books in the National Assembly Library published

during the Roh Tae-woo and Kim Young-sam administrations was five and six, respectively.

8. The publishing industry in South Korea as a whole became established and grew in the 1960s, with the Copyright Act promulgated in 1957 and the Law on the Registration of Publishers and Printing Houses in 1961. Park Chung-hee, who came to power in a military coup, advocated 'modernizing the motherland' and carried out reforms in the publishing industry as well as in various fields. In the 1970s, Park promoted active publishing policies, such as supporting the publication of good reading materials and the National Campaign of Reading. In the 1980s, the Chun government tightened censorship by changing publication registration to a licensing system, but the publishing market did not shrink much. As a result of the June Democratic Struggle in 1987, measures were taken to revitalize publishing, and the number of publishers increased rapidly, and the boom continued until the mid-1990s. See Chun-keun Ahn, "chul-pan (publish)", *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* <<http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/E0058089>> (in Korean) accessed on 23 May 2022.
9. Ki-pyok Cha, *gan-di (Gandhi)*, (Seoul: Jimoongak, 1965), p.14.
10. Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi*, Trans. Hyun Choi (Paju: Bumwoosa, 1983), original work published 1924, p.31.
11. In his 1983 translation of Gandhi's autobiography, Seok-heon Ham expressed his thoughts on the translation as follows. "People love Gandhi so much after the March First Movement, and I don't know why there was no translation of the biography until liberation. ... This time, Samsung publishing house had been planning to produce Gandhi's *Autobiography* and Thoreau's *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* into one volume and asked for a translation, and I immediately responded to the request. Now that Gandhi was about to be forgotten rather than famous, I couldn't afford to decline". See Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *gan-di jin-li-ui sil-hyeon -na-ui sa-sang-jeog ja-seo-jeon (Gandhi: An Autobiography — The Story of My Experiments with Truth)*, Trans. Seok-heon Ham (Seoul: Samjungdang, 1965), original work published 1927, pp.47-49.
12. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *gan-di ja-seo-jeon (Gandhi: An Autobiography — The Story of My Experiments with Truth)*, Trans. Hongkyu Park (Seoul: Moonye, 2007), original work published 1927, p.746.
13. Park says Ham sees Gandhi was a nationalist and communist, and translates his autobiography based on this belief, so there are quite a few errors. *Ibid.*, pp.829-834.
14. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *ma-eul-i se-gye-leul gu-han-da (Village Swaraj)*, Trans. Tae-un Kim (Seoul: Greenview, 2006), original work published in 1962, p.293.
15. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *gan-di, na-ui gyo-yug-cheol-hag (My Views on Education)*, Trans. Byung-hun Ko (Seoul: Moonye, 2006),

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- original work published in 1970, pp.236-241.
16. Opened in 1997, the school has emerged as an alternative to the public education system that focuses only on college entrance exams. Principal Son Jin-geun explains that this alternative school was named with the intention of inheriting Gandhi's philosophy of labour, a village community, and a life that follows the truth. <<https://bit.ly/3qUxLGb>> accessed on 1 April 2022.
 17. One of the scriptures of Hinduism.
 18. In South Korea, it was only published in 2006 under the title *ma-eul-i se-gye-leul gu-han-da* (*Villages Save the World*). See Gandhi, *Village Swaraj*, *op. cit.*
 19. In South Korea, it was given a different title, *gan-di, bi-pog-lyeog jeo-hang-un-dong* (*Gandhi, Nonviolent Resistance*) and the original title became a subtitle. I guess this was because the word satyagrahara is difficult to translate properly into Korean. See Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *gan-di, bi-pog-lyeog jeo-hang-un-dong* (*Satyagraha in South Africa*), Trans. Hong-kyu Park (Seoul: Moonye 2016), original work published 1928.
 20. *Ssial* is the pure Korean word for min (people), which is a Chinese character. *Ssial* is the idea that people themselves are the basis and subject of history and society. Thus, emphasizing the inner revolution of the individual subject, Ham believed that social problems could be solved with nonviolence and love in solidarity with all these trained ssials in the world.
 21. The March First Independence Movement refers to spontaneous nonviolent demonstrations by a large number of citizens throughout the Korean Peninsula and in densely populated areas of the Korean population throughout the world over a period of several months beginning on March 1, 1919. It was the largest civic movement in Korean history, with 1.06 million people counted by the governmental authority, or 6.31% of the Joseon population at the time. This movement led to the establishment of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea.
 22. In the first issue of the news review magazine *Voice of the Ssial* he wrote, "If I had continued to live as I had lived previously, I would have become a doctor, or I would have studied something else, and I would have been under the Japanese power, running errands for them, and becoming a poor slave of knowledge that squeezes Koreans who were less than me. But with the rise of the March First Independence Movement, I changed a lot". Seok-heon Ham, "hanna-nim-ui bal-gil-e chae-wo-seo 1 (Fill in God's Footsteps 1)", *Voice of the Ssial*, 1, 1 (April 1970), pp.44-45.
 23. Nonchurch movement is a Christian idea that seeks a biblical-centred religious life, believing that the basis of Christian faith and theology is not in the form of church, religious authority, doctrine or worship, but the Bible. The Japanese colonial government closed the *Bible Joseon*, believing that there was an anti-Japanese spirit in this

- idea. Seok-heon Ham pursued the nonchurch movement from the mid-1920s and as a Quaker after the mid-1950s.
24. The National Congress for the Restoration of Democracy issued a declaration of three principles: first, nonviolent resistance, second, civil disobedience, and third, solidarity among democratic forces. It is evaluated as having a more organized movement than other civic movements that resisted the dictatorship in the past. In particular, the boycott campaign, the public referendum asking for measuring the nation's confidence in the president and the whistle-blowing campaign to declare the invalidity of false confessions, affidavits, and memorandums coerced by investigative agencies are considered to have great historical significance. Jung-nam Kim, *jin-sil, gwang-jang-e seo-da - min-ju-hwa-un-dong 30nyeon-ui yeog-jeong (Truth, Stand in the Square - Thirty Years of Pro-democracy Movement)* (Paju: Changbi Publishers, 2005), pp. 88-95.
 25. Hong-kyu Park, *ham-seog-heon-gwa gan-di: pyeong-hwa-leul hyang-han gat-go-do da-leun gil (Seok-heon Ham and Gandhi: The Same and Different Path to Peace)* (Paju: dulnyouk, 2015), p.212.
 26. Sung-soo Kim, *ham-seog-heon pyeong-jeon (Biography of Seok-heon Ham)* (Seoul: Samin, 2001), p.23.
 27. Seok-heon Ham Memorial Foundation *ham-seog-heon sa-sang-eul chaj-a-seo (In Search of Seok-heon Ham's Thought)* (Seoul: Samin, 2001), p.252.
 28. *Ibid*, p.247.
 29. *Ibid*, p.247.
 30. *Ibid*, p.247.
 31. *Ibid*, p.248.
 32. Ok-soon Lee, *sig-min-ji jo-seon-ui hui-mang-gwa jeol-mang, in-do (India, the Hope and Despair of Colonial Joseon)* (Seoul: Publishing Green History Co., 2006), p.30.
 33. *Ibid*, p.111.
 34. Jong-cheol Kim, *gan-di-ui mul-le (Gandhi's Spinning Wheel)* (Seoul: Greenview, 1999), p.84.
 35. Ik-rok Kim, *na-neun mi-cheo mol-lass-ne geu-dae-ga na-yeoss-da-neun geos-eul - mu-wi-dang jang-il-sun jam-eon-jib (The Book of Proverbs of Il-Soon Jang)* (Seoul: Dosol, 2010), p.101.
 36. Jang ran for the National Assembly twice, once as an independent and once as a member of the progressive Social Mass Party, but was not elected.
 37. More than 4,000 people were banned from political activities under the law, which was made in 1962 by military forces led by former President Park Chung-hee, who came to power in a military coup, to regulate political activities by opposition politicians and government officials, including the Democratic Party. The law was abolished in 2008.
 38. The law enacted in 1972 legalized the protective custody system for former political prisoners. Park Chung-hee regime noticed that political prisoners who were imprisoned after the Korean War began

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to be released from prison in the 1960s and in the early 1970s and that institutional and legal mechanisms were needed to jail them again. It was replaced by the Sheriff's Watch Act in 1989.

39. Jang-moon Choi, "won-ju du ji-seong-in, ji-hag-sun sin-bu-wa jang-il-sun seon-saeng (Two intellectuals from Wonju, Father Ji Hak-soon and Il-soon Jang)", http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0000356301, (Ohmynews 2006), (in Korean) accessed on 3 August 2022.
40. Young-joo Kim, an adviser to the Muwidang(Il-soon Jang) People, wrote in his memoirs. See Young-joo Kim, "na-ui hoe-go-log (my memoirs)," Newsletter of Muwidang People, 69 (2020), <http://bit.ly/3XMYnH6> (in Korean) accessed on 3 August 2022.
41. Il-soon Jang, *na-lag han-al sog-ui u-ju (The Universe in a grain)* (Seoul: Greenview, 2009), p.34.
42. Hansalim "2021 Annual Report," (Seoul: Hansalim, 2022), <http://www.hansalim.or.kr/?p=56558>, (in Korean) accessed on 10 August 2022.
43. The full text is posted on the Hansalim Training Center website, <http://edu.hansalim.or.kr/?p=1661>, It was also published as an ebook in 2020.
44. Kim, op. cit., p.88.
45. Hansalim Training Centre, *han-sal-lim-un-dong-ui i-hae (Understanding the Hansalim Movement)* (Seoul: Hansalim Training Centre, 2016), pp.169-173.

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Shanti Tseng (*Tseng Shengti*): Mahatma Gandhi's Chinese Disciple and a Literary Giant

Prashant Kaushik

ABSTRACT

*Shanti Tseng (Tseng Shengti) (1901-1982) was a writer, journalist, poet, editor, translator, literary theorist, and founder of several publications. Tseng came to India for the first time in 1925 to study at Visva-Bharati Santiniketan. After studying in Visva-Bharati for some time, he went to Sabarmati Ashram and became a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. Shanti left Sabarmati Ashram for Singapore at the end of 1926. Shanti visited India for the second time in 1932 to see Gandhi on a hunger strike inside Yerwada Jail. He again visited India in December 1979 to research Gandhi. He breathed his last in Sewagram, Wardha, India, on 1 December 1982, at 81. He immensely contributed to developing Chinese literature in Nanyang, which corresponds to southeast Asia. The later generation of scholars in Singapore regarded him as the “navigator” of Malayan-Singapore Chinese literature, primarily because Tseng spent the prime of his life in present-day Malaysia and Singapore. Shanti wrote reminiscences of his India visits and association with Gandhi in the book *Zai Gandi Xiansheng Zuoyou*, later translated into English as *By the Side of Bapu*. This paper seeks to throw light on the life and times of Shanti Tseng, his three sojourns to India, and his contributions to the development of Chinese literature in Malaysia and Singapore, focusing on his representative work *Zai Gandi Xiansheng Zuoyou*.*

Key words: *Shanti Tseng, Chinese disciple, Gandhi, literature, Nanyang.*

Introduction

WHILE MAHATMA GANDHI'S association with people and countries from the Western world is relatively well documented, there

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is a dearth of knowledge regarding his association with people from China. In this context, it is noteworthy that Gandhi had a Chinese disciple named Shanti Tseng (*Tseng Shengti*: 1901-1982) who not only lived with Gandhi in Sabarmati Ashram and committed to observing Gandhian vows but was also a literary giant who contributed to the development of the Malayan-Singapore Chinese Literature in Southeast Asia, a region referred to as '*Nanyang*' in the Chinese language.¹ While Nanyang broadly corresponds with Southeast Asia, in the context of Shanti Tseng, it refers to the region of British Malaya comprising present-day Malaysia and Singapore since he spent the prime of his professional life there. Through a careful study of primary and secondary sources available in Chinese and English languages, this paper seeks to highlight Shanti Tseng's association with Gandhi, his life as Gandhi's disciple, and his contribution to the development of Chinese literature in present-day Malaysia and Singapore during the second quarter of the twentieth century.

For more heuristic purposes, this paper is divided into several parts. First, it provides a biographical sketch of Shanti Tseng highlighting his early education, stay in India (1925-26) and British Malaya (late 1920s to late-1930s)², hardships experienced during various political movements in Maoist China, and final visit to India (1979-1982) where he also breathed his last. Second, it calls attention to the significance of Tseng's contribution to developing Chinese literature as an independent stream of literature in British Malaya. Third, it highlights the significance of one of his most representative works- *Zai Gandhi Xiansheng Zuoyou* (By the Side of Bapu)- as a literary and historical text. While summing up the paper's main findings, the conclusion highlights the need to study chapters of people-to-people exchanges between India and China, like the life and work of Shanti Tseng, that lie buried in archives.

A BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

Shanti Tseng (1901 - 1 December 1982) was originally named Tseng Chuqiao or called Wei Shi or Zeng Manni, with a style name of Da Ji or M. Tseng was born in Fenghuang in Raoping (present-day Chaoan County of Chaozhou city), Guangdong Province. His father, Tseng Hanjing, was a *xiuca*³ during the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912). Tseng studied in an old-style home school under a private tutor as a child and later went to a new-type Western school named Xiamen Jimei Middle School in 1918.⁴ After graduating from high school, he worked with the Xiamen Newspaper for some time. He went to Singapore in 1922 to teach at the Tao Nan Middle School but returned to China six months later. Tseng was in Shanghai when Rabindranath Tagore visited

China in 1924.

Tseng was influenced by Chinese Buddhist monk Su Manshu (1884–1918), who had visited India, and later by Rabindranath Tagore, who visited China in April-May 1924. Inspired by these two personalities and their advocacy of the India-China fraternity, Tseng came to India to study Sanskrit at Visva-Bharati Santiniketan, founded by Tagore. He was the first Chinese student in the modern era who came to India for higher studies.⁵ He studied in Santiniketan for some time, but British authorities started watching him, suspecting him of being a spy.⁶ This upset Tseng immensely. Tseng first heard of Mahatma Gandhi in 1925 while studying in Santiniketan. Tseng first met Gandhi in May 1925 when the latter visited Santiniketan. Tseng met Gandhi again in Calcutta, where he requested Gandhi to let him join Sabarmati Ashram. Gandhi agreed to Tseng's request and was sent to Sabarmati Ashram by Gandhi. Tseng stayed in Sabarmati Ashram from July 1925 till October 1926, thus becoming the first and the only Chinese disciple of Mahatma Gandhi.

In a letter written to Ramdas Gandhi from Calcutta on 27 July 1925, Mahatma Gandhi wrote, "*A young Chinese is also here. He seems very polite and industrious. He has come to me as Santiniketan could not accommodate him. He will go to the Ashram with Jamnadas.*"⁷ Gandhi liked Tseng and gave him his Indian name, "Shanti". Gandhi wrote: "*At present the Chinese student seems to possess all fine qualities of character. At his own request, he has been given an Indian name. We call him Shanti.*"⁸ Tseng immediately changed his name to Tseng Shengti or Shanti Tseng, a name that stayed with him for the rest of his life. Tseng left Sabarmati Ashram for Singapore in October 1926.

Tseng worked with Chinese language newspapers and publications in British Malaya between 1927 and 1937. He served as a news translator for *Nanyang Siang Pau* and later became its seventh chief editor in May 1930.⁹ In August 1931, he left *Nanyang Siang Pau* and planned to study in Europe. However, after the Shanghai Incident of 28 January 1932, also known as/the 28 January incident, in which Japan launched an aggressive assault on Shanghai, Tseng changed his plan and moved to Penang, Malaysia. In Penang, he started a newspaper under the name "Telegraph News" (*Dianxun Xinwen*) with his friends with the aim of carrying out anti-Japanese propaganda. In 1932, Tseng also came to India for the second time, especially to meet Gandhi, who was on a fast unto death inside Yerwada/Jail in Poona.

In 1936, he was hired by Penang's "Modern Daily" (*Xiandai Ribao*) to serve as its editorial director. Tseng organised an "Overseas Chinese War Reporters Correspondence Group" (*Huaqiao zhandi jizhe tongxuntuan*) following the rise in anti-Japanese sentiments among

overseas Chinese in British Malaya after the “7 July Incident” in 1937 in which Chinese and Japanese armed forces exchanged heavy fire at the outskirts of Peking. Tseng gathered six young men in their twenties from the local Chinese reading clubs and formed a seven-member reporter group to go to the front line of the fighting in China to report from the battlefield. These seven journalists came from Singapore, Penang, Bacheng, Java, Sumatra, and Siam. They carried several cameras and an enlarger, representing 11 newspaper offices and two publishing houses from Southeast Asia.¹⁰

The group reached Hong Kong in November 1937 from Singapore, travelling in the “Fengping” freighter. They stayed in Hong Kong for ten days and were welcomed by the Hong Kong Office of the 19th Route Army, the Southwest Bureau of the Communist Party of China, and many anti-Japanese groups in Hong Kong.¹¹ The group joined more than ten other Chinese newspaper reporters from Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand to travel to Wuhan city in the north, serving as the national military and political center then. They also set up their head office in Wuhan.¹² With the spread of anti-Japanese resistance, the group decided to travel to various places to cover the war and filed reports from Fujian, Hainan Island, Xuzhou, and many other places. People in China and Nanyang widely appreciated Tseng’s initiative to report on the war.¹³

Tseng shifted to China before the Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia in 1941-42 and settled down in Tianjin after the end of the war in China. However, he faced numerous ups and downs following his return to China. He ran a petty business in Chaoshan and Chongqing for survival, and after relocating to Tianjin, he started a tailoring business to make ends meet.¹⁴ He could not write much after 1949 due to a series of political movements. Since he could not suddenly become a “leftist writer” (*zuoyi wenren*) in Mao’s China, he had to undergo a series of study sessions and self-criticisms through the 1950s and 1960s. During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-77), his home was ransacked after he was labelled a rightist. His manuscripts and translations were thrown out in the open to disintegrate in the wind and rain. He was forced to give up writing and had to turn to the study of medicine instead. He displayed prodigious skills and prepared five sets of medical notes, which he effectively used to treat village people when he was sent to the countryside in Guangxi in 1969. Tseng returned to Tianjin after the end of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁵

However, Tseng’s Indian friends had never forgotten him. He was invited to visit India in 1961 by his old bosom friend Dr. G. Ramachandran (1904-1995), who had studied with him in Santiniketan

and Sabarmati Ashram, and who was then the Secretary of Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, but the visit could not materialise as the Chinese government denied him permission due to growing clashes and hostilities with India.¹⁶

In December 1979, Gandhi Peace Foundation invited him to India again to research Gandhi's life and thoughts. Before leaving China, the Chinese authorities finally recognized his status and gave him the designation of a Research Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (*Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan nanya yanjiusuo yanjiuyuan*). Notably, there were very few people with either the designation of a full professor or a Research Fellow in China in the 1970s, and Tseng was one of them.¹⁷

He wrote to his old friend Dr. G. Ramachandran, who was then Vice-Chancellor of Gandhigram Rural University, that *"I am as old as the great Monk Fa Hian who came to India centuries ago... I would like to spend the rest of my life in India mending the Sino-Indian friendship fence."* In response, Dr. G. Ramachandran's wife, Dr. T.S.Soundram Ramachandran, replied, welcoming him, *"You may be the modern Fa Hian"*.¹⁸

Tseng reached India for the third time in December 1979 with his wife, Chen Kemei, and two grandchildren, granddaughter Tseng Yelan and grandson Wu Hong. The Gandhi Peace Foundation was supposed to have provided them with local hospitality in New Delhi, but that did not happen, and they were sent to Sewagram Ashram, Wardha, Maharashtra. They stayed in Sewagram Ashram for the next few years. Tseng's grandson Wu Hong was admitted to Kasturba Vidya Mandir and granddaughter Yelan joined a Wardha College to complete her education in India.¹⁹

During his third visit, Tseng had plans to travel to central and southern India, visit friends to find Gandhi's footprints, and complete a book of about 500,000 words titled *"A Non-violent War in India"* (*Feibaoli zhangzheng zai yindu*).²⁰ Tseng wrote in one of his letters: *"I have an inseparable relationship with India. I am 77 years old now, an old weak horse trudging against the harsh westerlies, yet I come here to wander. Now I live in the small town of Wardha in Central India. Thanks to my old friend, Ramachandran I am staying in Mahatma Gandhi's Sevagram Ashram. I have made a vow to write a book like the famous Chinese novel "Romance of the Three Kingdoms" (San guo yanyi) and the Russian Leo Tolstoy's "War and Peace" in about 500,000 words, 100,000 words per year, which will take five years to complete."*²¹

But his wish remained unfulfilled as he breathed his last in Sewagram, Wardha, India, in the early morning of 1 December 1982, at 81.²² However, during his last stay in India, Tseng got one of his

most representative works *Zai Gandi Xiansheng Zuoyou* translated into English under the title *By the Side of Bapu*. After his death, Mrs. Tseng returned to China, grandson Wu Hong went for higher studies in the US, and granddaughter Yelan Tseng stayed back in India for higher studies. She later married Kranti Gutta and settled down in India.²³

During his third stay in India, Tseng also regularly wrote for Chinese newspapers in Singapore and Malaysia, including works such as *Old Man Shanti's Memories* («Shengti Laoren zai huiyi»), *Flowing Water and Floating Clouds* («Liu shui xing yun»), *Dedicated To the Homeland* («Xian gei xiang tu») among others.²⁴

He also translated Tagore's "*Naukadubi*" into Chinese as *Fu zhou* and published it in the magazine *Reader, Literature and Art* («Du zhe wenyi»). His *Essays on a Southwest Journey* («Xinan xing suibi») were published in *Literary Spring and Autumn* («Wenji chunqiu»). The special 70th-anniversary commemorative issue of the Penang *Kwong Wah Daily* published Tseng's novel *The Story of the People of Southeast Asia* («Dong nanya renmin de gushi»), poetry anthology *Gazing Southward* («Nan wang»). Prose such as *Tears of the Boat People* («Chuan min lei»), *Flying Over the South China Sea* («Fei guo Nan Zhongguohai») were published in *Sing Pin Ji Pao*. Tseng's *Ten Thousand Lines of Poetry in Southeast Asia* («Nanhai wan hang shi») was published in the supplement of the *Sing Pin Ji Pao* in 1984, titled "*Looking at the South*" - the posthumous work of *Tseng Shanti* («Nan wang—Tseng Shengti Xiansheng Yizhe»). It was a long poem describing the struggle of millions of Chinese people in Southeast Asia.²⁵

A LITERARY GIANT

Shanti Tseng was a literary giant who contributed to developing Malayan-Singapore Chinese Literature as a writer, journalist, poet, essayist, editor, translator, literary theorist, and founder of several publications.²⁶ The early Malayan-Singapore Chinese Literature sprouted in British Malaya under the influence of China's New Culture Movement in the initial decades of the twentieth century.²⁷ At that time, most of the authors in British Malaya were migrants from China who had not yet considered British Malaya their home. Most of the literary works were based on themes from China depicting the migrants' sentiments, whereas most publications published clippings from China, and thus, original writings were few. With the majority of writers in British Malaya regarding China as their 'teacher', the Chinese literary world in the region during the early decades of the twentieth century was dominated by Chinese literary trends. It existed as an offshoot of Chinese literature.²⁸ Under such circumstances, Shanti Tseng, along with his two younger brothers, who were also literary

figures, Tseng Huading (?-1942) and Tseng Yuyang (1910-?), and several colleagues, vigorously promoted the localization of Chinese literature in British Malaya, which undoubtedly helped the local Chinese literature to truly break away from mainland Chinese literature and emerge as an independent branch of Chinese language literature in the world.

Although several writers and editors before Tseng had advocated that Chinese language literature emanating from British Malaya or *Nanyang* should possess local flavour and themes, his call to “*forge the iron tower of literature and art in Nanyang with blood and sweat*” (“*yi xue yu han zhuzao Nanyang wenyi de tieta*”) was by far the most resounding and persistent one which also had far-reaching implications. Tseng himself matched his words with action by spearheading the shift in Chinese literature in British Malaya from aestheticism to realism.²⁹ Tseng managed to do this by playing an instrumental role in establishing and running some of the representative literary supplements in British Malaya, advocating ground-breaking theoretical innovations, and practising what he preached through his pen.

Steering Literary Supplements

Given the financial constraints, literary supplements attached to newspapers were Southeast Asia’s main literary publications in the late 1920s.³⁰ On 18 August 1927, Shanti Tseng, Huadu Rongnv, Zhang Fang, and Tseng Huading co-founded the *Honghuang* literary supplement of *Nanyang Siang Pau*. *Honghuang* represented a shift towards realism in Malayan-Singapore Chinese literature through its advocacy of “awakening of spirit” (“*ling de juexing*”) and “liberation of human nature” (“*renxing de jiefang*”).³¹ It advocated facing the world with true feelings, “to advance courageously and create new life” (“*guyong qianjin, zhuangzao xinsheng*”). It also published original works full of praise of true feelings such as essay *The World of Love* («*Qing de shijian*») written by Huadu Rongnv calling for the blood of youth to be ignited for true love; and poem *Moonset* («*Yue luo*») written by Tseng expressing the feeling of being dissatisfied with the world and having nowhere to escape.³²

Honghuang ran for 24 issues between August 1927 to November 1928, which included 52 poems, 26 essays, 16 novels, and six papers. Tseng himself wrote poems *White Bird* («*Bai niao erzhang*»), *Autumn Evening* («*Qiuwan*»), *Wandering World* («*Huang huang renjian*»), *Moonset* («*Yue luo*»); novels such as *Suicide* («*Zisha*»), *Principal* («*Xiaozhang*»), *Detective* («*Zhentan*»), *Father’s Love* («*Fu ai*») and so on.

Honghuang was discontinued in November 1928, perhaps because

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Tseng and his close associates wanted to advocate a new set of ideas by then. Thus, *Literary Weekly* («Wenyi zhaokan») a fresh literary supplement of *Nanyang Siang Pau* was founded in January 1929. Tseng announced the launch of *Literary Weekly* and its founding mission on 1 January 1929, through his article published in the Literature and Art Section of the *Nanyang Siang Pau*: “This publication has no special mission, she just wants to find some local native grains (genuine literary works rooted in the Nanyang region) in the scorching hot country (of Nanyang). Although she doesn’t want to find diamonds and beads to decorate her marble palace, but she is willing to recruit her sympathizers, and at the same time, to forge the iron tower of literature and art in Nanyang with blood and sweat beyond coconut and rubber trees.”³³ From then on “to forge the iron tower of literature and art in Nanyang with blood and sweat” (“yi xue yu han zhuzao Nanyang wenyi de tieta”) became synonymous with the literary ideas of Shanti Tseng.³⁴

In the same section, Tseng also wrote an article titled *Literature and Art in Nanyang* («Nanyang de wenyi») to rectify the misconceptions about literature and art in Nanyang among Chinese literati who had come to Nanyang from China. Clearly underscoring the existence of Nanyang literature and art Tseng wrote: “Is there a palace of literature and art in Nanyang, whether is it possible to build a palace of literature and art or is there literature and art in Nanyang that can be found. I would like to climb up high and declare loudly to the young people who love literature and art at home and abroad that Nanyang Asia is the treasure house of modern literature and art, she is the source of infinite and inexhaustible literature and art.”³⁵

Tseng gave voice to his strong desire to independently establish Nanyang literature and art by dealing with the Malay culture and describing the life of Chinese and other people living in British Malaya.³⁶ Tseng wanted the literature in British Malaya to have distinct regional characteristics rather than exist as “remake” of stories from mainland China, and wanted to create a self-sufficient literature that was not dependent on mainland China.³⁷

In an article titled *Wake Up! Artists of the Star City* («Xingxing ba! Xingcheng de yiren») published in the third issue of the *Literary Weekly* on 18 January 1929, Tseng lashed out at the narrow and decadent literature and art of the time and appealed to make full use of the fresh local environment and the infinite number of materials to represent the lives of people under the prevailing circumstances in British Malaya. He also voiced the firm belief that literature and art in British Malaya could become a fresh and unique palace of art by itself.³⁸ In the essay *Truth Leads Us* («Zhenli lingdao zhe women») Tseng frankly and explicitly advocated that literature and art are not an

ideal paradise full of illusory fantasies but a country of truth originating from life.³⁹

Tseng spared no effort in bringing the Malay culture to the fore in literary creations by encouraging translations of Malay literary works and folk songs and publishing works with Malay cultural flavour. The subject matter included narrating the life and experiences of Chinese indentured labour (*zhu zai*), nostalgia for the homeland, gender equality, love, and education, among others, mostly narrated through many local vocabularies.

The *Literary Weekly* («Wenyi zhoukan») ran for a total of 41 issues, publishing 45 new poems, 23 novels, 29 essays, 3 plays, and 1 thesis. Tseng himself contributed poems *Funeral Song* («Zangge»), novels *Life and Sin* («Sheng yu zui»), *Divine Grace* («Shen en»), *Revolutionary Man* («Gemingren»), essays *Wake Up! Artists of the Star City* («Xingxing ba! Xingcheng de yiren»), *Truth Leads Us* («Zhenli lingdao zhe women»), *Nirvana* («Niepan») and so on.

Tseng was representative of the writers who helped the early Malayan-Singapore Chinese literature make the transition towards realism from aestheticism — realism which was rooted in the experiences and lives of people living in British Malaya and not elsewhere. Its greatest contribution was creating several works with British Malaya characteristics in subject matter and language, which enriched the Chinese literary scene in Singapore and Malaysia in the 1920s and 1930s and earnestly launched the localization process of Nanyang Chinese literature.⁴⁰ Tseng himself widely used popular local dialects and vocabulary from other ethnic languages in his literary works, such as ‘hou wei’ (*hou mian*: behind), ‘qing xin’ (*xin li shuchang*: feel at ease), ‘feng che’ (*qi che*: car); and English such as ‘ai shang ji lin’ (ice cream) among others.⁴¹ Tseng’s novel *Life and Sin* («Sheng yu zui») and reminiscences of the time spent with Mahatma Gandhi, written as an essay collection, were two of the most representative works in Malayan-Singapore Chinese Literature of that era.

Novel *Life and Sin* (Sheng yu zui)

Among a dozen novels Tseng wrote, *Life and Sin* is generally regarded as the most successful. It narrates the story of a rickshaw puller identified as “Father of Goujian” (*Goujian de die*) who loses his means of livelihood after his rickshaw gets broken after being hit by a car. He has a pregnant wife and five small kids at home crying out of hunger, waiting to be fed. Facing the empty walls of his shanty, he gets immersed in boundless fantasies to tackle his pain. He walks out into the street helplessly and sees other rickshaw pullers working hard to fend for themselves. He gets envious and depressed. Left

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without any options, he loses his mental balance, picks up a gun, and decides to rob others. But he gets caught by the police, arrested, and imprisoned. The story concludes this way, devoid of a tragic or a happy ending. However, in addition to using the typical atmosphere and language in British Malaya, it also describes the delicate psychological state of his characters, such as when suffering from acute hunger “*Father of Goujian started staring at the big loaf of bread from the glass window. He saw that the loaves were dancing... and then the biggest loaf ran out of the shop...*” (“*Goujian de die*” ningshi zhe bolichuangli de damianbao. Ta kanjian tamen zai tiaowu.....ta kanjian nage zuidade mianbao cong dianli paochulai”)⁴²

Interestingly, *Life and Sin* was written earlier than the much-acclaimed *Rickshaw Boy* («*Luotuo xiangzi*») by renowned Chinese writer Lao She (1899-1966), which appeared in 1936-37. Although *Life and Sin* was not a full-length novel like *Rickshaw Boy*, it vividly depicted the life, hardships, pain, misery, and sufferings experienced by the lower classes of that era in British Malaya.

Essay Collection *Zai Gandi Xiansheng Zuoyou* (By the Side of Bapu)

Among the numerous essays written by Shanti Tseng, the collection of his essays *Zai Gandi Xiansheng Zuoyou* describing his India sojourns particularly deserve mention, especially in the broader context of the evolution of essay writing in Chinese literature in British Malaya. Prose essays were one of the earliest forms of literary writing in British Malaya, but they remained short in length until the early 1930s. Essays compiled in *Zai Gandi Xiansheng Zuoyou* were long and very rich in content compared with other essays of the period, which only wrote about life and experiences from British Malaya.⁴³ Tseng was the first to ‘internationalise’ the content by writing about his experiences visiting India and staying with Mahatma Gandhi. This experience was unique and special and attracted readers to it. Moreover, Tseng’s effort to write essays comprising several thousand characters each and publish them as a collection was truly pioneering.⁴⁴

Tseng had actually written the book in March 1943 following a rush of emotions on knowing about the 21 days long fast by Mahatma Gandhi in February-March 1943 to protest against the British Government’s propaganda that the Congress Party was responsible for disturbances after the Quit India resolution was passed in 1942. Gandhi was 74 years old in 1943, and such a long fasting period was life-threatening. Old memories engulfed Tseng on getting this news, and he finished writing the book in 10 days. In the foreword written on 4 March 1943, the first day after Gandhi ended his fast, Tseng mentions, “*This book is written specially for the event that Bapu went on*

fasting for the sixth time... For some time in 1924, I served Bapu in Sabarmati Ashram. Then in 1932, when Bapu announced in Yeravada Jail that he would fast unto death over a religious conflict, I went to visit him again. This book is an account of my two trips there and lingering memories of my contact with him."⁴⁵

The book *Zai Gandi Xiansheng Zuoyou* was first published in Chongqing in March 1943 by the Chongqing Gujin Publishing House. The book cover was painted by the famous Chinese cartoonist and painter Ye Qianyu (1907-1995).⁴⁶ It was next published in Shanghai in 1948 by the Zhen Shan Mei Book Company following Gandhi's assassination. This edition also carried an obituary written by the then Chinese ambassador to India, Luo Jialun (1897-1969).⁴⁷ The book was subsequently published several times in Singapore in 1953, 1959, and 2007 by The Youth Book Co., underscoring its continuous popularity.

The book provides a detailed record of Tseng's experiences of following Gandhi and introduces Gandhi's non-violent ideology and thoughts to readers. After its publication in 1948 it was hailed as one of the best books of its time published in China, "*a wonder in modern Chinese literature*", "*a remarkable piece of reportage in Malayan Chinese Literature*".⁴⁸ It was a truly influential work that also inspired the later generation of Singaporeans, such as Lien Shih Sheng (1907-1973). Lien Shih Sheng moved to Singapore in 1949 and, much like Tseng, served *Nanyang Siang Pau* as a reporter, chief writer, and editor-in-chief. Among 23 books Lien wrote, three biographies, that of Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and Jawaharlal Nehru, were perhaps influenced by his predecessor Shanti Tseng.⁴⁹ No wonder Tseng and his works have always been a popular topic of study and research in the development history of Malayan-Singapore Chinese literature.

During Tseng's third visit to India between 1979 and 1982, *Zai Gandi Xiansheng Zuoyou* was translated into English under the title "*By the Side of Bapu*" by "Miss Kwan Zi"⁵⁰ with financial support from the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi. It was published in India by Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Rajghat, Varanasi, and Sewagram Ashram Pratishthan, Wardha, Maharashtra in March 1982. The Introduction of the English edition was written by noted Gandhian and Tseng's bosom friend Desikottama Dr./G Ramachandran. The English version also consisted of three appendices in addition to the original ten chapters. The foreword was originally written by Shanti Tseng himself on 4 March 1943, the first day after Gandhi ended his 21-day fast. Tseng mentions in the foreword that in 1943 he could not travel to India like in 1932 and decided to pen the book primarily as a narrative account of Gandhi's role in the Indian Independence

Struggle and recording his short stay by the side of Bapu.⁵¹

Zai Gandi Xiansheng Zuoyou: Content

The book consists of ten chapters: Visited Yeravada Jail (*Puna Jianyu*), My Maiden Voyage to India (*Yindu chulv*), In Sabarmati Ashram (*Axulan zhong*), A Routine of Mahatma (*Babuzi qiju zhu*), Eternal Interflow in Culture (*Yongheng de jiaoliu*), Restless and Whimsical (*Xinmo*), Along The River (*He shang xing*), Little Stories (*Xiao gushi*), Fast and Silence (*Jueshi he jingmo*), and Departure (*Bieli*). All these chapters graphically recorded and described the person and personality of Mahatma Gandhi and introduced the ideals of non-violence to Chinese readers in elegant and beautiful Chinese prose. Tseng's writing style was anchored in his training in classical Chinese language and Chinese Classics from early childhood, making his writing smooth and delightful, as the following excerpts illustrate.

Tseng begins the book by detailing his second visit to India in 1932 to meet Gandhi in Yerawada Jail. In 1932, Tseng first arrived in Calcutta from Singapore, from where he took a train to Delhi and Poona. He stopped in Ahmedabad to visit Sabarmati Ashram. Visiting Ahmedabad after a gap of more than five years in 1932, Tseng found the city the same as before.

In the following chapters, Tseng took his readers from Santiniketan in Eastern India to Sabarmati Ashram in Western India via Wardha and Bombay, detailing his journey from being a student in Santiniketan to becoming a disciple of Gandhi.

When Tseng reached Sabarmati Ashram for the first time in 1925, he did not know whom the residents of Sabarmati Ashram called "Bapu". After realising that "Bapu" was none other than Mahatma Gandhi, Tseng really pitied himself. He vividly described the life and discipline inside the Ashram.

In Sabarmati Ashram, Tseng was also a representative of China since almost every visiting journalist and curious Indian met him to learn more about China.⁵² Tseng introduced the classic Sanskrit play *Shakuntala*, and the Indian epic *Ramayana* to his readers, comparing them with the famous Yuan dynasty (1271- 1368) drama "*Xi Xiangji*" and the Ming dynasty (1368- 1644) novel "*Monkey Goes West*" («*Xi youji*») while pointing to the Indian influence on Chinese literature.⁵³ Tseng described the disciplined life and daily routine of Mahatma Gandhi and the excellent bonding that he shared with his bosom friend G. Ramachandran who had also studied with him in Santiniketan before joining him in Sabarmati Ashram.

It was very touching for Tseng to see that going to jail was a real aspiration for young kids living in the Sabarmati Ashram. Tseng also

described the pigeons, cats, and peacocks living in the Ashram and fish from the adjacent Sabarmati River. Tseng learnt Sanskrit, Hindustani, and English during his stay in India and also highlighted Gandhi's zeal for promoting Hindustani as a common language for all Indians.

Undertaking a purificatory fast for ten days from 1 September to 10, 1925 was a life-changing experience for Tseng.⁵⁴ Giving the reason for undertaking the fast, Tseng writes: "...partly to settle the accounts of the first half of my life and partly to satisfy my childish curiosity, I wrote a letter and handed it personally to Bapu to seek permission for a ten-day fast."

⁵⁵ Narrating the scene when he informed Gandhi of his decision to go for a ten-day fast, Tseng writes: "He agreed, but only to my fasting for three days. Left with no choice, I told him in curt finality that I had made up my mind. I understood Bapu well. So long as one was determined, he would not hold the person back. Sure enough, after what I said, he did not object anymore..."⁵⁶

In the daily account of his fast, Tseng narrates his feelings in detail, from physical pain and numbness of consciousness to fulfilment and exuberance of spirit towards the end. It was very tough initially, and Tseng vomited and even lost consciousness, but at last, his spirit started to get restored, and he was able to sort out his entangled thoughts one by one. Gandhi meticulously looked after him throughout his fast. He lost 15 lbs. after the fast, but it sorted out his thoughts and made him more patient in character.⁵⁷ Tseng also observed silence for one month. It was difficult initially, and Tseng broke his silence several times in the first week. But then he learnt to concentrate his thoughts and successfully observed silence for a month. After observing fast and silence Tseng also promised to abide by Gandhian vows.

Gandhi wanted Tseng to become a scholar in Sino-Indian relations. Moreover, a secretary visiting Sabarmati Ashram from Santiniketan told Tseng that Gurudev Tagore wanted him to join Santiniketan as a Chinese teacher, and Santiniketan would take care of his food and lodging too. But Tseng declined nonetheless and decided to leave the Sabarmati Ashram owing to "personal reasons".⁵⁸ Gandhi wrote to C.F. Andrews: "Shanti is about to leave for Singapore in search of a living as he wishes to support the girl whom he expects some day to marry."⁵⁹

Tseng describes the scene of his departure from Sabarmati Ashram in a sublime manner: "All night, there was no moon. Loud, clear but gentle singing of hymns whiffed from the Worship square on the banks of River Sabarmati. I slung on my back a big white travelling bag, wore a long khadi dress, wrapped a white dhoti below, sported a snow white Gandhi cap and wore a pair of clumsy shoes. Like a log. I sat at the last row of the square, before a

*stanza of the hymn had been finished, my face was drenched with tears.....
 "Bapu asked me to sit beside him. Facing the crowd and the villagers, he announced formally my departure. Everybody wished me well. When the train from New Delhi nearly arrived at the station, I stood up to bid Bapu farewell, I bent and touched his feet. He patted my back. My tears gushed out. In the dark. I could not see his face. Nor did I dare to look at him in the eye. He blessed me and hoped that I would write every month."*⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

Shanti Tseng is perhaps one of the many forgotten chapters in the long history of people-to-people exchanges between India and China. He represents a relationship that continues despite all the twists and turns, underscored by the fact that he is also the maternal great-grandfather of famous Arjuna Awardee Indian badminton player Jwala Gutta.⁶¹ Tseng was Mahatma Gandhi's first and only Chinese disciple and the only Chinese with the most thorough understanding of Gandhi and his ideals. As a disciple of Gandhi, Tseng's advocacy for independent literature rooted in people, stories, themes, and culture of British Malaya just after he returned to Singapore from Sabarmati Ashram was much likely influenced by Gandhian values. Tseng's own literary creations bore an unmistakable Gandhian imprint of advocacy of consistent struggle and persistent efforts to attain one's goals. Quite naturally, Tseng put to practice things he learnt in Sabarmati and India to practice in his professional career.

Nonetheless, from the point of view of academic inquiry, many questions remain unanswered about Shanti Tseng, such as why he chose to settle down in Tianjin following the Second World War. Intriguingly, a southern Chinese like Tseng, who had spent most of his life in British Malaya, chose to settle in northern China. Why did he not return to Southeast Asia but chose India for his final years? A more detailed study of his life and career in Maoist China and his stay in India during his last years could also shed more light on the nature of recent contacts between India and China.

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Notes and References

1. Southeast Asia is also referred to as *Nanyang* in old Chinese, a shorter

version for *Nanyang qundao* denoting the South Sea Islands comprising the Malay Archipelago, the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia. This paper also uses 'Nanyang' to denote 'Southeast Asia'.

2. It is pertinent to note that this paper uses the term "British Malaya" to refer to the parts of Malay Archipelago, including present-day Malaysia and Singapore, which were under the British colonial control. The British Malaya was also the part of bigger Southeast Asia referred to as Nanyang in Chinese.
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4. New Type Western Schools appeared towards the end of the Qing Empire in late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Their curriculum comprised natural sciences, foreign languages and information about countries other than China. Such schools were established by foreign missionaries, Qing government and as well as civil organizations led by reformers and revolutionaries.
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13. Ibid.

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14. Ibid.
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18. Nair, 2020, op. cit.
19. Ibid.
20. Also tentatively titled "«Sheng xiong ling feng"» ("Mahatma's Persuasion", or "Visiting the Footprints of Mahatma") (See Song 2003, op. cit).
21. Ibid.
22. R. Ramachandran Nair, *Dove of Peace* (2006, p.viii). https://www.ruralunivlibrary.ac.in/dr_g_r_books/books_on/09_Love%20of%20Peace%20-%20R.%20Ramachandran%20Nair.pdf, accessed on 28 Oct 2022.
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Gandhi's perspectives on Jews and their Homeland

Naseeb Benjamin

ABSTRACT

Some Jews were Gandhi's dearest friends. He appreciated many of their qualities. They made a great contribution to the world civilization. He was aware of their sufferings in the past when they were even butchered. It was particularly true during the Nazi domination of Europe. He disapproved of it as it was in consonance with his tenet of nonviolence. For all this, they deserved whole-hearted sympathy. But he did not want that their search for a homeland should result in their taking over land where others were inhabited. This has led some authors to think that Gandhi wished to garner support for his dream of a united India, making him cold-shoulder Israel's creation. In essence, he was a man of nonviolence and believed in peaceful co-existence among all the concerned people,

Key words: *Jewish character, Jews' persecution, Jewish homeland. Kallenbach, Zionism*

I. Introduction

OWING TO FOREIGN INVASIONS, the Jews left their homeland of Palestine for different countries. The circumstances of their arrival in India are shrouded in mystery with three Jewish communities. The first community is Cochin, the oldest Jewish community in the country. They came as traders or refugees from the siege of Jerusalem 2,000 years ago or more. They were agriculturalists, soldiers and merchants, and a few held high political office under the Hindu Maharaja. The second Jewish community is the Bene Israelis, shipwrecked off the Konkan coast and settled in and around Mumbai. They assimilated into Hindu culture but maintained some Jewish observances. Third,

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the Baghdadi Jews came to India during the British Raj from Iraq to settle in Bombay, Calcutta, and other port cities. The best-known among them is the Sassoon family of Bombay. There was little interaction among the three Jewish communities: they spoke different languages, observed different traditions, and had different cultures. Even though the Baghdadi Jews lived near the Bene Israel, there was little interaction between them. The Baghdadi Jews partnered with both Indian and European commercial interests. They played a role in the economic colonization of India. They were loyal to the British, and when the British were leaving India, they were unsure of their future. It led to their exodus, which was propelled by Indian independence and the formation of Israel.¹ This was true for the other two Jewish communities too.

A reference may be made here to Abraham Barak Salem (1882-1967), a Cochin Jew. He was a lawyer and nationalist, popularly called Jewish Gandhi, a compliment he happily accepted. Black Jews in Cochin were considered children of enslaved people who faced discrimination in the Paradesi Synagogue. White Jews were not permitted to sit on the benches and so went to their own synagogue. He undertook a satyagraha against it, and his sons defiantly sat on the benches in the Paradesi Synagogue. The discrimination was relaxed in 1932 by the White Jews and finally ended in the 1950s.²

Gandhi regretted that the Hindu caste system crept into other communities, including Jews "And so, in a way Christians, Mussalmans, Parsis, Jews and Hindus have all become untouchables to one another."³ He reiterated, "Untouchability exists between caste and caste and between Hindus and Mohammedans, Christians and Jews. These defects should be removed from our land. We should forget the feeling of high and low and consider that we are all children of God."⁴ He thought, "In dealing with the monster of untouchability my own innermost desire is not that the brotherhood of Hindus only may be achieved, but it essentially is that the brotherhood of man - be he Hindu, Mussalman, Christian, Parsi or Jew - may be realized."⁵ He said that only those people were his comrades who looked upon the entire people of India as brothers and sisters.⁶

Notwithstanding their small numbers in India, the Jews have left behind a rich heritage through grand synagogues, prayer halls, schools, cemeteries, museums, stately mansions, and street names.⁷ Gandhi was operated on for appendicitis on January 12, 1924, in Sassoon Hospital, Poona. While leading the freedom struggle, he was under the medical care of Dr. Abraham Solomon Erulkar, a Jew, who attended him during his several fasts.⁸

Gandhi first came in contact with the Jews in South Africa. He

said, "I think the Jewish religion is a very fine religion, being so closely allied to Christianity in many respects. For example, the Prophets of the Old Testament are all Jews, and Jesus himself was a Jew. I visited the Synagogue at Johannesburg during the Festival of the Passover, and you can almost say I was keeping the Passover with my Jewish friends.... I have, however, attended two or three Jewish services, which I think are very impressive...."⁹ When Margarete Spiegel wished to leave Judaism to be a Hindu, he retorted, "You do not need to be a Hindu but a true Jewess. If Judaism does not satisfy you, no other faith will give you satisfaction for any length of time."¹⁰ He subsequently added, "Having reverently studied the scriptures of the world, I have no difficulty in perceiving the beauties in all of them. I could no more think of asking a Christian or a Mussalman or a Parsi or a Jew to change his faith than I would think of changing my own."¹¹

Overall, he was impressed by the Jews in South Africa. "There is no doubt that the living habits of poor Jews are worse than ours. But when money comes into their hands, they can make very good use of it. Instead of hoarding wealth, they put it to appropriate use. In Durban, in Johannesburg or in Cape Town,... the Jews who have made money know how best to spend it; that their houses are very tidy and elegant, and that their standards of life are high. They mix easily with other Europeans and by doing so, they have been able to make so much money that, in Johannesburg, they wield as much influence as the rulers themselves."¹² He noted, "They have got a wonderful spirit of cohesion. That is to say, wherever you find Jews there is a spirit of comradeship among them. Moreover, they are a people with a vision."¹³ For some time his food was Jewish. He wrote, "My food at present is 30 ounces goat's milk with honey and any fruit that is available and generally home-made bread like Jewish passover cake unleavened."¹⁴

Gandhi called himself not merely a Hindu but a Christian, a Muslim, a Jew, a Sikh, a Parsee, a Jain or a man of any other sect. This way, he avoided any clash and expanded his conception of religion.¹⁵ He insisted, "I do hold that the God of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees, Jews and others is one and the same, no matter by what name a votary mentions Him or recognizes Him."¹⁶ He asserted, "I claim to be a true Hindu and a sanatani Hindu at that. That is exactly why I am also a Muslim, a Parsi, a Christian and a Jew. For me all these are the branches of the same tree."¹⁷ He repeated, "In thought, word and deed I love the Muslims, Parsis and Jews and all mankind as much as I love the Hindus."¹⁸

Gandhi had many Jewish friends in South Africa.¹⁹ Herman Kallenbach (1871-1945), a German Jew, was one of them. He loved

luxury, but he led an austere life after getting close to Gandhi. He assisted Gandhi in establishing Tolstoy Farm near Johannesburg on May 30, 1910. He was with Gandhi in fasting and dietetic changes. Gandhi lived with him when satyagraha was at its height.²⁰ He introduced Sonja Schlesin (1888-1956) (a Jewish girl, b. Moscow) to Gandhi. She joined him as a steno-typist at the age of 16 and “achieved the conquest of my heart in a month”. She made herself useful for *Indian Opinion* and ardently supported the Indian cause. She was more of a member of the Gandhi family. He wrote, “Thousands of stalwart Indians looked up to her for guidance. When during the satyagraha days almost everyone was in jail, she led the movement single-handed. She had the management of thousands, a tremendous amount of correspondence, and *Indian Opinion* on her hands, but she never wearied.” Gandhi wrote about her in *Indian Opinion* dated January 11, 1908, “Very few Indians know how hard she has worked for the community. She works indeed not for a salary, but because of her deep sympathy [for the Indian cause].²¹ The third was H.J.H. Polak (1882-1959), an English Jew whose candour attracted Gandhi. They were like blood brothers. He edited *Indian Opinion* for some time, and Gandhi wished him to be his successor in conducting Indian affairs in his absence. He was Gandhi’s close colleague in passive resistance. He was sentenced to imprisonment for three months for advocating the Indian cause. Gandhi wrote that the Indian community in South Africa owed “not a little” to Mrs. Millie Polak (a Christian), who shared her husband’s self-sacrifice and public spirit. She wrote that Gandhi was a loving and understanding older brother. The Polaks, Gandhi, and Ba lived in one home despite rampant racism.²²

II. Role of Jews in India

Gandhi’s fraternity for different Indian communities goes back to his struggles in South Africa. During a protest march to Transvaal, “Everyone realized that we are all brothers whether we are ourselves Christians, Jews, Hindus, Mussalmans or anything else.”²³ Interestingly enough, “The first satyagrahis of South Africa laboured for the common good and the common purse and felt free like birds. They included Hindus, Muslims (Shias and Sunnis), Christians (Protestants and Roman Catholics), Parsis, and Jews.”²⁴ He recalled, “... my experience with all of them warrants the statement that I have known no distinction between relatives and strangers, countrymen and foreigners, white and coloured, Hindus and Indians of other faiths, whether Mussalmans, Parsis, Christians or Jews.”²⁵

Gandhi believed that though migrants in India, the Jews had rights and duties like other Indians. The foremost national goal was swaraj

which had many connotations for him. Among others, "Swaraj means that Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Jews should all be able to follow their own faith and should respect those of others."²⁶ He wrote that the four pillars of swaraj were nonviolence, Hindu-Muslim-Sikh-Parsi-Christian-Jew unity, total removal of untouchability and manufacture of hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar completely displacing foreign cloth.²⁷ His advice was: "Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Jews must all remain together and live together in Peace and brotherliness. We must give up drink and gambling and we must all, in due humility, worship God according to our own ways and early in the morning, after having washed our mouth, cleaned our teeth and having regained perfect possession of our faculties, we must announce the name of God and ask Him to help us to be and remain good. We must ask Him to help us to do our duty by our country."²⁸ Again, "No great preparation save a mental revolution is necessary for us - Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis, Sikhs, Christians and Jews and others - to feel as one indivisible nation and as having a common stake in the country...."²⁹ He believed: "God is not seated in the skies, in the heavens, or elsewhere. He is enshrined in the heart of everyone - be he a Hindu, Mohammedan, Christian or Jew, man or woman."³⁰ He admitted, "I am a servant of Mussalmans, Christians, Parsis and Jews as I am of Hindus. And a servant is in need of love, not prestige. That is assured to me so long as I remained a faithful servant."³¹ Therefore, "I wish to become and die as a true servant of the Hindus and, therefore, of the Harijans, of India and, therefore, of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians, Jews and all others."³² Again, "Mussalmans, Christians, Jews and Parsis, among whom I have friends as dear as blood-brothers?"³³ He stressed, "In the unity of all parties in India, I always refer to and include Anglo-Indians, Parsis, Jews, and so forth; without these there could be no unity, except the tyranny of the great over the small. The greater communities of India, such as the Hindus and Muslims, had solemn obligations to perform towards the lesser communities."³⁴

He also focused on swadeshi. He pleaded, "I beseech every Hindu, Mussulman, Sikh, Parsi, Christian and Jew, who believes that he belongs to this country, to take the swadeshi vow and to ask others also to do likewise."³⁵ After some days, he reiterated, "I hope that Hindus, Mahomedans, Sikhs, Parsees, Christians, Jews and all who are born in India or who have made India their land of adoption will fully participate in these national observances and I hope, too, that women will take therein as full a share as men."³⁶ With swadeshi went spinning and the boycott of foreign cloth. He wrote, "Every man and woman and child in India, Hindu or Muslim, Parsi or

Christian, Sikh or Jew, rich or poor, who wants to join God's army, must qualify himself or herself by half an hour's drill on the spinning-wheel."³⁷ He clarified, "... if we are to clothe ourselves by the joint effort of millions, the politician, the poet, the potentate, the pundit and the pauper, male or female, Hindu or Mussalman, Christian, Parsi or Jew, will have religiously to give half an hour to spinning for the sake of the country.... The religion of Indian humanity demands half an hour's spinning at least from everyone who calls himself or herself Indian."³⁸ He said, "For if we, Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis and Jews unite in achieving the universalization of the wheel in India, we shall not only have arrived at real unity and exclusion of foreign cloth, but we shall also have acquired self-confidence and organizing ability which render violence wholly unnecessary for regaining our freedom."³⁹ Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians, Parsis, Jews, and others had their place in the All-India Spinners' Association.⁴⁰

At the same time, "Untouchability of foreign cloth must be held to be a duty with every Hindu, Mussulman, Jain, Sikh, Parsi, Christian, Jew and all other religious communities which have made India their home.... Untouchability of foreign cloth is as much a virtue with all of us as untouchability of the suppressed classes must be a sin with every devout Hindu."⁴¹ He invited volunteers for satyagraha work, "I have already stated that everyone is eligible for enlistment in this army (of satyagrahis), men and women, the young and the old, the cripple and the disabled, the weak and the strong, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, Jews, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, Dheds and Bhangis."⁴² It could be a small beginning, but the overall effects could be widespread. He wrote, "If one district can be found where ninety per cent of the population have completely boycotted foreign cloth and are manufacturing all the cloth required by them by hand-spinning and hand-weaving, if the whole of the population of that district, whether Hindu, Mussulman, Parsi, Sikh, Christian or Jewish, is living in perfect amity, if the whole of its Hindu population is purged of the sin of untouchability and if at least one in every ten of its inhabitants is capable of suffering imprisonment or even mounting the gallows, and if while that district is civilly, peacefully and honourably resisting the Government, the rest of India remains non-violent and united and prosecutes the programme of swadeshi, I hold it to be perfectly possible to establish swaraj during this year."⁴³ Even after the Government of India confined him to Bombay city, he said, "I shall never abandon the faith I have that India is capable of delivering this truth to the whole world, and I wish that all Indians, men and women, whether they are Hindus or Mahomedans, Parsis, Christians or Jews will share with me this unquenchable faith (in satyagraha)."⁴⁴ He wrote,

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"Would to God that all of us, Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians, Parsis, Jews, belonging to all races, have the same virtue of charity, justness and breadth of vision."⁴⁵ After a while, he wrote, "Lord, lead India towards the path of Truth, this doing teach her the religion of swadeshi, and knit the Hindus, Mussulmans, Parsis, Christians and Jews living in India closer together."⁴⁶

When he launched the Non-cooperation Movement (1919-24), he held it to be "... so pure that no class of people, whether Parsis or Christians or Jews, who have made this country their own, will be able to keep aloof from it."⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the Parsis, Christians, and Jews kept aloof from it, resulting in communal disturbances. Distressed, he wrote on November 19, 1921, "I must refuse to eat or drink anything but water till the Hindus and Mussulmans of Bombay have made peace with the Parsis, the Christians and the Jews, and till the non-co-operators have made peace with the co-operators. The swaraj that I have witnessed during the last two days has stunk in my nostrils. Hindu-Muslim unity has been a menace to the handful of Parsis, Christians and Jews. The nonviolence of the non-co-operators has been worse than the violence of co-operators. For with nonviolence on our lips we have terrorized those who have differed from us and in so doing we have denied our God."⁴⁸ When peace was restored, he issued a statement: "I will beseech the Parsis, the Christians and the Jews to bear in mind the new awakening in India. They will see many coloured waters in the ocean of Hindu and Mussulman humanity. They will see dirty waters on the shore. I would ask them to bear with their Hindu or Mussulman neighbours who may misbehave with them and immediately report to the Hindu and Mussulman leaders through their own leaders with a view to getting justice."⁴⁹ His conviction was: "It behoves us all to forgive and forget the errors of one another. Hindus, Mussulmans, Parsis, Christians and Jews, who have their homes in India, ought to live as brothers and sisters and bear with the differences and failings of one another."⁵⁰ Again, "Hindu-Muslim unity must be our creed to last for all time and under all circumstances. Nor must that unity be a menace to the minorities, the Parsis, the Christians, the Jews or the powerful Sikhs."⁵¹ His expectation included "The promotion of unity amongst Hindus, Mussulmans, Christians, Parsees, Jews etc."⁵²

He insisted, "There must be a heart union between Hindus, Mussulmans, Parsis, Christians and Jews. The three latter communities may and will distrust the other two. The recent occurrences must strengthen that distrust. We must go out of our way to conquer their distrust. We must not molest them if they do not become full non-co-operators or do not adopt swadeshi or the white khadi cap which has

become its symbol. We must not be irritated against them even if they side with the Government on every occasion. We have to make them ours by right of loving service."⁵³ He continued, "Hindu-Muslim unity is not worth a day's purchase if it does not prefer the interests of smaller communities to its own. Christians and Jews in India are not foreigners, nor are Parsis. We must go out of our way to be friendly to them and to serve and help them, above all to protect them from harm from ourselves."⁵⁴ Obviously then, "Unless therefore we remove the last trace of ill will against Parsis, Christians or Jews, we shall fail in our purpose. The condition of such protection is not that minorities accept our political or other opinion. That would be no protection. Protection to be true has to be given in spite of the dissent, even opposition of minorities. Indeed we must jealously guard the rights of minorities if we are to have perfect freedom of opinion in the country."⁵⁵ He said, "In the moment of our trial and our triumph let me declare my faith, I believe in loving my enemies. I believe in nonviolence as the only remedy open to the Hindus, Mussulmans, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Jews of India. I believe in the power of suffering to melt the stoniest heart. The brunt of the battle must fall on the first three. The last named three are afraid of the combination of the first three. We must by our honest conduct demonstrate to them that they are our kinsmen."⁵⁶ He admitted, "If, at the end of the year, the people have not realized through their own experience that swaraj will be won through nonviolence, through unity of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Jews through swadeshi and the removal of untouchability, then I shall have been proved totally deficient in practical wisdom and I must retire to the Himalayas."⁵⁷ He argued that, inter alia, those who did not recognize the need for unity of the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs, the Parsis, the Christians, and the Jews, should not even think of courting arrest and should decidedly abandon the idea of getting their names enrolled as volunteers.⁵⁸ He repeated, among other things, "We must behave with consideration and love towards our Parsi, Jew and Christian brothers and also those who co-operate with the Government."⁵⁹ He argued, "But the best method of strengthening it (Hindu-Muslim unity) is for both Hindus and Muslims to take it upon themselves to protect the minority communities. They should love and respect Parsis, Christians and Jews, protect them and never so much as dream of harassing them or forcing them to do anything."⁶⁰ He reiterated, "If Hindu-Muslim unity means enmity towards Parsis, Christians or Jews, that unity will be a curse for the world."⁶¹ He warned that those who did not believe in the brotherhood of Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, and Jews should leave the Gujarat Mahavidyalaya.⁶²

Nor did he forget the Jews during the Salt Satyagraha (1930-31) and prophesied that if it kept the earmarked path, Jews and others would join it.⁶³ Subsequently, he observed, "Those who say that Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews and others have not united speak an untruth. This salt tax applies equally to all.... Why should not everyone unite in order to have that tax abolished from which even a buffalo and a cow cannot escape?"⁶⁴ He clarified, "I have never dreamt that I could win swaraj merely through my effort or assisted only by the Hindus. I stand in need of the assistance of Mussalmans, Parsis, Christians, Sikhs, Jews and all other Indians."⁶⁵ He added, "Purna – complete - (Swaraj) because it is as much for the prince as for the peasant, as much for the rich landowner as for the landless tiller of the soil, as much for the Hindus as for the Mussalmans, as much for the Parsis and Christians as for the Jains, Jews and Sikhs, irrespective of any distinction of caste or creed or status in life. The very connotation of the word and the means of its attainment to which we are pledged - truth and nonviolence - preclude all possibility of that swaraj being more for someone than for the other, being partial to someone and prejudicial to the other."⁶⁶

He treated the Indian National Congress as the epitome of the freedom struggle. "If the Congress is our national assembly, if the Congress is an instrument in our hands for establishing swaraj in India, it is natural that every man and woman, every Hindu and Mussulman, Christian, Parsi and Jew born in India should place themselves on the Congress register."⁶⁷ He expressed similar sentiments later also.⁶⁸

When Tilak Swaraj Fund was established, money had to be collected from all and sundry. He stressed, "Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, Jews—all who look upon themselves as Indians should contribute their full share".⁶⁹ He hoped that Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs, Christians, and Jews would observe the oath of swadeshi they had taken. Tilak had taught them that swaraj was their birthright and they would only be doing their duty to their country by winning it. He appealed to them to observe the Swadeshi vow forever and ever. He urged them never to give up swadeshi even after they had attained swaraj.⁷⁰

He wished constructive work to be done by all the people. He wrote, "Communal unity means unity between Hindus, Sikhs, Mussalmans, Christians, Parsis, Jews. All these go to make Hindustan. He who neglects any of these communities does not know constructive work."⁷¹ He also said, "It will be necessary for us Indians - Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians, Jews, Parsis, and all others to whom India is their home - to recognize a common flag to live and to die for."⁷²

He wanted the minorities like the Jews to find a place in the interim government.⁷³ In free India, there had to be freedom and protection for all minorities. Parsi fire temples and Jewish synagogues should be protected as Hindu temples.⁷⁴ Besides, "And what shall we do with the Jews? We must so treat them that they will enjoy perfect freedom here."⁷⁵

III. Jewish homeland

He compared the untouchables relegated to remote quarters of a town/village by the Hindus with the Jews in Europe who were like untouchables, and the quarters assigned to them were named ghettos. He said, "The ancient Jews regarded themselves as the chosen people of God to the exclusion of all others, with the result that their descendants were visited with a strange and even unjust retribution."⁷⁶ He had misgivings about giving Palestine to the Jews to the exclusion of the Arabs. He said succinctly, "So far as I am aware, there never has been any difficulty put in the way of Jews and Christians visiting Palestine and performing all their religious rites. No canon, however, of ethics or war can possibly justify the gift by the Allies of Palestine to Jews."⁷⁷ He stressed, "The most thorny part of the question is, therefore, Palestine. Britain has made promises to the Zionists. The latter have, naturally, a sacred sentiment about the place. The Jews, it is contended, must remain a homeless wandering race unless they have obtained possession of Palestine. I do not propose to examine the soundness or otherwise of the doctrine underlying the proposition. All I contend is that they cannot possess Palestine through a trick or a moral breach. Palestine was not at stake in the War. The British Government could not dare have asked a single Muslim soldier to wrest control of Palestine from fellow Muslims and give it to the Jews." He continued, "Palestine, as a place of Jewish worship, is a sentiment to be respected and the Jews would have a just cause of complaint against Mussulman idealists if they were to prevent Jews from offering worship as freely as themselves.... Either Zionists must revise their ideal about Palestine, or, if Judaism permits the arbitrament of war, engage in a 'holy war' with the Muslims of the world with the Christians throwing in their influence on their side. But one may hope that the trend of world opinion will make 'holy wars' impossible and religious questions or differences will tend more and more towards a peaceful adjustment based upon the strictest moral considerations."⁷⁸

He argued: "The Muslims claim Palestine as an integral part of Jazirat-ul-Arab (peninsula of Arabs). They are bound to retain its custody, as an injunction of the Prophet. But that does not mean that the Jews and the Christians cannot freely go to Palestine, or even

reside there and own property. What non-Muslims cannot do is to acquire sovereign jurisdiction. The Jews cannot receive sovereign rights in a place which has been held for centuries by Muslim powers by right of religious conquest." He repeated, "The Muslim soldiers did not shed their blood in the late War for the purpose of surrendering Palestine out of Muslim control."⁷⁹

He told *The Jewish Chronicle* he had "great sympathy" for the Jews. Anti-Semitism was a remnant of barbarism, and antipathy to Jews and their persecution were incomprehensible. However, "Zionism meaning reoccupation of Palestine (by Jews) has no attraction for me. I can understand the longing of a Jew to return to Palestine, and he can do so if he can without the help of bayonets, whether his own or those of Britain. In that event he would go to Palestine peacefully and in perfect friendliness with the Arabs." His remedy was twofold: Christians should learn toleration and charity, and the Jews should rid themselves of the causes for their reproach.⁸⁰

He wrote on the Jews vs. the Arabs in *Harijan*, touching on the Hitlerite genocide. He reiterated, "My sympathies are all with the Jews." He conceded, "But the German persecution of the Jews seems to have no parallel in history. The tyrants of old never went so mad as Hitler seems to have gone."⁸¹ But he asserted, "If I were a Jew and were born in Germany and earned my livelihood there, I would claim Germany as my home even as the tallest gentile German may, and challenge him to shoot me or cast me in the dungeon; I would refuse to be expelled or to submit to discriminating treatment. Suffering voluntarily undergone will bring them an inner strength and joy." His faith in nonviolence was irrevocable, "I am convinced that if someone with courage and vision can arise among them to lead them in non-violent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling of an eye be turned into the summer of hope." He hoped, "The German Jews will score a lasting victory over the German gentiles in the sense that they will have converted the latter to an appreciation of human dignity." At the same time he said, "The cry for the national home for the Jews does not make much appeal to me." They should make that country their home where they were born and earned their livelihood. Palestine belonged to the Arabs, as England belonged to the English or France to the French. It was wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs. The international mandates had no sanction. He believed, "The nobler course would be to insist on a just treatment of the Jews wherever they are born and bred. The Jews born in France are French in precisely the same sense that Christians born in France are French. If the Jews have no home but Palestine, will they relish the idea of being forced to leave the other parts of the world in which

they are settled?" They could settle in Palestine only by the goodwill of the Arabs. They should seek to convert the Arab heart, offering satyagraha in front of the Arabs and offering themselves to be shot or thrown into the Dead Sea. He argued, "There are hundreds of ways of reasoning with the Arabs, if they will only discard the help of the British bayonet. As it is, they are co-sharers with the British in despoiling a people who have done no wrong to them. I am not defending the Arab excesses. I wish they had chosen the way of nonviolence in resisting what they rightly regarded as an unwarrantable encroachment upon their country."⁸²

Gandhi expected sharp reactions against his views. He wrote to his German critics, "The main facts about the atrocities are beyond dispute.... (but) underlying my writing there was friendliness towards Germany, never any ill will." He amplified, "And if the Jews ...adopt active nonviolence, i.e., fellow-feeling for the gentile Germans deliberately ... the stoniest German heart will melt. Great as have been the Jewish contributions to the world's progress, this supreme act of theirs will be their greatest contribution and war will be a thing of the past."⁸³

When suggested that the Jews adhered to nonviolence for centuries, Gandhi retorted that it was not a deliberate policy. He drew a distinction between passive resistance of the weak and active non-violent resistance of the strong. Sufferings of the non-violent have been known to melt the stoniest hearts. He wrote, "I make bold to say that if the Jews can summon to their aid the soul power that comes only from nonviolence, Herr Hitler will bow before the courage which he has never yet experienced in any large measure in his dealings with men...." He added, "The most relevant criticism, however, which I have received is this: How do I expect the Jews to accept my prescription when I know that India, where I am myself working, where I call myself the self-appointed general, has not accepted it in toto. My answer is: 'Blessed are they that expect nothing.' I belong to the category of the blessed, in this case at least."⁸⁴

Gandhi believed that the Jews even wanted America and England to fight Germany on their behalf for their anti-Semitism. He stressed, "... to be truly non-violent, I must love him (the adversary) and pray for him even when he hits me. The Jews have not been actively non-violent or, in spite of the misdeeds of the dictators, they would say, 'We shall suffer at their hands.... But we shall suffer not in the manner in which they want us to suffer.' If even one Jew acted thus, he would salve his self-respect and leave an example which, if it became infectious, would save the whole of Jewry and leave a rich heritage

to mankind besides."⁸⁵ He did not despair because Hitler's heart was not touched. "On the contrary I plead for more suffering and still more till the melting has become visible to the naked eye."⁸⁶ The Editor of *The Jewish Tribune* (Bombay) referred to the imputation made against Jews by Gandhi that they urged countries like England and America to go to war against Germany which was false. Gandhi admitted that as "... I cannot lay my hands on anything on the strength of which I made the challenged observation, I must withdraw it without any reservation."⁸⁷

Subsequently, he said, "I do believe that the Jews have been cruelly wronged by the world.... But for their heartless persecution, probably no question of return to Palestine would ever have arisen. The world should have been their home, if only for the sake of their distinguished contribution to it." All the same, "...they have erred grievously in seeking to impose themselves on Palestine with the aid of America and Britain and now with the aid of naked terrorism. Their citizenship of the world should have and would have made them honoured guests of any country." Gandhi asked, "Why should they depend upon American money or British arms for forcing themselves on an unwelcome land? Why should they resort to terrorism to make good their forcible landing in Palestine? If they were to adopt the matchless weapon of nonviolence whose use their best Prophets have taught..., their case would be the world's, and I have no doubt that among the many things that the Jews have given to the world, this would be the best and the brightest. It is twice blessed. It will make them happy and rich in the true sense of the word and it will be a soothing balm to the aching world."⁸⁸

He again remarked, "If I were a Jew, I would tell them: 'Don't be so silly as to resort to terrorism, because you simply damage your own case which otherwise would be a proper case.' If it is just political hankering then I think there is no value in it. Why should they hanker after Palestine? They are a great race and have great gifts. I have lived with the Jews many years in South Africa. If it is a religious longing then surely terrorism has no place. They should meet the Arabs, make friends with them, and not depend on British aid or American aid or any aid, save what descends from Jehovah."⁸⁹

He tried to balance his views between the Jews and Arabs when he said, "The Jews are a persecuted people worthy of world sympathy and India sympathizes with them. They are energetic, intelligent and progressive. The Arabs are a great people with a great history and therefore if they provide refuge for the Jews without the mediation of any nation, it will be in their tradition of generosity."⁹⁰ His final suggestion for the most acceptable solution to the Palestine problem

was: "The abandonment wholly by the Jews of terrorism and other forms of violence."⁹¹

IV. Concluding remarks

Gandhi came in touch with the Jews during his sojourn in South Africa. Instead of painting their Shylock-like picture, he wrote about them glowingly. He was grieved at the persecution of the Jews in Europe for centuries, especially under the Nazis. When Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Gandhi about the plight of the Jews, he replied, "And I feel keenly for the persecuted Jews. As a concrete proposal I suggest your collecting the names of the most deserving ones and making it plain to them that they must be prepared to throw in their lot with us and accept our standard of living."⁹² Recently, the National Library of Israel obtained his letter dated September 1, 1939 to A.E. Sholet, head of Bombay Zionist Association, Bombay in which he wished the "afflicted (Jewish) people" an "era of peace". He greeted them with a happy Rosh Hashanah (new year). Sholet's efforts to win the support of the Indian leadership for the Jews in Palestine failed. Subsequently, he wrote to Eliahu Epstein (who became Israel's first ambassador to US), "... although Gandhi to a certain extent understood the idealism of the Jews' wish to return to Palestine, he still saw the Palestine question from the Muslim point of view."⁹³ Leonard A. Gordon thinks, "Gandhi also believed that the Arabs were the main sufferers in Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s. Based on information that seems likely to have come from Muslim sources, Gandhi condemned British tyranny and Jewish terrorism in Palestine in his statements of 1938, 1946, and 1947."⁹⁴ Kallenbach, American pacifist John Haynes Holmes, British Labour MP, Sydney Silverman, Louis Fischer, etc., persuaded Gandhi to support the Zionist cause but in vain.

Subsequent research has suggested the habitation of both Jews and Arabs in Palestine. Benjamin Brown writes, "The Jews have had an uninterrupted presence in the region since antiquity albeit in a minority and hence legitimate claim to some of the land. Therefore reciprocal recognition of the rights of the various religious and ethnic communities is a precondition to the creation of two states whose respective territories will be determined by their demographic minorities."⁹⁵ Simone Panter-Brick adds, "Gandhi had reasons of his own for favouring a consensus in Palestine. He had constantly in mind his own struggle to maintain unity in India itself, where his claim to be a spokesman for all Indians, Muslims as well as Hindus, was bitterly contested by Jinnah and his Muslim League."⁹⁶ P.R. Kumaraswami has concluded that Gandhi's views on Jewish nationalism in the 1920s were hostage to the Khilafat Movement; his

views in the 1930s were determined by growing Muslim League-Congress ideological warfare. Power politics determined Gandhi's thoughts on Judaism, not his moralist or ethical stance.⁹⁷ Thus, Gandhi's opposition to religious-based claims by the Arabs over Palestine was exclusively directed at Jews and not at the Muslims. As a counterpoise to it, one must remember that Gandhi was against imperialism and could not bear the hegemony of one group of people over another group in any part of the world.

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Role of the Government in ensuring elementary education in Assam: An Analysis

Chandan Bordoloi

ABSTRACT

Education is a basic human right to be respected, protected, and promoted without discrimination. No one should be deprived of this right on any ground. Traditionally elementary education refers to the first stage of formal education that every child is entitled to receive. Educating children is very important for the progress of the country. The present article seeks to highlight the position of elementary education in Assam and the significant role played by the Assam Government in realizing this right from time to time. After the post-Covid reopening of the school, the Government of Assam has taken various initiatives and prepared models which have received recognition at the national and international levels. The article intends to analyse the noteworthy role played by the Government and highlight the recent situation of the right to elementary education in Assam

Key words: *Elementary Education, Development, Initiatives, Obligations, Fundamental Right*

I. Introduction

MAHATMA GANDHI REFERRED to education as the route which aims to bring out the best in a child or a man on all levels – body, mind, and soul. According to the Indian perspective, education (Shiksha) is considered one of the six Vedangas and cannot be only confined to a particular stage or category of people.¹ It is a lifelong process; it is also called life. There is no denying that education is a powerful, liberating force without which no one can earn a legitimate

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position in society. It is a means of preparing for life and living.²

Education is the most powerful tool that helps in the growth and development of a human being and seeks to widen and enhance one's perception of his life. Our daily communications and activities make us realise that a man is truly like an animal without education.³

The right to education has been viewed as a human right that gained recognition globally, nationally, and regionally. The source of all human rights instruments, namely, the United Nations Charter of Human Rights, laid down the principles for guaranteeing social justice, maintaining stable international order, and lasting peace, which should be followed while adopting future documents.⁴ Considering this source, the right to education has also been recognised in several international and regional legal instruments: treaties (conventions, covenants, charters) and soft law such as recommendations, declarations, and frameworks for action.

Most importantly, mention needs to be made of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) whereby everyone has the right to education.⁵ It claims not only to provide free education at the primary and fundamental levels but also to make higher education equally accessible to all strictly on the basis of merit. It aims to impart education to help fully develop human personality, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, and help maintain peace.⁶

Like the UDHR, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, 1966, endeavors to provide and promote primary, secondary, technical, and higher education. Further, it aims to encourage fundamental education for those persons who have not received or completed the whole period of their primary education.⁷ On the other hand, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, is silent regarding free and compulsory education at any level, but it states about imparting religious and moral education to the wards.⁸ Another important document that seeks to protect the educational right of the child is the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Child, 1989. This is the first globally binding treaty relating to the rights of child and the most important responsibility for the State Parties is to recognise this right, particularly to provide free and compulsory education to all. It also encourages the development of different forms of education, including general and vocational education, besides making them available and accessible to every child.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also mention making available to all students an "inclusive, equitable and high quality education" along with providing them with the opportunities for lifelong learning under Goal No. 4. This goal under Target 4.1 intends

to make available primary education free to all girls and boys by 2030 without any restrictions. Such education shall be of high standard, ensuing in learning consequences that are both pertinent and efficient. While Target 4.2 envisages preparing the pre-primary students for the primary education in such a way that they have access to high-quality early childhood development, care, and education by the year 2030.⁹

The present paper is based on the doctrinal method of data collection. The author has referred to many scholarly articles published in books, periodicals, reputed journals and magazines, newspaper reports, reports prepared by Government agencies, etc. to understand the situation of elementary education in Assam.

2. National scenario

Every problem that our society comes across can be considered a chain link where each problem has some kind of relationship with the others, whether directly or indirectly. Illiteracy is the most powerful element in this network as it is the cause of poverty, unemployment, child labour, female foeticide, population explosion, and similar other issues.¹⁰

Ignoring the problem of illiteracy can have serious consequences for a country's progress. Thus all the countries have to take measures in order to eradicate illiteracy as it can bring down even the most powerful nations.¹¹ The countries are obligated to adopt various measures nationally and regionally to deal with this menace and promote the right to education at different levels.

The framers of the Constitution of India have also introduced the right to education in order to fulfill its international mandates. Initially right to education was not available as the fundamental right under the Constitution. However, This right was protected by many articles including Articles 15, 21, 29, 30, 41, 45 and 46.

In *Mohini Jain vs. State of Karnataka*¹² popularly known as the Capitation Fee case, Hon'ble Supreme Court declared that under Article 21 of the Constitution, access to education is a fundamental right and it is inextricably linked to the right to life. Article 21 guarantees right to life and dignity of an individual, but only if the right to education complements it. In *Unnikrishnan vs. State of Andhra Pradesh*,¹³ Supreme Court has accepted a similar view in *Mohini Jain's* case. In this case, the Apex Court has made it clear that the right to education which is implicit in the right to life and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21 must be construed in the light of Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV of the Constitution.

The right to education got the status of a fundamental right under

Article 21A of the Constitution with the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act in 2002, which deals with providing free and compulsory education for children between 6 to 14 years. Further, this amendment has also inserted clause (k) in Article 51A, thereby obliging the parents or guardian of the child or ward as the case may be, between the age group of 6 to 14 years to provide educational opportunity to avail this right.¹⁴

2.1. Legislative initiatives towards promoting Elementary Education

While referring to the legislative powers of the Legislature, the significance of the entries of the three lists under the Seventh Schedule cannot be ignored. Like other aspects, education also finds its place under the Seventh Schedule. Before 1976, education was declared a state subject, and the state legislature had the exclusive responsibility to make laws relating to educational matters. It was the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976, which had transferred education to the Concurrent list, and thus it became the joint responsibility of both the Centre and the State to take various measures on any educational matters.¹⁵

It was seen from time to time that different States of India had enacted legislation to regulate free and compulsory primary education without any central Act. It was in the year 2009 that a comprehensive law concerning the elementary education of every child between the ages of six to fourteen was passed in both Houses of Parliament, namely, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, which came into force from Apr. 01, 2010.

The Act is divided into seven chapters and one Schedule. It not only recognises the right of every child to receive free and compulsory education till the completion of elementary education but also lays down provision for a non-admitted child to get enrolled in a class which is appropriate to his or her age.¹⁶ The Act has also duly emphasized the obligations required by the appropriate government, local authorities, and parents.¹⁷ Any kind of physical punishment, or mental harassment to the child within the school premises is not allowed, but if such acts are committed, then the schools and teachers shall be held liable.¹⁸ Further, they are to reserve 25% of seats for admission of economically deprived communities in Class 1 in all private schools and that admission is not subject to a capitation charge or a screening process.¹⁹ It also focuses on maintaining the pupil-teacher ratio in all the schools following the norms set under the Schedule of the Act, prohibits private tuitions by teachers, and also forbids deputation of teachers for other duties except provided by the Act.²⁰ Some of the norms set under the Schedule are shown in the following

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table:

Sl. No.	Categories	Norms
1.	Pupil-teacher ratio	In case of classes from 1-5, the ratio for the minimum of thirty students is 30:1.
		In case of classes from 6-8, the ratio is 35:1.
2.	Building	The school buildings need to be well structured, suitable for all weather, easily accessible by the students without much difficulty, and have facilities for separate toilets for boys and girls and safe and pure drinking water facilities. A separate kitchen for preparing food for the mid-day meal, a playground to ensure the students' physical fitness and activities, and a well-secured boundary wall or fencing covering the school building is also required.
3.	Teaching learning equipment	Various equipment required for strengthening the teaching-learning process should be available in every school.
4.	Library	Each school must have a library with literature on all subjects, including children's books, periodicals, and newspapers.

5.	Play material, games, and sports equipment	Equipment for extra-curricular activities needs to be provided to the students by the school authority.
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Despite being an important piece of law, the RTE has received a great deal of opposition from different groups and education reformers. The Act is being criticized for not covering the children below six years which is the early childhood stage. Early childhood is a significant stage in a child's life and thus, the child should receive due care in this stage. Early Childhood Education has been repeatedly addressed in the earlier education policies, but no reliable measures have guaranteed it. Thus the National Policy on Education, 2016 emphasized on removing this gap properly and completely without further delay.²¹ Although early childhood education does not form part of the formal education, yet in the past few years this gap has been filled by the play schools and preschools mainly in the private sectors of the urban areas.²² To provide early childhood education, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme was created. Thus, initiatives have been undertaken to ensure that the ICDS Anganwadi practices are improved to raise the standard and norms at the pre-school level.²³

The Act also failed to lay down the essential qualifications required to appoint teachers.²⁴ Further, the Act does not clarify the criteria of neighbourhood school, factors for determining the quality of education, obligations concerning financial matters, etc.²⁵ It is also observed that children from various underprivileged groups, such as street children, children from migratory or nomadic families, and children from conflict zones, who have a difficult time accessing their right to education, have not received any special consideration under the Act.²⁶ Moreover, there is a lack of awareness among the people about their rights enshrined under the Act, and at times it is also difficult for the people to approach the judiciary for the redress of their grievances as petitions pertaining to the RTE can only be filed in the Supreme Court and High Courts which most people cannot afford to file them.²⁷

2.2. Government efforts vis-a-vis Elementary Education

The framing fathers of our Constitution recognized that illiteracy in our society could not be eradicated without making education free and mandatory. Article 45 of the Constitution under the Directive Principles of State Policy directed the State to provide free and

compulsory education for all children until they reach the age of 14 years within ten years of the Constitution's inception.²⁸ Thus, with the Constitution's adoption, the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) began.

The Indian Government has launched various programs and projects to achieve UEE. In this regard, the Government adopted an integrated approach to execute various centrally sponsored initiatives while adhering to the principles of the National Policy on Education at the same time. The unifying goals of such schemes were to increase access by extending quality school education, promote fairness by including marginalized groups and weaker sections, and improve the quality of education.

Some of the centrally sponsored programs which are being implemented in the education sector encompassing elementary education includes: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)²⁹ which is a comprehensive and integrated flagship program launched in 2001-2002 with the aim to provide useful and relevant elementary education to all children between 6-14 years of age, National Program for Education of Girls at Elementary Level³⁰ (NPEGEL) launched in July 2003 and is an important component of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan which aims at establishing model schools in every cluster in order to mobilize and supervise the enrolment of girls in schools, District Primary Education Program which was launched in 1994, Mid-Day Meal (renamed as 'PM POSHAN' or Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman in September 2021)³¹ which attempts to provide mid-day meals to the school children studying at primary stage, in order to revitalize the primary education system and to achieve the objective of universalization of primary education.³²

3. Status of elementary education in Assam

In ancient Assam, the education system was not corresponding to the system that exists in the present time. The mode and method of teaching were entirely different, and education was primarily provided through Gurukulas, where pupils were given knowledge about the Vedas, Vedangas, Smritis, and other sacred scriptures.³³ Later, Pathshalas, Tols, Muktabs, and Satras were developed as an indigenous system of providing instruction, but education at that time was not organized. Gradually with the changing time, the traditional system of imparting education underwent many changes.³⁴

It was seen that when the East India Company entered Assam after the signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, they also took an interest in improving the education system in Assam. Mention needs to be made of Mr. David Scott, the first agent of the East India

Company, who took various initiatives to promote and expand elementary education in Assam, be it the setting up of schools in upper and lower Assam or establishing schools in Garo hills to expand primary education. Further, this growth was catalyzed by the recommendations of the Hunter Commission in 1882, the liberal policies of Lord Curzon etc.³⁵

During British rule, legislation like the Assam Local Self Government Act of 1915 was enacted whereby the local councils were granted more authority over all aspects of primary and secondary education. Another important piece of legislation was the **Assam Primary Education Act 1926**, which was the first Act to focus on compulsory primary education.³⁶ This Act also vested wide powers upon the local authorities to deal with primary education. More specifically, they were obliged to make elementary education compulsory for children between six to eleven years within its jurisdiction. But in spite of such legislative provisions, progress in the education sector was very slow during that period. The implementation of the Acts was not proper owing to factors like erroneous grant-in-aid policy of the Government, incompetency of the local boards in controlling primary education and people's indifference all contributed to the revision of the Act in 1930. This revision has brought significant changes in primary education in Assam. Research shows that by 1937, there were 347 students enrolled in 6795 primary schools.³⁷

On the other hand, Mahatma Gandhi introduced the concept of basic education as he believed that the education system introduced by the Britishers should not be able to benefit the Indians in the long run. Hence, he focused on promoting basic education whereby the learners shall "learn by doing." The parameters encompassing basic education included imparting compulsory education till seven years, providing instructions to the students in their native language, engaging the students in skill-based activities along with their other curricular activities, etc.³⁸

The principles put forward by Mahatma Gandhi were accepted by the entire nation following India's independence. Even the Assam Government followed the Gandhian principles on basic education rather than coping with the pattern introduced by the Britishers and enacted the Assam Basic Education Act in 1954, however, the Act could not suffice to the needs of the society.³⁹ Thereafter the Assam Elementary Education Act, 1962 was passed to establish guidelines for the overall monitoring of primary education and to gradually implement free and compulsory education in Assam.⁴⁰ The Act of 1962 was again repealed by the Assam Elementary Education Act, 1968,

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which was further repealed by the Assam Elementary Education (Provincialisation) Act, 1974, accompanied by the Assam Elementary Education (Provincialisation) Rules, 1977. In 1987 some changes were made to the Assam Elementary Education (Provincialisation) Act 1974 also.⁴¹ Thus, the repealing legislations and the amendments indicate that from time to time, efforts had been made in Assam to strengthen the elementary education and gradually the number of primary schools, the enrollment ratios of the students and teachers associated with the schools also had increased. By 1973-74, it was found that the total number of schools increased to 19,595, along with the increase in the number of teachers to 15,92,613.⁴²

With the introduction of the National Education Policy of 1986, attempts were also made by the Assam Government to expand and improve the horizon of elementary education within the State. Further, adopting the Right to Education Act of 2009 obliged the States to promote elementary education's universalization to the fullest extent possible. The Assam Government has made attempts to implement the provisions of the RTE Act, 2009. The recently published Statistical Handbook of Assam, 2021 (54th Edition) indicates the figures of the Government in the education sector along with other sectors simultaneously.⁴³ Some of the parameters are indicated in the following table:

Sl. No.	Categories	Statistics	
		Lower Primary	Upper Primary
1.	No. of schools	35856 Rural = 34694 Urban = 1162	5668 Rural = 5250 Urban = 318
2.	Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)	22	20
3.	Dropout Rate	3.3%	4.9%
4.	Average number of classrooms	2.8	4.7
5.	Availability of drinking water facilities (in nos.)	34705	5541
6.	Boys toilet facilities (in nos.)	33808	5384
7.	Girls toilet facilities (in nos.)	34813	5543

Table: Table showing different parameters relating to elementary education in Assam.

Source: Statistical Handbook Assam, 2021, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam

The above table help in comparing the norms set out under the RTE Act and the state of current statistics available from the Statistical Handbook of Assam, 2021. It is seen that, on the one hand, the figures pertaining to drinking water facilities and separate boy's and girl's toilet facilities show significant improvement. While on the other hand, the other parameters, namely, the number of schools in rural areas as compared to the urban areas, the ratio of pupil and teacher, and the average number of classrooms, depict the loopholes in the State of Assam in rural and urban areas.

3.1. Implementation of schemes in Assam

In order to fulfill the mandates laid down by the Centre and to accomplish the directives under the Constitution, the State Government had also taken various initiatives in the form of schemes and policies like initiating the Education Policies, Operation Blackboard, District Primary Education Programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid-Day Meal etc. Various schemes relating to elementary education have been implemented in Assam as well. Some of the schemes are discussed below briefly:

i) District Primary Education Programme

As already stated, ever since the adoption of the Constitution of India, many projects and policies have been initiated encompassing primary education. District Primary Education Programme is one such initiative formed in the light of the District Primary Education Programme guidelines started in 1994. The programme is regarded as one of the key initiatives to raise elementary education standards in Assam.⁴⁴ Approximately 42 districts from across the seven States were the primary target of this centrally supported scheme. One of these seven states was Assam, which also started the DPEP in the same year.⁴⁵

During the first phase, the DPEP initiative was launched in Assam's four districts: Darrang, Dhubri, Karbi Anglong and Morigaon. Thereafter, the second implementation phase covered the districts of Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Goalpara, Kokrajhar, and Sonitpur. Although the first phase was scheduled for four districts, it could not be implemented in the Karbi Anglong district due to certain issues.⁴⁶

ii) Mid-Day Meal

The Government was not only concerned about educating the children with free and compulsory education, but they were also much alarmed about the issue of malnutrition among the children owing to poverty and socio-economic issues. The poor economic conditions of these families forbid the children from having good food at home. Although

they go to school, they suffer from hunger, and as a result, they return home or drop out of school due to the financial burden on their parents. Taking these factors into consideration and in order to increase the nutritional level among the children, the scheme of Mid-Day Meal was introduced by the Narasimha Rao Government in the year 1995.⁴⁷

The basic objective of this scheme is to provide education and food to ensure that students do not suffer from malnutrition. As put forward in the scheme, it covers all government-run and government-aided elementary schools, while private schools are excluded from its ambit. Even the Apex Court had given a directive in 2002 to implement the scheme as required.⁴⁸

The scheme was implemented in Assam from the month of January 2005, and initially, the Director of Elementary Education was responsible for looking into the scheme's fulfillment. But from 2014 onwards, the responsibility was shifted to the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and since then, SSA, Assam has been directly overseeing the Mid-Day Meal programme. The scope of the scheme was expanded to embrace venture schools that received financial aid, the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE).⁴⁹

Since the year of implementation of the scheme, the Government of Assam have been continuously improving the arrangements made under the Mid-Day Meal from time to time. The Government of Assam had released a handbook in Assamese language addressing the various aspect of the scheme and to make the people aware about the same in their local language. The handbook highlights the steps to be taken to look into the nutrition and hygiene of the food, the conditions of the kitchen and cooking materials, ensuring the availability of pure drinking water, cleanliness of the place and environment etc.⁵⁰ Further, the Government launched the innovative programme called the 'Sampriti Bhojan' in the year 2016 under the aegis of the Governor of Assam.⁵¹

Further, under the scheme, the Government initiated a model on group hand-washing, which received a lot of appreciation at both national and international levels as it deals with a low-cost great-value approach. To fulfill the mandate of the Central legislation, the State had recently set up kitchen gardens in many schools and encouraged the students to involve in planting different locally available traditional food.⁵² Thus, it is seen that with the passage of time, Assam Government has been gradually successful in executing or implementing the Schemes.

As per the Mid-Day Meal Reporting Statistics for 28.02.2023 available on the website of the Department of Elementary Education,

Government of Assam, out of the total number of 51336 schools in Assam, 3228 schools have reported serving 279313 meals while 48108 schools have not reported about the same. As mandated, the districts are required to report about the mid-day meal served on a daily basis, but the data available on the abovementioned website depicts that the concerned schools do not completely undertake the obligations.⁵³ Further, there have been instances whereby the workers associated with this scheme had not received their salaries on time.⁵⁴ Thus, all such issues need to be properly addressed for the successful execution of the scheme.

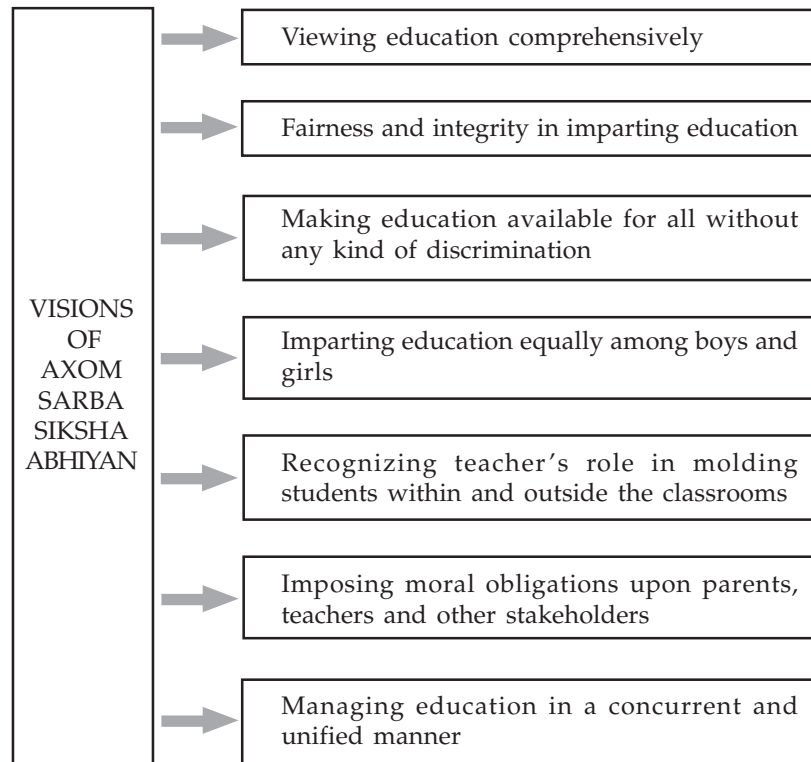
iii) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

SSA is a holistic, integrated, mission-driven flagship programme covering the entire nation. It was introduced in 2001–2002 by the Government of India in collaboration with local and State governments. It is also known as the “Education for All” or “Each One Teach One” movement. By 2010, it envisioned that every kid in the six to fourteen age range would have access to a useful and pertinent elementary education.⁵⁵

In order to implement Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in Assam, the Axom Sarba Shiksha Abhiyan Mission (A.S.S.A.M.) was created in 2001 as a society registered under the Registration of Societies Act, 1860.⁵⁶ Along with the Central Government, the Assam Government also started this mission to fulfill the mandate of universalization of elementary education.

The objectives of A.S.S.A.M. are as follows:

- i. Reaching out to those areas which are completely lacking in the education sector and thereby provide education facilities within a specific time period.
- ii. Encouraging the parents and children aged 6-14 years to get enrolled in schools and other educational programmes and camps.
- iii. Holding the children enrolled in the educational system throughout their elementary years so that they do not drop out owing to various reasons.
- iv. Raising the calibre of instruction through teacher preparation, the supply of instructional materials, textbooks, etc.
- v. Encouraging social justice among socially underprivileged communities, castes, tribes, etc.
- vi. Promoting gender awareness and ensuring the Panchayati Raj organisations and people’s committees effectively involve in school management.⁵⁷

Vision of A.S.S.A.M.:

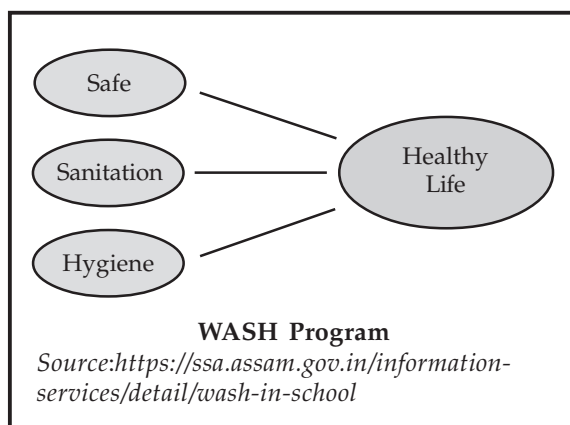
It is important to note that the Government of Assam has always attempted to reach out to children from the disadvantaged or weaker sections of society so that they are not deprived of this basic right while fulfilling this vision. The children within this sphere include – “children of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, the Muslim minority, girls in general, children of landless agricultural workers, children with special needs, etc.”⁵⁸

However, only framing a scheme or a mission is not sufficient, the implementation of the schemes is the deciding factor. After the enactment of the RTE Act, 2009 the Axom Sarba Siksha Abhiyan Mission (A.S.S.A.M.), State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), and Directorate of Elementary Education, Assam have been designated as the “Implementing Authority of the Act.”⁵⁹

Since then, the Assam Government, with the assistance of the Implementing Authorities, has been taking various initiatives to successfully implement the scheme, considering the abovementioned

objectives and vision. Some of the outcomes of the implementation efforts include:

1. W A S H (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) Programme. This programme seeks to stimulate health and education among children. Two of the most important activities undertaken within this program are Daily Hand washing for an Ailment-free Life



(DHaAL) and Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar (SVP).⁶⁰ DHaAL activity has been started with the joint collaboration of Assam Sarba Shiksha Abhiyan, Centre for Environment Education & UNICEF. To fulfill this activity, Group Handwashing Stations (GHS) were developed at low-cost in the respective schools by virtue of which the students could wash their hands together at the same time before their mid-day meal. This group hand washing system saves water and ensures every student's cleanliness and hygiene before having their food.⁶¹

On the other hand, Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar was introduced in the year 2016 under the National Mission of Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya (SBSV) initiated in 2014 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development of India. This award is presented to honor, encourage, and reward those schools which have shown excellence in sanitation and hygiene practices. The evaluation of the schools is to be made on the basis of certain grounds such as providing safe drinking water, proper toilets, facilities for hand washing with soaps, proper operation and maintenance, observance of Covid appropriate behavior, and capacity building.⁶² The award is open to all schools, whether government or private or government-aided, and is available at three levels: district, State, and national. Assam started undertaking various activities to fulfill the National Mission in 2015 and it became the first State in India to have prepared a model fulfilling the WASH facilities which received acknowledgment at all levels. Accordingly, those schools which were successful in executing this model were given the Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar in June 2016.⁶³

2. Inclusive education programme has been started with the

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objective of imparting education to all categories of children from 6-14 years, even to children with special needs. The disabled students are not discriminated against on the ground of their disability. The Assam Government has continuously taken various steps to bring their all-round development.⁶⁴

3. Special training programme is provided to children who have never attended school or who have dropped out. This program mainly aims to give the students elementary education and to guide and motivate them to enroll in age-appropriate classes, which shows the congruence with Goal 4 of Sustainable Development Goals.⁶⁵

4. Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) is a special test conducted to select the appropriate and eligible teachers capable of teaching students at different levels. This test is held centrally as well as by the States individually. Assam has also introduced this test under the leadership of the then Education Minister, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma and has recruited thousands of teachers in order to fulfill the objectives laid down under the RTE Act, 2009.⁶⁶ Further it is seen that initiatives to train the teachers at different levels have started, also focusing on the training of untrained teachers by introducing the 2-year D.El.Ed. Programme.⁶⁷ This programme was introduced in Assam in January 2012 in order to help the prospective teacher to gain the necessary professional skills to teach students at elementary level.⁶⁸

iv) Gunotsav

The success rate in the education sector depends greatly upon the quality of education. The Government of Assam is also concerned about imparting quality education among students at all levels. Keeping this objective in mind, the Government of Assam, in 2017, planned to implement 'Gunotsav' – an initiative first introduced by the Government of Gujarat.⁶⁹

Gunotsav, an important quality enrichment programme with better learning results, is intended to evaluate the students and the schools to improve the elementary level of education.⁷⁰ It is a joint effort of the Assam Government, SSA, SCERT, and Directorate of Elementary Education.⁷¹

In order to determine the quality factor in education, proper assessment or evaluation is necessary, more specifically external evaluation. In the case of such evaluation, there is every possibility to get impartial and fair results. If the evaluation is done internally, the teachers, as well as the evaluators, may give biased and incorrect statistics. Therefore, the external evaluation or assessment system has been introduced under the Gunotsav program to get genuine

responses on “learning gaps, common errors, misconceptions, strong and weak competencies” among the students and schools.⁷² These evaluations are done by external evaluators, including Ministers, IAS, IPS, IFS officers, Class-I & II officers, and college and University teachers. The feedback of the external evaluators shall eventually help in framing new policies as well as improving the existing policies.⁷³

The Government of Assam has decided to carry out this programme under different phases so that all the schools covering the districts gets due recognition. Till now three phases have already been completed. The evaluation of the fourth phase, scheduled in the month of May and June 2022 is yet to be completed. A brief summary of the three completed phases are given below:

Phase I: The first phase of the programme was conducted from 4th to 7th April 2017 encompassing eight districts, namely, Barpeta, Chirang, Dibrugarh, Hailakandi, Kamrup (M), Lakhimpur, Morigaon, and West Karbi Anglong. The evaluation focused on four main areas: participation and involvement, availability and usage of school facilities and other amenities, academic achievement of students in classes 2 to 8, and co-curricular activities.⁷⁴

The above table shows that the targeted figures were not completely achieved, both in the case of number of students as well as the number of schools. Among the eight districts, only in two districts – Chirang and Karbi Anglong (West), the number of schools targeted were fully evaluated. However, it is to be noted that the children did not turn out completely for evaluation; as a result, the total percentage of students who appeared is 79%. Barpeta, Morigaon, Hailakandi and Lakhimpur are the top three districts in the first phase.

Phase II: The second phase, covering 12 districts of Assam, was conducted from 10th to 13th October, 2017. The evaluation in this phase was made on the same parameters as that of the earlier phase.⁷⁵

The above table of Phase II shows that the number of schools and students targeted are not fulfilled. It is observed that number of schools was not completely evaluated in any of the districts. However as compared to Phase I, the percentage of children appeared for evaluation has significantly increased in all the districts, tallying to 91.89% as against 79% in Phase I.

Phase III: The third phase, covering 13 districts of Assam was conducted from 3rd to 6th January, 2018. The assessment of the schools was made on the basis of the abovementioned four criteria.⁷⁶

This table of Phase III indicates the increase in the number of children evaluated in the schools of all the thirteen districts. Phase III of Gunotsav have received wide appreciation and cooperation from all the spheres. The total percentage of students appearing is also

Table: District Wise Status of Coverage under Phase I

Sl. No.	District	Target children	Total External Evaluators	No. of target target schools	Children appeared	No. of schools evaluated	% of children appeared
1	Barpeta	222384	846	2506	189082	2498	85%
2	Chirang	76583	347	972	52947	972	69%
3	Dibrugarh	143645	642	1896	107297	1891	75%
4	Hailakandi	75365	539	1520	60248	1518	80%
5	Kamrup (M)	76411	255	719	54837	708	72%
6	Karbi Anglong (West)	40676	276	741	28998	741	71%
7	Lakhimpur	143694	909	2456	115195	2449	80%
8	Morigaon	132830	505	1510	107326	1509	81%
	TOTAL	911588	4319	12320	715930	12286	79%

Source: https://ssa.assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/swf_utility_folder/departments/ssam_medhassu_in_oid_5/portlet/level_1/files/Gunotsav%20result%20-%20AI%20three%20phases_0.pdf

Table: District Wise Status of Coverage under Phase II

Sl. No.	District	Target children	Total External Evaluators	No. of target schools	Children appeared	No. of schools evaluated	% of children appeared
1	Bongaigaon	89061	358	1073	81482	1062	91.49%
2	Cachar	190433	826	2476	179778	2473	94.40%
3	Charaideo	48189	282	844	44418	822	92.17%
4	Dima Hasao	18029	312	936	15288	840	84.80%
5	Jorhat	71487	528	1583	65983	1545	92.30%
6	Kamrup	148009	797	2391	132326	2332	89.40%
7	Karbi Anglong	64571	533	1377	59477	1301	92.11%
8	Kokrajhar	100537	617	1819	93997	1797	93.49%
9	Nagaon	223068	784	2351	200184	2320	89.74%

10	Sivasagar	59001	519	1557	56742	1471	96.17%
11	Tinsukia	122138	490	1468	113995	1446	93.33%
12	Udalguri	85417	475	1424	77290	1402	90.49%
	TOTAL	1219940	6511	19299	1120960	18811	91.89%

Source: https://ssa.assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/svf_utility_folder/departments/ssam_medhassu_in_oid_5/portlet/level_1/files/Gunotsav%20result%20-%20All%20three%20phases_0.pdf

Table: District Wise Status of Coverage under Phase III

Sl. No.	District	No. of schools evaluated	Target Children	Children appeared	No. of External Evaluators Engaged	% of children appeared
1	Baksa	1864	91860	83322	632	91%
2	Biswanath	1101	77172	72678	380	94%
3	Darrang	1280	100840	94320	443	94%
4	Dhemaji	1528	70587	66049	519	94%
5	Dhubri	2242	200041	186725	751	93%
6	Goalpara	1769	122226	121149	601	99%
7	Golaghat	1635	95014	87621	559	92%
8	Hojai	989	105369	96262	336	91%
9	Karimganj	1961	154269	144004	699	93%

10	Majuli	598	17792	17555	204	99%
11	Nalbari	1278	68676	64597	442	94%
12	Sonitpur	1183	111419	104241	423	94%
13	South Salmara-Mankachar	441	41168	36472	148	89%
	TOTAL	17869	1256431	1174995	6137	94%

Source: https://ssa.assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/swf_utility_folder/departments/ssam_medhassu_in_oid_5/portlet/level_1/files/Gunotsav%20result%20-%20All%20three%20phases_0.pdf

highest compared to other phases.

Gunotsav 2022:

After successfully completing three consecutive phases, the program could not be continued due to Covid 19. The Assam Government, however scheduled to celebrate Gunotsav 2022 in three phases covering all the 33 districts of Assam in the month of May and June 2022.⁷⁷ The evaluation shall be on the basis of curricular activities of the students, their extra- curricular activities, community participations from class 1 to 9 and performance of the students. This evaluation shall enable the evaluators to identify the gaps in the present educational system after Covid and thereby formulate policies mitigating the same.⁷⁸

The schedule⁷⁹ of the three phases of Gunotsav 2022 are as follows:

Sl. No.	Phase	Date of self - evaluation	Date of external evaluation	Districts covered
1	Phase I	May 11, 2022	12 th , 13 th & 14 th May, 2022	Biswanath, Bongaigaon, Charaideo, Darrang, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Karimganj, Karbi Anglong and Nagaon.
2	Phase II	May 23, 2022	24 th , 25 th & 26 th May, 2022	Barpeta, Golaghat, Kamrup, Kokrajhar, Majuli, Morigaon, Sivasagar, Tinsukia and Udalguri.
3	Phase III	Jun. 01, 2022	2 nd , 3 rd & 4 th June, 2022	Baksa, Cachar, Chirang, Dhubri, Dima Hasao, Jorhat, Kamrup, Lakhimpur, Nalbari, Sonitpur and West Karbi Anglong.

v) National Education Policy, 2020 in Assam

Keeping in tune with the New Education Policy of 2020, the Chief Minister of Assam on November, 2021 informed the press that the Assam Cabinet had decided to overhaul the education policy of the State whereby the schooling shall be made a 15-year process. It shall comprise four categories: foundation, preparatory, primary and senior secondary. The updated syllabus for the new pattern shall be introduced from April 2023. Thus it can be well stated that the Assam Government has decided to welcome the initiative of the Central Government in this regard.⁸⁰

4. Conclusion

Thus from the above study it can be concluded that promoting and protecting the right to education is very important. The present study dealt briefly with this right's historical background, the international and national framework, and the regional position. It is observed that the Government of Assam have been playing a prominent role in improving the quality of elementary education since pre-independence period. The initiatives taken by the Government to implement the RTE Act, 2009 in the form of various schemes, programmes, policies, awards etc. have eventually encouraged the parents to send their wards to school.

However, in certain occasions, few of the mandate provided under the RTE Act are not fulfilled, for instance, the pupil-teacher ratio in different classes. Surveys and studies show that in many primary schools of Assam there are no teachers; on the other hand, there are also many schools with more teachers than the number of students. Secondly, the RTE Act prohibits commission of any physical punishment, mental harassment or torture on the students, and the Government of Assam has also issued notification prohibiting the same. But instances have shown that in certain places such kind of activities are still committed by some teachers. Thirdly, the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan talks about imparting education to all without any discrimination. It visions to give due recognition to the needs of the weaker or disadvantaged children. But it is observed that many children still loiter in the streets, involve in rag pickings and begging, and consume dangerous substances. To overcome these shortcomings, it is important that the parents, teachers and all other related stakeholders including the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) need to actively perform their moral and social obligations. Each of them needs to undertake their responsibilities in order to impart and promote the basic right to education among all.

Despite the shortcomings, it needs to be acknowledged that the Assam Government have been trying to achieve the right to elementary education successfully. But only adopting government initiatives is not sufficient, the public in general also has to play their role to raise awareness of the value of education and take effective steps to properly educate each and every citizen of their locality so that the disease of illiteracy is eradicated and the right to education is established.

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Reconstructing Development in Covid Affected India: Relevance of the Gandhian Model of Development

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ABSTRACT

The global impact of the COVID-19 epidemic is unparalleled, offering significant challenges to civilization. Covid's impacts on the international economy, including India, include sudden job losses, rising food prices, reduced labour supply and productivity, enormous unemployment, and reduced consumption. India's condition is exacerbated by its heavy reliance on agriculture and the unorganised sector, as well as a lack of attention to local empowerment and unskilled labour, all of which contribute to high unemployment. India could only develop based on its own traditions, and development methods taken from the West would be detrimental rather than beneficial. The current pandemic has taught us the ideals of the Gandhian development model, which emphasises self-reliance, decentralisation, and long-term development. This article attempts to re-emphasize the Gandhian model of development as a viable alternative development strategy for the post-Covid Indian economy.

Key words: *Development, Self-reliance, Decentralisation, Swadeshi and Sustainable Development*

Introduction

COVID-19 HAS BEEN classified as a public health and economic threat. In many ways, the current economic crisis is exceptional. A lack of effective demand and supply causes typical downturns.

April–June 2023

Manufacturing is usually the most cyclical sector of the economy, but service sectors have been struck the worst this time. GDP decelerates quicker than consumption in common parlance, as consumers smooth their spending throughout economic cycles; but, consumption is decreasing significantly this time. Supply disruptions and panic buying may jeopardise food security; the rapid removal of service sector jobs and the rise in food costs have produced economic hardship, particularly for those in the informal sector¹.

While the global economy has been hit hard, India's economy has also not been spared. The global GDP decrease rate for the 2020-21 financial year was 3.3 percent, with emerging markets and developing nations losing 2.2 percent. The influence of COVID-19 is highlighted by the fact that India's growth rate of 4 percent in 2019 was higher than the global average of 2.8 percent and 3.6 percent for comparable nations.² By the end of April 2020, India's jobless rate had reached a new high of 27.1 percent. According to a survey by the CMIE (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy), about 122 million workers had lost their employment by the end of April, with roughly 70 percent of them being small businesses³. The situation is particularly deadly in India, where agriculture and the unorganised sector employ most people. Since independence, Indian economic authorities have paid little attention to village empowerment, resulting in many unemployed people. India's illiterate education system also contributed to unemployment. Because of these factors, the less educated relocated from rural to urban areas in search of work. Unfortunately, in India, most jobs are in the private sector, and most people work as labourers. The COVID-19 epidemic has exacerbated the problem in this case⁴.

The major development paradigms of modernisation and dependency are being questioned in this context. Westernisation, urbanisation, literacy, the dissolution of joint families, free entrepreneurship, cultural secularisation, and social mobility are all considered indices of development by modernisation theorists⁵. While the dependence paradigm, which sprang from a critique of modernisation, suggests a new application of Marxist theorising on imperialism and the development concept it represents. According to the dependency theorists, the coloniser's home and the colony have a 'centre – periphery' historical relationship. The worldwide division of labour, skill, and knowledge is based on the geography of the 'centre' and the 'periphery.' Because the periphery's poverty is a result of the center's affluence, the periphery cannot get out of it without changing the historically defined system⁶.

Another development paradigm, known as 'alternative development,' evolved from a critique of modernisation and its effects.

It focuses on development content– its methods and outcomes – and has recently entered popular debate. These alternative theories are qualitative and ‘spiritual’ approaches to development that enable ‘deprived’ individuals to participate in the process of social development in order to restore their ‘capacity,’ to use Amartya Sen’s phrase⁷. The intellectual background of this paradigm lies in Schumacher’s concept of ‘small is beautiful’. This paradigm sees the individual as the unit of development process. What Schumacher said – man is small, and, therefore, small is beautiful’ – came exactly from this⁸ and Gandhiji’s emphasis on self-reliance and autonomy of small communities and small-scale production. Both of them argue that solutions to the problems of development can be found in structural reforms in favour of people’s participation in decision-making, increased independence of communities, and physiocentric planning aimed at the development of appropriate technology⁹. Gandhian path of development did not accept the theory of unlimited wants and had several strong reservations about giving free rein to modern science and technology. It also argued that India could grow only based on its own tradition and that borrowed models from the West, both capitalist and socialist, would do more harm than good¹⁰.

As a result, the alternative development strategy put forward numerous developmental options. While the exact combination would vary by country, key aspects in this newer paradigm include information dissemination equality, economic rewards, and other factors. The awareness that rural and urban poor should be the core audience for development initiatives and that, more broadly, eliminating socio-economic gaps by bringing up the lagging sectors was a major goal in many countries resulted from this new focus on development. People’s involvement in self-development planning and implementation is generally accompanied by the decentralisation of some of these activities to the village level. Self-reliance and independence in development with an emphasis on the potential of local resources are the major hallmark of this strategy¹¹.

Likewise, according to post-development theory, which was developed in the 1980s and 1990s through the works of scholars like A. Escobar, G. Esteva, M. Rahnema, W. Sachs, J. Ferguson, S. Latouche, G. Rist, and F. Sabel, the concept of development portrays the North as advanced and progressive while the South is portrayed as backward, degenerate, and primitive¹². The post-development school of thought is interested in local culture and knowledge, has a critical stance towards the established scientific discourses, and aims to promote localised and pluralistic grassroots movements for an alternative to development¹³.

Schmelzer(2022)pointed out that, as with previous capitalist crises, the coronavirus pandemic's economic turbulence exposed how unstable and reliant on economic growth and the globalised trade modern economic systems are and how strongly the economic growth paradigm continues to influence politics globally. Ecology, socio-economic, feminist, South-North, cultural, anti-capitalist, critique of industrialisation, and reactionary growth criticism were the eight currents of growth criticism that Schmelzer examined. Since increasing GDP (Gross Domestic Product) disregards declining stocks and the economy as a subsystem of the environment, the ecological criticism of growth is founded on the premise that limitless growth is impossible in a limited world. According to the social-economic growth critique, economic expansion undervalues human lives and impedes everyone's well-being and equality. The feminist criticism of growth contends that GDP excludes non-monetary labour, household, and subsistence tasks, all of which are mostly performed by women, and that economic growth is founded on gendered over-exploitation and devalues reproduction. The South–North critique of growth argues that growth relies on and reproduces relations of domination, extraction, and exploitation between the capitalist centre and periphery as well as inequality in power hierarchies. Here, human beings and nature were commodified, culture and knowledge devalued, and regions and people in the global South were reduced to the dependent role of raw material suppliers without large value-added contributions of their own, causing ever-deepening inequalities and unequal power relations. According to cultural critique, economic development and institutional structures have fostered alienating ways of living, working, and interacting with one another and the natural world. Capitalist exploitation and accumulation underpin and drive criticism of capitalism. Similarly, reactionary critiques of growth argue that economic growth destroys racially defined bioregions and communities, threatens traditional lifestyles through increased trade, global exchanges, and migration, and is driven by population growth, which should be stopped. Critics of industrialism also claim that it gives rise to undemocratic productive forces and techniques¹⁴.

All the above concepts point to the notion that development is dynamic. It was first associated with economic development, which was, for a while, seen as synonymous with 'economic growth' defined as an increase in Gross National Product (GNP) and per capita income. The phrases 'development' and 'growth' were sometimes used interchangeably¹⁵. This overemphasis on economic expansion also meant large-scale industrialisation, which led to a higher level of modernisation, all of which resulted in an increase in poverty,

unemployment, and inequality (in terms of the income distribution, regional disparities, and social inequality). The idea of distributive fairness, or redistribution with growth, was vigorously promoted due to this development fallout¹⁶. This is a manner of looking at development as a process of expanding the freedoms of the people i.e., the removal of a person's deprivation¹⁷. This implies that the success of all development programmes is assessed not only in terms of their impact on incomes and outputs but also on people's lives. As a result, progress necessitates excellent governance, which entails expanded participation in institutions, a decentralised power dynamic, freedom from discrimination, respect for human rights, and people-centred economic and social policies¹⁸. Overall, development can be characterised as a process of improving people's well-being.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi made major contributions to human welfare and progress. COVID-19 is a wake-up call for the entire world to reconsider Gandhi's ideas, beliefs, and practices. In the aftermath of the Pandemic, Gandhi's importance and principles have resurfaced. The Gandhian concepts of Swadeshi, Swachhata, Swaraj, and Sarvodaya can be useful for rebuilding the post-Cold War world order¹⁹. COVID-19 has thrown the globe into chaos, disrupting all aspects of human life. It has altered our consumption patterns, jolted our sophisticated production systems, altered modalities of education and entertainment, and forced us to reconsider our 'social animal' identity as a race that has increasingly learned to rule this world. We are obliged to reassess Gandhi's economic paradigm due to the pressures of circumstance. Gandhian economics, based on non-violence, honesty, and non-covetousness, is immediately antagonistic to mainstream economics, starting with the containment of demands. His ideas of labour dignity, self-sufficiency, a robust village economy, and the principle of trusteeship emerge as logical corollaries of this system of thought²⁰. The Gandhian model of rural development is based on villagers' freedom from exploitation, simple living and high thinking, voluntary reduction of materialistic wants, the dignity of labour, use of indigenous (swadeshi) products, and a balance between ends and means, all of which are necessary for the survival of non-violence and truth²¹.

Gandhi's concept of swaraj suggests that each individual's autonomy and freedom are constrained by their duties and obligations to other people and communities. The idea of societal boundaries, which result from contested social processes that define collectively agreed-upon thresholds that societies agree not to cross, is related to this idea. These restrictions cover issues like injustice, subordination, exploitation, consumerism, protection of the commons, and poverty

and inequality. Societal borders are physical boundaries that protect the resources and energy needed to provide sufficient circumstances for a good existence for all. These boundaries are typically established by political norms within societies. There is no assurance that societies will choose to limit their own growth democratically or that this can be done through the creation of the agreement. Progressive social movements, other political actors, political education, and alternative projects might help in this situation by reinforcing and promoting sociocultural values and norms based on social justice considerations that, in turn, must be ingrained in social relationships and institutions. All cultures must broadly acknowledge the importance of such boundaries and influence the formulation of public policy to be considered socially meaningful. In particular, societal boundaries are important for individuals who live in precarious conditions and whose voices are not typically heard in decision-making spaces for coping with the ecological crisis's worsening socio-economic effects²².

According to Trantas (2021), the sustainable development rhetoric may have various facets that promote social and environmental welfare, but it is essentially a top-down reform project that seeks to eliminate the social and environmental externalities to economic growth. Although, in theory, it encourages stakeholder and civic engagement, public participation is limited and is carried out in a fashion that does not substantially challenge the prevailing economic paradigm. It is governed by governments that adhere to the logic of capitalism. The degrowth paradigm challenges conventional wisdom and provides alternatives to the sustainability argument²³. Degrowth focuses on transformational change in six areas: (1) democratising the economy by bolstering the commons and solidarity economy, transferring utilities into democratic ownership, providing institutional support for cooperative workplaces, or proposing macroeconomic coordination and participatory planning; (2) redistribution and social security policies ensuring access to basic services for all; (3) democratising technology, supported by policies like assess and reinvest; and (4) democratising government by ensuring that all citizens have access to information; 5) democratisation of social metabolism, which entails the dismantling of significant portions of the production and consumption sectors and the development of new systems in their place. Examples of this include changing taxation policies to discourage harmful industrial activity or putting a moratorium on future fossil fuel infrastructure projects like mega-highways and airports; (6) international solidarity, such as by eliminating the debts of countries in the Global South and transferring resources, technology, and money as compensation for climate debt, or by reforming the international

monetary system to check unequal hierarchies between nations²⁴.

As already stated, our consumption habits changed dramatically during the lockdown. Consumers are becoming more aware of the differences between essential and non-essential consumption. This is a form of 'desire confinement,' yet circumstances compel it. In order to combat the threat posed by Covid, households were encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle, and individuals began to favour natural and herbal therapies after learning about their efficacy and long-term consequences. Ceremonies have grown more sparse as large gatherings enhance the spread of disease. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, humanity was compelled to consider Gandhiji's simple living philosophy²⁵.

Fundamentals of Gandhian Understanding of Development

Gandhian ideas of rural development is a multidimensional process that includes Gram Swaraj (self-rule), Atmanirbhar (self-reliance), Ram Rajya (the rule of law established by moral values), Panchayat Raj (decentralisation of power, economy, policies, and decisions at Panchayat), Ahimsha (politics based on non-violence), Satya (administration based on truth and honesty), Sevabhava (service attitude), Sahyog (cooperation), and Swabhiman (self-dignity of individual). His concept stresses the upliftment of the commoner by allowing him to gain access to basic necessities like as food, clothing, shelter, health, and education through working locally and with dignity²⁶. Gandhian development is based on a moral and ethical perspective on socio-economic and political growth. Truth and non-violence are fundamental factors in his idea that influence human activities and decisions. He emphasises complete decentralisation of economic structure, with the village controlling all economic powers and functions and acting as a self-regulating and self-sufficient development unit. Gandhi's economic development concept is based on humanity, balanced and complete development of body, mind, and soul²⁷.

Thus the Gandhian scheme of holistic development has the following core objectives: human development, particularly moral development, to increase capacity; development of the body, mind, and spirit in a balanced manner through manual and intellectual labour; social justice, rights, and freedom in development; self-sufficiency and self-reliance achieved through rural development; and increased income and jobs to help people out of poverty²⁸.

The COVID-19 issue caused a shift in production patterns. In order to spread risk, reduce vulnerability, boost resilience, and stimulate industrial development, poor countries are increasingly constructing

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regional value chains. The regional pacts can ensure that small businesses cooperate to lower transaction costs and benefit from economies of scale by identifying and sustaining horizontal and vertical linkages²⁹. Instead of highly centralised organisations, decentralised production, and marketing are frequently required to promote local resilience and economic recovery³⁰. There must be a push for more decentralisation based on the subsidiarity principle. COVID-19 has highlighted concerns about local government funding, flaws in the health mandate granted to local governments, and the extent to which they can manage health issues on their own. Even when local governments deal with pandemic management, keeping services running and protecting people's livelihoods is more critical. The role of municipal governments is perhaps most visible when dealing with the pandemic's humanitarian component. Because they are closest to the people, local governments will have a greater potential to influence behavioural changes among their constituents, which will be especially important during a pandemic³¹.

Gandhi's economic theory was based on local self-sufficiency, or Grama Swaraj. Every village should be self-sufficient in two basic needs: food and clothing. Everyone in the family had to ply the loom, spin yarn, and grow their own rice and vegetables. Gandhi's dream of Ramarajya was to be realised in three stages. The first goal was for India to gain independence. The second goal was to create a primarily nonviolent state through the evolution of Gram Swaraj, or Village Republic. The third step aspired to attain Ramaraj, or God's kingdom on earth, which would be a completely nonviolent and democratic society. Thus, in Gandhiji's vision, the perfect social order will be realised through the accomplishment of Swaraj, Gram Swaraj, and Ramraj³². Gandhiji's vision of village Swaraj includes concepts like as trusteeship, Swadeshi, full employment, bread labour, self-sufficiency, decentralisation, equality, and NaiTalim. The Gandhian dream's ideal village concept was broad, covering economic, social, political, and educational aspects³³.

According to the Gandhian notion of Village Swaraj, it is a fully autonomous republic that is unreliant on its neighbours for its basic requirements. As a result, the first priority for each hamlet will be to raise its own food crops and cotton for its textiles. It should feature a cow reserve, as well as a relaxation area and a playground for both adults and children. Then, if more land becomes available, it will be used to produce beneficial money crops, excluding ganja, tobacco, opium, and other such substances. The village will maintain a community theatre, school, and public hall. It will have its own waterworks, assuring a constant supply of pure water. Controlled

wells or tanks can be used to accomplish this. Every action shall be carried out cooperatively as much as feasible. There will be no castes like the ones we have now, with their different levels of untouchability. The village community will authorise non-violence and non-cooperation using the Satyagraha technique. Village guards will be required to provide a mandated service and will be selected by rotation from the village registration. The village will be governed by a Panchayat, consisting of five adults, male and female, who will be elected annually by the adult villagers who meet the necessary standards. They will have all the necessary authority and jurisdiction and serve as legislative, judicial, and executive powers. Even the current government, whose only practical relationship with the villages is the exaction of local tax, may help any village establish such a republic today without any interference. There exists a perfect democracy founded on individual liberty. Each person is the architect of his or her own government. The law of non-violence governs him and his government. He and his hamlet can stand up to the might of the world. For every villager, the law states that he must die in defence of his and his village's honour³⁴.

Gandhi's ideas of Swadeshi and independence are two sides of the same coin that still hold true in today's more globalised society. The concept of self-reliance is as old as humanity, and it is a dynamic movement that should be led from the bottom up rather than from the top down³⁵. The COVID-19 pandemic situation emphasises the importance of Gandhi's ideals in reducing the rampant impacts of capitalism and globalisation. Self-reliance enables the most efficient use of local resources, promotes local inventiveness, fosters trust in one's institutions and technologies, reduces alienation, ensures ecological balance and neighbourhood unity, and reduces exploitation. Similarly, food self-sufficiency will prevent any country or region from using food as a weapon in a crisis situation. As a result, self-reliance provides more autonomy and independence³⁶.

The Gandhian development paradigm is founded on the idea of sustainable development. Gandhi was a strong critic of modern industrial society, which significantly influenced humanity and the environment. It promotes nothing but a selfish pursuit of worldly pleasures and a craving for wealth. Modern civilisation was considered "Satanic" by Gandhiji. The unlimited plurality of wants is a key element of modern culture. As a result, Gandhi exhorted people to limit their wants and consumption, thereby decreasing the strain on the environment by eliminating harmful waste³⁷. In his book *Small is Beautiful*, Schumacher says:

From an economic point of view, the central concept of wisdom is permanence. We must study the economics of permanence. Nothing makes economic sense unless its continuance for a long time can be projected without running into absurdities. There can be 'growth' towards a limited objective, but there cannot be unlimited, generalised growth. It is more than likely, as Gandhi said, that 'Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not for every man's greed'. Permanence is incompatible with a predatory attitude which rejoices in the fact that 'what were luxuries for our fathers have become necessities for us'.³⁸

Gandhi is the best example of the human ecology worldview since he did not acknowledge distinct rules for various domains of human life but considered all spheres as one. Gandhi is recognised as an ecological advocate around the world for these reasons, notably by the well-known Green movement and its derivatives. Indeed, ecological concerns arose from his concentration on a basic needs model of social order, which would take just what is absolutely necessary for human subsistence from nature rather than exploiting it for short-term gains. Gandhi had to admit that life entails a certain amount of inadvertent aggression against nature. What we can do is minimise it to the greatest extent possible³⁹.

The Gandhian model recommends that bio-manures and bio-pesticide be used instead of chemical fertilisers and pesticides in sustainable agriculture; khadi and village industries are environmentally friendly because they provide jobs and help to reduce poverty. As a result, we should promote khadi and village-made products; use appropriate technologies that our villagers are able to comprehend and operate themselves; and use renewable energy sources like solar, which is limitless and inexhaustible. Water and wind energy can also be harnessed for the production of electricity⁴⁰.

Small-scale and cottage enterprises will be given a conscious role in our planned economy in order to achieve Gandhi's socio-economic goals, particularly equitable and sustainable growth. As a result, it is necessary to return to Gandhi's economic doctrine, which always favoured Swadesi and local self-reliance. If all available land and resources were completely utilised, it would undoubtedly meet the demands of all human beings. Gandhian economic thinking is based on a strong emphasis on 'Plain Living,' which aids in reducing your wants and becoming self-sufficient. Consumer desire is similar to animal appetite, which will travel to the ends of the earth in quest of gratification⁴¹. Gandhij's concepts of self-sufficiency and Swadeshi are relevant in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic, in which all levels of government have been obliged to lock their borders and operate their economies within a confined area in order to contain the virus's

spread. Furthermore, people are willing to put their greed aside in order to meet their basic requirements. They looked to their immediate surroundings and neighbourhood to address their day-to-day requirements.

Gandhi's vision of Sarvodaya might be viewed as the epitome of long-term development based on non-violence. Sarvodaya is a Sanskrit term that refers to everyone's upliftment and is closely related to what we call the common good, also known as common weal in Western tradition⁴². John Ruskin's 1862 essay 'Unto This Last' was a major impact on Gandhi's understanding of the common good. The contrast between political and mercantile economy is at the heart of Ruskin's book. The former aims to preserve and promote the common good, or, as Ruskin expressed it, to increase the nation's wealth and well-being, whereas the latter aims to increase the wealth of individuals⁴³. As a result, it is critical to concentrate on the true purpose of all economic activity, which is to maintain the "pleasure and power of all human nature, body and soul."⁴⁴ As Gandhi repeatedly submits, "it is when I discipline, control, and sacrifice my ego-driven self, when I identify with the needs of the suffering and unfree other, that is when the deeper, nonviolent, truthful self/Self, God, Reality, and so on, are revealed and become an essential part of my process of self-realization"⁴⁵. The Sarvodaya plan aims to create a social structure based on non-violence, truth, love, and cooperation. The Sarvodaya Plan calls for; (a) economic equality; (b) complete consideration of cultivators and labourers; (c) the formation of independent committees by all cultivators; (d) all labourers forming their own unions; (e) all cultivators (technical or basic) education; and (f) hand-spinning in every family. Gandhi's sarvodaya is essentially a redevelopment programme for Indian villages. The revitalization of the village economy includes, among other things, the development of village and cottage industries, improved village sanitation, protection from robbers and wild animals, agricultural development, cooperating in all activities, creating village panchayats, being self-sufficient in necessities, abolishing the caste system, and eliminating illiteracy. A significant emphasis would be placed on local industry growth, sanitation, and cleanliness⁴⁶.

...India's economic constitution, and, for that matter, the world's, should be such that no one under it goes hungry or without clothing. To put it another way, everyone should be able to find an adequate job to make ends meet. And only if the means of production of the most basic necessities of existence remains in the hands of the people will this vision be universally achieved. These should be freely available to all, just as God's air and water are or should be; they

should not be turned into a mode of transportation for the profit of others. It would be unjust for any country, nation, or group of people to monopolise them. The failure to follow this fundamental principle is the source of the poverty that we see today, not only in this miserable country but also in other regions of the globe⁴⁷.

Gandhi's perspective mirrors that of John Rawls, who claimed that the government is expected to aim for the common good, that is, to preserve conditions and achieve goals that benefit everyone equally⁴⁸. Rawls' theory of justice is founded on the following two premises. To begin with, everyone should be entitled to the broadest range of fundamental liberties that are compatible with a commensurate set of liberties for others. Second, social and economic inequalities must be structured so that they are both fairly expected to benefit everyone and linked to open positions and offices. While wealth and income distribution are not equal, it must be to everyone's benefit⁴⁹.

Gandhi's economy also included the concept of bread labour. He emphasised the importance of physical labour, claiming that physical labour rather than intellectual feats bring on gains. It is a well-known scientific fact that where woods are attracted, the amount of water obtained increases as the amount of vegetation increases. The Gandhian notion of bread labour advocates the use of human hands and bodies to produce vital commodities such as vegetables and clothes rather than machinery⁵⁰.

The Gandhian distribution model was based on moral values and some local institutions. Trusteeship was such a value that he explained it could bring equality of wealth in society. He believed the wealthy possessed no more rupee than their neighbours. It was their self-denial to accumulate wealth at the expense of the poor fellows⁵¹. Gandhi remarked: The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society. In this argument, honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed⁵².

Today, the world is fighting to obtain essential goods and medical equipment, with only a few countries having sufficient supplies. Fortunately, India has a sufficient number of pharmaceutical enterprises and has progressed in manufacture and supply, but it remains reliant on other countries for raw materials. This disaster has taught us Gandhi's Self-Reliance lesson, which states that every country must have basic facilities in order to survive. Gandhi's ideals are particularly pertinent here because he emphasised local self-reliance. As a result, what is required today is a major commitment to

action in order to ensure that opportunities are equal for all. And whatever action is advocated, it must be done in a Gandhian manner, as a moral force exercise. For India's social regeneration, a place of thousands of poor labourers have been forced to return home as a result of the pandemic adherence to Gandhian concept of rural swaraj and Swadeshi is desirable because it advised the youth to stay in the countryside for the sake of their families, society, and nation. Rather than being a consumer, serve and become a producer. Gandhiji thought that villages should produce and prepare their own necessities, and that once those requirements were met, they should help the metropolis. Contribute to each other's success in this way, in the spirit of mutual cooperation. These principles proved to be quite valuable during COVID-19 and its aftermath, as we realised and experienced the use of Swadeshi and purchasing items and everyday necessities from merchants near us⁵³.

Development will require fresh thinking that is distinct from previous thinking in that it will take poverty seriously. Because human people are the primary and ultimate source of all wealth, whatever is good for the rich must also be good for the poor. Nothing will ever bear true fruit if self-proclaimed experts and high-handed planners disregard or bully them⁵⁴. As a part of 14th Central Finance Commission recommendation, the centrally organised People's Plan Campaign⁵⁵, which began in 2018, has proven to be an effective tool for assuring GPDP preparation (Gram Panchayat Development Plan). The national government undertook a baseline survey of Gram Panchayats (Mission Antyodaya) as part of this programme. Mission Antyodaya was introduced in the Union Budget for 2017-18 to establish a convergence model that may integrate poverty-eradication initiatives. Mission Antyodaya is a framework for improving lives and livelihoods via responsibility and convergence. The Mission's main goal is to improve the accountability and outcomes of a significant pool of resources invested under various schemes for the country's rural areas' sustainable and inclusive growth and development⁵⁶. People, their education, organisation, and discipline are at the heart of development. All resources remain with unrealized potential without these three. No matter how damaged, every country with a high level of education, organisation, and discipline achieved an 'economic miracle.' In reality, these were simply miracles for those who were only interested in the tip of the iceberg. The tip had been shattered, but the foundation of education, organisation, and discipline remained intact⁵⁷.

Gandhi believed that health was more valuable than gold and silver as genuine wealth. The Key to Health is among Gandhiji's most

well-known publications. His definition of health is having an easy body. To live a healthy life, Gandhiji's teachings emphasise the importance of understanding oneself and one's body. He claims that the five elements—Earth, Water, Light, Air, and Vacancy or Ether—that make up the human body are those that ancient thinkers identified. He had faith in the body's capacity for recovery as well as in nature's capacity for healing. However, the interaction of the factors mentioned above is a must to clear the path. Gandhiji's suggestions for enhancing health include breathing exercises for people who are unable to breathe, nose cleaning, sleeping outside, hydrotherapy, sunbathing, and mud poultices. Gandhiji opposed using intoxicants and promoted vegetarianism over a mixed or non-vegetarian diet. It's interesting to notice that, when discussing health, he kept mental fitness level with physical fitness. The same may be seen in his daily activities, which included a morning walk, a balanced meal, prayer, fasting, and meditation. Eleven vows (Ekadash Vrata) were suggested by Gandhiji and zealously upheld as standards in daily life. Three of the vows, namely Aswada (detachment from tasty foods), Brahmacharya (which had a broader meaning than only sexual abstinence), and Sharirshrama (physical labour to earn your bread), have a direct impact on lifestyle and better living. Gandhiji's 18-point Constructive Programme for Achieving 'Swaraj' emphasized health and hygiene, bringing them to the fore. His virtues, which also include cleanliness, building communities, physical activity, mental toughness, a healthy mother and child, dietetics, and assistance to the sick, are all centred on health. Even though the state of global health has significantly changed since his time, most of his viewpoints are still relevant today, especially in light of COVID-19⁵⁸.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic forced humanity to reconsider Gandhi's ideology of self-reliance, Swadeshi, decentralisation, and people's engagement in the development process, as well as simple living and long-term growth. Individuals are increasingly adopting healthy lifestyles and favouring natural and herbal medicines to address the threat of Covid. Furthermore, effective governance is required to restrict the spread of pandemics, which requires increased engagement in institutions, a decentralised power dynamic, a discrimination-free environment, respect for human rights, and people-centred economic and social policies. Because local governments are closest to the people, they will have a better ability to promote behaviour changes among their citizens; the epidemic reasserts the importance of local government. The People's Plan Campaign and Mission Antyodaya

are macro-level initiatives to follow in Gandhi's footsteps by recognising that human beings are the primary and ultimate source of all wealth and that whatever benefits the rich must equally be good for the poor.

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Notes & Comments

Decoding the Inauguration of the New Parliament Complex on Savarkar's Birth Anniversary

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Anil Sadgopal

Introduction

INDIA'S HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER MODI inaugurated the new complex of the Indian Parliament on May 28, 2023, which is also the 140th birth anniversary of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who is described as a 'great son of India' and 'Veer' [gallant/fearless] by RSS-BJP leadership. The new Parliament complex – built under the direct supervision of PM Modi and his chosen few – will be dedicated to Savarkar. It is a horrendous and shameful decision in many respects. Dedication to Savarkar implies a rejection of the whole idea of an egalitarian, democratic, and secular India rooted in Social Justice which came into being on August 15, 1947, and, with its historic Constitution, became a sovereign Republic on January 26, 1950. Honouring Savarkar dishonors the thousands of martyrs and other participants of the historic Indian freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi against

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British imperialism. Hence, let us know the truth as told by Savarkar himself or recorded in the Savarkar-led Hindu Mahasabha archives.

Savarkar's Hatred for the Tricolour Flag of India

Like the RSS, Savarkar abhorred every symbol of the Indian people's united struggle against British rule. In a circular issued on September 22, 1941, to be followed by the Hindu Mahasabha cadres, he declared,

So far as the flag question is concerned, the Hindus know no flag representing Hindudom as a whole other than the 'Kundalini Kripanankit' Mahasabha flag with the 'Om and the Swastik' the most ancient symbols of the Hindu race and policy coming down from age to age and honoured throughout Hindusthan...Therefore, any place or function where this Pan-Hindu flag is not honoured should be boycotted by the Hindu Sanghatanists at any rate...The Charkha-Flag [before the present national flag spinning-wheel used to be at the centre of the Tricolour] in particular may very well represent a Khadi-Bhandar, but the Charkha can never symbolize and represent the spirit of the proud and ancient nation like the Hindus.¹

Savarkar preceded Jinnah in propounding the two-nation theory

Muslim League under M.A. Jinnah demanded Pakistan in March 1940. Long before it, Savarkar had laid down his two-nation theory. Savarkar became the President of Hindu Mahasabha [HM] in 1937. While addressing the 19th Session of Hindu Mahasabha at Ahmedabad in the same year, he stated:

As it is, there are two antagonistic nations living side by side in India, several infantile politicians commit the serious mistake in supposing that India is already welded into a harmonious nation, or that it could be welded thus for the mere wish to do so...India cannot be assumed today to be a Unitarian and homogenous nation, but on the contrary there are two nations in the main: the Hindus and the Moslems, in India.²

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar described this shameless collusion between Savarkar and Jinnah in the following words:

Strange as it may appear, Mr. Savarkar and Mr. Jinnah instead of being opposed to each other on the one nation versus two nations issue are in complete agreement about it. Both not only agree, but insist that there are two nations in India – one the Muslim nation and the other Hindu nation.³

Hindu Mahasabha led by Savarkar declared unconditional support to the British government during Quit India Movement

The Quit India Movement began on August 9, 1942 as per Mahatma Gandhi's call to 'Do or Die' to expel the British from India. The British rulers swiftly responded with mass detentions on August 8 itself. Over 100,000 arrests were made, which included the entire top leadership of Congress, including Gandhi; mass fines were levied, and demonstrators were subjected to public flogging. Hundreds of civilians were killed in state-sponsored violence, many shot by the police and the army. Congress was banned. During these critical times of repression, Savarkar announced full support to the British rulers in line with the Muslim League.

Addressing the 24th session of the Hindu Mahasabha at Kanpur in 1942, Savarkar outlined the strategy of the Hindu Mahasabha of cooperating with the rulers in the following words:

The Hindu Mahasabha holds that the leading principle of all practical politics is the policy of Responsive Cooperation [with the British]." He called upon HM councillors, ministers, legislators and conducting any municipal or any public bodies to offer "Responsive Cooperation which covers the whole gamut of patriotic activities from unconditional cooperation right up to active and even armed resistance...⁴

Savarkar led Hindu Mahasabha (HM) and formed coalition governments with Muslim League (ML) during Quit India Movement.

Hindu Mahasabha (HM) and Jinnah-led Muslim League (ML) joined hands in running coalition governments in Bengal and Sind (and later in NWFP) in 1942. Defending this collusion between HM and ML against Congress, Savarkar stated,

In practical politics also the Mahasabha knows that we must advance through reasonable compromises. Witness the fact that only recently in Sind, the Sind-Hindu-Sabha on invitation had taken the responsibility of joining hands with the League itself in running coalition Government. The case of Bengal is well known. Leaguers whom even the Congress with all its submissiveness could not placate grew quite reasonably compromising and socialable [*sic*] as soon as they came in contact with the Hindu Mahasabha and the Coalition Government, under the premiership of Mr. Fazlul Huq and the able leadership of our esteemed Mahasabha leader Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerji, functioned successfully for a year or so to the benefit of both the communities.⁵

It is to be noted that Mookerji was deputy premier and held the portfolio of suppressing the Quit India Movement in Bengal!

Backstabbing Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose

When Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose planned to liberate India militarily, Savarkar offered full military cooperation to the British masters. Addressing the 23rd session of Hindu Mahasabha at Bhagalpur in 1941, he declared:

Our best national interests demand that so far as India's defence is concerned, Hindudom must ally unhesitatingly, in a spirit of responsive cooperation with the war effort of the Indian government in so far as it is consistent with the Hindu interests, by joining the Army, Navy and the Aerial forces in as large a number as possible and by securing an entry into all ordnance, ammunition and war craft factories...Again it must be noted that Japan's entry into the war has exposed us directly and immediately to the attack by Britain's enemies...Hindu Mahasabhaites must, therefore, rouse Hindus especially in the provinces of Bengal and Assam as effectively as possible to enter the military forces of all arms without losing a single minute.⁶

According to HM documents, Savarkar inspired one lakh Hindus to join the ranks of the British armed forces.

Savarkar's Mercy Petitions (MPs) were no ruse but instruments of abject surrender.

Savarkar submitted a minimum of 5 mercy petitions [MPs] in 1911, 1913, 1914, 1918 and 1920. Savarkarites claim that these were submitted not as an act of cowardice but "as an ardent follower of Shivaji, Savarkar wanted to die in action. Finding this the only way, he wrote six letters to the British pleading for his release". A perusal of the two available mercy petitions will prove that there cannot be a lie worse than the claim that Savarkar's Mercy Petitions [MPs] were in League with the methods which the great Shivaji Maharaj used to hoodwink the Mughal rulers successfully. The mercy petition dated November 14, 1913, ended with the following words:

[Therefore] if the government in their manifold beneficence and mercy release me, I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English government which is the foremost condition of that progress....Moreover my conversion to the constitutional line would bring back all those misled young men in India and abroad who were once looking up to me as their guide. I am ready to serve the Government in any capacity they like, for as my conversion is conscientious so I hope my future conduct would be. By keeping me in jail nothing can be got in comparison to what would be otherwise. The Mighty alone can afford to be merciful and therefore

where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the Government?

The mercy petition dated March 30, 1920, from this prodigal son of the British masters ended with the following words:

The brilliant prospects of my early life all but too soon blighted, have constituted so painful a source of regret to me that a release would be a new birth and would touch my heart, sensitive and submissive, to kindness so deeply as to render me personally attached and politically useful in future. For often magnanimity wins even where might fails.⁷

There was nothing wrong on the part of the Cellular Jail (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) detainees in writing mercy petitions to the British. It was an important legal right available to the prisoners. Apart from Savarkar, Barin Ghosh, HK Kanjilal, and Nand Gopal too submitted petitions. However, only Savarkar and Barin sought forgiveness for their revolutionary past. Kanjilal and Nand Gopal did not demand any personal favour but the status of political prisoners.

Savarkar was incarcerated in Andamans on July 4, 1911, for two life terms [50 years]. On May 2, 1921 [after nine years and ten months], he was transferred to the mainland with his elder brother, Babarao. He was finally released conditionally on January 6, 1924 [total imprisonment twelve years six months] from Yeravda Jail.

Savarkar as a worshipper of *Manusmriti*, Casteism, and Patriarchy

Savarkar is glorified as a rationalist and crusader against Untouchability. Let us compare these claims with Savarkar's beliefs and acts as recorded in the HM archives. While delivering the presidential address to the 22nd session of Hindu Mahasabha at Madura, he declared Manu to be the lawgiver for Hindus and emphasized that once we "re-learn the manly lessons" which Manu taught, "our Hindu nation shall prove again as unconquerable and a conquering race as we proved once".⁸

He declared Manusmriti to be "that scripture which is most worshipable after Vedas for our Hindu Nation ...Today Manusmriti is Hindu law. That is fundamental".⁹

So far, his crusade for Untouchables' entry into Hindu temples was concerned, he gave an undertaking to Brahmins that "the Hindu Maha Sabha shall never force any legislations regarding the entry of untouchables in the ancient temples or compel by law any sacred ancient and moral usage or custom prevailing in those temples. In general the Mahasabha will not back up any Legislation to thrust the

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reforming views on our Sanatani brothers so far as personal law is concerned".¹⁰

Savarkar wanted Nepal King to rule India in case the British decided to leave India

Savarkar even preached that having the King of Nepal as 'Free Hindusthan's Future Emperor' was legitimate if the British plan to leave India. His advice to the British rulers was very clear:

If an academical [sic] probability is at all to be indulged in of all factors that count today, His Majesty the King of Nepal, the scion of the Shisodias [sic], alone has the best chance of winning the Imperial crown of India. Strange as it may seem, the English know it better than we Hindus do...It is not impossible that Nepal may even be called upon to control the destiny of India itself. Even Britain will feel it more graceful that the Sceptre [sic] of Indian Empire, if it ever slips out of her grip, should be handed over to an equal and independent ally of Britain like His Majesty the King of Nepal than to one who is but a vassal and a vanquished potentate of Britain like the Nizam." [Italics as in the original]¹¹

Savarkar criticized Shivaji for not allowing the molestation/rape of captured Muslim women.

Savarkar was a great defender of molestation and rape as a political tool against the women of adversaries. In his important work on Hindu history, *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*, originally written in Marathi and translated into English in 1971, he included a chapter titled 'Perverted Conception of Virtues' (Chapter VIII). He criticized Shivaji and Chimaji Appa for restoring the women of defeated Muslim and Portuguese governors to the families. Since Shivaji did not allow the molestation of captured women, Savarkar complained: "Did not the plaintive screams and pitiful lamentations of the millions of molested Hindu women, which reverberated throughout the length and breadth of the country, reach the ears of Shivaji Maharaj and Chimaji Appa?"

He went on to lament that "It was the suicidal Hindu idea of chivalry to women which saved the Muslim women (simply because they were women) from the heavy punishments of committing indescribable sins and crimes against the Hindu women. Their womanhood became their shield quite sufficient to protect them".¹²

Epilogue

These irrefutable facts about Savarkar notwithstanding, the Hon'ble Prime Minister decided to honour him on May 28, 2023, when he

inaugurated the new Parliament Complex. This is bound to accelerate the dismantling of the constitutional dream of democratic-secular India that evolved under the leadership of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar along with the inspiring anti-caste and anti-patriarchy gains made during India's historic renaissance of 19th and 20th centuries in defiance of the Brahmanical hegemony of Varna Ashram through Chaturvarna as ordained in Rig Veda's Purusha Suktam and later shaped as a Law in Manusmriti.

Undoubtedly, the aforesaid retrogressive message emerging from the inauguration of the New Parliament Complex on Savarkar's 140th birth anniversary will act against the revolutionary struggle for social transformation for equality and social justice that the ancient Indian civilization has deeply engaged with since 6th and 5th Century B.C under the pioneering leadership, to name a few, of Gautam Buddha through Baudh Philosophy; Mahavir (24th Jain Tirthankar) through Jain Philosophy; Srimanta Sankardev (Assam); Basaveshwara (Karnataka); Pandit Iyothee Thass, Singaravelar and Periyar (Tamilnadu); Narayan Guru and Ayyankali (Kerala); Gurujada Apparao and Kundukuri Veersalingam (Andhra Pradesh); Sant Tukaram, Savitribai Phule, Fatima Sheikh and Mahatma Jotirao Phule, Shahuji Maharaj and Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (Maharashtra); Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekanand and Rokeya Begum (West Bengal); and Swami Dayanand Saraswati (Gujarat & Punjab); Sant Kabirdas & Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia (Uttar Pradesh); and the Great Sikh Gurus & Shaheed Bhagat Singh (Punjab). This retrogressive impact of Savarkar's ideology is precisely what the RSS has been dreaming of since its inception in 1925 by promoting selective re-writing and distortion of the history of ancient, medieval, and contemporary India. Yet, history shall never forgive us for the irreparable damage being done to India's socio-cultural fabric by the grandiose event held on May 28, 2023, Savarkar's 140th birth anniversary.

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Book Reviews

Bidisha Mallik, *Legends in Gandhian Social Activism: Mira Behn and Sarala Behn – Addressing Environmental Issues by Dissolving Gender and Colonial Barriers* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2022), pp. 545, ISBN 978-3-030-95430-7, Price: EUR.139.99; Rs.11,966.

Most of the Gandhi literature gives us the Gandhi of *satyagraha*, one who fought non-violently to free his country from the British yoke. In this political quest, he is surrounded by well-known Indian political figures. This is perhaps to be expected. But there are different ways of looking at Gandhi. There is also the Gandhi of *sarvodaya*, one who was concerned with the uplift of his people, one who had a vision of a more just and sustainable society. And, of course, there is the Gandhi who is seeking God face-to-face. These more overlooked Gandhis are not accompanied by well-known Indian politicians. Instead of Nehru, Patel, Jinnah, etc., we get Narandas Gandhi, Jamnalal Bajaj, J.C.Kumarappa, and, most importantly, women.

Although Gandhi is often surrounded by women, few, even of those who have read a Gandhi biography, will have heard of any of them other than his English “disciple” Mirabehn. The likes of Muriel Lester, Esther Faering, Nilla Cram Cook, Mary Barr, Marjorie Sykes, Catherine Mary Heilemann (Saralabehn), Sushila Nayar, Premabehn Kankar, Amrit Kaur, Saraladevi Chaudhurani or even Sarojini Naidu, either disappear from the record or are briefly categorised as followers. However, most of them had inspiring lesson-rich activist lives that went beyond their relationship with the Mahatma.

The bulk of what little has been written about the women in Gandhi’s circle focuses on their relations with him, their pre- and post-Gandhi lives little more than footnotes. In *Legends in Gandhian Social Activism: Mira Behn and Sarala Behn*, Bidisha Mallik has reversed this trend. Her telling of the Mirabehn and Saralabehn stories focuses mainly on their post-Gandhi lives, their time with the Mahatma less significant than their later self-directed achievements. Mallik provides

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us with the little-known but groundbreaking work that Mirabehn undertook in the decade she spent in various mountain settlements after Gandhi's death – work and writing on ecological agriculture, organic sustainability, animal husbandry, forest protection, respect for and cooperation with nature – issues that we are now realising the fundamental importance of. Regarding Saralabehn, Mallik notes that she should be seen as the “mother of sarvodaya activities” such as the celebrated anti-logging “tree hugging” Chipko movement and the protests to stop the Terhi dam in the Uttarakhand hills, rather than as the “daughter” or disciple of Gandhi.

Mallik asks why most studies of Indian Himalayan environmental movements have overlooked the role of the women she collectively refers to as the “Behns”, and why so few of the studies that cover the lives of these women merely focus on their relationships with Gandhi, often almost dismissing them as uncritical disciples and devotees, rather than examining the foundations of their thought and its implications.

In this book, Mallik's primary interest is in the individuals Mira Behn and Sarala Behn, well beyond their relationships with Gandhi. She summarises these personal histories in the following words: “Abjuring western privileges, these women wholeheartedly embraced lives of voluntary poverty, lived and worked with and amongst the poorest of India, participated in India's independence movement and went to prison for the cause. Their faith in nonviolence and their passion to eradicate colonialist, capitalist, patriarchal, and racist ideologies through humanitarian service brought them to Gandhi's constructive work.” While this book is not strictly a biography of the Behns, it provides us with the best biographical sketches of them yet produced.

Following the provision of a Gandhian context of science, technology and social development, Mallik examines the Behns, the Gandhian influences upon them, and how they went beyond what Gandhi was able to do in his lifetime.

Mirabehn, of course, is the best-known Western associate of the Mahatma, but, as Mallik points out, she is often portrayed from a Gandhian perspective “that fails to consider the coherence of her personal philosophical and spiritual motivations behind her coming to India.” Madeleine Slade, the English admiral's daughter, who Gandhi named Mirabehn, became his preeminent Western disciple. Being so often at Gandhi's side, she simply could not be ignored and, as an elite person from the British ruling class who, as has been noted, “went native”, she made exceptional news copy. The account of her privileged but lonely childhood, her love of Beethoven's music that

took her to the French pacifist writer Romain Rolland who had written about the composer and had just completed a hagiographical book about Gandhi that he gave her, how it influenced her to go to India to be with Gandhi, becoming, or wanting to become, his attendant, her trip back to London with him, the at times difficult relationship with the Mahatma in his later years and her eventual departure from India for the remainder of her life in Austria near the forests where Beethoven once strolled, is well known.

In most sources, Mirabehn's story more or less stops with the death of Gandhi. Mallik takes up the narrative of the inspiring and lesson-rich post-Gandhi agricultural and environmental pioneer that Mirabehn became – and it is a story that ought to be much better known.

In this book, Mallik gives us a Mirabehn for whom Beethoven is not merely some compulsive bookends to her life with the Mahatma. For her, Mirabehn understood the composer's music as intimately connecting to an inner world of spirit, a connection that, rather than being an abstract ideal, "became a practical means to serve others in the world." Her deep ecological connections with nature provided a similar spirituality, one of an ethic of deep ecological sustainability. And here, Mallik shows us how she had gone well beyond Gandhi's understanding, given that he still saw nature as hierarchical, with humans at the apex.

While in the generally male Gandhi scholar-produced biographies, Mirabehn is presented as being obsessed with Gandhi the person, Mallik gives us a far more nuanced person, someone with agency and a philosophical and spiritual life outside her close relationship with the Mahatma. While perhaps she was a little more obsessed with Gandhi than Mallik wants to admit, her Mirabehn is finally a full person in her own right. By way of summary, we are presented with a Mirabehn who took spiritual sustenance from Beethoven and Gandhi and integrated and "implemented them on a practical level, for a creative synthesis that shaped her ecological aesthetics."

Unlike Mirabehn's many times retold partial life story, Saralabehn's biography is little known but just as interesting. This is partly due to the fact that she was rarely together with Gandhi, because she chose to speak and write in Hindi, and because she undertook her creative feminist pedagogical work in the mountain areas of Uttarakhand rather than in more observable environs. Saralabehn was a Gandhian worker, not a disciple, who did most of her influential Gandhian constructive work after the death of the Mahatma and remained in India for the rest of her life.

In her childhood in London, Catherine Mary Heilemann, because

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of the German-Swiss background of her father, suffered racial prejudice during the First World War. Disillusioned with organised religion, she learned about Gandhi from Indian students, and she shifted from her childhood dream of becoming a missionary to becoming part of the nationalist movement by joining in Gandhi's constructive activities. At the age of thirty-one, she set out for India, taught at a progressive school in Udaipur, witnessed white racism, and visited Gandhi's ashram girl's school near his Wardha headquarters, where she met the Mahatma. For health reasons, she relocated to a Gandhian ashram in the mountains, where she stayed as a constructive worker and mentor to young women rural campaigners and social workers, including those who became leading figures in the Chipko movement and the movement against the sale and abuse of alcohol. She was an important participant in Vinoba Bhave's "land-gift" Bhoodan movement in the hill districts. Through *nai talim*, the Gandhian practical education system, which Mallik has termed "feminist pedagogy", that she employed at her Lakshmi Ashram at Kausani in rural Uttarakhand, along with a practical environmental, spiritual ethic of care, had her empowering an impressive cohort of young women activists.

There have been many Gandhian social activists, some far better known than others. This raises the question of why we should know about these particular women. Mallik contends that "Mira Behn's early approach to sustainability of rural communities in the mountains has relevance in the current context of rapid social, ecological, and cultural changes and market-led commercial exploitation in the hill villages of Uttarakhand." As a summary of Saralabehn's work, Mallik points out that "During her 41 years ... of living and toiling amid the women, children, poor and destitute of the Himalayas, she strove painstakingly to achieve a decentralized exploitation-free society working for the protection of the hill environment, social equity, and the empowerment of women".

Mallik notes that there is a gap in knowledge that has downplayed the role of the Behns in the instigation of major environmental movements, such as the Chipko and anti-dam movements, and how their focus on local industries morphed into a larger environmental consciousness and campaigns that grew out of their activities. She redresses the balance. We are also shown how the philosophical lessons of the Behns informed the movement to stop the building of a large dam in the Himalayan headwaters of the Ganges and have pushed for a rethinking of the notions of development and sustainability. Mallik clearly shows how the environmental philosophy of the Behns expanded Gandhian ideas and how important these ideas are given

the deteriorating state of the planet. What these women had to say was way before their time, but now we ignore their message at our peril.

The places she visited, the people she talked to, and the obscure documents that she utilised are impressive. They back up Rajmohan Gandhi's assessment in his appreciative "Foreword": "Bidisha Mallik's study is remarkable." It is a book that should be read by those interested in Gandhi's life, especially its *sarvodaya* aspects, but even more so by those interested in important contributions to feminist and environmental literature. The pity is that this groundbreaking and thankfully readable book will not be. The publisher has produced a beautifully set out text with maps and welcome photographs; however, the price of the work means that while it may make it into the odd university library (of the few that still house hard copy volumes), it and even the electronic edition, will be prohibitively expensive for the general reader. One can only hope that somehow an Indian publisher can produce an affordably priced paperback version to give us an edition of *Legends in Gandhian Social Activism* that reaches the readership it deserves.

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Examples

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

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

Chapters within Books: Pearl S. Buck, "A Way of Living", in S. Radhakrishnan, ed., *Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1956), p.51.

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

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