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Douglas Allen

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

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Editorial

THE TACTICAL RETALIATORY strikes on Pakistan following the Pahelgam carnage have led to several speculative accounts. People seem to be under the impression that the Indian armed forces have given Pakistan a thrashing. Pakistani army thinks otherwise, and the army chief's elevation to the Field Marshal status tends to suggest that. When we engage in discussion about who has achieved the strategic advantage, we often assume that war is perhaps the only solution to cases of terrorism. India had several wars with Pakistan, and on each occasion, Pakistan was on the receiving end. But the very nature of the Pakistani state and the investment made by them in Kashmir by exporting terrorism may not end with such strikes alone. The conflict with India has become a part of the identity construction of Pakistan. We have a responsibility to create an environment where the people of Kashmir feel encouraged to engage positively with the Indian government, so that extremist influences gradually lose relevance in Kashmiri society.

While many criticize the government for what they see as a premature ending of the conflict or engage in contestations as to whether the US played an intermediary role in these, the achievement of a ceasefire itself is to be lauded by any right-thinking people. The restraint exercised by India is not to be seen as a case of temerity but responsibility. Since a number of untested fighter planes, air defence systems and missiles were used, it created a minefield of assessments of the relative superiority of the equipment with claims and counterclaims. The war has demonstrated that air power and technology can sometimes cause unpredictable damage to even powerful states' equipment, infrastructure, and population. The Ukrainians were able to hit targets thousands of kilometers away from their country in mighty Russia, wiping out almost one-third of the country's bombers capable of delivering nuclear warheads. Although a cross-party delegation was sent to select countries to explain the Indian position and garner international support, a move

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that may be portrayed as a resounding success, the same objective could perhaps have been achieved through a larger meeting with ambassadors in Delhi by the same cross-party group.

It is always better that India detaches itself from the incident immediately and goes ahead with its other pressing problems. Too much fixation with Pakistan and demonstration of muscularity intended to enthuse the domestic constituency may need to be toned down. War is never a solution to any of our problems. The way ahead is negotiations. We also have a problem with the idea of mediation. We think that mediation is a kind of loss of face for our country. This is applicable only in a situation of active mediation by a third party. Instead, we have instances of the mediator acting as a facilitator and providing good offices, which gives the control of negotiations entirely to the participating countries. Recently, Turkey offered itself as a site for negotiations between Russia and Ukraine. Unfortunately, even in its best days, the India-Pak conflict had not progressed beyond the pre-negotiation stage. Now, it has to start all over again. We also need to make a distinction between the ruling class in Pakistan and the ordinary people there. Our grouse should not be directed at the people, but their rulers. In war, most people who die are civilians from either country. To break this deadlock, a spirit of perestroika and glasnost is needed in South Asia.

This issue of the journal has eight articles. The first by Thomas Weber examines the history and dynamics centred around the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. The second by Ravi Ranjan and Priyanshu Singh explores the Gandhian perspective on parliamentary democracy. Kumari Sunitha V and Bins Sebastian revisit the idea of Rama Rajya. In the following article Bipasha Raha examines how Gandhi posited youth power during the freedom struggle. Syed Insha discusses the theme of suppression of dissent through the lens of spiritual politics. Nisha V. Nair analyses the challenges for financing the National Educational Policy 2020 in the higher education sector. There is a rather elaborate article by Douglas Allen on dialectical relations between Gandhi and Marx in the notes and comments section. I hope this collection of articles will generate considerable curiosity and interest from the academic and lay readers.

JOHN S. MOOLAKKATTU
Chief Editor



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The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi: A Brief History

Thomas Weber

ABSTRACT

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi is a remarkable world-class resource for those with an interest in Gandhi, especially Gandhi scholars. However, very few know the history of this series and that lack of knowledge may be diminishing its value. In 1999 a digital electronically searchable version, one that scholars had long waited for, was published. A “revised” print version was published in 2001. The new versions however had fundamental flaws and were withdrawn from circulation in 2005. A searchable e-version of the original “standard” edition was finally released in 2015. Unfortunately, many Gandhi-related web sites and Gandhi scholars’ libraries still carry the corrupted “revised” editions. The CWMG will reach its full potential when all the complementary volumes of the Letters to Gandhi are eventually published.

Key words: Mahatma Gandhi, Collected Works, Bibliometric Analysis, Systematic Literature Review

FOUNDED IN 1941, the Publications Division of the Government of India was subsumed into the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting with the attainment of Indian independence on 15 August 1947. Since then, the Publications Division has become a major publishing arm of the government, functioning as a vehicle for national integration and cultural preservation. The *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* has become its flagship publication. Whatever Gandhi may have thought about the project, or problems that manifested themselves in the production of the series, the CWMG has become the major research tool for Gandhi scholars and one of the most ambitious undertakings of its kind anywhere in the world.

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Gandhi and His Works

Mahatma Gandhi suggested that his writings should be burnt on his death: "As a matter of fact my writings should be cremated with my body. What I have done will endure, not what I have said or written ..." ("Weekly Letter", *Harijan*, 1 May 1937). However, given whom he was, not only in Indian terms but also as a major world figure of the 20th Century, this was never going to happen. And now, we have 100 published volumes of his writing. And the story of the journey of this seemingly not Gandhi endorsed but nevertheless necessary undertaking is a fascinating one.

With the collaboration of Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, after Gandhi's assassination, in 1949 the Working Committee of the Congress Party set up a National Memorial Fund, the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi. Part of the Fund's remit was to "collect, preserve and publish all of his writings and teachings in various languages, and to maintain a museum where articles connected with Gandhi may be preserved," The results were the Gandhi Museum at Rajghat in Delhi, across the road from where he was cremated, and the massive *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*.

The Birth of the CWMG

The Nidhi began collecting Gandhi's scattered English, Hindi and Gujarati writings from India, England and South Africa (Guha, 2021, 2005; Patel 2019). The veteran Gandhian and Bombay politician, Morarji Desai recommended that the Indian Civil Service member P.M.Lad be appointed as Secretary to the Centre's Information and Broadcasting Ministry. Lad prepared a plan for the collection of Gandhi's writings, speeches and letters and publishing them. An Advisory Committee with Desai as Chairman was constituted. It included a representative of the Navajivan Press, which held the copyright to Gandhi's writings, and Gandhi's newspaper editor youngest son, Devadas. By 1956 it had enough material to start bringing out the material in book form. In 1974, Desai noted that

Gandhiji's works were to be collected and edited in the first instance in English, Hindi and Gujarati and the project has been carried on since that time. The collection has been far greater in volume than had been estimated. We found that Mahatma Gandhi had written and spoken much more than any other individual in the past. When we started the collection of material for this work we had estimated that there would be about fifty volumes. We found later on that the number would go beyond eighty. We had hoped to complete this work by the end of the birth centenary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi in 1969 but we have not

been able to do this on account of the magnitude of the task and the inherent difficulties involved in it (Desai, 1974, pp.34-35).

The process entailed the collection of Gandhi's writings from around the world, authentication of the material, and then translating it into the three languages (English, Hindi, and Gujarati) that the series would be published in. The work was guided by an Advisory Board of veteran Gandhians and carried out "by a specially equipped team of editors with a perspective of English literature, world classics, history and modern systems of law" ("The Making of", 2023). The work took 38 years and totalled over 55,000 pages.

The first appointee as Chief Editor of the CWMG was the English and Scottish educated well-known writer and Gandhi colleague, Bharatan Kumarappa. After the first volume went to press, he died of a heart attack in 1957. It was published the following year by the government's Publications Division. The next Chief Editor was Jairamdas Doulatram, who resigned after two years to take up a seat in India's upper house, the Rajya Sabha. Finally, on the recommendation of Gandhi's close associate and follower, Vinoba Bhave, the Editorial Board coalesced into the team that would complete the task under the general editorship of the English teacher, scholar and newspaper editor K.Swaminathan (Bhatt, 2019; Guha, 2016).

Swaminathan (1896-1994) moved to Delhi from his home town of Madras in 1960 to take up the post. He was to oversee the publication of the ninety substantive volumes before, with failing health and eyesight, retiring in 1985. He continued to collaborate on the publication of the seven supplementary volumes. The Gujarati English scholar, C.N.Patel served as Deputy Chief Editor (John, 2019). The Hindi poet and author Bhawani Prasad Mishra took charge of the Hindi edition, and M.K.Desai and Ratilal Mehta the Gujarati edition.

The Rationale for the Series

In his "Homage" to Mahatma Gandhi in the first published volume of the CWMG, the Indian President, Rajendra Prasad, noted that the project, which would encompass over fifty volumes, was important

For the proper appreciation of such a man [as Mahatma Gandhi] it is essential to take a comprehensive and collective view of his teachings and the events of his life. Any sketchy or piecemeal study of his life's story might prove misleading, doing as little justice to this great man as to the reader. This is the primary reason why a compilation of Gandhiji's writings on such a vast scale had to be undertaken (Gandhi, 1958, pp.v-vi).

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In his "Foreword" to the first volume, penned in 1957, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said:

I am glad that the Government of India are bringing out a complete edition of his writings and speeches. It is most necessary that a full and authentic record of what he has written and said should be prepared. Because of his innumerable activities and voluminous writings, the preparation of this record is itself a colossal undertaking and may take many years to complete. But this is a duty we owe to ourselves and to future generations.

Nehru added that,

In a collection like this there is bound to be a mixture of what might be called the important and the unimportant or the casual. Yet, sometimes it is the casual word that throws more light on a person's thinking than a more studied writing or utterance. In any event, who are we to pick and choose? Let him speak for himself. To him life was an integrated whole, a closely-woven garment of many colours. A word to a child, a touch of healing to a sufferer, was as important as a resolution of challenge to the British Empire.

Finally he advised that "In all reverence of spirit, let us undertake this task, so that succeeding generations may have some glimpses of this beloved leader of ours who illumined our generation with his light and not only brought national freedom to us but also gave us an insight into the deeper qualities which have ennobled man" (Gandhi, 1958, pp.ix-x).

In the unsigned "General Preface" to the first volume, the reader is informed that the "Government of India have undertaken this project of publishing the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi not merely from a sense of requiting a nation's debt to the architect of its freedom, but from the conviction that all the writings, speeches and letters of the Mahatma need to be collected and recorded in one place for the benefit of posterity" (Gandhi, 1958, p.xi). However, some issues that would later cause problems for the series were also noted:

In the nature of the work itself no claim of completeness or finality can be made for this collection. Later research may lead to the discovery of documents not now obtainable. It would have been inadvisable to wait indefinitely to achieve perfection. The task of improving of this work must be left to the future. For the present, however, every effort is being made to collect and verify all material that can be had, and to publish it with brief notes to aid the reader in understanding the text. If material is secured too late to go into a volume, it is proposed to publish it separately (Gandhi, 1958, p.xii).

The CWMG: A Brief History

The first English language volume appeared in 1958. A second revised edition of the first volume appeared in 1969, the second volume was published in 1960 with a revised second edition in 1976, the third volume was published in 1960, with a second revised edition in 1979. The revised second editions of the first three volumes brought them into line, with regard to size (the original versions were smaller), format and style, with the subsequent volumes in the series. The rest of the volumes, from volume 4, published in 1960, came out steadily until the last substantive volume, number 90, was published in 1984. These ninety volumes, comprising 48,000 pages, were followed by seven volumes of supplementary material that came to light after the appropriate volume had already been published (1989-1994). Finally, two index volumes (subjects and persons) and a collection of the prefaces to all the published volumes completed the series as volume 100. The 97 volumes containing 33,000 letters written by Gandhi were published in three languages: English, Gujarati and Hindi. The Hindi edition was completed in 1998, the Gujarati edition (overseen by the three Ahmedabad Gandhian organisations: Navajivan, the Gandhi-founded nationalist university - the Gujarat Vidyapith - and the Sabarmati Ashram) ceased publication in 2012 with volume eighty-two, requiring eighteen further volumes to complete the series.¹

Gandhi biographer Ramachandra Guha notes that, "There was, however, a slight hiccup during the Emergency of 1975-77, by which time more than 50 volumes had appeared. The minions of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi wanted to get rid of Swaminathan on the grounds that he was sending the Gandhi volumes one by one, to the chairman of his advisory board, Morarji Desai, who happened to be in detention." He adds that fortunately "wiser counsel prevailed, and the chief editor stayed on for several years thereafter, retiring only in 1985 after the original 90-volume set of Gandhi's chronological writings was completed" (Guha, 2005). The series was finally completed with the 100th volume on Gandhi's birthday, 2 October, 1994, twenty-five years after the original planned completion date.

Reviews Following the Publication of the Early Volumes

Following the publication of the first nine volumes of the CWMG, the well-known Gandhian philosophy of conflict theorist Joan V. Bondurant declared that the project warranted "the highest praise" and that

In no instance have the editors intruded themselves; yet they have managed to answer the repeated questions which even the best informed of readers need to ask of the material. In the verification of sources,

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authentication of authorship, identification of little-known persons in letters, and addition of valuable background and appendix materials, they have met the highest standards of scholarship (Bondurant, 1964, p.323).

Generally, reviews of the early available volumes of the CWMG in English language academic journals were very positive (Weiner, 1965; Harcourt, 1962). Paul Power, of the University of Cincinnati, noted that Gandhi would have admired the "conscientious work of the editors," and that "based on the quality of these volumes, the finished set promises to be a landmark in Asian Studies and beyond" (Power, 1967, pp.311-312). Donald W. Smith, of the University of Pennsylvania, added that from the nine volumes then published, "the editors were not inclined to omit anything that could conceivably be of even the slightest significance. The historian certainly cannot object to this policy, at least so long as he is not required to purchase the entire series" (Smith, 1964, pp.174-175). Margaret W. Fisher of the University of California, Berkeley, echoing Nehru's sentiments, summed up the value of the CWMG thus: "In a collection like this there is bound to be a mixture of what might be called the important and the unimportant or the casual. Yet, sometimes it is the casual word that throws more light on a person's thinking than a more studied writing or reference. In any event, who are we to pick and choose? Let him speak for himself" (Fisher, 1960, pp.123-124). Following the publication of vol.6 in 1963, the India scholar W.H. Morris-Jones added that "This collection will be near one hundred volumes before completion, but it is a necessity for any library seriously concerned with world politics" (Morris-Jones, 1963, p.213).

Ramachandra Guha notes that "These standards were scrupulously maintained in the years to come" (Guha, 2005). At least as far as the "Standard" or "Original" edition" was concerned.

Later Assessments of the CWMG

Ved Mehta is the writer of a very popular, but rather disparaging, book about Mahatma Gandhi and his followers. One of his jumping off points was the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. He informs his readers that in 1956 the Indian government established a special department of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry to publish the CWMG. It was estimated that the collection would eventually run to around eighty volumes. He quotes the general preface which sets out the purpose of the undertaking:

The series proposes to bring together all that Gandhiji said and wrote, day after day, year after year ... Those who knew him in the body as he trod this earth, striving every moment to practice what he believed, owe it to those who cannot have the privilege of learning from his presence and example, that they should hand over to the coming generations the rich heritage of his teachings in its purity and, as far as possible, in its entirety (Mehta, 1977, p.33).

Mehta conducted an interview with C.N.Patel, one of the main editors of the CWMG and the person with probably more hands on knowledge of what went into the volumes than anyone. However, Mehta seems more interested in Gandhi's "apostles", as he calls them – and then generally in ways that make them seem somewhat ridiculous – rather than look seriously at their work. In his chapter concerning "Editors, Biographers, and Bibliographers", following his usual description of his interviewee, he focuses on Patel's stomach problems rather than the contents of, or issues concerning, the production of the fifty-nine volumes that had by then been published (Mehta, 1977).

Thankfully he does a little more than discuss health issues with Swaminathan, who was still chief editor. Mehta asks, "How is the project coming along?" Swaminathan concedes that there have been problems with cost overruns such as having to pay Pyarelal, Gandhi's later secretary and chief biographer, for an assistant to secure his cooperation. Swaminathan points out that Gandhi wrote and spoke in Hindu, Gujarati and English, meaning translations were necessary, that the authentication of documents was a cumbersome process, and that material that turned up after the dated volume had been published meant that there would have to be supplementary volumes. Mehta commented on the fact that there would be a great deal of repetition and, probably correctly, that the Mahatma would not have approved of the project. As a final note to this section of his book, Mehta asks Swaminathan whether he thought that some parts of the CWMG read better than others, to be informed that "I am so busy supervising the whole project that I'm not able to read very much that goes into it. I have to look after fifty researchers and editors and thirty clerks just here in Delhi, and there are many others in Ahmedabad working on our great project" (Mehta, 1977, p.37). Here he gives us a whinging chief editor.

In a 1990 article on anthologies of Gandhi's writings, speeches, letters and recorded conversations, Stephen Hay of the University of California, Santa Barbara, notes that a time might come when the CWMG

may yet be copied onto computer disks, supplemented with previously

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omitted materials, and thoroughly indexed by subject. Given sufficient funds and demand for all these projects, a single index volume or set of volumes with extensive headings, subheadings and ample cross references would greatly ease the task of researchers. Scholars and compilers could then quickly find and connect different selections, indicating their exact locations (Hay, 1990, pp.675-676).

At the time Hay was writing this article, the 90 substantive volumes of the CWMG had been published and the Supplementary volumes and index volumes were being compiled. Given this, some of Hay's desires seemed quite reasonable as additions, and indeed some of them materialised as index volumes. Others had to wait until the electronic revised edition was released almost a decade after Hay's article, and would lead to serious troubles down the track.

Bhikhu Parekh takes note of mistranslations in various language editions of Gandhi's writings, including issues in the *Collected Work* (Parekh, 1986). This was probably inevitable given that a large portion of the content of the English language series is translated from Hindi and Gujarati, a large portion of the content of the Hindi language series is translated from English and Gujarati, and a large portion of the content of the Gujarati language series is translated from English and Hindi. Parekh observes that the "Collected Works leave a good deal more to be desired. They miss out important phrases and sentences, distort Gandhi's meaning, overlook crucial distinctions and inaccurately interpret some of his basic ideas. They also fail to give a full flavour of Gandhi's distinctive style of writing" (Parekh, 1986, p.169).

As Gandhi scholar Tridip Suhrud points out, the CWMG can "be seen as an exercise in translation from Gujarati and Hindi into English", and notes that this has resulted, as Parekh has also pointed out, in various problems (Suhrud, 2012, 2008, 2018). However, as seen by the issues surrounding the "revised" edition and the halt in taking the project further, the problems surrounding the 100 volume series go deeper than inevitable issues of translation.

The Revised and Electronic Version

In 1997, as part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Indian independence, the government proposed the production of a multimedia CD-ROM that included a digital version of the CWMG. The following year, the BJP government started the process of re-editing the CWMG to establish a searchable, updated electronic version of the series, with the material from the supplementary volumes integrated into the main collection in chronological order. The stated

aim was to provide the series with “uniformity, strict chronology and authenticity” (Mahurkar, 2004). Many Gandhi scholars had long awaited such a searchable e-book.² It seemed that at long last their wishes had been granted.

The revised edition was published in a CD-ROM version in 1999 and in print in 2001. The “Publisher’s Note” in the digital version foreshadowed future problems. The public was informed that the

Publications Division brings to the user an electronic book based on Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi running into 100 volumes with about 50,000 pages. This e-book has Gandhiji’s writings, speeches and letters covering the period 1884-1948 almost sixty years of his very active public life. The arrangement of the material in the series is in chronological order. The writings are placed as per date of publication, except where the date of writing is there or is ascertainable. Where an item had no date in the source, the inferred date has been indicated in square brackets with reasons. There is a comprehensive integrative search facility based on personalities, contemporary events, Gandhian concepts, places and other key words used by Gandhiji in his writings. Appendices refer to background material relevant to the text.

Further, it was noted that,

In the earlier series Gandhiji’s works were divided in 90 volumes, while volumes 91-97, known as supplementary volumes, carried the matter received later. Volumes 98-100 were indices. The objective of the series is to reproduce Gandhiji’s actual words as far as possible; reports of his speeches, interviews, conversations which did not seem to be authentic have been avoided, as also reports of his statements in indirect form. In the case of speeches, however, reports in indirect narration of proven authenticity have been included as they give additional information not otherwise available. Every endeavour has been made to adhere strictly to original. Variant spellings of names have, however, been retained as in the original. Words in square brackets in the text are explanatory in nature. Quoted passages are in small type and printed with an indent. Indirect reports of speeches and interviews have been set up in small type and slight changes have also been made where absolutely necessary. Though the best efforts have been made to include all that Gandhiji wrote and spoke in these volumes, however, there may be some material that might have been left out. As and when new matter comes to the notice of Publications Division, it will be included in subsequent reprints.

It soon became clear that several entries, mostly Gandhi’s letters, had been omitted from the revised electronic version. This led the champions of the original version to undertake a careful stock take of the new version to find that 97 items had gone missing from only the

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seven supplementary volumes. This included eight letters to Gandhi's South African friend and backer Herman Kallenbach. One could only guess how many letters or other entries were missing from the ninety substantive volumes. Tridip Suhrud, the former director of the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, where the Gandhi archive is housed, thought that there were about 500 entries missing from the new CD-ROM version of which about 215 have been added back in to the revised print version – leaving about 300 entries missing (Suhrud, 2004, pp.4967-4969). And this raised questions about whether there was some form of deliberate meddling with the historical record or whether the omissions resulted from general incompetence. It appears that the preparation of the digital version was entrusted to a computer company without any Gandhian editorial oversight. Looking at the omitted entries, no obvious nefarious undertaking becomes readily observable. Incompetence and sloppiness seems to be the more likely cause of the disorder.

In this new version, entries were, in Guha's words, "remixed" according to the "new specifications." The prefaces of the original volumes were dropped, as were the maps and illustrations. And the cross-references "so carefully prepared and so indispensable to scholars have been rendered meaningless", and the "new Subject and Person indexes" were rendered unusable (Guha, 2005).

Guha noted that scholars who had worked on the original edition were "appalled", proclaiming that the new series was "an utterly rudderless conglomeration" that mauled the memory of Gandhi, with the "vast edifice of Gandhian thought ... undone in a shocking orgy of twisting 'treating' and truncating, all in the name of 'revision'." This means that "with the great work redone and undone, both scholars and readers have been put into confusion." Why this was done is unknown. Guha sums up the controversy thus:

Speculation is rife as to why this new edition was commissioned. There could be a pecuniary motive at work; namely, kickbacks from the new contracts for typesetting and printing. Or the impulse could be ideological; the "editing" done with a view to excising entries embarrassing to the beliefs of those then in power. Or it could be personal vanity; the desire to illegitimately insert one's own, otherwise unknown name, as the "editor" of the works of Mahatma Gandhi (Guha, 2005).

Those who undertook the project or assisted in it remain unidentified. "The Publisher's Note" does not mention who the editor or members of any advisory board may have been. No one has come forward to accept responsibility.

In 2005 a committee headed by senior Gandhian Narayan Desai was set up by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to ascertain whether the revised version “should be scrapped and the original version published or whether the new version is capable of being revised.” The Committee talked to several Gandhi scholars and activists and in June wrote to Jaipal Reddy, the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, informing him that

After going through the records and personal hearings, the Committee would like to express its anguish on the manner in which the revised edition was brought out without expert editorial supervision or consultation. This was in stark contrast to the painstaking research, meticulous editing and dedication of Editors and other staff members of the office of Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (N.Desai, A.Mishra, B.R.Nanda, E.S.Reddy, J.P.Unival and P.K.Tripathi to S.J.Reddy et al, 2005).

The Committee had unanimously agreed that “in view of the large number and gravity of errors in the revised edition, it was not possible to remedy the situation by a few corrections.” It recommended that the sale of the revised edition be stopped and that a corrected CD-ROM version, based on the original edition, should be prepared as soon as possible (Reddy, 2005).

Following much controversy and public anger, later in the year, the series was withdrawn from circulation by the Government. Following lengthy campaigning by Dina Patel, a student of Gandhian literature and the daughter of C.N.Patel, the original standard edition was published in a searchable digital form in 2015. The task had taken 200 people eight years to complete (“Collected Works Rededicated”, 2017).

The Future of the CWMG

Gandhi’s writings are here to stay. However, there are still some issues to contend with. For the ease of research access, many scholars waited eagerly for a digital edition to materialize. Unfortunately the digital revised version was a disaster; however it is still the version on several Gandhi information web sites and still the version in the possession of many Gandhi scholars who did not have the shelf space to house 100 large volumes or the funds to purchase them. Fortunately, the standard edition is now back in its place as the “official” *Collected Works*, in hard copy and as an electronic version.³

After the completion of the 100 volumes, and particularly the seven volumes of supplementary material that came to light after the volumes covering the given dates had already been published, the question is

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raised as to how even newer unearthed material will be presented.

And then there is the issue of making sense of Gandhi's many replies to correspondence he received, correspondence that cannot be viewed without a visit to the National Archives or the archives of the Sabarmati Ashram. This is being rectified with the publication of the 8,500 letters that were received and preserved by Gandhi. Ramachandra Guha, in his "Foreword" to the first volume of Tridip Suhrud, Megha Todi and Kinnari Bhatt's, *Letters to Gandhi* (published in 2017), notes that

Although the CWMG is both impressive and indispensable, the series does have one limitation. It gathers together the letters, articles, speeches written or made *by* Gandhi, it occasionally refers to a letter written *to* Gandhi in the footnotes, and sometimes reproduces a few such letters in the volumes' appendices. By and large, though, the CWMG presents a portrait of the world from the point of view of Gandhi himself (Guha, 2017, p.iii).

This new series, published by Navajivan (not only the holder of the rights to Gandhi's writings but also a major publisher of his works and works about him) saw a second volume come out in 2020 and a third in 2024. This is to be warmly welcomed as in a very real sense it will complete the CWMG. However, it appears that editorship of the volumes, carried out by various combinations of the staff of the Sabarmati Ashram, has come to a halt after these first volumes (covering Gandhi's time in South Africa from 1889-1900, 1901-1910 and 1911-1914 respectively) became available. This is a major pity and hopefully only a temporary pause. As valuable as the CWMG is, the complementary *Letters to Gandhi* would make it even more so, but perhaps the history of such publications tells us that we cannot necessarily assume that more volumes will materialise any time in the near future.

There is precedent for unfinished series of Gandhi material. Besides the *Letters*, there are other key texts of Gandhiana that are incomplete. For example, in 1948 Navajivan published *Delhi Diary*, a collection of Gandhi's peace-pleading prayer speeches delivered in Delhi from September 1947 until his death at the end of January 1948. A publisher's note informed readers that these historical speeches fell into three parts: those delivered in Gandhi's Noakhali tour, those delivered in Calcutta and those delivered in Delhi and that "We intend to collect the others in separate volumes as early as possible." They were never published. By this time it was becoming clear that a bigger project, collecting all of Gandhi's writings and speeches, was going to subsume this more restricted endeavour (Gandhi, 1948).

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Still, under the title of *The Diary of Mahadev Desai*, a single volume chronicling Gandhi's time in Yeravda Jail with Sardar Patel between 10 March and 4 September 1932 was published in 1953. No other volumes appeared. However, there were other detailed accounts of Gandhi's life by his secretary. Nine volumes of Gandhi's secretary Mahadev Desai's *Day-to-Day-With-Gandhi [Secretary's Diary]* have been translated from Gujarati into English and published, covering the period between November 1917 and March 1927.⁴ They appeared in print between 1968 and 1974. Probably a further ten volumes would be needed to complete the series but, given the time that has elapsed since the ninth volume came off the press, it seems very unlikely that further volumes will ever appear. Fortunately, much of the material in these diaries is also available in the pages of the CWMG.

However, if, at a time when Gandhi was still in the living memory of the majority of Indians, and he seemed more relevant than he appears to be today, these series could not be completed, it is unlikely that they ever will be. Serious Gandhi scholars will have to make the trip, perhaps with translators, into the archives to view original documents rather than into a library or to a computer screen to view reproductions of items that were envisaged to go into various series of Gandhi material that were not completed or simply did not make it in to them. Thankfully, with all its tribulations, most of them, the *Letters to Gandhi* being the obvious exception, did make it into the pages of that remarkable resource which is the standard version of the CWMG – one that will be an even more remarkable resource once the counterpart volumes of the *Letters* are all published.

Notes

1. In this brief history of the series, the focus is on the English language version.
2. Each of the ninety-seven core volumes contained an index which made searching for names or topics cumbersome. In order to overcome this, two index volumes – ninety-eight and ninety-nine – covering subjects and names were added to the series. However, these volumes were not a combination of the earlier indexes, but a new re-indexing of the complete series. A thorough scholar may have felt the two new index volumes may have missed entries that were part of the earlier volumes (they did) and thus may have felt the need to look at ninety-nine indexes instead of, as previously, merely ninety-seven!
3. The digital version of the full original standard edition is available on the Sabarmati Ashram's Gandhi Heritage Portal site.
4. The publication of even the Gujarati diaries seems to have run out of

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steam - four further volumes would be needed to complete the series.

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Searching for a System with Soul: Gandhian Perspective of Parliamentary Democracy

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the triangular relationship of parliamentary democracy, constitutionalism, and institutionalism to understand Gandhi's perspective and its relevance for revitalizing governance with a moral core. Gandhi's critique highlights two tendencies: first, the growing centralisation of power in the executive, disrupting the balance among legislature, executive, and judiciary; second, party-driven democracies where electoral competition and ideology weaken the individual-institutional relationship. These patterns aggravate democracy's ethical crisis and undermine constitutional morality (Rajdharmā). The paper argues that Gandhian parliamentary swaraj offers a corrective, enabling democracy to become more participatory and ethical by moving beyond mere procedural prescriptions

Key words: *Constitutional Democracy, Institutionalism, Rajdharmā, Dharma, Parliamentary Swaraj*

Context: Problematizing Parliamentary Democracy

PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACIES ARE one of the essential attributes of modern state system and has got crystallised with refinements in the state structures. People's participation and institutional procedures have shaped modern democracies. Parliamentary democracies are being experimented as method of governance based on democratic institutionalism and constitutional morality. Considering itself as government of all, parliamentary

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democracy has succeeded in ensuring representation in governance of diverse groups and has established itself as one of the most preferred systems of governance in larger part of the globe. Even in India, the national movement describes how the issue of representational democracy constructed the anti-colonial thought. However, parliamentary democracy's robust representational agenda is showing a noticeable deficiency when it comes to the welfare and wellbeing of its stakeholders. Considering such deficit as inherent characteristic of parliamentary democracy, Gandhi criticised both Parliamentary democracy and British Parliament.

The rise of Gandhian perspective on electoral representation and on modern democracy can be traced in Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (1909). In post-independent India, Gandhian perspective on parliamentary democracy and its proponents have developed a proposal for federalist postcolonial constitution, combining a system of participatory legislative councils with collectivist agrarian socialism (Parasher 2022, p.837). The intellectual origin of Gandhi's democratic thought in 1930s and 1940s was outlined and articulated mainly by Gandhians as antiparliamentarianism. Gandhi's conception of institutionalism can be helpful in explaining the present democratic structures as antithetical to Gandhian ethical democracy, where the moral foundations of politics tries to create a constitutional ethics for both the citizens and the rulers. Democracy as minimal governance influenced Gandhi to fix up the balance between rights and duties by looking beyond contractual state's procedural primacy. Through his idea of parliamentary *swaraj* he was arguing for what we owe to each other (Scanlon 2000).

From Anarchism to Antiparliamentarianism: Gandhi's Discord with Democracy

Considering Gandhi's idea of a stateless society and his engagement with institutions of state, many commentators labelled him as an 'anarchist' for his conceptualization of the modern state as a representative of violence in concentrated and organised form (Gandhi 1954, p.74). This vicious characterization of state indicates, how he repelled the omnipotence and coercive character of the state. To establish an ideal order of a stateless society (Kumar 2004, p.377)-*Swaraj* as an alternative to modern state, he has explicitly mentioned:

There remains the question as to whether in an ideal society, there should be any or no government. I do not think, we need worry ourselves about this at the moment. If we continue to work for such a society, it will

slowly come into being to an extent, such that the people can benefit by it.(Gandhi 1946, p.309)

This proposition at the outset might seem to be in lines with the western anarchism based on mutual self-interest and rejection of all external sanctions (Gier 2003, p.81). However, at close reading of Gandhi it could be construed that his ideas were much unlike the classical approach to anarchism. He rather propagated a practice of nonviolence and self-suffering, discouraging self-interest and reintroduced constraint and coercion of a certain kind. This ideal could be achieved through the path of Satyagraha. It is one where there is no machine as the modern state but a sense of governance and rule wasn't absent either. This was an ethical proposition of democracy(Dallmayr 2011, p.7-8) rooted upon moralised politics which talks of self-rule or Swaraj instead of Western idea of selfish rule.

In Gandhi's formulation 'Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to the human beings the path of duty. Performance of duty means to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. In doing so we come to know ourselves'(Gandhi 1909, p.56). Even more importantly in doing so we come to rule ourselves both as individuals and as peoples, such that we conquer our atomistic self into a higher self. Therefore, Gandhi views, individual development to be solely possible when society prospers with cooperation of all. One can identify Gandhian democracy as cluster of ideas circulating between South Africa and colonial India from approximately 1910 to 1950. This very existence of Gandhian tradition into the immediate post war years illustrates how the institutional apparatus of liberal representative democracy- the constitutional arrangement of elected parliament came to be seen as a problem to overcome in establishing post-colonial republics (Parasher 2022, p.856).

Rejecting rights-oriented liberalism as insufficient theory of democracy and refusing to give individual rights a central role in understanding of moral and political life, Gandhi's principal problem with liberal democracy is its separation of rights and duties. By separating the "ought" from the "is," politics loses its moral focus. The notion of duty comes before that of rights, which is subordinate to the former. The effective exercise of a right springs not from the individual who possesses it, but from her responsibility towards others. Here, a right is recognized through the sense of duty toward others (Jahanbegloo 2015, p.66). Rights in true sense can be secured by observance of social obligations by individuals for each other to promote common good life for each other, where rule of the state becomes almost a futile proposition. Thus, Gandhi conceptualizes a

moral democratic ecosystem which can be sustained by moving away from a contractual relationship of liberalism to one based on social obligations, possible only in the Gandhian model of a stateless society. It is in this context, he has been termed by Dr. Gopinath Dhawan, as a Philosopher Anarchist (Fattal 2006).

The formula provided by Gandhi to deal with interests in or outside of democratic societies, is to eliminate the causes of interest as much as possible (Terchek 1986, p.311). As in modern form of government, democracy penetrates all aspects of our life right from governance mechanism to private sphere. All of which are cushioned by capitalism, leading human to ceaseless greed for accumulation of more resources and fulfilment their particular interests. This selfish behaviour of a human abandons the idea of spiritually attuned and awakened individual, hence dislocating one from community life, this for Gandhi is the root cause for industrialized civilization (Roy and Ranjan 2016, p.249). It comes about as a form of violence, i.e., of self-accumulation. In this degraded status of modern society, liberalism encourages and justifies the coercive power of state without condemning arguments against use of violence, wars and killings.

Interrogating Procedural Democracy: From Liberal to Illiberal

In contemporary situation, parliamentary democracies have turned out to be such, where individual members(citizens) are under sway of their factional parties which have mostly misused the institution of parliament. Considering this rupture, Fareed Zakaria has rightly pointed about 'the rise of illiberal democracy'(1997, p.22) and illiberal tendencies around the world. Where the sole promotion of elections has been equated with practice of constitutional democracy, and ignoring other crucial values such as—the rule of law, individual freedom and independence of institutions. This limited reading of constitutional rule has paved way for use of corrupt practices to win elections; in such a scenario the elected governments fail to safeguard basic liberties of the masses. Reflecting the eroded reality of institutions and the socio-political set-up. Further differentiating between 'constitutional liberalism' and 'democracy', which Zakaria claims, while democracy is flourishing; values of constitutional liberalism are not.

The prevailing interest-based approach to politics is merely 'nominal' democracies (Pantham 1986, p.320). Which has become more apparent with the spurt of many populist leaders and parties. Who instead of representing the individual concerns of the people, aim at making value-neutral procedural and technical political decision, reducing citizens into captivated individuals who could only decide to accept or refuse the men who are to rule them, as Pantham critiqued

of this democratic methodism in, *On the Theory of Democracy: A Critique of 'the Schumpeter Dahl Axis'* "(1986). Therefore, while in the private sphere men are supposedly understood to be 'autonomous' and 'rational', as soon as they enter the political life, their private judgements are excluded, their natural political right is given up, and the crucial decisions are supposedly taken on behalf of the individuals by these leaders and representatives (Pateman 1975, p.451). These agencies of modern state are seen to be the moral guardian of human rights, however the decisions made by them have recurrently been opposed by the citizens for their arbitrary and discriminatory nature. Thus, a representative state becomes the bearer of alienated political rights of citizens. That subsequently, ends up ignoring the true democratic ethics of liberty, equality, justice, accountability, dignity, fraternity and participation being the normative values at the heart of any constitutional democracy.

The ongoing disruptions find genesis in the minimalist nature of western liberalism due to the unsolved conflict between unrestricted individual freedom and social interest as an area of rational action (Mishra 2012, p.206). However, Gandhi propagates for horizontal co-existence among the individuals and the communities to be inter-linked and convergent. That could be successfully achieved by assimilative co-existence of communities followed without any threat to the tradition of other (Patnaik 2022, p.30). The lack of which in today's times has led to cleavages in the social arena, he therefore relies on Indian values for critiquing the West. To this Ramashray Roy remarks, "The essence of a democratic system is the centrality of individual *qua* individual as free agents responsible for determining his wants derived from his own nature and doing all he can to satisfy them." (Roy 2009, p.4) Highlighting the fallacy of liberalism, with a wall of separation between the private and public, Gandhi's vision of democracy was characterized by the inseparability of the two and the self-transformation of the former in favour of the latter (Jahanbegloo 2015, p.65).

An Alternative to Procedural Democracy : An Ethical Path to Decentralised Rule

Gandhi argued for restructuring the social and economic institutions of society based on equality. Grounding on the ethical assumptions that individuals are moral equals and there should be no inherited or acquired superiority by any section of society (Patil 1983, p.109). So that many of the interests which seem important in highly diversified hierarchal societies, would become less important or disappear. It could only be achieved in a perfect state of ethical rule which he termed

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as *Ramrajya*. In this 'sovereignty of people will be based on pure moral authority' (Mishra 2013, p.457), thus a spiritualized democracy is achieved. Instead of a pyramidally structured society with the powerful national state at the top with powerless units at the bottom, Gandhi emphasised on relationship between responsive government and active citizens in a horizontally interrelated social life (Patnaik 2022, p.30). Where good governance is achieved through right balance between a minimum modern democratic state and a vibrant society of citizens undermining the split between civil society and political order (Jahanbegloo 2015, p.67).

In recent years, Indian Parliamentary democracy faces polarising trends of identity based majoritarianism, that at times makes democracy what Alex de Tocqueville has projected in his classic on democracy 'as the tyranny of majority'. To address such turns and twists in democracy, Gandhi used the idea of inclusive religiosity that focuses on *ahimsa*, *sarvodaya* and *Ramrajya*. Gandhi's democracy rooted in his Hindu belief system envisioned a strategy of nonviolence that could confront oppression while upholding compassion and reverence for adversaries. His concept of *sarvodaya* aimed at elevating the marginalised interwoven with the idea of *antyodaya*, prioritizing the welfare of the last person in society. Gandhi's fusion of Hindu values with the principles of *ahimsa*, *sarvodaya*, and *Ramrajya* provides a roadmap for democratisation in Indian society (Srivastava 2022, p.218-219).

This ideal democratic society surpasses this binary nature of duty and rights debate of modernity, where rights are held at higher pedestal quashing the significance of duty for citizens. Gandhi has alternatively talked about how rights and duties go hand-in-hand, that rights originate from the obligations performed and that if an individuals' rights are to be steady with another's right, it can only happen through acknowledgement of comparing obligations by men. Reciprocity of both rights and duties is vital for development of the citizens which comes full circle buttressing the development of a country (Panigrahi and Panda 2022, p.199).

This is purely attainable when *Rajdharm* and *Swadharma* coincide with one another, as Gandhi suggests them as two paddles of good governance of the welfare state. Creating a complete holy convergence of 'circle of dharm' (2022, p.200), where *dharm* as righteousness is a unique blend of law and morality. While, *Rajdharm* revolves around the concept of *prajapalanah* (Singh 2015, p.132-138), which means the duty of state should be to exercise its political power towards the people and aim at maximizing the welfare of people (Duncan 1976) without discriminating against any. On the other hand, *Swadharma*

emphasizes on discharging individual 'duty' (Jahanbegloo 2013). This notion of *Swadharma* limits any activity that endeavours to infringe the dharma of another person (Rothermund 1969), such that it gradually pushes an individual to the understanding of common cause (Panigrahi and Panda 2022, p.196). Gandhi therefore, strongly advocates for performance of one's duty imperative for preservation of social, political and economic wellbeing of the nation. Realization of *dharm* at both ends of—individual and state is crucial for achieving an ideal democracy of Gandhi's postulation.

Holistic Governance: Gandhi's Institutional View

Locating an individual within the larger society of governance, in his formulation of Oceanic circle, Gandhi indicates towards holistic nature of polity. Gandhi suggests an institution of Village Republic, where each village, is a component part of the state, it forms the life-breath of an ideal State by preserving non-violence and truth in their entirety throughout the State (Mishra 2013, p.457). This form of governance is supposed to ensure involvement of each individual in the governance system. Gandhi's Sarvodaya, which is about good of all against the Benthamite utilitarian conception of the state, which only seeks to propagate good of the majority. Considering this view, Gandhi has been regarded as an ethical absolutist, who accepted metaphysical idealism (Varma 1959, p.81). Believing in supremacy of ethical values and Sarvodaya based on the concept of the unity of existence and universal love, it stresses universal love as the only way of life. In this manner Gandhi is inclined to sustain and reform the democratic order through civic practices, by redefining the concept of citizenship through the virtue of duty of citizens and their participation in the political community (Jahanbegloo 2015, p.68). Where the individual is not egoistic and materialistic to self-aggrandize but is a righteous social-being. Further, refusing to be satisfied with the progress and well-being of a class and a nation, he advocates for good and emancipation of all living beings (Varma 1959). This vision was explained in 1946, by Gandhi through his program of action that explains about a decentralized system of governance:

Independence begins at the bottom... It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its own affairs... This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbors or from the world. It will be a free and voluntary play of mutual forces. In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose

center will be the individual. Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it (Gandhi 1946, p.80).

Gandhi threw light on the significance of institutions to ensure an ideal society of perfect democracy. That has been described by Ramin Jahanbegloo, as practical realization of internal democracy to talk about the idea of solidaristic citizenship (2015, p.60), wherein there was a no particular mechanism of parliament per se. But one organized along lines of panchayat units was prescribed. Where elections should to be held accordingly with all representatives indirectly elected by the representatives of the lower units, except for the panchayat members (Patil 1983, p.114). These elected representatives were to ensure a self-sufficient and self-supporting developed village. This could be achieved only when the representatives maintain close contact with their constituencies, engage in adult education, support agriculture and home industries, ensure prevention of people suffering from diseases, and maintain a dairy recording activity of each day. Here communal possession and use of these resources offers a different orientation to the triangular relationship between individual, society and the nature. This Kumarappa defended to be “cultural democracy” against a “formal democracy” of universal suffrage and competitive elections, based on idea of “consciousness of unity” (Parasher 2022, p.840).

Gandhi's Advocacy of Parliamentary Swaraj: Emergence of Moral Authority of Representatives and Citizens

Though in the ideal situation, Gandhi abstained from arguing for a parliamentary form of government especially for the way it operates. Nonetheless, he was realist and pragmatist (Pandey 1988, p.41) enough to understand the need of hour for a new nation-state to have institution like parliament. Therefore, Gandhi couldn't out-rightly discard almost hundred years of practice of modern-Parliamentary system stemming from India's struggle against British power (Narain 2007, p.2). Beginning with the government of India Act 1858, Indian Councils Act, 1861; then the Government of India Acts of 1909, 1919 and 1935 offered, opportunity for legislative experience, and trained the participants in the difficult art of parliamentary system (Pathak 1958, p.338). He regarded, since this parliamentary step had taken, it would be improper to boycott the existing effort (Gandhi 1946, p.237-238). Instead of its wholesale rejection, he suggested to recognize the limitations of the legislative system and replace it with one based upon ethical values—establishing a Parliamentary Swaraj. Gandhi

formulated a model of parliamentary government in context of India. Such that he regarded the Constituent Assembly as a constructive satyagraha.

Drawing his line of thinking from Henry David Thoreau's idea "government is best that governs least," which could be possible only in a decentralized democracy of ethical constitutionalism. Ultimately, redefining democracy as "the rule of unadulterated non-violence" describing not all legislation to be violence. Expressing himself, in favor of government through consent of people, negates any kind of exclusion and exploitation arising from centralized system and the majority community. Reinforcing an inclusive participative democracy where the public is not alienated from decision making democracy (Jahanbegloo 2015). Hence, at the Second Round Table conference in his speech on 17th September, 1931 he gave an outline of the legislative organization for the Indian nation (Singh 1994, p.77).

On the lines of 'Swaraj polity' where ideally each person belongs to the primary village community and the district, regional, national, and world communities, where the world community is ultimately integrated with the cosmic order of nature and paradise. Unlike the modern liberal state both self and nature here are in sync with the swaraj polity. In this decentralized polity the activities flow from below to the higher units. This apparently provides for Jay Prakash Narayan's outline for Loksakti or Lokniti (Patnaik 2022, p.28). During the meeting Gandhi proposed, each village would elect its own representatives to form an electorate for further election to the central or federal legislature (ed. Murti 1970, p.288). The representatives elected in this manner alone would be able to keep contact with every humble villager, thus establishing real democracy (Singh 1994, p.77-78). This structuring of indirect elections was to ensure representatives are tried and tested in public life and also better representation can be ensured, unlike the present scenario in order to reduce corruption and violence (Kumar 2004, p.377).

This highlights India as a model for a new type of polity of ethical values, which could be the only successful way out in bringing sixteen different major language groups and six world religions together, not by brute force but by rule of law and representative democracy (Gier 2003, p.80). To many the above postulation by Gandhi might sound as a diversion from his initial popularly known view on the parliament and his aspiration for a stateless society. While the latter proposition might come out to be true, the former outlook of anti-parliamentarism is more of a half-hearted study from Hind Swaraj which is as follows.

The condition of England at present is pitiable. I pray to God that India may never be in that plight. That which you consider to be the Mother of Parliaments is like a sterile woman and a prostitute. Both these are harsh terms, but exactly fit the case. That Parliament has not yet, of its own accord, done a single good thing. Hence I have compared it to a sterile woman (Gandhi 1909, p.28).

Gandhi has been critical of modern parliamentary democracies and the nature of English Parliament through his work, but not the idea of institution called Parliament at the broader level. The rationale behind this assessment is the degradation in overall performance of this institution in England, due to ill-functioning of the British parliamentarians—the agencies of the legislature. It has impacted the political climate in a way that West gets limited to competition between political parties and the politicians to enjoy power, rather than collaboration among citizens (Jahanbegloo 2015, p.65). This growing immorality among the agencies stooping to the level of justifying prejudices unleashed towards the colonies, has led to overall degeneration of the legislature in England. Consequently, he differentiates between the institution of parliament and its agency the Parliamentarians in this context. This above statement from *Hind Swaraj* comes more as a word of caution for a nation such as India striving for nationhood. Therefore, he recommended India not to import the same pattern of parliamentary government as the West, to save itself from similar plight. As he mentions about the members of the English parliament;

But, as a matter of fact, it is generally acknowledged that the members are hypocritical and selfish. Each thinks of his own little interest. When the greatest questions are debated, its members have been seen to stretch themselves and to doze. Sometimes the members talk away until the listeners are disgusted. Carlyle has called it the “talking shop of the world”. Members vote for their party without a thought. Their so-called discipline binds them to it. If the money and time wasted by Parliament were entrusted to a few good men, the English nation would be occupying today a much higher platform (Gandhi 1909, p.28-29).

The members and therefore the system has become a ruthless pursuit of centralised power (Varma 1959), such that MPs use coercive arbitrary action oriented by the political parties to enlarge their interests. The agents end up acting like masters of people, instead of being servants of their electors (Gandhi 1909). Subsequently, turning parliamentary system into a site of unhealthy competition between parties and therefore among the members for position. Indeed,

political parties have emerged as major reason of this condition. Causing two folds injury on the agencies of the parliament.

First, the parliamentarians have lost their independent voices as representatives of people to work for their welfare. Instead, act like brokers of their party as they avoid taking a moral-autonomous position in the legislative process. Turning the parliamentary democracy into a power play and game of money. Therefore, Gandhi attributed in Hindi Swaraj to the plight of the institution caused by the influence of political parties, "Parliament is simply a costly toy of the nation....One of the members of that Parliament recently said that a true Christian could never become a member of it. Another said that it was a baby." (Gandhi 1909, p.12-13) Not only this, he even critiqued the expenditure of huge monetary resources in the elections. Therefore, he went on to advise, "nominees of a popular organisation should be elected without any effort on the latter's part." (Gandhi 1946, p.13) This point reflects the level of concern he raised with regard to influence of political parties on contaminating the act of MPs.

Second, the members with high ministerial positions and even the most powerful authority—the Prime Minister seem to be more concerned with the success of their party than the welfare of Parliament. Often neglecting overall common good of the people just to voice on behalf of their own interest group. Hardly adding any value and effectiveness to the institution instead uses the platform merely for party advantage (Gandhi 1909, p.28-29). By performing merely as powerful orators under the banner of patriotism they try to safeguard themselves from being held accountable by the voters. These people change their views frequently. Their views swing like pendulum of a clock and are never steadfast. The people would follow a powerful orator or a man who gives them parties, receptions, etc. As are the people, so is their Parliament. If India copies England, it is my firm conviction that she will be ruined (1909).

These ramifications of party-based politics, aren't only limited to the agencies but have also affected the voters mind and pattern of political choices. In a representative form of government where elections have become crucial, modern devices of propaganda and the corrosive influences of wealth can have bearings on the electorate. Parties with their octopus-like grabbing hold appear on the scene to enhance their electoral-number game. Such that it won't be possible for the people to make genuine independent choices even amongst the limited number of candidates who are put forward for elections (Varma 1959, p.289). Hence, the independent voters are lured by publicity done at the hands of their parties, instead of making voting decisions based upon the true needs.

Elector's private relations with the candidates have often weighed with them more than the candidates' qualifications. It would be well if we set up a better standard for the elections to the legislative councils. Only thus shall we be able to make the best use of the councils. I suggest also that voters should not identify themselves with any party or its quarrels. They should consider candidates' views and not their party. Their character should weigh more even than their views. If I were a voter from among the list, I would first select men of character and then I would understand their views (Gandhi 1920, p.7).

To this corruption ridden situation among legislators and within the modern legislatures, model of parliamentary swaraj provides a moral cure, where the MPs aren't serving as rapacious members of their political parties. Who are merely interested in aggrandizing their power-hungry selves, but are expected to nurture the institution of 'gram swaraj' by being its true representatives. Gandhi's parliamentary swaraj comes about as a party-less democracy, where the parliamentarians would have broken down the shackles of greed to attain Swaraj themselves. To perform their true *dharma* on principles of *ahimsa* and *antyyodaya* for collective welfare of their village constituencies.

The atomistic essence of Western liberalism at large, and the English parliament in particular is an operating sample of liberal order that has turned Britain into a nominal democracy that actually supported enduring colonialism for capitalist exploitation of the Asian and the Africans. Nevertheless, Gandhi instead emphasised on providing the institutional solution to promote ethical constitutionalism grounded on values of—non-violence and freedom for India (Terchek 1986, p.299). Gandhi's petition was to counter construction of modern democracy. The link between political representation and parliamentary democracy has led to capturing of political establishments by the elite, preventing swaraj to be exercised by the people at large. This is the driving force behind unaccountability of elected representatives in modern life, as Gandhi specified (Parasher 2022, p.848). Therefore, his idea of intuitionism comes out distinctively compared to the traditional understanding, in the form of a parliament to provide a fresh institutional arrangement promoting these values to achieve participatory democracy. To establish "parliamentary swaraj" at both levels—institutional and socio-political, for independent India, Gandhi emphasised on the mutual relation between the two and their impact equally on each other.

Parliamentary Swaraj at Institutional Level

At the institutional setup, the system is such, that those who seek to contest election must have acquired 'personal swaraj', so they are expected to be selfless, able and incorruptible (Kumar 2004) legislators. Through the parliamentary programme, we are to advance a step further in the direction of non-violence, guided by the philosophy of Sarvodaya, aiming to protect the weakest section in the society (Parel 1994, p.115). This was to be achieved by following the path of Gandhi's constructive programme—including hand-spinning and handweaving, Hindu- Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, prohibition—is in pursuit of truth and non-violence (Gandhi 1937).

Truth and non-violence are both the means and the end, and given the right type of men the legislatures can be the means of achieving the concrete pursuit of truth and non-violence. If they cannot be that, it will be our fault and not theirs. If we have a real hold on the masses, the legislatures are bound to be that and nothing else (1937, p.97-98).

Furthering the cause for a party-less democracy he expected the representatives work towards devotion of the Nation in place of loyalty to the party (Jones 1960, p.207). As to him politics does not arise from competition among the political parties but the contrary it is the outcome of collaboration among citizens. In other words, politics is the pursuit of freedom through a conscious self-transforming act (Jahanbegloo 2015). Therefore, even in his proposal for Parliamentary Swaraj, it is only through non-party system that Sarvodaya is possible, against the practice of dictatorship of the cabinets and party oligarchy. Both of which are prominent reasons behind this delegitimization of legislators in party-based polity as these MPs are unable to use their rational as true representatives of their constituency. He therefore envisioned, in party-less polity the MPs of independent India to be altruistic, independent-minded and hardworking individuals with democratic values, much unlike the English party system of democracy. Gandhi vehemently discouraged the need for high expenditure for elections.

The legislature as an institution can expose and stand up against Government's wrongs by preventing undesirable legislation, and bring laws which are useful for the public. So that much help can be fostered towards carrying out constructive programme fulfilling the aspirations of popular will. This happens to be legislator's real service (Gandhi 1946, p.13). Along with the other important ministers, Gandhi talked of the cardinal role of the speaker to ensure proper functioning of the legislature. Certain responsibilities of being fearless, naturally just,

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and above all truthful and non-violent in thought, word and deed; could be successful only in a party-less system (1946).

The Speaker's position assumes very high importance, greater than that of the Prime Minister. For he has to discharge the functions of a judge while he occupies the chair. He has to give impartial and just rulings. He has to enforce decorum and laws of courtesy between members. He has to be calm in the midst of storms. He has opportunities of winning over opponents which no other member of the House can possibly have. Now if a Speaker outside the House ceases to be impartial and indulges in party polemics, he cannot possibly carry the weight he would if he observed impartiality and calmness everywhere.....(1946, p.164)

These ideals set by Gandhi of an ethical democracy for India couldn't be attained in a presidential form of government but only in a parliamentary one. The former locates centralised power in the hands of one powerful leader. While it would have ensured stability and a responsible form of governance, through separation of power between the three branches works in the mechanistic manner. But the executive wouldn't have been successful in voicing the aspirations of a diverse electorate in regular affairs by not being part of the legislature at all. Rather a holistic functioning of institutions is the required between all the branches, to promote common good. This would ensure better transparency, accountability and efficiency of legislature. Thus, a decentralised participatory system foreseen by Gandhi could be best implemented in a reformed parliamentary democracy, that aims to attain Swaraj.

Contemporary Decay in Institutional Perspective of Parliamentary Democracy

To its contrary present reality of India's parliament, is far-distanced from Gandhi's vision for various reasons. This can be verified by the much visible symptoms effecting the over-all decay in performance of this institution. First, much alike other democracies of twentieth century which under conditions of capitalism underneath the veneer of formal representative democracy has become, "a form of government which assumes the name of the rule by the people and the outward appearance of such rule", as Vinoba Bhave (1940) described. As now, the pompous parties and symbols are winning, and the more locally connected individuals get neglected in the process of electoral competition. Apart from that, there has been a decline in productivity of legislature, with decrease in number of sittings over years. While the 16th Lok Sabha sat for 331 days. The 17th Lok Sabha held only 274 sittings (Menon 2024) becoming the shortest Lok Sabha

term since 1952 (PRS 2023). The low sitting reflects on the democratic culture of a country where the main body of deliberation and collective decision making has been side-lined.

Second, the rise of disruptions in parliament affects its smooth functioning. It has emerged as a tool by the political parties to bring into notice of their selfish agendas and interest, instead of common good. The 16th Lok Sabha lost 16% of its scheduled time to disruptions, better than the 15th Lok Sabha (37%), but worse than the 14th Lok Sabha (13%) (Malik, Kanwar and Kanadje 2019). Sloganeering, walkouts, or even shouting has been used by the party members under the direction of the party. As parliamentarians are selected by the parties not on the basis of their capability to debate and put across their viewpoint in a discursive manner, but for their ability to win elections. Therefore, it is natural that preferences would be vociferously put-forth through disruptions rather than through cogent debate (Pandey 2015). It has further become apparent with the introduction of anti-defection law. With the parties beginning to appoint 'party whips' as internal enforcing authorities. Experts infer that the anti-defection legislation has considerably reduced the degree of leverage in the hands of individual legislators. In the case of disruptions, MPs may not always fear disqualification, but follow the 'disruption whip' to project themselves as a 'loyal party man' and cash onto the benefits that would be made available by the party (Phadnis 2016, p.8-10). It is the dominant leaders of the party on whose whims and fancies most of the decisions are made. Hence, the choices and opinions of individual MPs gets subdued, creating a crisis of representation in a classic model of parliamentary democracy.

Thirdly, the low success rate of Private Members Bills(PMBs) in floor of the parliament highlights how independent voices of the MPs have been stifled by the government in the name of majority. With only 14 PMBs being passed (Kumar 2010, p.1) out of about 7000 bills till date. The high amount of PMBs lapsing instead of being considered shows that most of them haven't even been deliberated in the house. The criteria of PMBs in legislature, comes out as an opportunity especially for the opposition MPs to contribute in the legislation process tabling bills on some of the most crucial matters. That's why Gandhi was apprehensive about political parties, as the party in power particularly with majority, will never allow legislators to function unless they are toeing with party line. However, in some cases it is used to serve the utility by MPs to gain attention in Parliament from the party head to seek high position. Therefore, at times, some of these bills are brushed aside as they cease to be of any interest of their political party. Political parties in India, over the past decades

have decomposed the nature of Indian legislature. This is a kind much misplaced from Gandhi's ethical conception of party-less democracy, where legislators are to be independent minded serving the needs of the people. Henceforth, functioning like English parliamentarians motivated by their selfish desire for power.

Parliamentary Swaraj at Socio-Political Level

For the latter part Gandhi focused on the role of ethical politics of ideal state, with 'Swaraj' conception of democracy at the socio-political arena. Which is much different from the classical idea of democracy where state acquires more and more power over people's life. Swaraj, according to Gandhi consisted of *ahimsa* (non-violence), *sarvodaya* and *Ramraj*. Parliamentary swaraj at social level tries to make state-society relations more human and responsible. The increased state power means the retreat of the individual, who in his isolation becomes more vulnerable to manipulation exploitation and dominance by the state as well as others (Roy and Ranjan 2016, p.251). That is why Gandhi looks at increase of the power of the state with the greatest fear because although while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation it does the greatest harm to the mankind. This hypertrophy of state transforms citizens into subjects who invest their trust in the benevolent power, and themselves into humdrums of everyday life (2016). These distortions impel Gandhi to reject western type of democracy to use Wolin's characterization, as an embodiment of, 'the law of violence and employment of violence as if it were the external law' (Wolin 1960). Gandhi's indictment of democracy concerns the degradation of the democratic ideal into a utilitarian democratic ideology and into its institutional manifestations at social operations.

Therefore, he attempted to reintroduce political culture and political psychology as a vital element of theory and practise of democracy (Terchek 1986, p.316) while seeking an alternative vision of the society. Aiming to restructure for common purpose and individual responsibility to the community in an ideal society. To this Uday Mehta describes Gandhi as an 'deeply anti-political thinker' as he abjures to the notion of secularity of progress, accompanying valorisation of politics in state. His commitment to non-violence can be understood by acknowledging that he did not view the world solely in political terms (Mehta 2010, p.363-364). But as a spiritualised society where man is not a *kamachar*- a life involving a ceaseless effort to satisfying material desires for the maintenance of an elegant lifestyle in society, but exercises his *Swadharma*. As it robs the individual of their power of self-determination. Such that it makes the man purely instrumental cutting him off from the source of divine devoid of morality. This

system leads to prevalence of exploitation, oppression and injustice, such a social order becomes dominant pattern of social interaction. (Roy and Ranjan 2016, p.250)

Socially, Gandhi's parliamentary Swaraj, talks of moral politics which entails to give no space for majoritarian and exclusive politics. In domestic as well as international arena of discourse we find war, hate, violence and suppression being rendered by the state as a mouth piece of capitalism and majoritarianism. Gandhian perspective on parliamentary democracy argues for establishing a harmonious socio-political order to realize humanistic democratic ideals. This paper suggests, the government should aim at freeing persons from political, social enslavement and from economic exploitation by paving way for gliding their slavery off (2016).

Thus, Gandhian concept of democracy as 'disciplined and enlightened' one, which is not only a form of government but relates with all walks of human life. He accepts that individual is the centre of democracy which can be evolved by his continuous endeavour. Therefore, Gandhi suggests, "Democracy has to be built up inch by inch in economic, social and political life." But in his view this goal cannot be achieved by the State as an embodiment of coercive power. It requires a collective effort on the part of individuals. Hence brotherhood to obtain Sarvodaya becomes an important ingredient of Gandhian conception of democracy (Mishra 2012, 206). The legacy of Gandhi's democratic thought influenced both our Indian national movement and the normative framework of governance – the Indian constitution. From perspective of Gandhianism, representative government was a profoundly contested category and continues to be one of the important normative themes to be researched and analysed.

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Rama “Rajya” and “Rama” Rajya: Disinterring the Significance of Gandhian Ideal State

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the meaning of Ramarajya, a Gandhian ideal state concept, and its historical origins and interpretations. It highlights how this concept has been idealized into a mythic representation of Lord Rama by a dominant cultural and political hegemony in India. The paper discusses two narratives: one presenting an ideal of governance, and the other a counter-narrative, based on a particular cultural hegemony, aimed at exclusion and the thwarting of justice.

Key words: Gandhi, Ideal State, Justice, Cultural Hegemony, Moral Sovereignty

Rama “Rajya” and “Rama” Rajya: Disinterring the Significance of Gandhian Ideal State

*R*AMARAJYA IS THE concept of the ideal state according to the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. He is an important modern Indian political thinker and “[O]ne of the non-western thinkers in the modern age to develop a political theory grounded in the unique experiences and articulated in the lines of indigenous philosophical vocabulary of this country.” (Parekh 1989, p.3. cited Gray 2015.) Scholars interpret the concept of Ramarajya differently, emphasizing its political, philosophical, moral, and spiritual dimensions. This paper investigates how this concept of governance has lately been idealized as a mythic representation of Lord Rama and Him as a perfect ruler. Gandhi’s

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Ramarajya is not “Rama’s” *rajya*, but it is *Rama* “*Rajya*”, which envisages a society of moral sovereignty where individuals are righteous and self-governing and the state works towards establishing justice. This paper discusses these two narratives elaborately: one presents an ideal of what governance should seek to attain, and the other, a counter-narrative, remodeling governance based on a particular cultural hegemony.

Gandhi’s notion of *Ramarajya* is based on principles of moral sovereignty, justice, and equality and a conception of a state that would work towards the protection of the vulnerable. It is the political administration of justice, where the widows do not lament, people are without fear of disease, calamity, or robbers, and there is no untimely death of the young¹. Gandhi’s political thought contains three major conceptual components: universal equality, responsibility, and interconnectedness. He believed that non-violent resistance should be aimed in part at achieving political equality, which, for example, could be embodied in the new Indian constitution. (Gray 2015, p.375.)

He envisaged a morally governed or virtuous state where everyone was happy and conscious about duty and enjoyed the right to life and its derivatives equally. He proposed the establishment of a state based on ‘*swaraj*’², a morally acceptable alternative to the modern coercive state. Gandhi equated *Ramarajya* with *Swaraj*,³ which is considered to be self-rule, self-restraint, and one that could be equated with liberation. Gandhi claims that *Ramarajya* is “a type of *swaraj*” (Iyer 1986, 3: 370 cited Gray 2015.) It is not some mythical divine kingdom that he has in mind, but a spiritual or existential condition connected to his understanding of *swaraj* – a condition he believed could produce possible political reform and perhaps a “manifest” *Ramarajya*. (Gray 2015. pp.387-8)

Gandhi’s concept of governance emphasizes individual self-rule (*swaraj*) as the foundation for broader social and political transformation. He envisioned a decentralized, bottom-up approach, where individuals and communities are empowered to govern themselves, rather than relying on a centralized state-controlled system. This approach prioritizes individual autonomy, self-discipline, and collective responsibility “Gandhi’s understanding of ruling begins with the individual and only moves outward after self-rule is achieved. His broader vision of self-rule and the central aspect of his political system, is the inverse of a top-heavy state centered system.” (Gray 2015) Gandhi puts it as, “the key to *swaraj* is in our hands.... It is in your pocket and mine.” (Raghavan Iyer 1986 cited Gray 2015). This concept of self-rule leads to his ideal political term – *Ramarajya*. Here “... *Ramarajya* should be understood, first and foremost, as a more

abstract, moral state of being as opposed to a particular external state of affairs and form of political organization.” (Gray 2015. p.388) This Gandhian concept of governance based on moral sovereignty is being interpreted and intentionally used to establish a cultural and political hegemony.

There is an inseparable and dynamic relation between man and man and his environment. In the Gandhian concept of the ideal state, the individuals are not alienated from the state. Unlike in the philosophies of Machiavelli and Hobbes,⁴ Gandhi asserts the non-co-existence of the state and citizens. The state and individuals, in his notion, work as means and ends; that is, the end, the state, totally depends on its means, i.e., citizens (Parekh 1989, 122). He asserts the significance of the harmonious living of individuals, village communities, and civil society in the formation and maintenance of an ideal state; the state and civil society have a joint role in the ideal society. This implies that the individuals are well educated in political concepts such as justice, democracy, equality, righteousness, etc., and contribute significantly to establishing an ideal political system. Instead, civil society is being manipulated and exploited today by a dominant cultural and political hegemony, bringing to the fore an ideology of hatred, exclusion, and disruption of harmony to attain economic and political mileage. It is not surprising that the same hegemony interprets the Gandhian political and moral ideas to legitimize its own ideology.

‘Rama’ for Gandhi, in his concept of an ideal State, *Ramarajya*, was the most used and familiar name of God but one that any other suitable name could easily replace. He made conscious efforts to downplay the significance of this name of God, associated with a particular culture, in saying that for him, *Ram* and *Rahim* were the same and in emphasizing the replaceability of it by any other suitable name and thereby cementing the multicultural fabric of India. “I warn my Musalman friends against misunderstanding me in my use of the words ‘*Ramaraj*’. By *Ramaraj* I do not mean Hindu Raj. I mean by *Ramarajya* Divine Raj, the Kingdom of God. For me Rama and Rahim are one and the same deity. I acknowledge no other God but the one God of truth and righteousness.” (Gandhi, September 19, 1929, 305) He says that to the Muslim he would refer to it as *Khudai raj*, for Christians as the Kingdom of God.⁵ For Gandhi, Rama signifies truth and righteousness and not any specific deity. “My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth” (Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. p. 355 cited Gray 2015.)⁶ Hence, it was easily translatable to many religious communities in India. This also expressed Gandhi’s emphasis on multiculturalism or pluralism

rather than secularism.⁷ According to Gandhi, the state should be characterized by communal harmony, protecting differences, and a dialogue every individual should have with the self, i.e. looking within.

Rama, for Gandhi, signifies the force of good over the force of evil. In *Young India* he says: "Whether Rama of my imagination ever lived or not on this earth, the ancient ideal of Ramarajya is undoubtedly one of true democracy in which the meanest citizen could be sure of swift justice without an elaborate and costly procedure." (Gandhi, September 19, 1929, 305-306.) It was not bound to Hinduism alone but to the universal principle of truth.

Gandhi was not in favor of adopting the Western concept of secularism in India and thought everyone in the state should practice their religion without any hindrance. However, he was equally against the idea of a state based on any particular religion. "Religion is dear to me and my first complaint is that India is becoming irreligious. Here I am not thinking of the Hindu or the Mahomedan or the Zoroastrian religion but of that religion which underlies all religions. We are turning away from God." (Gandhi 1947, 48-49.) To him, religion is not a religion of superstitions but of tolerance. In his article "Final Encounter: The Politics of Assassination of Gandhi" Ashish Nandy encountered how Gandhi was disturbed and depressed during the partition. "My whole soul rebels against the idea that Hinduism and Islam represent two antagonistic cultures and doctrines. To assert such doctrine is for me a denial of God." (Nandy 2010, 88.)

The present political efforts are to interpret *Ramarajya* as Hindu *Rajya*, though Gandhi was so keen to explain it otherwise, as mentioned earlier. There is an apparent attempt to interpret *Ramarajya* as "Rama's" *rajya*, thereby negating the notion of ideal governance and making the concept exclusionary and sectarian. Mythical upheaval around the name 'Rama' in different forms have helped the dominant cultural narrative to take deep roots in the Indian soil. In this narrative, the name 'Rama' is not replaceable with any other concept of God from any other religious tradition, as was possible in the Gandhian concept. The notion here gets tied down to everything related to the deeds and character of the King Rama in the Ramayana; the ideal is to establish a kingdom after this example. However, one should remember that the focus here is not on establishing an ideal state or governance but on government-making i.e., the establishment of a Hindu *Rashtra*,⁸ Rama being its divine face and justification.

It is an age-old political and cultural hegemonies tactic to implement their political agenda, masked with cultural and popular symbols. In India, Rama becomes this acceptable face, masking the

real political intention of establishing a Hindu *Rashtra*, based on Hindu laws and *Shastras*, replacing a secular and pluralistic state. Examples could be seen in the history of India, where the epics and religious narratives were relegated before the Hindu *Shastras* and *Samhitas*. In the case of Rukma Bhai, a woman doctor in colonial India, her step-father refused to send her with the family of her child-groom, realizing her desire to get educated. When it came to the colonial court for trial (Bikhaji Vs Rukhma Bai, 1885) the court verdict favoured the girl's right to education. When this was challenged as violating the sanctity of Hindu customs, instances of ‘*swayamvara*’, the practice of women choosing their husbands, in the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata were presented to support the woman's choice. However, the Hindu nationalists, including Bal Gangadhar Tilak, refuted this, stating that the Epics weren't as binding on the practices of Hindu individuals as the *Samhitas* and *Shastras*. (Burton 1998, 1119-1146; Sharma et. al. 2021, 265-287) Tilak also took the position that due to English education, Hinduism was facing a danger. (Anagol-McGinn 1992, 100–118) Tilak alleged that not only was Justice Pinhey ignorant of Hindu traditions and faith, but he was also deliberately determined to destroy them. (Jayawardena 1995, 85 cited Sharma et al. 2021) As mentioned earlier, the so-called dominant narrative tactically communalizes the society through epics, placing Rama in the front to implement the ancient ideas of Hindu law-givers in effect. As seen in Rukma Devi's case, it is evident that the Hindu cultural imageries and epics would not be considered authentic sources of law and would take a back seat while defining social and political living.

Whereas the Gandhian concept of *Ramarajya* is a rational ideal and a normative conception of the state of the future, the so-called political and cultural hegemonies tie the concept of State or Governance effectively to the past, identifying it with the deeds and character of a mythical figure, from the epic, *Ramayana*. Though it is possible to present Rama's *rajya* as an expression of ancient wisdom, the debate here is neither between past or future ideals nor regressive or progressive ideas. Rather, the problem lies in the cultural baggage that the name ‘Rama’ carries and the danger of being presented as a universal political ideal in a multicultural or pluralistic society like India.

This cultural hegemony or political act of violent exclusion and cultural alienation is nothing new and has been a historically tested political strategy of fascist regimes all over the world. Fascist ideologies in Europe systemically combined many philosophies of nationalism, racism, and anti-Semitism to alienate and eliminate

cultures and peoples different from the dominant ones. They also used various strategies and technologies to spread hatred and suspicion. For example, Hitler used various strategies, including the then-relatively-new techniques of the loudspeaker and radio (Sarkar 2016, 139.) to establish political hegemony.

In India, cultural hegemony has been slyly propagating a consent that is been constructed and nurtured for about 90 years (Sarkar 2016, 138) through physical training, corrupting intellectual discourses, awakening class, and religious consciousness through cultural events, dialogues, public media, Tele serials and comic series on Hindu mythical and historical characters, effectively exalting Hindu culture, even erasing the distinction between history and myth (Sarkar 2016, 138-9). The emergence and surge of cultural nationalism in India was ably facilitated by soft cultural hegemonic positions of different political parties⁹, where religion and caste were brought forth into the mainstream, of course, for electoral gains.

The common masses, in reality, are neither hate campaigners nor direct perpetrators of violence, i.e., the general population does not press for any particular religious or cultural regimes. Yet they, in accepting religious or cultural imageries or “symbols of faith” permeated at various levels, unconsciously approve of and contribute to the hatred and violence perpetuated by the hegemony. This becomes true of the Indian society just as it was of the German society as mentioned by Christopher Browning in his book *Ordinary Men* - the vast majority of Germans, the ‘onlookers’, did not press for any anti-Semitic measures yet as “apathetic,” “passive,” and “indifferent” general population, they accepted the legal measures of the regime.¹⁰ Fascist regimes all over the world gained the support of the common public just like the Nazis managed to gain the support of the ordinary Germans through propaganda, justifying or historicising myths, spreading lies and rumors, romanticizing the past or a culture, hate campaigns, and branding critics as anti-nationals, etc. Disinterring the significance of the Gandhian concepts of *ahimsa*, truth, *sarvodaya*, tolerance, and multiculturalism has relevance in such contexts of exclusivist political hegemonies.

It is one of the strategies of totalitarian regimes to get “the omniscience and association with divinities proclaimed” (Chattopadhyaya 1993, 183) and to get these myths widely propagated. Aristotle thought in similar lines that the tyrants would do so. “A tyrant must put on the appearance of uncommon devotion to religion. Subjects are less apprehensive of illegal treatment from a ruler they consider god-fearing and pious. On the other hand, they do less easily move against him, believing that he has the gods on his side.”¹¹ In

India, the dominant narrative draws from the Epics to legitimize political hegemony (Madhav, June 3, 2023). Surprisingly, this takes one back to similar ideas of Kautilya, a Hindu law-giver, "Similarly in foreign countries they are to spread the news of gods appearing before the king and of his having received from heaven the power of the sword (*aanda*) and the power of the purse (*kosa*), the two important elements of the state... A trick suggested by Kautilya is to damage the images of gods, from which blood may be caused to flow out in floods; spies may then represent this as an indication of defeat to the enemy..." (Sharma 1959, p.161 cited Chattopadhyaya 1993). Kautilya, in his *Arthashastra*, held that "as many as seven classes of officials, astrologers, sooth-sayers, horologists, Pauranikas (story-tellers), Iksanikas (probably a type of astrologers), spies and Sacivyakaras (companions of ministers) are to be pressed into the service of the state for the purpose. As the first four of these are mentioned elsewhere in the *Arthashastra* as members of the priestly class, this testifies to the important role of the priests in moulding public opinion. They are to give wide publicity to the superhuman powers of the king throughout his territory." (Kautilya. *Artha Shastra*. xiii. 1.1. cited Chattopadhyaya 1993). "(Thus) he wants... by means of skillful propaganda carried on by a well-organised machinery, the masses should be impressed with the all-knowing and divine character of the conqueror, so that his own people might support him whole-heartedly in his aggressive designs, and those of the enemy might transfer their allegiance to the new conqueror." (Sharma 1959, p.161 cited Chattopadhyaya 1993).

The implementation of this ancient strategy by a cultural hegemony today has been strengthened with the significant rise of digital and social media, which are faster mediums to communicate with the commons. Any such permeation creates a situation in which it attempts to control the civil society and monopolize every stage of development. In the process, the state gets negated by a particular cultural hegemony as it becomes one with the dominant culture. India has been witnessing for many decades how this 'molecular permeation', (Sarkar 2016, 138-39) as Antonio Gramsci would call it, of building a hegemony or subtly bringing the public into the fold of the dominant culture works.

Through molecular permeation, cultural hegemony can communalize the state, effectively sabotaging justice and governance, contrary to the Gandhian political ideology. This particular hegemony maintains the dominant narrative and tries to eliminate every other voice, effectively undoing pluralism, the soul of India. Political society gets monopolized by a privileged society or group, which absorbs religion or culture to better or preserve its monopoly, with the support or silence of the civil society, to the total elimination or disregard of

the other groups and cultures. It would lead to cultural hegemonic totalitarianism, transcendentalism, and absolutism, thus replacing the Gandhian conception of moral sovereignty with religious fanaticism.¹² This is how the proponents of the political and cultural hegemonies have managed to shift focus from "*Rajya*" (governance) to "*Rama*", the divine figure linked to culture. Here, religion becomes greater than the state, and in the process, the state itself gets hijacked as Hitler claims in *Mein Kampf*, "the founding or destruction of religion is an action of immeasurably greater importance than the founding or destruction of a state ..." (Gramsci 1998 (trans.), 266)

The hegemony is perpetuated through a series of strategies, including the silencing of intellectuals and suppressing critical voices, manipulation of media and public discourses, and strategic placing of members belonging to the hegemony in state positions. Expert opinions and academic dissent work as roadblocks in replacing history and science with myth and hence would face the anger and arrogance of the cultural or mythical narrators. As followed by Mussolini, the Italian dictator, Hitler believed that 'intellectuals' and 'sterile intellectuals' threatened the nation.¹³ Branding intellectuals and rationalists as 'anti-nationals' or getting them eliminated by rogue forces supported by the hegemony is a visible expression of its inability to engage in meaningful dialogue with intellectuals. As a result, democratic space, including freedom of expression, religious practices, and strong political criticism, has shrunk as attempts are made to silence dissenting media and academics. As a result, strong criticism gives way to veiled criticism. The non-acceptance of the dominant view is presented as a matter of shame.

Silencing of the intellectuals will naturally lead to the emergence of new cultural elites who would anonymously support and repeat the voices of the dominant culture. Consequently, this hegemony would undermine and negate the development of science and take society back to primitive times. (Padma 07 November 2017, Kumar, 15 Feb 2019, 679-680, Narmada P et. al. May 2021) The effort is to actualize a cultural and political hegemony through civil society's support or forced silence. The establishment of a new order or reassertion of the past is attained by trojan horsing the idea of a dominant community as the idea of everyone, including the victims of such ideas, and by silencing media, dissenting political and academic voices through coercive or persuasive methods.

In a hegemonic society, the state and its instruments, including the judiciary, legislature, police etc. would become means towards the establishment of political hegemony. Members of the dominant class, in service of the state and placed strategically within academia,

bureaucracy, army, media, judiciary, etc., infusing various organs of the state with the dominant culture, would bring together and negate the difference between the two.¹⁴ It is against the Gandhian principles of *swaraj*, pluralism, and the welfare of all.

A political hegemony where the ruler’s happiness lies in the happiness of a ‘segment of the people’ who imitate the hegemony’s sentiments is considered undemocratic and against the concept of ideal governance both in the Hindu epics and Gandhian philosophy. The soulless appropriation or interpretation of the term *Ramarajya* has larger political implications in India’s pluralistic and multicultural fabric. It would lead to cultural polarization where some citizens would be treated as second class, and religious and cultural minorities would be pushed to constant fear of communal violence amounting to genocide. The Gandhian ideal would detest a state where minority groups of different nature are alienated from justice.

Any such lapse in the administration of justice will be disastrous to the public as this hegemonic apparatus would impose arbitrary and biased actions on the public by the political and judicial administration. (Murthi, *The Wire*, May 27, 2022) A communal ideology can engage in and justify any form of violence for the establishment of its cultural and political hegemony using religious sentiments. In such a situation, the Gandhian concept of righteous governance through means of non-violence would gradually wither away. Gandhi’s method of war of position (Gramsci 1996, 229), a method he successfully used against the colonial forces, is used by Cultural Hegemony for an opposite purpose - to unite a group and to fight against another, just as it happened in Weimer Republic. In internal colonization of caste and religious differences, ideologies are used to separate, divide, and annihilate people. Gandhi asserted the power of the collective, and for him, the means, i.e., non-violent movement, was directly connected to the attainment of the end, social justice.

Though the Gandhian concept is too large to be consumed by a politically motivated exclusivist and sectarian narrative, ignorance of the original concept or sweeping political backing for the alternative can surely eclipse it. The present efforts of establishing a Hindu nation, including building a Ram Temple at Ayodhya, are already seen by supporters as efforts towards establishing *Ramarajya*. (*Times of India*, October 03, 2020, *Economic Times*, January 22, 2024, *The Hindu*, February 18, 2024) The cultural hegemony is enforcing the undoing and walking back from the scientific and welfarist governance that India attained in the past, effectively taking us back to the dark ages of religious supremacy and political subjugation.

India’s pluralistic state is maintained due to the interdependence

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between secularism and democracy. Any attempt to alienate cultural, social, and religious minorities would lead to political chaos, as they are considered second-class citizens. This divisive political situation would result in constant fear of violence, genocide, and fundamentalist groups within their own cultural groups and the state.¹⁵ Surprisingly, the state, which is supposed to support or create a space for them to live peacefully without fear, has shed its secular fabric and has become instrumental in such atrocities.

It is not surprising that "An ocean separates the Ram of Mahatma Gandhi, conceived as both Ishvara and Allah, from the Ram in whose name the Babri Masjid has been destroyed." (Sarkar 2016, 147) Sumit Sarkar quotes Ramakrishna Paramhansa as saying, "Hindu Muslim and Christian differed as little as *jal* from *pani* and water" (Sarkar 2016, 147) and expresses further that "our thought inevitably goes back to January 30 1948, when a man whose last word was Ram, was murdered by a youth who held the cultural ideology that led to the establishment of Ram Mandir." (Sarkar 2016, 147) It is to be noted that Gandhi's idea of *Ramarajya* is not immune to criticism and has been critically approached, especially from the subaltern perspective.¹⁶ Even though his ideal wasn't free from Brahmanical patriarchy, his relevance in the contemporary Indian political context is significant.

The secular forces should not be fragmented in their fight against any communal or cultural hegemony and to build inclusive societies where the other is accepted and acknowledged. There is a general tendency of intellectual elites to keep apart and negate the agency of believers on the ground that they are communal and, therefore, less human. According to Lenin and Trotsky, a revolution should never separate people over individual differences. A society should set differences aside and fight together to achieve a common cause. To re-establish and maintain the secular and democratic fabric of Indian society, the religious, the non-religious, the secular, the atheists etc., should have a shared understanding of the threat and fear psychosis created and constructed by the cultural hegemony and work for solidarity; that is, "March separately, but strike together." (Trotsky 1975, 106).

Notes and References

1. "No widow was ever found in distress nor was there any danger from snakes or disease during his reign; there were no malefactors in his kingdom nor did any suffer harm; no aged person ever attended the funeral of a younger relative; happiness was universal; each

attended to his duty and they had only to look on Rama to give up enmity. Men lived for a thousand years, each having a thousand sons who were free from infirmity and anxiety; trees bore fruit and flowers perpetually; Parjanya sent down rain when it was needed and Maruta blew auspiciously; all works undertaken bore happy results and all engaged in their respective duties and eschewed evil. All were endowed with good qualities; all were devoted to pious observances and Rama ruled over the kingdom for ten thousand years." (Shastri, 1932. Pp. 370-71)

2. "At the individual level swaraj is vitally connected with the capacity for dispassionate self-assessment, ceaseless self-purification and growing swadeshi or self-reliance". (Gandhi, June 28, 1928, 772); "Swaraj of a people means the sum total of the swaraj (self-rule) of individuals. And such swaraj comes only from performance by individuals of their duty as citizens. In it no one thinks of his rights. They come, when they are needed, for better performance of duty." (Gandhi, *Collected Works of Gandhi*, Volume-75, 178-79)
3. "My ideal of Indian states is that of *Ramarajya*. Rama taking his cue from a washer man's remark and in order to satisfy his subjects abandoned Sita who was dear to him as life itself and was a very incarnation of Purity... He lent splendour to his throne by his popular administration and proved that *Ramarajya* was the acme of swaraj. Rama did not need the very imperfect modern instrument of ascertaining public opinion by counting votes. He had captivated the hearts of the people. He knew public opinion by intuition as it were. The subjects of Rama were supremely happy." (Gandhi, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, 558) The above remarks were made by Gandhi as a part of his presidential address at the Third Kathiawar Political Conference held at Bhavnagar on January 8, 1925. (Mishra, January – March 2020).
4. Machiavelli and Hobbes prioritized a powerful state over individual rights, favoring monarchies and a double standard of morality for rulers and the people. Machiavelli believed in a pragmatic view of religion, promoting Christian ethics for peace. Hobbes, on the other hand, believed in scientific rationalism, accepting the authority of the state due to human reason and rational concern for survival. Both emphasized the importance of a strong state over individual rights.
5. "Let no one commit the mistake of thinking that *Ramarajya* means a rule of the Hindus. My Rama is another name for Khuda or God. I want Khudai raj, which is the same thing as the Kingdom of God on earth. The rule of the first four Caliphs was somewhat comparable to it. The establishment of such a rajya would not only mean welfare of the whole of the Indian people but of the whole world." (Gandhi, *Harijan*, 23-3-1947; Gandhi. *Collected Works*, Volume 94, P.46).
6. There are contending views that Gandhi's political thought, especially, ideas of truth were developed based on the Hindu tradition

and that it got developed cross-culturally especially with influences from non-fiction essays of Tolstoy and David Thoreau. (Gray 2015. p.376)

7. Akeel Bilgrami during his lecture at the Sesquicentennial Distinguished International Lecture Series at the Department of Philosophy, Madras Christian College, Chennai on 5th January, 2024. (*The Hindu*, January 06, 2024, p.10.)
8. "Such is Hindutva ideology at its crudest, engaged in the direct justification of communal violence. The slightly 'softer' or more insidious levels should also be considered, for these can indicate almost as clearly the fascistic implications of Hindu Rashtra. Fascism has often tried to appropriate elements, or at least terms, from ideals considered laudable and progressive in the society it sought to conquer: thus the Nazis claimed to be not only nationalists in post-versailles in Germany, but also keeping in mind the very strong working class political presence in the Weimar Republic, 'socialist' and representative of 'labour'". The Sangh Parivar, similarly, tries to establish its claim to be truly and uniquely 'national' by a 'democratic' argument: Hindu interests should prevail always in India, and may be, it should at some stage be declared a Hindu Rashtra, for Hindus after all are the majority, by Census reckoning 85 per cent of the population." (Sarkar 2016, 145)
9. "Then, in the early and middle 1980s, came the efforts of Indira and Rajiv to play the 'Hindu card', communalizing the state apparatus on an unprecedented scale through the anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984 and the subsequent cover-up of the guilty, and further eroding the rule of law through rampant corruption. All this directly prepared the ground for the Ram Janmabhoomi blitzkrieg of the Sangh Parivar, now spearheaded by the VHP. It must not be forgotten that it was the Congress government that updated the Ramayana epic into a pseudo-nationalist TV serial, and allowed access in 1986 to the idols installed inside the Babri Masjid by stealth and administrative collusion in December 1949, under an earlier Congress regime." (Sarkar 2016, 139.)
10. "Apart from the activists, the vast majority of the general population did not clamor or press for anti-Semitic measures. But the majority of "ordinary Germans" -whom Saul Friedlander describes as "onlookers" in contrast to "activists" nonetheless accepted the legal measures of the regime, which ended emancipation and drove the Jews from public positions in 1933, socially ostracized the Jews in 1935, and completed the expropriation of their property in 1938-39. ... Most important, however, a gulf had opened up between the Jewish minority and the general population. The latter, while not mobilized around strident and violent anti-Semitism, were increasingly "apathetic," "passive," and "indifferent" to the fate of the former." (Browning, 2001, 200)
11. "But tyranny may also be preserved by an entirely opposite method.

Although the tyrant must in self-defence keep his power, yet he may use it like a constitutional monarch. He ought to be a model of virtue and economy, not squandering on courtesans and artists the public revenues, but using them in the service of the state, as if he were the trustee and not the owner of them. This will be far wiser than to keep a hoard which there will be no one to guard when he is away from home. He should inspire reverence rather than fear; whatever vices he may privately practice, he should be dignified in public, and maintain the character of a ruler. He should avoid immodesty or sensuality, or at any rate he should not parade them in the face of the world. He should adorn and improve the city; he should be religious, that he may be thought a good man and a friend of the gods – men will then be less afraid of suffering injustice at his hands, and they will be less likely to conspire against him, for they will think that he has the gods fighting on his side...." (Aristotle, 1885 (trans.) ciii.)

12. Gandhi's concept of moral sovereignty is democratic, based on swaraj, where individuals are in constant dialogue with their own selves and decide matters on their own. But proponents of the hegemony, interpret moral sovereignty differently as a kingdom that is founded on moral principles and the king as the epitome of morality. (Madhav, April 21, 2021.) In the context of a cultural and political hegemony, especially in a secular and pluralistic society like India, this, however, turns out to be religious or cultural fanaticism and moral fundamentalism.
13. "Ominously relevant, too, is another peroration of the Italian dictator, in July 1934, where he called for an end to 'intellectualizing and those of sterile intellectuals who are a threat to the nation'. Hitler at the Nuremberg Nazi Congress next year similarly exalted the 'heart', the 'faith', the 'inner voice' of the German folk over 'hair splitting intelligence'". (Zeev Sternhell 1976, 334.) It is in this line that "Hard work" would find preference over "Harvard" for some in the Indian political discourse. (*The Hindu*, March 01, 2017)
14. "This period is characterized by a certain unstable equilibrium between the classes, which is a result of the fact that certain categories of intellectuals (in the direct service of the State, especially the civil and military bureaucracy) are still too closely tied to the old dominant classes. ... In this sense, the Church itself may become State, and the conflict may occur between on the one hand secular (and secularising) civil society, and on the other State/Church (when the Church has become an integral part of the State, of political society monopolised by a specific privileged group, which absorbs the Church in order the better to preserve its monopoly with the support of that zone of "civil society" which the Church represents)" (Gramsci 1996, 245.)
15. "What the triumph of Hindutva, 'hard' or 'soft', implies for Muslims and other minority groups is already obvious enough: a second-class citizenship at best, constant fear of riots amounting to genocide,

a consequent strengthening of the most conservative and fundamentalist groups within such communities". (Sarkar 2016, 146)

16. Ambedkar's criticism of Ramarajya, for example, was multi-pronged, focusing on Rama's acceptance of *Chaturvarna* and his treatment of Shambhuka, Bali, and Sita. (Mandal, *The Print*, 05 August, 2020)

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Contextualizing Youth Power under Colonial Rule in Gandhi's Vision of India

Bipasha Raha

ABSTRACT

This essay explores Gandhi's vision of India and how he posited youth power in a colonial ambience as potential leaders who could negotiate India towards political freedom and social and moral rejuvenation through his faith in virtues of discipline, service, truth, and non-violence. They were destined to play crucial role in the nation's present and future history. A complex admixture of spiritual, social, and political ideals shaped Gandhi's vision for India. His conviction in non-violence, rural self-sufficiency, social justice, and religious harmony influenced India's quest for alternative to imperialism and subsequent liberty. Gandhi entrusted to the youth a central role in rural reconstruction, in transforming and rebuilding rural infrastructure and inculcating a new tradition of seva, self-reliance and self-respect among rural populace. Youth was appropriate age for inculcating national awareness. In a nation as diverse as India, it was imperative to train youth in virtues of unity and communal harmony.

Key words: Gandhi, *Swadeshi*, Youth, *Sarvodaya*, Satyagraha

Rama "Rajya" and "Rama" Rajya: Disinterring the Significance of Gandhian Ideal State

1. Introduction

"My hope lies in the youth of the country." (CWMG 27: 347)

GANDHI ENTERED INDIAN political arena at a crucial juncture in
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history of the world. It was in midst of First World War, a more devastating catastrophe that world had never experienced before. Professed condescension of western world in civilizational discourse was subject to interrogation. Monstrosity of War dealt a visceral shock to European social fabric and left an indelible mark on human history. It crushed all faith in human progress and image of a peaceful rational world. All assumptions of social values of a pre-War world were rendered meaningless. Apparently timeless truths were seemingly washed away by tumultuous outpouring of greed and vanity of warring nations. Political and economic shifts and consequences initiated by War were no less formidable. World paid a heavy price in terms of human and economic resources.^(Gandhi 1939: passim)

As empires collapsed and political landscape changed, its rumblings could be heard in colonies in Asia and Africa. Breaking away from stranglehold of imperialism no longer seemed to be an unachievable task. Contradictions between contributions of colonies to War effort and their lack of political rights and representations were exposed. A major driving force in eventual push for decolonization after the War was disillusionment with century old convictions in superiority of western value system so deeply ingrained in psyche of the colonized. Moral rights of the colonizer, a party to such rampant dehumanization, to rule and its credibility was no longer a viable proposition thereby creating a moral vacuum. Burden of War debt was imposed on colonies exposing the frailty of their economic structure and causing immense hardships to people whose war it never was.

In India, a British colony whose War spending was second only to Britain within British Empire, War accentuated political aspirations of Indian leaders. They had not opposed British War efforts and imposition of War debt on the already over-burdened Indian economy because of their confidence in their ability to extract political mileage and concessions from the colonial rulers once the War had ended in a victory for Britain. But this never happened and truncated constitutional concessions in garb of Montagu-Chelmsford reforms fell far short of their expectations.¹ Disillusionment with British sense of justice and intense disappointment caused by failed promises initiated insistent demands for self-rule and self-realization that all hitherto trusted techniques of agitation were no longer viable.

In the meanwhile, Gandhi's success in South Africa (CWMG 44:163-64) and his technique of Satyagraha opened a new window to a leadership searching for new alternatives.² Need for greater legitimization of the nationalist movement by way of bringing within its fold a greater multitude could no longer be overlooked. Gandhi's

Hind Swaraj (1909), which offered a critique of modern civilization (Parekh 1989: 34), had already acquainted contemporary Indian political leadership with his arguments on self-rule, techniques of resistance and unsuitability of western civilization for India (CWMG 10: 280-2). It offered an authentic statement of his ideology (Parel 1997:50). His ideas and philosophy imbibed elements from both Western and Oriental civilizations (CWMG 48:120). Recognizing diversities of India Gandhi's style of politics was characterized by inclusivism (Dalton 1993: 21).

This essay explores Gandhi's vision of India and how he posited youth power as potential leaders who could negotiate India towards political liberation and social and moral revitalization through his espousal of discipline, service, truth, and non-violence. They were designed to play pivotal role in nation's destiny.

2. Gandhi's Vision of India

Gandhi's spiritual beliefs, his philosophical moorings, deeply influenced his vision and understanding of India. It went much beyond political independence from shackles of colonial domination. His perception of socio-political complexities was governed by his sense of justice, equality and inner callings. India of his dreams was essentially a *karmabhumi* or land of duty in contradiction to *bhogabhumi* or land of enjoyment. He said "India is fitted for the religious supremacy of the world." (CWMG 16: 116) He wanted his India to be free and strong such that she could dedicate herself to cause of betterment of the world. India's freedom, he believed, should revolutionize the world's perception of war and peace. Her impotence, according to him, affected whole world (*Young India* 17.9.1925).

India had her own calling. While there was much that Indians could profitably assimilate from West, Gandhi resisted indiscriminate and thoughtless imitation based on the assumption of western superiority as it would spell ruination for India (*Young India* 30.4.1931). India's destiny, in his own words, lies not along "the bloody way of the West" but along the "bloodless way of peace" that comes from a simple and godly life. India needed to master the strength to resist the "onrush from the West" for her own sake, her soul, and that of the world. (*Young India* 7.10.1926) Dedicated workers were advised to restrain from power politics (CWMG 77:371).

India's mission was different from that of others. India was unparalleled in the world for the purificationary process she had undergone at her own volition.^(Gandhi 2018: 3) Idea of *Swaraj*, variously interpreted as self-rule, constituted the core of Gandhi's vision of India. *Swaraj* signified more than mere political independence from

colonial rule encompassing varied socio-political and moral dimensions.(CWMG 44: passim) Youth had zeal for *Swaraj* (CWMG 38:333). To attain this *Swaraj* India had her divine weapons, her soul force, and not the brute force of the western nations. In the colonial milieu, as India was in the throes of the decolonization struggle, he said:

I would like to see India free and strong so that she may offer herself a willing and pure sacrifice for the betterment of the world. India's freedom must revolutionize the world's outlook upon peace and war. Her impotence affects the whole of mankind.(*Young India* 17.9.1925)

Swaraj was to Gandhi the creation of a society where people were liberated from both internal and external oppression, exploitation and corruption. It was a personal and collective state of self-control and self-reliance. He held:

The *Swaraj* of my dream is the poor man's *Swaraj*. The necessities of life should be enjoyed by you in common with those enjoyed by the princes and the moneyed men.(*Young India* 26.3.1931)

Majority of the population of India constituted of rural masses. Hence, Gandhi believed, empowerment of common people, the rural populace, was crucial to the logic of her political and economic systems. For him *Swaraj* would never be *Poorna Swaraj* until all the ordinary "amenities are guaranteed to you under it"(*Young India* 26.3.1931) and that:

My notion of *Poorna Swaraj* is not isolated independence but healthy and dignified independence. My nationalism, fierce though it is, is not exclusive, is not devised to harm any nation or individual. (*Young India* 26.3.1931)

Decentralization with local self-governance through village councils or *panchayats* was thus central to Gandhi's vision of *Swaraj*. He said:

My idea of village *swaraj* is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is necessary.(*Harijan* 26.7.1942)

A moral and spiritual revolution was essential to guide citizens of a true self-governing nation to live in an ambience of harmony with natural and human worlds.

Ahimsa he deemed vital in political endeavours and personal behavior, a rudimentary principle of Gandhi's vision:

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I declare that we cannot win swaraj for our famishing millions, for our deaf and dumb, for our lame and crippled, by the way of the sword.^(CWMG 45: 349)

It was not a technique of politics but a way of life, a moral code that undergirded all his thoughts and deeds. As he said:

Nonviolence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-cooperation will be the sanction of the village community.^(Harijan 26.7.1925)

Non-violence was to him rejection of all forms of violence verbal or physical, in deeds or actions. It was a principle that was applicable to human and natural world, a powerful technique for initiating social change and influencing oppressors and thereby establishing a more just society. At a time when the revolutionary activities of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev cast a deep spell on Indian youth Gandhi cautioned “way of violence can only lead to perdition” and urged in name of the Motherland to devote themselves to non-violent struggle (CWMG 45: 349-50).

Concept of *Satya* or truth, the ultimate reality, was yet another cornerstone of Gandhian philosophy. “To find Truth completely,” said Gandhi, “is to realize oneself and one’s destiny.”^(Young India 17.11.1921) This search for truth that every individual must strive for was a personal and spiritual journey, and Gandhi said “Truth is God.” He advocated *Satyagraha* (truth-force or soul-force), which was a form of non-violent resistance grounded in search for truth and justice. Through *Satyagraha*, Gandhi believed, people could resist tyranny without recourse to violence, creating a moral force that could compel even most powerful rulers to submit to truth. Doctrine of sword was not for India. He said “We were able to enlist as soldiers millions of men, women and children because we were pledged to non-violence.” (CWMG 45: 349) His patriotism was subservient to his religion:

I hold the opinion firmly that civil disobedience is the purest type of constitutional agitation. Of course, it becomes degrading and despicable, if its civil i.e. nonviolent character, is a mere camouflage.”^(Young India 15.12.1921)

Describing the India of his dreams Gandhi said:

I shall work for an India, in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people: an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in

such an India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of the intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men. Since we shall be at peace with all the rest of the world, neither exploiting, nor being exploited, we should have the smallest arm imaginable. All interests not in conflict with the interest of the dumb millions will be scrupulously respected, whether foreign or indigenous. Personally, I hate distinction between foreign and indigenous. This is the India of my dreams... I shall be satisfied with nothing else. (*Young India* 10.9.1931)

A complex amalgamation of spiritual, social, and political ideals informed Gandhi's vision for India. His adherence to non-violence, rural self-sufficiency, social justice, and religious harmony fashioned India's journey of anti-imperialist struggle and subsequent liberty. The fragrance of independence, said Gandhi, lies in work (CWMG 38: 334)

A devout Hindu, steadfast in belief that India's strength lay in her diversity deeply concerned with growing communal tensions, believing all religions following diverse pathways strived for same ultimate truth and that true religious harmony was attainable through mutual respect between all religious communities Gandhi advised all to live in co-operation for common good of India, nation of unity, transcending divisions of religion, language, and ethnicity:

The Swaraj of my... our... dream recognizes no race or religious distinctions. Nor is it to be the monopoly of the lettered persons nor yet of moneyed men. Swaraj is to be for all, including the farmer, but emphatically including the maimed, the blind, the starving toiling millions. (*Young India* 26.3.1931)

Attempts at fostering religious harmony included his crusades against communal violence and promotion of welfare of religious minorities, pursuit of justice, truth, and nonviolence that alone could cement all differences, offering a timeless framework for building a just society. He said:

It has been said that Indian Swaraj will be the rule of the majority community, i.e. the Hindus. There could not be a greater mistake than that. If it were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it Swaraj and would fight it with all the strength at my command, for me Hind Swaraj is the rule of all people, is the rule of justice. (*Young India* 16.4.1931)

To foster communal harmony, he co-operated with liberal Muslim leaders, such as M.A.K. Azad. He vehemently opposed Partition in 1947, pained by fury of violence and human tragedy that unfolded.

Adopting a spiritual and practical approach to caste system

(CWMG 52:256), convinced that it was a deep social malaise demanding eradication and firmly believing in inherent dignity of all, in his endeavour to ensure social justice in his dream India necessitating issues of caste and untouchability be addressed, prompted Gandhi, to advocate strongly for rights of *Harijans* (children of God), a term he coined for socially “untouchables” (CWMG 53: 166). Originally organized to provide caste based professions casteism had degenerated into an oppressive system that marginalized and exploited people (CWMG 68: 152). Gandhi argued that untouchability was a sin and removal of untouchability, integration of *Harijans* into mainstream society and securing their right to access temples, public wells, and schools, was central to India’s journey to nationhood (CWMG 14: 456-7). Governed by his belief in its moral and spiritual dimensions Gandhi’s idea of an independent India, not limited to political or territorial liberation from colonial yoke, focussed on nurturing a deeper, moral transformation to revive true essence of Indian civilization, combining best of India’s traditional values with demands of modernity (CWMG 68:182).

Resuscitation of villages was central to Gandhi’s vision of an India that was modern and self-reliant as they constituted nucleus of Indian civilization (CWMG 77: 374)

He reminded students “India lives in her villages and not in her towns.” (CWMG 30: 412) and those who received a liberal scientific education were to take its fruits to the villages. India had become a classic colony subject to cash cropping, high taxes, and destruction of indigenous handloom industries, converted into a market for Manchester and Lancashire thereby boosting industrialization of England. Indian villages needed to become self-reliant; her real freedom would be achieved once she could satisfy her own agricultural and industrial needs (CWMG 28: 102). Adoption of *khadi* with emphasis on hand-spinning (CWMG 16:396), symbolized economic self-sufficiency, unity, self-respect and resistance against British being a tool for empowerment of rural populace (CWMG 38: 335) and obliteration of rural-urban divide (CWMG 19: 289). Gandhi advised the youth to recognize importance of *khadi* for sake of the poor (CWMG 38: 335) Rural sanitation, indispensable for healthy living, was to be entrusted to dedicated youth. (CWMG 46: 319) His perception of rural recovery was both a reaction to economic and social issues confronting India during colonial rule and a fundamental component of his panoptic view for a self-sufficient, equitable, and non-violent society (CWMG 81: 369-70). He observed:

In the case of the Indian villager, an age-old culture is hidden under an

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encrustment of crudeness. Take away the encrustation, remove his chronic poverty and his illiteracy and you have the finest specimen of what a cultured, cultivate, free citizen should be. (*Harijan* 28.1.1939)

Reinventing Indian villages encompassed more than mere economic development or infrastructural advancement; it aimed at revivification of moral and spiritual integrity within communities, reactivating them to acquire control of their destinies, and promote a novel form of citizenship grounded in service, humility, and social responsibility. The youth were pivotal to this goal, as Gandhi regarded them as leaders, catalysts, and custodians of rural rebuilding.

Education constituted a key component in Gandhi's programme for realization of his vision of India, work of nation-building, allowing academic learning, intellectual development and nurturing character and moral values. He critiqued colonial education system that produced a loyalist service class and offered an alternative structure *Nai Talim* or *basic education* embedded in traditional culture and mores, philosophy emphasizing moral integrity, communalism and inclusivity, amalgamating education with productive physical labour, and acquisition of practical skills aiding children learn through experience, involving them in handicrafts, farming and other practical activities. An integrated approach to learning it combined an intellectual, manual, and moral education imparted through a variety of practical activities that would make true a part of his larger vision for an independent India constituting of citizens all of whom would be self-sufficient and able to contribute to welfare of community. He advised young students "they must make up their minds about one thing at least in life, viz., to understand what they are in this world for." (CWMG 30:411) Gandhi offered a programme for holistic education empowering youth to handle differences, interrogate authority, engage in critical thinking, and act in alignment with their ethical principles. He advocated education for life, raising responsible, self-respecting, self-reliant citizens who could contribute to the social eudaimonia. Gandhi's belief in integral role of manual labor in education was indeed a novelty, an alternative to colonial education system that engendered and nourished a deep segregation between intellectual work and manual labour thereby, reinforcing social hierarchies and class divisions. He bemoaned middle classes had lost use of their hands (CWMG 30:412). Development of both mind and hands was central to a complete education. To him work was integral to knowledge and manual labor would help foster self-reliance and inculcate a sense of dignity and humility. He believed that every individual, irrespective of their social standing, should acquire skill in a trade or craft.

Gandhi's perspectives on education were fundamental to his understanding of role of youth, trained in practical competencies facilitating harmonious coexistence with environment and enhancing rural self-sufficiency, in nation-building. Gandhi's model of education necessitated engagement of youth in productive work satisfying social needs thereby, bridging gap between theory and practice, inculcating sense of responsibility, and obliterating stigma attached to manual labour. Training in trades and crafts, would ensure economic independence for youth thus reducing reliance on foreign imports and promoting the goal of *Swadeshi* or self-reliance. Gandhi's youth were not only inheritors of struggle for independence but also equipped to spearhead a moral and social revolution.

Social reform for moral and spiritual regeneration lay at the heart of Gandhi's vision of India. Against backdrop of colonialism, he visualized an India striving for moral upliftment of individuals and society alongside political independence. India's future depended on active involvement of its younger generation, who could carry forward legacy of freedom struggle, shape its future, and transform society (CWMG 81: 369-70)

3. Power of Youth

Gandhi's perception of youth power was shaped by this broader vision, youth could be moulded, inspired, and enthused to imbibe values of truth, *ahimsa*, self-discipline and service to others, possessed immense transformative power, potential to initiate social reform, dismantle caste system (CWMG 31: 445-6), empower women, promote education while catalyzing political change as political freedom would not be complete until its social and moral fabric was renewed (CWMG 45: 396). Gandhi consistently underscored the importance of character, self-sacrifice, and discipline in his numerous writings, speeches, and letters—qualities he saw essential for young individuals. He contended that a nation's moral and spiritual integrity, rather than its financial resources or military strength, constituted its true power.

Gandhi posited that the youth may serve as the principal advocates of non-violent resistance, which he regarded as a formidable weapon against British imperialism. His notion of non-violence transcended simple physical restraint; it became a holistic philosophy advocating for truth, love, compassion, and respect for all beings (CWMG 47: 421)

In the Indian National Movement, particularly during the non-cooperation, civil disobedience, and salt march campaigns, Gandhi underscored the significance of youth engagement in these non-violent endeavours. He contended that the youth, owing to their intrinsic

idealism and unblemished perspectives were most qualified to champion the tenets of *ahimsa*. Gandhi viewed youngsters not only as adherents; they were intended to emerge as leaders in an ethical struggle against imperialism.

Gandhi's conviction in the efficacy of youth was not merely theoretical. He aggressively endeavoured to engage youth in several movements during the quest for independence. One of the defining characteristics of Gandhi's leadership was his capacity to inspire and mobilize substantial numbers of young Indians in the national struggle. Non-Cooperation Movement was one of Gandhi's most pivotal initiatives. He urged the Indian populace to retract their endorsement of British institutions and to abstain from foreign products, educational establishments, judicial systems, and governmental employment (Bandyopadhyay 2004: 301). Gandhi issued a distinct appeal to the youth to engage actively in the struggle. He implored people to contribute to the nation by engaging in constructive endeavours, including the promotion of *Khadi*, dissemination of education, and organization of rallies against British, as "constructive work" would not disrupt their education (CWMG 81: 369-70). Youth were urged to renounce Western school system and prioritize self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Establishment of national institutions and incorporation of Indian ideals into curriculum aimed to equip youth for future leadership roles. The Movement, advocating boycott of British goods, educational institutions, and government services, involved considerable participation from youth. Energized by their vigour and idealism, youth played a pivotal role in disseminating movement's message throughout India. Salt March and Civil Disobedience Movement fostered a climate that enabled youth to engage actively in political protests. Gandhi urged young men and women to participate in boycott of foreign goods, to contravene salt law by producing salt domestically and confront arrest with fortitude (Bandyopadhyay 2004: 311-13). This would undermine British rule and impart essential moral education for politically inclined and socially responsible youth. At the height of the Movement Gandhi advised youth to participate in non-violent protests but urged them to be patient and disciplined. By doing so and by remaining firm in their resolve to follow path of non-violence alone could they serve their cause not only win independence for India, but would also help build a just and moral society. Quit India Movement, despite severe persecutions, was a pivotal moment in engagement of youth in anti-imperialist movement (Bandyopadhyay 2004: 405-9). A multitude of young individuals participated in rallies, demonstrations and sabotaging, their feeling of urgency and dedication to cause of freedom

kindled. Mass movements stimulated by combined efforts of youth energized entire nation. Strategy of Satyagraha emphasizing peaceful protest, civil disobedience and passive resistance varied from all earlier techniques (CWMG 22: 315). Constructive work involved activities that contributed to welfare of country and promoted values of self-reliance, self-respect, and communal harmony (CWMG 81: 369-70). These activities included promoting *khadi*, organizing rural sanitation campaigns and motivating educational initiatives for underprivileged. Gandhi was convinced that once mobilized youth would constitute an irresistible force capable of toppling British imperialism. Gandhi advised students and youth to participate in political agitation without disrupting their education. Those who could not afford to abandon their education or homes could still participate by undertaking boycott of British goods, organizing local protests, and engaging in community service. He always cautioned in favour of moderation, peaceful protest and constructive action and not be swept by frenzy of revolutionary violence that marked other parts of nationalist struggle. He visualized creation of not a generation of martyrs or heroes of violence, but rather a generation of conscientious objectors who would build a free India through peaceful means (CWMG 16: passim). No society could be built on a denial of individual freedom (CWMG 79: 284).

Gandhi prophesied young individuals possessed fortitude to confront exploitation and injustice. Free from anxieties and compulsions of preceding generations, youth were empowered to challenge authority and societal conventions. In course of liberation movement, Gandhi motivated youth to act courageously and advocate for justice, even at peril of personal injury or incarceration (CWMG 43: passim).

Aspirants for nation-building and dedicated to national cause youth needed to be instilled in virtues of self-discipline for political activities and in all aspects of daily existence. Self-imposed restraint was no compulsion (CWMG 48:244). Dedicated to non-violence youth were advised to regulate external behaviours and negative inner emotions viz., wrath, hatred, and resentment. Gandhi's non-violence involved qualities of *daya*, *akrodh* and *aman* (CWMG 14: 456-57). Love of one's country entailed warranted selfless service or *Seva* to nation and mankind rather than pursuit of personal advantage. One needed to realize that liberation entailed a price and sacrifice was central to nationalist struggle for freedom. Epitomizing austerity and simplicity all his life, Gandhi advised youth to hold on to ideal of self-sacrifice. Swadeshi entailed promotion of self-sustenance among youth in all aspects of life and encouraging a sense of personal accountability, diligence, and a dedication to both ethical and physical health.

Typifying *satya*, paramount ethical objective and a natural force adept at effecting enduring change, in all facets of corporeality youth were destined to assume spiritual leadership, guiding India towards a rejuvenation of its ethical and moral well-being. Gandhi's vision of youth power portrayed an image of truth, modesty, self-restraint, self-reliance, perspicuity, self-contemplation and a life-style entrenched in virtuous code of conduct focussed on spirituality eclipsing all religious traditions. Youth would be promoter of avant-garde movement directing lives of individuals and collective welfare of nation, epitomizing India's future and assuming a pivotal role in India's transformation to a politically vibrant and free nation. Gandhi conceded contemporary confrontations with colonialism would inform India's future journey and that endurance, nobility and commitment of youth were crucial for achieving his vision of an independent and equitable India.

Gandhi assigned to youth a pivotal role in rural reconstruction, in transforming and rebuilding rural infrastructure and inculcating a new tradition of *seva*, self-reliance and self-respect among rural populace (CWMG 81: 369-70). Their collaboration with people in rural reconstruction, through education, health care, agriculture, social reform, and manual labor, was medial to his dream of a deconcentrated, self-reliant and equitable India even while entrenched in its traditional roots. A central plank of Gandhi's rural rejuvenation chimera was meliorism of health and sanitation facilities, promoting health education, in India's villages (CWMG 45: 319). Youth were entrusted to play lead roles in these efforts. He underscored urgency of imparting knowledge of basic hygiene and preventive medicine to rural folk by young activists. Gandhi's invitation to youth for active involvement in rural recovery was not limited to just philosophical realm but was translated into numerous practical ventures. One such significant initiative was All India Anti Untouchability League later renamed Harijan *Sevak Sangh*, which he founded in 1932 as protest against to gear towards realization of his dream for upliftment of "untouchables" or Dalits (CWMG 52: 234). A section of youth, from urban middle class in particular, was motivated to directly and actively dedicate themselves to this cause, involving improvement in existing conditions of untouchables, resistance to practice of untouchability and advocating social justice (CWMG 17: 320-21).

Gandhi urged active youth participation in practicalities of rural life, involving agrarian pursuits. He strived to enthuse them to practise techniques of sustainable agriculture. Gandhi's faith in necessity of organic farming, disavowal of excessive mechanized agriculture, and articulation of the suitability of small-scale, family-run farms

constituted cornerstone of his programme of rural reconstruction. His programme encompassing a strong urban educated youth force actively involved in rural rejuvenation work including direct participation in agriculture had its detractors among those sections that set store by government employment and white collared jobs as career choices for their wards. Yet, he was undaunted in his faith in immense potentialities of youth for transformation of society. Blessed with idealism, insurmountable energy and immense ability to initiate change and guide their communities toward self-sufficiency and sustainability, youth were expected to be proactively engaged in pursuit of justice and freedom and reconstruction of rural life rather than remain passive recipients of education or political ideals.

Gandhi displayed great faith in their acumen for both political mobilization and social reform, displaying unwavering faith in their potential for ushering in extensive societal transformation (CWMG 53: 166). Their pursuit for political independence needed to be accompanied by addressing social issues viz., untouchability, caste system, and empowerment of women (CWMG 31: 445-6). Gandhi entrusted youth with task of elimination of untouchability and betterment of marginalized communities (CWMG 17: 445-6). Political liberation was untenable without promotion of equality and social justice. He conferred on youth task of directing *Harijan* movement.

Youth were entrusted with contesting traditional gender roles, enthusing women to undertake an active role in anti-imperial movement (Bandyopadhyay 2004: 391-3). Young women needed to be motivated to step out of confines of narrow domestic existence and participate in all forms of resistance including protests, picketing and imprisonment. This would promote empowerment of women, inclusivity and social justice. Questioning patriarchy, removing social barriers, promoting female education, ensuring their rights to equality and social justice, assuring their rightful place in all affairs of their country were essential for comprehensive integrated moral and social resurgence of India where justice and compassion persisted. A vigorous youth force could alone undertake this uphill task seeking to question limited societal role of women, crusading against child marriage, dowry system, and illiteracy, empowering them through education. They needed to actively undertake education of women (CWMG 16: 274) as he wanted them to actively realise their self emancipation through *satyagraha* (CWMG 15: 436).

Gandhi emphasized on spiritual and moral tutoring for youth. Gandhi's vision for education was inherently spiritual diverging from secular, materialistic education upheld by colonial system. True education could only be achieved through introspection and harmony

with one's inner self and accommodation of higher moral values. Principles of *ahimsa*, *satya*, meditation, self-reflection and self-discipline were central to his vision of education for youth. To be equipped to earn a living was as central as to live a life of purpose and moral integrity. In his own experiments with education at his ashrams viz., Sabarmati Ashram, he implemented a model of education that was rooted in ethical values. Gandhi's emphasis on character education was linked to his broader belief in metamorphic power of non-violence. True education should prioritize character building rather than imparting technical knowhow or academic knowledge. It should liberate men from shackles of ignorance, superstition, and colonial oppression. This liberation could only materialize with inculcation of a strong sense of self-respect, discipline, and ethical values. Self-evolution was wholly consistent with a nation's evolution. A nation could never advance without that of its component units and no individual "can advance without the nation of which he is a part also advancing." (CWMG 45: 341)

Youth was the rightful age for fostering national awareness. In a nation as diverse as India, home to marked divisions in religion, caste, and region, it was imperative to train youth in virtues of unity. Gandhi firmly believed that adoption of principles of non-violence, truth, and self-reliance, would help them overcome communal divisions and collaborate for collective welfare of the country (CWMG 50: 20). Rowdy demonstrations could alone, he felt, retard advent of *swaraj*. (CWMG 45: 350) He repeatedly highlighted importance of instilling in youth a sense of pride in one's own culture and heritage, while simultaneously acknowledging necessity for a modern, progressive nation.

Gandhi's visualized youth of India as vanguards of moral and spiritual resuscitation of the country and assigned them responsibility of political activism and social reform. They were major stake-holders in India's nation-building process, worthy of being entrusted to lead their country in struggle for both political independence and social transformation. Through their endeavours at non-violent resistance, self-reliance and righteous and virtuous living, Gandhi was convinced that youth could invigorate a just and equitable society. Gandhi's conviction in capability of youth to design future of India is a pointer to his firm belief in both spiritual and political enlightenment and salvation. In the colonial milieu, against the backdrop of nationalist movement balance between education and political activism constituted a major plank in Gandhi's thinking, empowering new generation of leaders equipped to guide India toward self-rule. He visualized for youth a pattern of education that would help prepare citizens alert to

their duties and capabilities for ensuring freedom of India. Education was integral to nationalist movement. An ideal student would be able to combine intellectual growth with a deep sense of social responsibility. This would help realize Gandhi's concept of *Sarvodaya* which was central to his dream for an independent India, create a society that emphasized values of peace, justice, and self-reliance. Social reform was essential not only for liberation of India from colonial rule but also for establishment of a just and moral society and the youth occupied a significant position in this transformation, being both torchbearers of change and moral compass mapping the country's journey toward its ideals of truth, non-violence, and self-reliance. (*Young India* 8.9.1927)

Youth alone could fulfill a transformative role in confronting colonial challenge while concurrently addressing social inequalities that were a bane of Indian social landscape. Untouchability and rigidly hierarchical caste system (CWMG 52:526) had embedded social inequalities in Indian society from time immemorial. Gandhi considered youth as active partners in his struggle for their upliftment and acceptance as equal members of society. Youth could play a significant role in breaking down barriers of caste discrimination, striving for high ethical standards in personal and professional lives, seeking truth, inclusiveness, integrity and honesty. They should be committed to social justice, community building and initiate social transformation in interests of the marginalized. They should be devoted to undertaking constructive programme. He held, class war could be avoided through adoption of non-violent method (CWMG 45: 339). In the context of the decolonization struggle Gandhi assigned a pivotal role to mobilization of students who represented youth force. In the Civil Disobedience movement they were involved on an unprecedented scale while, the Quit India Movement (1942) witnessed their extensive participation in sabotage activities (Altbach 1966: 450-2).

In his advice to a university student who expressed his eagerness to serve his country during his spare time, without jeopardizing his studies, Gandhi enumerated the following elaborate suggestions that constitute the blueprint of his programme for youth towards realization of his vision of India:

You can serve the country

- (1) By spinning daily even and strong yarn for the sake of Daridranarayana; keeping a diary of the time for which you have spun, of the quantity spun, with its weight and count, and

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reporting the work to me every month; Yarn should be carefully collected and held at my disposal.

- (2) By daily selling some Khadi on behalf of the local certified Bhandar, and by keeping a record of your sales.
- (3) By saving at least one pice per day.
- (4) By holding the collection at my disposal. The implication of the adjective 'least' should be understood, namely, that if you are able to save more, you should pour more in the Daridranarayan's chest.
- (5) By visiting Harijan quarters in company with other students; and with your companions cleaning the quarters, befriending the children and giving them useful lessons in sanitation, hygiene etc.

Then if you can save some more time you should learn some village industries for future service of villagers after finishing your studies. When you have been able to do these things and have still time and ambition for doing more, consistently with your studies, you can ask me. I shall send you more suggestions. (*Harijan* 19.10.1935)

He spoke of Tolstoy's influence on youth and social transformation. Gandhi told the youth "If you want my service, do not disown me; come and understand everything from me." (CWMG 45: 349) His repeated addresses to the youth indicate his faith in their potential (CWMG 14: 456-7).

4. Conclusion

Gandhi's hypotheses regarding youth's contribution to nation-building were significantly impactful, in spite of several problems and criticisms. One may argue that his focus on moral and spiritual premises was excessively quixotical and did not serve needs of practicality required to keep pace with rapid modernization. Others may argue that his insistence on non-violence was not in tune with context of tentacles of colonialism, believed instead that it would have been more pragmatic for youth to adopt more extreme forms of resistance. Moreover, Gandhi's outline of a self-sustaining rural India may have fallen short of expectations of urban and educated youth, dazzled by glitter and notions of *dernier cri*, industrialization, urbanization and Western-style democracy.

Yet, given the context of his time Gandhi's programme of education for youth in colonial India was revolutionary and cannot be denied its contemporaneity. His critique of colonial education system with emphasis on character building, his recommendation for manual labor and his incorporation of spiritual values into education are pointers of a holistic vision for betterment of India's future generations.

Gandhi's educational programme was not just about equipping youth for economic trials of a liberated India, but about readying them for a moral and spiritual existence that would contribute to foundation of a just, self-reliant, and liberated society.

In Gandhi's perception, education of youth was inseparable from all-encompassing blueprint of national independence. Gandhi wanted the "impatient youth in the name of God, in the name of our dear Motherland, to throw themselves heart and soul in the non-violent struggle." (CWMG 45: 349) He observed that only through ontogenesis of strong, ethically conscious individuals well versed in the importance of character building and aware of responsibilities could India achieve true liberation (CWMG 67: passim). His vision of education was ultimately one that focussed on aligning bodies, minds, souls and hands of youth with broader objectives of social justice, moral integrity and national self-sufficiency. Economic productivity could never be over moral and spiritual growth. Gandhi's vision and programme for education of youth, therefore, continues to be an enduring and eternal intimation of importance of building character and inculcating a sense of mission in fashioning future of any nation.

Contextualized against backdrop of struggle for decolonization Gandhi situated youth force in Indian national movement as a central aspect of his philosophy and activities. He admitted that India's future depended on its youth and contemplated to leverage their vigour, idealism and potential to install new socio-political framework. His impact on Indian youth was significant. Gandhi had immense faith in their ability to address economic problems that faced Indian millions. (*Young India* 6.8.1925) He advised the youth to have patience and self control (CWMG 45: 349).

Hardiman argues Indian political leaders paid "much lip service" to Gandhi and his ideals in post-independent India (Hardiman 2005:198). Gandhi's vision of India was a nation that was not simply a politically independent but also a morally and spiritually invigorated entity, where dignity and self-respect of all persons were respected and where justice and equality were prioritized. He urged students, post-independence, in context of India's new found freedom to uphold values of truth and non-violence (CWMG 89: passim) Gandhi's vision continues to be a perpetual reminder of moral and spiritual dimensions of nation-building and ongoing struggle for social justice and peace and faith of the nation in ability of her youth to continue as agent of transformation and continuous betterment unshaken. The initiative for *Bhoodan* (land donation) movement, aimed at redistribution of land from wealthy landowners to landless peasants although primarily spearheaded by Vinoba Bhave, Gandhi's close associate, drew major

support from young people who worked alongside farmers to facilitate land distribution and promote land reforms. These movements went a long way in enabling youth to learn values of self-sacrifice, social justice, and non-violence while playing an active role in influencing rural landscape.

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Addressing Suppression of Dissent Through the Lens of Spiritual Politics: Proposing Solutions

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the suppression of dissent in socio-political spheres and the use of spiritual politics as an inclusive approach to address such human rights violations. It traces the practice of dharma and ahimsa in ancient political discourse and Mahatma Gandhi's appeal for reintegration of politics with ethics. The article suggests that the Indian model of spiritual politics is suitable to address these issues and promote a renewed understanding of co-existence and collective good, highlighting the importance of human rights in a dignified and sustainable life.

Key words: Spirituality; dharma; ahimsa; human rights; spiritual politics; co-existence

Rama “Rajya” and “Rama” Rajya: Disinterring the Significance of Gandhian Ideal State

1. Introduction

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN politics and spirituality is often seen as conflicting, with spirituality often seen as personal and focusing on eternal aspects of life. However, the relationship is complex and nuanced, with two dominant perspectives emerging. One is that politics and spirituality are inalienable, with spirituality influencing politics through ethical and moral foundations, while the other is that politics is polarized on ideological and power lines, sidelining spiritual values.

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Understanding this interplay requires recognizing the meaning of politics and spirituality, which emphasizes immutable and eternal aspects of life through mindfulness, compassion, and inclusivity. Spirituality is often perceived as, “the dimension of religion that is not institutionalised or based on any doctrine” (Tomalin 2013, p. 4). It anchors both ethics and morality, wherein mankind seeks to transform the socio-political sphere into a more rational, righteous, and just space (Gottlieb 2012). Spirituality is often used as the substitute for religion, but religion, as defined by Drukheim is, “a unified system of belief and practices relative to sacred things, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions- beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community” (Durkheim 2001, p. 46). Religion is a doctrine that promotes and safeguards the interests of one moral community over others, whereas spirituality is based on the connection between soul and divine, without differentiating between one community over others. In this way, spirituality has the tendency to promote collective good and interests more than religion, but it is the religious reading of spirituality that gives spirituality a legitimate space in society. The interplay between spirituality and religion will be explained deeply in further sections. Politics, by contrast, is the realm where power is exercised and decisions are often taken for the collective good. Laswell asserts politics as the process to determine “who gets what, when, where, how, and why,” (Laswell 1936) whereas for Robert Dahl, politics is the determinant of power, reflecting “how power is distributed and exercised within a society” (Dahl 1961). Politics then implies a realm wherein power and resource allocation are exercised simultaneously. Both spirituality and politics influence human behaviour in definite ways. That is why, spirituality and politics converge with each other in terms of understanding human nature, political realities and socio-political circumstances.

Reintegration of spirituality with politics underscores the essentiality of unity of all on the basis of values of truth and non-violence. It can be argued that politics and spirituality have their independent spaces but politics influences the lived reality of the mankind and in this view, whatever happens in political space is constantly under surveillance of moral and ethical values. Socio-political issues of human rights violations, oppression of women, ethnic or religious minorities pose profound difficulties in inculcating the virtues of mindfulness and peacefulness. This is where spiritual understanding plays a significant role. Spirituality requires active resistance to social, political and moral injustices (Gottlieb 2012, p. 169), highlighting its importance in the political realm. Reintegration of spirituality with politics allows one to be virtuous, inclusive and

mindful towards others making the political process of decision making, resource allocation an egalitarian space where each individual will be given equal and rightful importance. Their duties and rights will also be recognised. Recent incidents of internet shutdowns, censorship of public communication, ethnic and religious conflicts across the world highlight that we need a renewed perspective of resolution of human rights violation. Suppressing the dissent has become a common phenomenon wherein as long as one follows the majoritarian belief, values and perspective, they will be regarded as part of social circle but as soon as one advocates their own dissenting opinion then various means of suppressing the dissent comes into practice. In a world where democracy is the most celebrated form of government, it is imperative to present renewed perspectives and solutions for the resolution of suppression of dissent.

The article explores the roots of spiritual politics in Indian civilizational discourse through the understanding of dharma and ahimsa, and Gandhi's appeal for reintegration of politics with ethics. It conceptualizes spiritualisation of politics, highlighting ancient Indian political discourse guided by spiritual values. The article distinguishes between spirituality and religion, highlighting how spiritual understanding helps individuals be conscious of their rights and duties without creating a dichotomy. It also delves into Gandhian discourse and his appeal for reintegration of ethics with politics, evaluating the applicability of the Indian model of spiritual politics in addressing global dissent suppression.

Spiritualisation of Politics

To have a nuanced understanding of spiritualisation of politics, it is imperative to comprehend the difference between religion and spirituality and how religion has been the means of both social transformation and conflict. According to Du Toit transformation implies a will to move away from an undesirable structure to a better one because of the discontent with the existing structures (Toit 1999). Similarly, addressing the issues of human rights violation implies questioning the existing ways of violation of human rights with the will to transform or resolve the issues of violation. Suppression of dissent is one of the popular ways of violation of civil rights like, right to expression or speak. The violation is directly or indirectly the result of illegitimate dominance of authority, imposition of arbitrary decisions, shut down of internet facilities and censorship of public communication. Addressing the suppression of dissent requires new ways of resolution in which mediation, deliberation and consensus should be practiced in cases of difference of opinions. Religion and

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spirituality permeate all aspects of human lives and have the potential to inculcate the values of mindfulness, inclusivity, understanding, and non-violent behaviour towards others, creating a means for social transformation. Social transformation here implies helping society “to reach wholeness or a condition of harmony” (Beyers 2021, p.44). Selinger argues that the role of religion has been reduced to moral and ethical spheres in the development processes (Selinger 2004). This sophistication is the result of separation of state and religion wherein state is confined with public sphere and material development whereas religion is confined to the private and spiritual spheres. Beyers argues that, a division between material and spiritual domains contributes to the marginalisation of religion (Beyers 2021, p. 47). However, religion provide guidance for ethical conduct in society and inculcate the moral rationality to take the decisions with fairness, truthfulness and non-violent means. It allows individual to act morally as well as responsibly. So, the moral and private sphere of religion help one to practice the morality and spirituality in politics, making it more transparent, responsible and coherent.

Religion can both promote social liberation and reform, but it can also disrupt harmony by instilling fundamentalist and orthodox characteristics. To avoid disruption, it's crucial to practice a spiritual understanding of religion. Spiritual interpretation can help resolve suppression of dissent in politics. Both religion and spirituality are interdependent, as spiritual truths influence social reality. Disparities in ethnic, racial, caste, religion, or region often lead to suppression of minorities. Social conscience is crucial for stability and order in society.

Social conscience and moral obligation are inherent values that spirituality has the potential to inculcate. Tomalin defines spirituality as religion that is not institutionalised and not focused on doctrine (Tomalin 2013). The existence of human is socially and culturally influenced and is also an expression of spiritual awareness. So, worldly existence is determined and influenced by spiritual fabric of society. Spiritual interpretation of religion becomes imperative for resolving the suppression of dissent faced by people worldwide. Cox also argues that the origin or heart of religion lies in the spiritual human impulse that shows appreciation for the sacred dimension of life (Cox 2017, p.195). It means that religion should be the means to inculcate the values of honesty, inclusiveness, and tolerance in society. Thus, spiritualisation of politics implies integration of politics with spiritual values that transforms a society into just society. As Beyers also asserts that, “spiritually inclined human beings will have a social conscience, will to address injustices, by considering values and principles not necessarily reflecting a religious affiliation or religious need for power

in society but emanating from a spiritually attuned orientation” (Beyers 2021, p.53).

Politics devoid of spirituality creates an unethical atmosphere disregarding the understanding and compassion towards others. Spiritualisation of politics traces its roots to the antiquities of Indian political thought in particularly with king-priest relationship wherein “Rajgurus have guided and counselled rulers and rulers in turn have supported religious/spiritual leaders” (Hopkins 1889, p.154). Brown argues that, “King-Priest union was fundamental to the functioning of governance as the ‘raja’ whose *kshatriya* duty was to wield power and administer punishment (*danda*) for breaches of the *dharma* relied upon the learnings of the *brahmana* for the understanding of *dharma*” (Brown 1953, p. 245). It is not merely to bring religion into politics but to transform individual into a *samadarshi* (one who sees everyone as being equal); *satyadarshi* (truthful); *paradarshi* (transparent); *doordarshi* (visionary); *priyadarshi* (embodied with love and compassion). Aurobindo also held that it is a European echo that religion and spirituality on the one side and intellectual activity and practical life on the other have to be pursued on separate lines with separate principles (Aurobindo 1997). In contrast, Indian tradition visualises the similar grounds for spirituality and politics. Politics and spirituality converge and diverge on various grounds. Politics is often violent and self-serving whereas spirituality inculcates selfless service. Interestingly, both politics and spirituality share the dissatisfaction with status quo and prescribes change wherein former produces violent change, latter encompasses the moral idea of change.

Spiritual politics at the individual level focuses on self-improvement, unity, and eternal values. It encourages compassion and understanding towards oneself and others. The intersection of spirituality and political engagement involves consciousness, purpose, good will, and unity. Individuals play a significant role in maintaining stability and order in society by aligning spiritual values in policy making and accommodating diverse interests. Spiritualisation of politics challenges selective execution of equality, freedom, and human rights by political elites.

Precepts of *Dharma* and *Ahimsa* in Ancient Indian Civilisational Discourse

Indian civilisational discourse has witnessed a tradition of spiritual politics, dating back to the *Vedic* period precisely in the tradition of ‘*Rajadharma*’ (duties of king) and in the values of *dharma* and *ahimsa* that gained momentum in twentieth century in Indian struggle against the colonial rule. The tradition of *rajadharma* exemplifies how notion

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of *dharma* was integral to politics in ancient India. It was based on two important principles. First, *Karma-yoga* (performance of duties with the spirit of selflessness) and second, *Loksamgraha* (welfare of all). These principles did not sustain the dichotomy of self and other rather dispensed unity of all. Indian political thought and its philosophy lays the foundation of the 'Indic civilizational discourse' which has been unique and passed down from generation to generation. It finds its distinguished characteristics in its ancient texts. Ancient Indian texts dispense a profound understanding of all branches of life as Majumdar argues that, "the mass of literature specific to India deals with philosophy and religion including ethics, ritual and ceremonial; cosmology; cosmogony, geography, astronomy, and the allied sciences; political and economic doctrines and practices and in a minor way with all branches of secular life" (Majumdar 1951, p. 41). Texts of *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* to *Tripitakas* and *Jatakakathas* of the Buddha and the Jain Agamas endorse the ideals of cosmic cohesion, harmony and co-existence. The individual and its relationship with the society was also the central theme of these texts wherein the state and society were viewed as an organic whole and '*dharma*' defined the respective roles and duties of people. The aim of individual's life was governed through the *purusharthas*¹ wherein individual was expected to lead life in balance of *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (pleasure) to seek *moksha* (salvation). It was believed that ultimate goal of human life is *moksha* (freeing individual from the "bondage" of earthly existence) which further relies on three lesser goals of human activity known to be *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* (Brown 1953, p. 243). The depth of Indian political thought is rooted in the spiritual fabric which made it harmonious and its impact immeasurable.

State was conventionally benevolent in its theory and practice in ancient India.² Ancient Indian understanding of political authority and popular legitimacy was rooted in tradition of *rajadharma*. *Rajadharma* implies duties of king towards his people. It underscores the centrality of individual and duality of rights and duties that essentialised the relation amidst state and subjects. It depicts that it was not just the authority and rights of king but duties towards his subject that made ancient Indian polity virtuous. Thus, an attempt to comprehend the evolving nature of contemporary global human rights issues essentialises an attempt to answer how these indigenous values dispense an alternative paradigm for co-existence and inclusivity rather than suppressing the dissent. Civilisation like India enjoined people to practice compassion, honesty, non-violence and service towards each other.³ The ancient Indian polity was governed by the principle

of *dharma* and the transgression from duties was considered to be *adharmic*. Ancient Indian polity has nonetheless much to render the world of its own distinct perspective. Let us start with the antiquated values of *dharma* and *ahimsa* upon which spiritual politics lays its foundations.

Dharma and *ahimsa* have been the anchors of the Indian way of life. The term *dharma* is derived from the Sanskrit root word '*dhri*' means to uphold. There is no English term equivalent for the term *dharma* but it is akin to the English terms of law and religion. Varma asserts that, "history is the progressive attempt at the modelisation, idealisation and incorporation of *dharma* in individual, collective and spiritual life and experience" (Varma 1959, p.105). Scope of *dharma* has been extensive as it first, laid the foundation of individual's life wherein individual is supposed to be having three key psychic tendencies of *sattva* (truth), *rajas* (domination), *tamas* (banality) with the balanced pursuit of *purusharthas* (*dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*). At societal level, it imbibed *varna* order of the classes of *brahmans*, *kshatriyas*, *vaishyas* and *sudras* followed by *asramas* (phases of life) i.e., *brahmacarya* (studentship), *grhasthya* (household-ship), *vanaprastha* (anchorage), *sannyasa* (renounce). Second, *dharma* was also considered as the basis of statecraft as the propositions of *rajadharma* based on the guiding principle of *dharma* constituted the rightful statecraft (Bowlesleiden 2008, p.150). According to Kapil Kapoor, "*dharma* was a sole principle that was applied equally to both Raja and the ranka" (Kapoor 2023, pp. 8-9). King in ancient India was bound by the same law and ideal of *dharma* as followed by the people. *Aitareya* notion of the king being the "protector of *dharma*" and the *Satapatha* view of king as the "upholder of *dharma*" simply connote the association of kingship with the concept of *dharma* which had gained a moral connotation by being identified with truth and the notion of *Rta*.⁴

Buddhist and Jain traditions prominently part of *sramana* tradition developed in preceding years of Vedic/*brahmanic* tradition. It is argued that, what lies at the heart of Buddhism is *dharma* which "is not an exclusively Buddhist concept but one which is common to Indian philosophical, religious, social and political thought in its entirety" (Gethin 1998, p. 35). Buddhist *dhmma* is aligned with *dukkha* that Buddha propounded in his four 'Noble Truth' that are, *Dukkha*, *Samudaya* (origin of *dukkha*), *Nirodha* (cessation of *Dukkha*) and *Magga* (way leading towards the cessation of *Dukkha*). The causes of *Dukkha* were *panca-khanda* (five aggregates) of attachment.⁵ The underlying proposition is that whole of existence is relative and conditioned and thus, nothing absolutely exists in isolation. The ideal of freedom or free will are also conditioned. So, according to Buddhist teachings

one must adopt the middle path and avoid the extremes of pleasure and self-mortification.⁶ There is nothing in the universe or outside, good or bad, conditioned or not conditioned relative or absolute, which is not included in the Buddhist *dhamma* (Thero 1974, p. 58). Buddhist theory of *dharma* removed the caste vocations and implied the theory of dependent origination and morality. Morality is known to be *Sila* in Buddhist tradition which imply adherence to truth, non-violence, celibacy, non-adultery, non-stealing and non-drinking of strong drink (Varma 1959, pp. 115-116). Buddhist *dhamma* was also the instrument of state policy of Asoka. He had in his reign *Dharma Mahamatras*. According to Sircar (1998, p. 35), “these *Mahamatras* worked for the establishment and promotion of *dharma* as well as for the welfare and happiness of those who are devoted to *dharma* even among Yavanas, Kambojas and Gandharas, the *Rashtrika paitryanikas* and other people dwelling about the western borders of Asoka’s dominion.”

The legacy of the idea of non-violence is also complex. Non-violence is a moral virtue which later evolved into an absolute socio-political strategy to fight against colonisers. It is an accepted norm in religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. It primarily implies avoiding injury and harm with thought, speech or action to any living or non-living beings. The beauty of *ahimsa* lies in both of its positive and negative aspects. Its negative connotation encompasses non-injury and advocates avoidance of ill-will, anger, hatred, humiliation and oppression of weak. Positively, it advocates the practice of love, compassion and benevolence towards others (Johani & Mahakul 2009). ‘*Ahimsa Parmo Dharma*’ signifies the alignment of *dharma* and *ahimsa*, implying respect for all, performing one’s duties and being harmless to self and others. Although *dharma* in early Vedic societies was inclusive of the virtue of *ahimsa* but it was in reactionary and protestant movements of *sramanic* tradition that *ahimsa* became non-negotiable to Indic civilisational discourse. The virtue of *ahimsa* further laid the foundation of strong sense of a responsibility and empathy towards others, sustaining the idea of welfare. The general welfare of society was prioritised over salvation of individual as if one renounces the world and attains salvation, s/he leaves behind a multitude of souls who suffer as they don’t receive any guidance. So, it is one’s duty first to bring happiness to the suffering soul (Shinde 2023, p. 27). Buddhist tradition also advocates spiritual welfare and it was not recommended to seek *nirvana* all alone till the last suffering soul had also attained it.⁷ Vedic tradition along with the evolution of varying traditions and religions modified itself but *dharma* and *ahimsa* remained central. At the outset of 20th century, principles of *dharma*

and *ahimsa* became moving principles in Indian independence movement. It was in search of truth that Mahatma Gandhi also essentialised the principles of *dharma* and *ahimsa*. Both the principles are interdependent upon each other to such an extent that mere understanding of one remains incomplete without understanding the other. Thus, the principle of *dharma* and *ahimsa* and Gandhi's appeal for reintegration of politics with ethics shaped the discourse of spiritual politics in India.

Gandhian Discourse and Reintegration of Politics with Ethics

Mahatma Gandhi's unfailing appeal for principles of *dharma* and *ahimsa* best exemplifies spiritualisation of politics or what he propagated as reintegration of politics with ethics. It was his belief in search after truth through non-violent means that led him to appeal for the reintegration of politics with ethics. His conceptualisation of truth (*satya*) traces its roots to *Rta*. The term *Rta* has been interpreted as law or more prominently the cosmic law. Heinrich Luders ascertains that, the term *Rta* in *Vedas* signify nothing but truth (Luders 1951), that intimately binds man, God and the world together. Gandhi believed in the essential unity of God and man and thereby regarded 'Truth (*satya*) as God'. *Dharma* evolved from *Rta* and inherited the element of righteousness or duty. It also laid the foundations of universal ordinance by which the cosmos is governed and sustained (Zimmer 1956, p. 163). According to Radhakrishnan, "*dharma* directs the mankind as each man and group, each activity of soul, mind, life, and body has its *dharma*" (Radhakrishnan 1939, p. 353). On these lines, Gandhi advocated that *dharma* and politics are relative and cannot be considered in isolation (Gandhi 1956, p. 453). Gandhi ascertained that, "Truth is God and *ahimsa* is God's love, and, Truth is hurt by every evil thought about anyone, therefore, *ahimsa* is fundamental to the discovery of Truth" (Gandhi 1949, pp. 4-5).

Gandhi was indeed the votary of '*ahimsa parama dharma*' (non-violence is the highest duty) wherein evil thought, hatred, malice towards anyone has to be avoided. It can be acquired through *Tapas* (state of equanimity of mind and soul), wherein mind is completely at rest and allows one to practice self-control and restraint. It imbibes the foundations of moral functioning of society. Gandhi's abiding faith in the theory and practice of both *dharma* and *ahimsa* emphasised that everyone must be respected as free moral agent. He was of the view that politics cannot be understood and functioned in distinction from socio-economic regularities. If the institutional foundations and socio-economic values are based on inequalities and dependency then political arrangement would also reflect the same. Gandhi's conception

of democracy advocated rights and opportunities for the weak. It is certain when he said that, “weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest.” This could only be possible through the means of righteousness and non-violence (Gandhi 1948, p. 269). Spiritualisation of politics or reintegration of politics with ethics ensures the individual freedom and social harmony as having the consciousness of social norms as a form of duty is at the nucleus of spirituality and secures the foundation of social order. It primarily broadens the idea of duty wherein individual does not observe or follow the norms merely for the reasons of legality or out of fear of legal sanctions but for the collective good and stability of society. Centralising man as a social being, Gandhi argued that individual must learn to adjust the individualism to the requirements of social progress, to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint (Gandhi 1969, p. 32). He ascertained that humans as the social beings and have the capacity to be reformed. His essential difference between man and the brute force lies in a view that, “former can respond to the call of the spirit in him, can rise superior to the passions that he owns in common with the brute, and, therefore, superior to the selfishness and violence, which belong to the brute nature and not to immortal spirit of man” (Gandhi 1957, p. 270). Exposing the cloak or myth of grand civilisation wore by western countries Gandhi held that Indian civilisational discourse lies in morality and religion. Religion has always been dear to Gandhi and was inherent part of Indian civilisation.

He argued that, “Religion is dear to me, and my first complaint is that India is becoming irreligious...here, I am not thinking of the Hindu and Mahomedan or the Zoroastrian religion, but of the religion which underlines all religions, we are turning away from God” (Gandhi 1938, p. 38).

In this view, Gandhian appeal for the reintegration of politics with ethics upon the foundational values of *dharma* and *ahimsa* characterises a moral approach to comprehend the ever-expanding global human rights issues and in particularly the suppression of dissent. Reintegration of politics with ethics recognises individual integrity as well as communal harmony. First, it allows one to respect the integrity and freedom of others in order to expect own integrity to be respected by others. Do unto others as you would have wanted them to do unto you was his mantra. Second, no individual can be forced to change their ways and accept the dominant standards. It would distort the understanding of justice or equality as for Gandhi justice lies in the respect of the moral worth of the individual. Third, violence for Gandhi was exploitation and anyone who follows the violent path becomes the less of human. Accordingly, “the violent person is at the

war with the world and believes the world is at war with him and he has to live in perpetual fear of the world" (Terchek 1975, p. 226). Thus, Gandhi held that we must act in a way which is true to ourselves and honest with our intentions. One must not impose his/her opinions over others. Ronald (1951, p. 79) held that Gandhi was of the view that, "We must try patiently to convert our opponents, if we wish to evolve the spirit of democracy out of slavery, we must be scrupulously exact in our dealing with opponents."

Reintegrated Approach to Global Human Rights Issues

Human rights are the foundation of democratic societies, encompassing basic rights for all individuals regardless of their cultural, religious, ethical, or political background. These rights are a source of other rights and are governed by the state's legitimate control over them. Negative rights restrict the state's authority to specific spheres, while positive rights require the state to protect individual rights through policies and welfare mechanisms. Freedom of expression and thought is a fundamental human right for all individuals, regardless of their religion, culture, gender, or class. However, when the state restricts individuals from expressing their thoughts, it is considered a negative expression of rights. Freedom of speech is crucial in promoting diversity and mutual co-existence, and it is essential to maintain and reflect on democracy for a broader manifestation of plural democracy.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights contains thirty articles and recognises inalienable rights of individuals in respect of dignity, equality, freedom and justice.⁸ Many other international compacts and agreements also maintain the sanctity and significance of human rights.⁹ Whilst freedom of thought and expression remain central to the functioning of democracy, political leaders throughout the world tend to be the torchbearer of human rights. But ground reality depicts the other side of the story. Contemporary world is witnessing a refined and nuanced strategies of repression. Despite the wide agreement over significance of human rights and in particularly the right to freedom of thought and expression, a culture of intolerance towards criticism and dissent is incubating in contemporary global politics. Individuals, groups, NGOs, media face harassment and violence for expressing dissent. Internet shutdown has recently become a prevalent instrument to curb any means of communication. According to Akshaya (2020), "Governments are increasingly resorting to shutdowns in times of crisis, arguing they are necessary for public safety or curbing the spread of misinformation." One of the UN reports states that, "when the internet is off, people's ability to express themselves freely is

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limited, the economy suffers, journalists struggle to upload photos and videos documenting government overreach and abuse, students are cut off from their lessons, taxes can't be paid on times, and those needing health care cannot get consistent access (Office of High Commissioner of Human Rights 2022)" Thus, switching off the internet causes incalculable damage to democracy (Office of High Commissioner of Human Rights 2022).

As reported by Emily Hart (2022), "Military coup in Myanmar, return of Taliban in Afghanistan and Ukraine-Russia conflict witness the severely limited right to freedom of speech, thought and expression....the slow reduction of freedom of expression is most marked in the Americas, where countries like Columbia, El Salvador, and Brazil, have seen sustained declines over time as institutions have been eroded and the environment for organisation, civic action, and dissent has been constricted...Hungary and Poland have also seen a steady deterioration of their scores." It depicts that suppression of dissent taking place at such wider level needs a resolution and transformation at its earliest.

Thus, values of *dharma* and *ahimsa* and socio-political thought of Gandhi impart a distinctive approach towards resolution of issues like suppression of dissent. Gandhi contended that righteous means should be solely utilised for attaining the political ends as politics without principles will be driven by greed and opportunism rather than principles. In this view, he accounted for political ethics with foundational principles of non-violence and truth. Gandhi held that, "a nonviolent world order is not only a spiritual commitment on the part of persons everywhere but must be institutionalized both politically and economically in the form of democratic world government and federated democratic government at all levels of governing" (Arora 2008). So, Gandhi's approach rooted in Indian civilisational discourse is a replication of spiritualisation of politics and is evident in his understanding of soul-force. Gandhi upheld the dictates of one's consciousness over anything. He was of the view that it is not right to disregard other's thoughts and to regard people holding different views from ours as enemies of the country. He argued that, "we who seek justice will have to do justice to others" (Gandhi 1938, p.21). Gandhi might have not dealt resonantly directly with freedom of thought and speech but his advocacy of love and duty towards others reflect the same ideal. Commenting upon if partition is the cause of awakening for him, Gandhi held that,

When a man rises from sleep, he twists his limbs and is restless.... it takes some time before he is entirely awakened, Similarly, although the partition

has caused an awakening, the comatose has not yet discovered...we are still twisting our limbs and still restless..... the present unrest in India be considered necessary and therefore, a proper state(Gandhi 1938, p. 25).

Independence may have granted national freedom, but its true essence lies in collective good, mutual respect, and love. Gandhi, for instance, viewed religions as convergent paths to common goals. He disregarded inborn enmity between Hindus and Muslims and argued against fighting for selfish interests. Gandhi also addressed the issue of cow-slaughter, urging fellow countrymen to protect cows for the sake of the country, as India relies heavily on cow progeny. And if fellow country-men would not agree then he argued,

I should let the cow go for the simple reason that the matter is beyond my ability....if I were over full of pity for the cow, I should sacrifice my life to save her, but not to take my brothers.. This, I hold, is the law of our religion(Gandhi 1938, p. 46).

Gandhi believed that quarrelling was unsolvable and that spiritual values were the seeds of a just and righteous society. He viewed cow-slaughter as a non-violent and dharmic issue that could only be eliminated through compassion rather than quarrelling. Gandhi emphasized the importance of individual conscience and judgement in decision-making. He disagreed with English views on civilisation, values, education, and railways but advised Indians to practice soul-force rather than brute force towards English rule. He urged individuals to speak and think right without fear, and to follow compassion rather than brute force in their actions.

Gandhi upheld passive resistance; soul-force over brute force. It is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms (Gandhi 1938, p. 69). It is primarily to refuse to do what is repugnant to one's conscience. In this view, Gandhi elucidated that one must not have to agree with the dominant belief system and notions of majority if it go against one's conscience but one must also not practice brute force or any violent mechanism to justify oneself or impose the view-points over others. It is to practice compassion, self-control and respond to the spirit of oneself. Instead, one must reach opponent's conscience whilst practicing non-violence and *dharm*. Reconciliation can be achieved based on the moral agreement. Thus, Gandhi was the staunch supporter of democracy. He was primarily influenced by the participative and democratic mechanisms that democratic form of government brings with itself. Gandhi was certain that democracy cannot prosper if there is some

form of restriction upon people's opinion as it will inhibit the true realisation of freedom i.e., *Swaraj* (Shaikh 2023, p.3). Gandhian discourse emphasizes the importance of participation, discussion, and constructive criticism for *Swaraj* and democracy. It promotes acceptance and tolerance towards oppositional views and respect for diversity. Gandhian political thought reflects the spiritualisation of politics in India and his efforts to promote consensus-oriented, self-sufficient societies. The importance of individualism is not limited to voting purposes but also holistically regulates democratic functioning.

Conclusion and Way Forward

The article presents a renewed perspective on human rights violation, particularly suppression of dissent, through the lens of spiritual understanding of politics. It highlights the practical implications of dharma and ahimsa in ancient Indian polity, particularly through rajadharma and Gandhi's appeal to not separate religion with ethics. Spiritual politics transforms humans into ethical, compassionate, and considerate beings, allowing them to follow rightful conduct without considering immediate outcomes. Integration of spirituality with politics harmonises the sphere of politics, where decisions are made and power is exercised over people through policy making, implementation, resource allocation, and distribution. The article traces the historical evolution of spiritual politics in India through the precepts of dharma and ahimsa in ancient political discourse and Gandhi's appeal for reintegration of politics with ethics during the anti-colonial movement. Spiritualisation of politics creates an open space of morality resisting suppression of dissent, enriching the sense of right and wrong and questioning moral values at stake if suppressing dissent is practiced.

Notes

1. Indian way of life was governed by Chatur-Ashramas which included four aims of life which are overall abiding principles of dharma. The four Asramas are: Brahmcharya (student stage), Grihastha (householder stage), Vanprastha (hermit stage), and Sanyasa (ascetic stage) for the fulfilment, happiness, and spiritual liberation.
2. Practice of Yogakshema implies welfare in form of protection and prosperity of all. Yogakshema is integral to the understanding and functioning of ancient Indian polity. Kautilya in his Arthashastra describes Yogakshema as the ultimate goal of the ruler and government. In view of practice of Yogakshema, role of state has

been described and further debated all along in ancient texts. For further information see, Ashok Chousalkar, "Political Philosophy of Arthashastra Tradition", *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 42,1(1981), pp. 54-66; Charles Drekmeier, *Kingship and Community in Early India*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962).

3. The earliest collection of the four *Vedas*: *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda* and *Atharvaveda* are testimonial to the practices of sacrifice and mutual-understanding wherein a person who does not follow or promote the ideals of mutual co-existence was understood to be ungrateful. Discharging one's duties as a member of society was considered to be significant for societal stability and welfare and in later times, general welfare of society was also prioritised over the salvation of individual.
4. Taittiriyaaranyaka 8.1. He (who was alone) desired 'let me be born as many' he observed penance, observing penance, he created what is this all (universe). P.44. Artharvaveda 12.1.45. 'The earth holds together the people speaking diverse speeches and doing diverse duties as if they are living in one common house.'
5. These five aggregates include a) matter characterised by solidity, fluidity, heat and motion and their derivatives; b) pleasant, unpleasant and neutral sensations, c) aggregate of perceptions, d) aggregates of volitional activities and e) aggregates of consciousness.
6. Middle Path of Buddha implies the Noble Eight-fold Path as the middle way to steer clear of the extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification. It comprises right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.
7. Disposition of *Rajarsi* and *Bodhisattva* in *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Arthashastra* depict that kings should lead a spiritual path, work selflessly for worldly as well as spiritual welfare of the suffering humanity. For further information on Bodhisattva see, Kelsang Gyato Uantiveda, *Shantiveda's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life: How to Enjoy a Life of Great Meaning and Altruism* (London: Tharpa Publications, 2002). For philosophy of Rajarsi see R. P. Kangle, *Arthashastra* (India: Motilal Banarasidas Publishers, 2014).
8. Article 18, 19, 20 of UDHR constitute the foundations of right to freedom of thought and expression. Article 18 maintains that everyone has the right to freedom of thought conscience and religion; Article 19 advocates right to freedom of thought and expression without any interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers; whereas Article 20 held right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. For further information, see "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948. Date of Access: 15th February 2024. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf.
9. International Compacts on Human Rights comprises European

Convention on Human Rights (1950), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), Helsinki Accords (1975) and African Charter on Peoples' and Human Rights (1981).

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NEP 2020 and the Challenges of Financing Higher Education Reforms

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses some issues related to financing higher education reforms in the National Education Policy (NEP) rollout context. It discusses theoretical questions about funding higher education, the practices followed in different countries, and the suggestions of various expert committees and individuals on financing higher education and improving the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER). The paper provides an overview of the allocation and expenditure in higher education based on available data. It also examines existing and potential alternative sources of funding higher education reforms in India, such as annual grants, HEFA, education cess, bank and government loans, contingent income loans, philanthropy, foreign universities, and mineral funds.

Key words: Finance, Higher Education, NEP, Public good, HEFA, Gross Enrollment Ratio

Introduction

INDIA HAS THE largest young population in the world, with more than 27 percent in the 15–29 age bracket. India's demographic dividend needs to translate into a productive one by focusing on higher education, which should be geared towards higher employment. The National Education Policy (NEP) was announced nearly five years ago. Both the Department of Education and the UGC are fast-tracking the process. However, financing the national education policy is still a gray area. The thrust of the 2009 Yashpal Committee Report was to promote fundraising from philanthropy, alumni, and other nonprofit sources and engagement from good overseas universities without

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the state running away from its responsibility. The state, the committee said, should provide block grants covering an entire plan period instead of annual grants to the Universities (Yashpal Committee, 2009). The N.R. Narayana Murthy Committee Report emphasized corporate sector involvement in higher education to advance market participation for enhancing efficiency and autonomy. The committee recommended the establishment of a scholarship called “The Indian Corporate Higher Education Scholarship” with a capital of Rs. 1,000 crores donated by the top 1000 corporations in the country and also a “National Educational Loan Fund” with Rs. 100,000 crores to provide long-term loans set up by the Public sector banks. The committee also recommended the setting up of the Indian Corporate R&D Fund with a corpus of Rs. 5,000 crores patterned on the National Science Foundation of USA (Narayana Murthy Committee, 2012). The NEP is largely silent on how such a wide-ranging reform is to be financed. This paper explores some challenges related to funding the NEP in higher education.

Conceptual Framework

Conventionally, higher education is seen as a public good. The resources for higher education should come from public sources, either in the form of public spending or through tax. When the number of students is large, the resources from public sources alone cannot meet the need. Taxation is another way to raise money, but it has its limitations. First, high taxation results in adverse incentives; secondly, tax funding tends to be regressive. It is regressive as higher education is ‘disproportionately consumed by people from better-off backgrounds; the system benefits the best-off most’. Due to macroeconomic reality and distributional goals, a large higher education system may require public funding to be complemented by private funding. Large-scale higher education is important, and mass systems are too costly to depend on public funding. The potential sources of private funding are family resources, a student’s earnings while a student, loans, employers, entrepreneurial activities by universities, or gifts (Barr, 1999).

One serious issue with financing higher education is to see whether education is a public good. From a human resource perspective, better education naturally adds to a country’s human capital. At the same time, it is also, in one sense, a private good because the beneficiaries of education may be able to make personal gains by marketing their training and education. The decrease in public spending has compelled public and private institutions to raise tuition fees. Second, there is an increase in institutions that self-finance and tack on complete cost

recovery to their tuition fees. The general approach is to ask the students to take loans from banks. The banks are unlikely to reach out to marginalized students with little collateral to offer. In such a situation, the importance of the public sector is particularly crucial. Union financing for government and government-aided HEIs is biased in favour of central universities, and state governments spend much more on higher education than the federal government in India.

Public sector engagement is more significant than private sector participation in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Korea. Public sector participation is more dominant in the majority of European countries. The majority of nations spend more than the average of 1.5% of GDP on financing higher education; in some, like Canada, Korea, and the United States, this rate exceeds 2.5% of GDP, while in others, like Hungary, Italy, and the United Kingdom, it is less than 1.5% of GDP. Most OECD nations support higher education and the actors involved by allocating roughly 22% of their public budgets. Since the 1980s, recent changes related to liberalisation have had a direct impact on higher education funding. If accepted, these cost-sharing measures would increase the dominance of the private sector in each country (Goksu & Gungor, 2015).

India has fully funded colleges and universities, although universities often can claim some own funds through fee collection. Then there are purely privately financed institutions that are run by collecting fees from the students. They could be the case of academic capitalism, which is profit-motivated or academic philanthropy as a part of corporate social responsibility. It takes resources to expand tertiary education systems. Higher education, unlike most industries, is labor-intensive, and as a result, even unit costs are rising. The search for capital-intensive operations or options is in its infancy, and opportunities to move institutions to places where labour is less expensive would betray the very purpose of higher education. The returns on investment in the higher education sector are characterised by time lags of decades, even though wealth is created through higher education, which is eventually taxed (Herbst, 2007, p.90).

There are supply-side and demand-side perspectives on the growth of higher education from a government standpoint. According to the supply-side theory, the government finances the construction of physical infrastructure (land, buildings, etc.). It may offer incentives (such as financial assistance programmes) to encourage citizen involvement in higher education. In a demand-side higher education framework, the government responds to the rising public interest in higher education by supporting institutions and encouraging them to do so, usually temporarily, until institutions can manage using

institutional resources to satisfy demand. According to the demand-side theory, the government allows the market to determine the creation and growth of higher education, only getting involved when it becomes apparent that there is a need or a sudden increase in demand. According to a supply-side theory, the government actively develops policies that increase citizens' motivation and interest in earning a college degree. The underlying philosophical approach required in any developed or emerging economy is assumed to be a balance in supply-side and demand-side rationales to guarantee a strong higher education system that adds to a state's economic and social well-being. Governments frequently establish environments favourable to higher education early on in developing a national or state higher education system (Villarreal & Ruby, 2018).

In higher education, four prevalent funding models are applied. Although incremental funding models are simple to adopt and yield little funding volatility, institutional leaders frequently see them as unfair. Although per-capita approaches are more favoured, they frequently overlook differences in student enrollment types and the variable costs of various academic programmes. Although performance-based models are considered less complicated and more equitable than credit-based approaches, the latter tend to have more reporting requirements. Governments and an educated public find political appeal in performance funding models, but these models are frequently complex, require ongoing review, and are still subject to manipulation by institutions. Enrollment-based methods (per capita and credit) are feasible for countries looking to increase access to higher education. When there is a strong higher education system, and the government wants to use performance outcomes to advance particular initiatives or government priorities, performance funding options might be suitable. But perhaps a fair warning is necessary for those countries considering performance-based models. At least in the US and UK, the performance-based approach has not yet been demonstrated to be the panacea (ibid).

The cost-sharing concept for financing higher education has gained acceptance in many countries. Four groups have begun to take part in financing higher education as a result of this development. Governments and taxpayers make up the first group; governments finance higher education through tax money and other public funds. The second group consists of parents who borrow or save money to pay for their children's higher education. Students, who comprise the third group, borrow or save money as their parents do. Organisations supporting parents, students, or higher education institutions comprise the final category (Johnstone, 2005).

The amount of money a government gives its colleges and universities yearly is known as an annual grant. It allows universities to choose how much to devote to meeting their competing financial needs. The university must, however, account entirely to the government for how it uses the grant money. Following its objectives and unique circumstances, the institution can engage in realistic strategic planning and create appropriate financial controls, including budgets, expenses, expenditures, and income streams. It also enables the institution to discover additional sources of income that could be used to increase its revenue base. Finally, following government regulations, the institution can charge competitive tuition rates.

NEP Document Provisions on Higher Education Financing

The NEP document does not adequately deal with the nitty-gritty of reform financing. It admits that students from socioeconomically challenged homes need help and encouragement to move to higher education successfully. As a result, universities and colleges will be expected to establish top-notch assistance centres. They will be provided the financial support and academic resources they need to do so successfully (NEP, 2020, p. 39). Further, initiatives will be taken to encourage the academic merit of students from SC, ST, OBC, and other disadvantaged groups. The National Scholarship Portal will be enhanced to assist, promote, and monitor the development of scholarship recipients. Private higher education institutions will be urged to give their students more free ships and scholarships (p. 40). Unspent grants will no longer be a problem, and a performance-based funding system for States and higher education institutions is proposed to be developed. A much smoother, faster, and more transparent flow of funds will be made possible by the proposed new regulatory framework. The Policy also calls for the revitalization, active promotion, and support of private charitable action in education. Any public institution can make efforts to raise private philanthropic contributions to improve educational experiences in addition to public budgetary assistance. Furthermore, alternatives for further cost recovery without harming the interests of the poor or deserving sections will be considered(p.61)

Increased focus on vocational education in NEP 2020 would also result in the need for financing such vocational courses. The increased technology adoption that the NEP 2020 would bring about in areas of online learning, e-program delivery, teacher training, or e-assessments will serve as a challenge for low-income students in terms of affordability, access to devices, and the internet. The National Education Policy (NEP) announced in 2020 stands on four pillars of

access, quality, equity, and affordability, with the stated goal of enhancing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) from 27.1% to 50% by 2035. A Higher Education Commission of India, yet to be created, will be responsible for regulation, accreditation, academic standard setting, and funding. The higher education under NEP has several innovative elements such as the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), focus on research in the final year of 4-year undergraduate degree programmes (FYUP), and mandatory industry internships. However, the foundational years need a huge funding focus beyond the mid-day meal scheme, e-vidya, virtual classes, and the preparation of books in Indian languages.

While the Union education budget shows a marginal increase each year, it falls short of various committees' recommendation of investing 6% of the overall budget on education for the past several years. In reality, as a percentage, it has seldom gone beyond half of that number. The budgets must become realistic if the GER is to go up from 27.1% to 50% in 12 years. The increased funding will need to go towards enhancing and improving the education infrastructure in classrooms, education tools, and facilities for clean drinking water and toilets.

Higher education allocations in the Union budget for 2022-23 are Rs 28,580 crore for UGC, IITs, NITs/NIEST, Central Universities, and IoE. However, Rs 8,195 crore, or 29%, of the allocation to the higher education budget was for 23 IITs with 16,000 BTech seats. By giving these institutions some time to figure out how to support themselves over the coming years, this anomaly must be urgently fixed. (Valliappa, 2022).

Market-Driven Fee and Performance Funding

Private education institutions often run into rough weather, with some states regulating college fees and others not agreeing to the central government's recommendations for minimum fees that technical colleges can charge. A study conducted in 39 universities found more than five universities raised fees to generate more than 50% of recurring income from student fees, and many of them started self-financing courses to generate additional resources (Tilak and Rani 2017). The discussion on private financing and the privatisation of education started in the mid-1980s. Early attempts were made to mobilize additional public resources for education, then shifted to the mobilisation of non-governmental resources, then diversification of finances, cost-sharing, cost-shifting, cost recovery, user charges, and finally privatization (Tilak, 2008).

Now comes the question of performance funding, which seems to be the thrust of NEP. The idea behind performance funding is that

money should go to places where performance is obvious: Institutions that are “performing” should be compensated more than institutions that are not, as this would provide the former an advantage over the latter and encourage the latter to improve (Herbst, 2007). One study of public universities demonstrated that UGC funding has a considerable and favourable impact on the university’s teaching and learning, research output, and student graduation rates. In contrast, it has been discovered that university outreach, inclusivity, and the attitude of academics, professionals, and students towards their universities are indifferent regarding central funding. The university’s history (experience) ultimately proves to be the most important factor bolstering its success in both financial and non-financial aspects (Kaur, 2023).

GER or EER?

The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) is a statistical tool used to calculate the number of students enrolled in higher education. The GER in higher education is calculated by dividing the total population in the relevant age group of 18–23 years by the number of students enrolled in higher education. The eligible enrollment ratio measures the number of students who have completed the senior secondary level and are eligible to enrol in higher education. The former is the measure of ‘population eligible,’ and the latter is the measure of ‘eligible population’. Some experts argue that the GER measure is unrealistic for various reasons. In developing or undeveloped countries, many youth may not have attained the required schooling or are dropouts who are not eligible for higher education and are part of the working population. The age bracket (18–23) of GER is erroneous, as there are students who pursue higher education after age 23, and the age bracket of GER differs from country to country. Another drawback is that it fails to include students enrolling in vocational or diploma courses in private institutions (Mittal & Pani 2020).

Mittal & Patwardhan (2020) pointed out that the GER and EER for developed countries are consistently high, and the difference between them is less than ten. In the case of India (GER 26.3, EER 63.7), there is a huge difference between GER and EER. The reason for low GER is low enrollment and high dropout rates at the higher secondary level. One factor determining the demand for enrolling in higher education is eligibility. This means sufficient students should have achieved the necessary pre-requisite for admission. This also requires higher rates of secondary school enrollment, which later translate into higher enrollment rates in tertiary institutions. Raising household wealth directly leads to a rise in demand for higher

education. Urbanisation is another factor in the rise in enrollment. An increase in public spending will increase enrollment and should be matched by private spending. It means there should be a simultaneous expansion; any lag will harm the enrollment rate in higher education.

One of NEP 2020's main goals is to increase GER to 50% by 2035. In order to meet costs, universities will increase the course fee. The number of students and the cost of higher education are directly related; as the number of students increases, the cost rises. Controlling students is the key to controlling costs. When there is uncontrolled student recruitment, there are three possibilities: Firstly, the cost to the government will increase; secondly, student fees will increase; and finally, the amount of money a university has to spend on each student will decline, and quality will be threatened (Barr, 1999). Mere increase in the GER would most likely have a positive impact on infrastructure but may not be on the quality of faculty. In Korea and Finland, the teaching profession is seen as respectable, and they get very good incentives. In the case of India, when we talk of performance-based incentives or increments, it has political economy dimensions. According to Govinda (2020:606), "it is well established that administrative inefficiency in education is intricately linked to undue political interference in decision-making, often contributing to undesirable and unethical practices. While the NEP is vocal in highlighting the need for autonomy, it is totally silent on the subject of the roles and relationship of the government or the governmental authorities in educational governance, particularly in the sphere of the university and higher education".

Cess

The union government uses the cess to pay for its share of the education budget, but the state governments have no control over or access to this fund because cess and surcharges are revenue collection instruments for specific reasons and are not included in the divisible pool. These subjects have been left out of the education policy (Jha & Rao, 2019). Education cess was introduced in 2004–05. Prior to 2004–05, the education expenditure was 2.3%. Later, the Secondary and Higher Education Cess was introduced in 2007. From 2006–07 to 2016–17, Rs 83,497 was collected and credited to the CFI without spending a single penny. Primary and elementary education were allocated in Prarambhik Siksha Kosh, but secondary and higher education (SHEC) had none. Later in August 2017, the cabinet approved the creation of the Madhyamik and Uchhatar Shiksha Kosh for SHEC. In 2018, the Finance Minister of India introduced a new health and education cess (4%) to be levied on the tax payable, which replaced both the primary

Table 1: Year-wise and category-wise Gross Enrolment Rate

Year	GER			SC			ST		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
2012 – 13	21.5	22.7	20.1	16	16.9	15	11.1	12.4	9.8
2013 – 14	23	23.9	22	17.1	17.7	16.4	11.3	12.5	10.2
2014 – 15	24.3	25.3	23.2	19.1	20	18.2	13.7	15.2	12.3
2015 – 16	24.5	25.4	23.5	19.9	20.8	19.0	14.2	15.6	12.9
2016 – 17	25.2	26.0	24.5	21.1	21.8	20.2	15.4	16.7	14.2
2017 – 18	25.8	26.3	25.4	21.8	22.2	21.4	15.9	17.0	14.9
2018 – 19	26.3	26.3	26.4	23.0	22.7	23.3	17.2	17.9	16.5
2019 – 20	27.1	26.9	27.3	23.4	22.8	24.1	18.0	18.2	17.7
2020 – 21	27.3	26.7	27.9	23.1	22.4	23.9	18.9	18.8	19.1
2021 – 22	28.4	28.3	28.5	25.9	25.8	26.0	21.2	21.4	20.9

Source: AISHE 2012-13 to 2021 -22

Table one shows the year-wise and category-wise gross enrolment rate.

education cess (2%) and the secondary and higher education cess (1%). Health cess was taken under Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Nidi. Instead of using the cess to enhance spending, the government cut budgetary support for the health and education sectors, and the allocation fell (Thakur and Nagarajan, 2022).

Centre-State relations

Both the central and state governments bear higher education finance. In order to envision NEP 2020, the central and state governments will have to devolve money for its effective implementation. Most states have to depend on the Centre for funding. Kerala, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu openly mentioned their reservations against the policy.

Table 2: Public Expenditure on University and Higher Education as a Percentage of GDP

Year	Expenditure (As % of GDP)		
	State/UTs	Centre	Total
2016 – 17	0.38	0.18	0.57
2017 – 18	0.33	0.16	0.49
2018 – 19	0.36	0.17	0.52
2019 – 20	0.42	0.19	0.61
2020 – 21	0.42	0.20	0.62
2021 – 22	0.45 (est)	0.22 (BE)	0.67
2022 – 23	0.43(est)	0.21 (BE)	0.64
2023 – 24	0.40 (est)	0.20 (BE)	0.60
2024 – 25	0.36 (est)	0. 18 (BE)	0.54

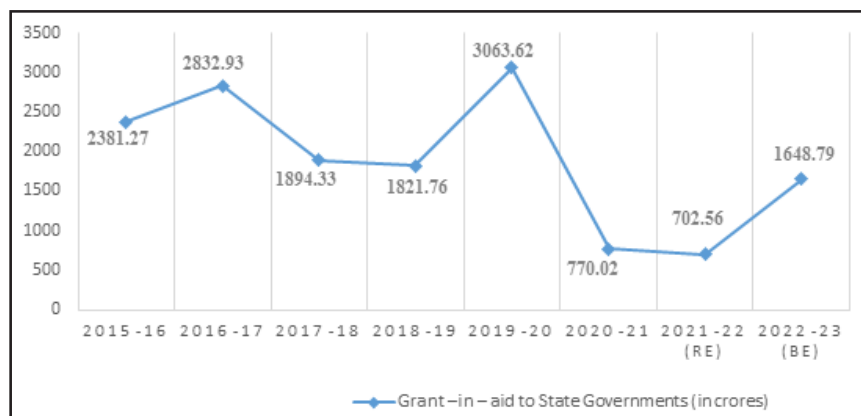
Source: Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education; MoE budget

Table two shows public expenditure on university and higher education. It is clear from the table that the state share of GDP is twice the centre share.

In Karnataka, which adopted the NEP, the higher education budget for 2021–2022 has been slightly reduced by 2.25%. The NEP reiterates the current promise to fund education expenditures at 6% of GDP but does not mention how to get there from the current 3.5%.

The one-time costs required to implement the NEP recommendations are also not mentioned (Maniar, 2022).

**Figure 1: Allocation for Higher Education
from 2015 -16 to 2022-23 (Rs. crores)**



Source: Demand for Grants, Department of Higher Education, 2017-18 to 2022-23

Figure one shows the Grant – in – aid to state government is not linear. In 2020-21 there was a drastic decline in the grant.

**Table 3: Performance-based Incentives and
Grants for Higher Education**

Year	Allocation (Rs crores)
2021 - 22	1133
2022 – 23	1177
2023 - 24	1259
2024 - 25	1303
2025 - 26	1271
2021 - 26	6143

Source: 15th Finance Commission report

Disparities in access, employability, research, and innovation,
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faculty vacancies, capacity building, multiple regulatory agencies, a large number of affiliated institutions, and a lack of flexibility in curricula are among the major challenges of higher education in India. This is not due to a lack of resources and funding but to a lack of a forward-thinking policy framework. The closure of universities and colleges created a new challenge that may have an economic and social impact on students. The 15th Finance Commission promoted providing a grant for technology-related solutions. They recommended grants of Rs. 5,078 crore for MOOCs, direct-to-home (DTH) content development, digital classrooms, and the provision of devices (laptops and tablets) for 25 lakh students belonging to socially and economically weaker sections of society. And Rs. 1,065 crore for the development of professional courses in regional languages over the period 2021–26. The table three shows the year-wise allocation of grants (Government of India, 2020).

National Research Foundation

The creation of a National Research Foundation was mooted by the Yashpal Committee (2009), and similar institutions exist in several countries. The National Research Foundation (NRF) will initiate, promote, and support academic institutions' research. NRF will be under Science & Technology Ministry. An annual grant will be paid to the NRF to reach at least 0.1% of GDP (roughly 20,000 million). The government expects the budget allocation of 2,000 crores during 2023–24 will attract private funds in the public-private partnership mode. The National Research Foundation (NRF) would get funding as a part of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), not as a separate organisation from the government, according to announcements made by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The finance minister suggested funding the NRF with Rs 50,000 crore over five years in 2021. The National Research Foundation is still not a separate entity. The major focus is on science subjects. How far it benefits social science and humanities subjects is a lingering question.

HEFA

The Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA), which was established by the Centre in 2017 to improve the nation's educational infrastructure to the highest standards possible, has so far approved 144 loans totaling Rs 35,000 crore, falling short of the government's goal of raising Rs 1 lakh crore by 2022, according to data that The Indian Express obtained through an RTI request (Barman, 2023). The university or institution availing the loan will have to pay it back in 20 half-yearly installments over ten years. The HEFA loan will charge

an annual interest rate of 7%. The government further informed the House committee, which BJP MP Vivek Thakur chairs, that HEFA has granted loans totaling Rs 35,253.18 crore until December 31, 2022, while also approving projects worth Rs 46,700.03 crore. The government also informed the panel that 16,013.79 crore rupees out of the sanctioned loan amount had been paid (Indian Express, March 30, 2023). In the fiscal years 2022–2023 and 2023–2024, the HEFA only received Rs. 1 lakh in financing. According to the government, the government's current equity investment in HEFA is enough to cover the current need for infrastructure. This indicates that the government did not consider it necessary to fund the organization from its budget. Its charter requires the HEFA to raise money from the market through CSR and other endeavours. This is still controversial, and several universities have increased fees to repay the HEFA loan and interest, leading to student protests (Sharma, 2023; Deeksha, 2023).

Foreign Universities

Regulations 2023, of the University Grants Commission for the Establishment and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India, allows foreign entities full freedom to operate in the country. They can run undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral, and post-doctoral courses and award certificates, diplomas, and degrees in all disciplines. To ensure the quality of the programmes, entry is restricted to universities in the top 500 in global rankings, either at the overall level or in the subject-wise rankings, and to other foreign education institutions of repute. The main entry requirements are parity in educational quality with that of the country of origin, equal treatment of certificates, diplomas, and degrees with a corresponding qualification from the campus in the country of origin, and accreditation by a recognised body.

In foreign universities, online courses have quality assurance and quality maintenance. Starting foreign universities in India is to capture the students who opt to study outside India. The problem is that students do not go out to study for a quality education but also to experience their work culture.

Income Contingent Loans and other means

Many international organisations, such as the OECD, World Bank, and IMF, recommend income-contingent student loans as international best practices. IIT Delhi mooted a proposal to the Ministry to look into the Australian Government's Higher Education Loan Programme, based on an income-contingent repayment plan designed to make repaying education loans easier for students pursuing jobs with lower

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salaries, and the model is appreciated by several countries. They asked the Ministry to set up a government agency to fund the higher education expenses of the needy students, as studies point out that over 25–30 percent of the meritorious students quit higher education due to financial constraints. The agency could be modelled after HEFA and would be responsible for fully or partially funding higher education through income-contingent student loan (Kumar, 2019).

The first student loan organisation in the world was founded in 1950 by Colombia and was known as ICETEX (Instituto Colombiano de Crédito Educativo y Estudios Técnicos en el Exterior). The institution offers subsidised loans to students from the most disadvantaged households, members of racial or ethnic minorities, and students with disabilities. During the loan period, the lowest-income students pay no real interest. The student loan coverage rate is at its highest in Latin America and among the best in the developing world. Operating costs decreased from 12 percent in 2002 to 3 percent in 2010 thanks to improvements in ICETEX's collection record and management procedures (Salmi & D'Addio, 2021).

Earn while you learn should be a required programme in every HEI. Students should have the option of accepting suitable part-time employment in the HEI for a specific number of hours each week and being compensated in accordance with current governmental standards (Yenugu, 2022). It has also been suggested that enrollment expansion in private universities and colleges might enable governments to spend money on scholarships for deserving students of such institutions. According to this reasoning, a division of work is advised, with public HEIs fostering equity and private HEIs meeting access demand (Teichler, 2006).

Public endowment

The public endowment is a source of higher education funding where the government could hypothecate the income from a specific source to its universities. For example, the State government has endowed the University of Texas with oil wells in Texas. Texas's experience is successful without the uncertainty of year-to-year political decisions. In India, District Mineral Foundation collects crores of rupees and left unutilized. The key mining states for which detailed DMF data are available include Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana. These states make up 88 percent of the total DMF collection in the country. As per the information available with the Ministry of Mines, District Mineral Foundations (DMFs) have been set up in 626 districts in 23 States. Till January 2023, Rs. 74,830.50

crores have been collected under District Mineral Foundation (DMF) in the country and Rs. 39222.73 crores have been spent. The highest amount was collected from Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan. In contrast, the least amount was collected from Kerala and Jammu Kashmir. Of the collected amount, only 47.6% were unutilised. Out of the total amount collected, 14.5% was allocated under the head of education. As of 2018, in Karnataka, 15,000 crores of the mineral fund was lying idle. These figures are not based on whims and fancies. On February 27, 2023, the Times of India reported that only 45% of Karnataka's mineral fund was used during the previous seven years. The Supreme Court verdict that the mineral fund should be used only in mining-affected areas was attributed to underutilization. Michigan and Texas University are land grant universities that can use the large parcel of land for development and take its proceeds.

Conclusion

India is one country that has the necessary potential to attract a large number of students from developing countries, given the affordable nature of the programmes offered. But only a small part of this potential has been used. A vibrant higher education system requires infrastructure and competent faculty, which many universities in the country lack. One way to overcome this deficit is by pooling and sharing the existing laboratories and resources. The UGC established the inter-university centres with this aim in mind. Since education is on the concurrent list of the Indian constitution, both the provincial (state government) and federal governments are responsible for increasing public funding to make up for the funding gap. The higher education sector in India is likely to witness an increase in student fees and the introduction of performance-based financing. The whole process of increasing GER has to take an evolutionary mode sensitive to regional peculiarities and cultures. It cannot be imposed from above by setting targets. Without addressing the question of academic quality, a mere focus on the increase in GER will be like treating cancer with lavender water. Neither the central nor state governments have come forward to allocate more funds for the NEP-led reforms in a realistic manner. There seems to be more rhetoric than a realistic assessment of the funding requirements sector by sector and how they have to be met, keeping a definite time frame. Furthermore, the conversation about financing should centre on people who cannot afford it in a world with an expanding middle class who can. This would aid in directing attention toward socially and economically deprived communities regarding access and equity.

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Notes & Comments

Mahatma Gandhi, Karl Marx, and Their Creative Dialectical Relations in 2025 and For the Future

Douglas Allen

Introduction

THIS ESSAY IS SIGNIFICANTLY revised and greatly expanded and developed from a presentation that I gave as part of the Socialist and Marxist Studies Series at the University of Maine on November 21, 2024. Unlike my many books, book chapters, and journal articles, this essay, while intended to be lively, engaging, challenging, and creative, does not include the usual scholarly documentation, footnotes, and bibliography. Such documentation can be found in my many publications focusing on Gandhi and on Marx.

Karl Marx was born in Trier, Germany in 1818 and died in London in 1883. Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) Gandhi was born in Porbandar, India in 1869, 14 years before Marx died. Marx was a significant influence in India during Gandhi's lifetime, continuing until the date when Gandhi was assassinated in New Delhi on January 30, 1948. Marx and Gandhi are two of the most significant contributors

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to our understanding of the modern world. This essay explores how they can be brought into dialectical relations providing new creative understandings and practices.

While acknowledging that Gandhi and Marx are two of the most formative, influential, and insightful theorists and practitioners for us today, this essay is informed by a key question: What is living and what is dead in Gandhi and Gandhian perspectives and what is living and what is dead in Marx and Marxian perspectives in 2025? Decades of experiences, studies, and understandings have led me to the conclusion that M.K. Gandhi has often been worshipped and continues to be extolled as the larger-than-life Mahatma. His writings are often taken as dogmatic scriptures. Competing Gandhian and anti-Gandhian approaches and positions are factionalized and ossified. This is often deadly in destroying what is living in Gandhi and Gandhian orientations today. Similarly, my conclusion is that Karl Marx has often been dogmatically placed on a nondialectical pedestal. His writings are often taken by diverse Marxists as the essential foundational texts with all of the needed answers and solutions. Competing Marxist and anti-Marxist approaches and positions are factionalized and ossified. Once again, this is often deadly in destroying what is living in Marx and Marxist orientations today.

At first, one may question why we should even attempt to relate Gandhi and Marx, since they may seem to be diametrically and oppositionally unrelated. Those most informed by Marx and later diverse Marxist orientations usually know nothing about Gandhi or regard him with hostility as an uncritical, escapist, reactionary, religious figure. They claim, or simply assume, that Gandhi has little to offer about class exploitation and class struggle, caste and race and gender oppression, and the modern world. Often similarly, those most informed by Gandhi and later diverse Gandhian orientations usually know nothing about Marx or regard him with hostility as a narrow, reductionistic, secular, immoral, violent, anti-spiritual figure. They claim, or simply assume, that Marx has little to offer about nonviolence, truth, morality, and human and cosmic flourishing in the contemporary world.

While acknowledging how Marx and Gandhi often sharply disagree and analyzing their respective strengths and weaknesses, this essay attempts, in selective and creative ways, to bring them into complementary, new, creative, dialectical relations of the greatest value for 2025 and the future.

We'll begin by providing a little personal background information on my limited exposure and almost complete nonexposure to Marx and to Gandhi in my youth. Growing up in the United States in the

1950s, we were told that the atheist evil communist Karl Marx hated religion and was mainly committed to destroying religion. I later learned how this was misleading and presented a false picture of Marx. After all, his most famous and most complete formulation of religion was written in his 20s. It consists of seven paragraphs, less than two pages long, and is entitled *Introduction to the Contribution to Hegel's Philosophy of Right (Law)*. Except for the brief *Introduction*, published in 1844, the work remained unpublished in Marx's lifetime. Marx's concludes the seventh and final paragraph: Now that we understand the illusory imaginary construction, the inverted consciousness, the drug-like opium of religion, let's move on to deal with the real problems of which religion is at most a symptom. During my entire Ph.D. studies, we never read anything by Marx.

What I first learned of the remarkable thinker Karl Marx came primarily from struggling along with others in 1960s, 1970s, and later to understand our hidden histories, how to better understand the Vietnam/Indochina war, imperialism, exploitation, oppression, and injustice and how to make better sense of ourselves and our world and then, in the words of the 11th and final thesis of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*, the point is not only to interpret our world, but the point now is to change it.

Marx has been embraced by hundreds of millions and by so many diverse and often contradictory Marxist and Socialist groups and perspectives. This does not discount the fact that Marx is also often presented as the most hated and dangerous modern figure. For example, the quickly composed *Communist Manifesto*, intended by Marx and Engels as a rather brief manifesto and not a lengthy, rigorous, scholarly work, has been described as the most attacked modern political text, while at the same time serving globally as perhaps the most inspiring, glorified, and influential of all modern political writings.

Turning to M.K. Gandhi, my youthful impressions of him were very different from those of Marx. In my youth, although we never read or studied Gandhi, there were the famous images, slogans, and references to Mahatma Gandhi. These were usually positive, even reverential, although sometimes rather bizarre, as of the saintly figure in loin cloth. Indeed, Mahatma Gandhi was often presented as the most admired moral, political, and spiritual figure in India and even in the world.

For example, Albert Einstein, who was a committed socialist, famously asserted of Gandhi that future generations would scare believe that anyone such as this ever walked the earth in flesh and blood. Einstein asserted that Gandhi's political views were the most enlightened and that we should act in Gandhi's spirit, not using

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violence and not participating in evil. Even in 2025, Gandhi is usually extolled as the world's greatest proponent of nonviolence. Gandhi's birthday, October 2nd, is fittingly recognized by the United Nations as the UN International Day of Nonviolence. Today Gandhi is still often presented as the most admired moral and spiritual figure for our future world.

I was fortunate to be the recipient of a youthful yearlong Fulbright grant to India in 1963-1964, and I was even more fortunate to be based in Banaras, Varanasi, the sacred Hindu city, on the sacred Ganges River. Institutionally, I was based at Banaras Hindu University, where I taught and did Ph.D. studies in Indian Philosophy at the top department in India.

I'll simply note a formative Gandhi-informed experience from that year that remains significant today. Gandhi's presence was ubiquitous. Politicians, administrators, and others would wear their Gandhi caps and homespun khadi vests. They would give endless speeches extolling Gandhi as Bapu, the martyred Father of the Nation, and Gandhi as the Mahatma, the Great Soul, who provides the exemplary model for India and for the world. This was inspiring, but the pervasive hypocrisy soon became apparent as Gandhi was used and misused for anti-Gandhian purposes. This use and misuse is certainly true in India, in the Indian diaspora, and throughout the world in 2025.

We may acknowledge that M.K. Gandhi is so extolled, revered, even sometimes deified, by Gandhians and other admirers, as the larger-than-life Mahatma, too good for this world, who gave us the perfect blueprint with all of the needed solutions to our ethical, violent, political, social, economic, and other crises. Nevertheless, Gandhi was always controversial with strong anti-Gandhian critics during his lifetime, and this continues today. Critics include many diverse Marxists, anti-Gandhian socialists, Dalits (Untouchables, Outcastes), diverse feminists, traditional and conservative Hindus and other religionists, representatives of what Gandhi analyzes and critiques as "Modern Civilization" (capitalists and modern economists, modern representative of the military-industrial complex, modern political theorists, modern scientific, technological, medical, educational, and environmental experts).

In what follows, I'll much too briefly and very selectively focus on some of these controversies, strengths, and weaknesses in relating Marx and Marxist perspectives and Gandhi and Gandhian perspectives.

Gandhi's Greater Focus and Strength: Violence and Nonviolence

M.K. Gandhi repeatedly asserts that his two major principles, values, and presuppositions are *Satya* (Truth, Being, What is Real) and *Ahimsa*

(No Harm, No Injury, Nonviolence). Mahatma Gandhi is best known as the most influential modern proponent of nonviolence. Gandhi-informed approaches, interpretations, and applications of violence and nonviolence can broaden and deepen Marx-informed understandings and can bring Gandhi and Marx into insightful dialectical relations, sometimes revealing surprising similarities.

Marx is often simplistically and misleadingly presented as extremely violent: as uncritically glorifying violence, violent revolution, and a centralized powerful violent communist state. Gandhi, by oppositional contrast, is presented as extremely nonviolent: as against all violence and as a decentralist viewing the state as invariably a violent, coercive, humanly constructed institution. Sometimes quoting Henry David Thoreau, Gandhi asserts that the best state is the least state.

The truth is that Marx does not uncritically glorify violence. He views the socialist proletarian state as indeed violent and coercive, but this is necessarily so because the more violent capitalist ruling class will not voluntarily and peacefully relinquish its exploitation and domination, and it will not later desist from its violent attempts at counterrevolution. Indeed, in the gradual transition from post-capitalist socialism or lower communism to communism, Marx repeatedly proposes “the withering away of the state” and a higher and more developed communism that is largely nonviolent and closer to Gandhi’s ideal vision.

In providing a historical, materialist, contextualized, dialectical formulation, Marx submits that nonviolence is sometimes ineffective, and violence is sometimes necessary. Surprisingly, in hundreds of passages, the nonviolent Gandhi agrees that violence is sometimes necessary, even if it is tragic and should never be glorified. The relative difference is that Marx asserts that Gandhi minimizes the role and need for violence in understanding class, the asymmetrical dynamics of violent class relations, and the positive nature of class struggle. Gandhi, by way of contrast, while repeatedly rejecting class struggle as violent, agrees that violence is sometimes necessary and is sometimes our most nonviolent option available, but he asserts that Marx allows for too much violence and does not recognize our many nonviolent options in lessening violence.

In my own view, Mahatma Gandhi, while far from perfect and sometimes revealing serious limitations and even major weaknesses that we should reject, has more of a focus and more of a developed analysis of violence and nonviolence than does Marx. In that regard, I’ll rather briefly share some of my own understandings,

interpretations, and applications of Gandhi on ahimsa, violence, and nonviolence.

Most of us easily affirm that nonviolence is better than violence, peace is better than war, love and kindness are better than hatred and meanness, even if most then qualify this by sharing that we unfortunately live in a violent and unjust world in which violence and war are sometimes necessary. Gandhi then challenges us by claiming that most of us who affirm that we believe in the superiority of nonviolence are really quite violent; we are complicit with violence, sometimes actively support violence, and often profit from violence. How can Gandhi justify such a challenging interpretation?

Mahatma Gandhi broadens and deepens our understanding of violence and nonviolence through two interconnected concepts or principles: the multidimensionality of violence (and nonviolence) and the structural violence (to be transformed into the structural nonviolence) of the status quo. When we easily affirm that we are against violence, we usually are thinking of examples of overt physical violence. We are against examples of the unjustified killing of innocent people, of torture and other blatant examples of violating basic human rights, of wartime “collateral damage” killing and injuring civilians, of rape and blatant examples of domestic violence, of lynchings and blatant examples of racist violence, of the terrorist 9/11 mass killings in New York in 2001 or the 26/11 terrorist mass killings in Mumbai in 2008, of the Oct. 7, 2023 slaughter of Jews in Israel and the revenge mass slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza, and more. Gandhi, of course, is against such overt physical violence, but he considers it a relatively small part of overall violence.

Gandhi radically broadens and deepens our understanding, resistance, and transformation regarding violence and nonviolence by focusing on their multidimensionality. In addition to overt physical violence, we experience and express hatred and other dimensions of inner psychological violence; poverty, exploitation, and other dimensions of economic violence; linguistic, social, political, cultural, religious, educational, and environmental dimensions of violence. Gandhi also focuses on how the multidimensionality is interconnected with the structural violence of the dominant status quo, which we usually do not even recognize as extremely violent. The dominant, hierarchical, economic, structural systems, even when they seem to be functioning nonviolently without any resisting disruptions, are extremely violent. This is also the case of the dominant political, cultural, social, religious, media, educational, and environmental relational and structural systems expressing and usually hiding and

deflecting our attention away from the exploitative, oppressive, unjust, violent status quo.

In short, Marx and Marxists, who often have had a history of failing to recognize, too easily accepting, and even supporting all kinds of multidimensional and structural violence, can learn a lot from Gandhi.

Marx's Greater Focus and Strength: Capitalism, Class Relations, and Class Struggle

Turning to Marx and in which Marx is more developed than Gandhi, Karl Marx has more of a focus on and a more critical and rigorous understanding and analysis of the mode of production and how this constitutes and reveals exploitative and unjust class relations. He provides a more focused and deeper analysis of the nature of commodification, commodity fetishism, dehumanizing alienation, the extraction of surplus value with endless accumulation and expansion of capital. He insightfully contributes to our understanding of the many obstacles to overcoming and moving beyond capitalism and moving toward a classless flourishing society, based on the movement from each according to their means to each according to their needs, a society in which the good and well-being of each is dialectically related to the good and well-being of all.

It will surprise many to learn that Gandhi really agrees with what was just expressed from Marx. Gandhi repeatedly asserts that capitalism is essentially and structurally exploitative, violent, and unjust and that he is a committed socialist. Indeed, in various passages, Gandhi expresses admiration for Marx's vision, even sometimes expressing approval for the Bolshevik ideal of communism. He claims that there is little difference between this Marxist communist ideal and his ideal of a post-capitalism beyond ego-driven greed and possessiveness, beyond private property relations and attachments, beyond hierarchical class relations of inequality and domination, and with the realization of a classless society with harmonious relations with other human beings, nature, and the cosmos.

Where Marx is much more focused, rigorous, and developed is evident in the fact that Gandhi's formulations and practices are sometimes very uncritical, muddle-headed, and blatantly inadequate. For example, as expressive of his socialism, Gandhi repeatedly claims that capital needs labor, which is certainly true, but also that labor needs capital. He is not simply asserting that labor needs capital in a capitalist mode of production or in a transitional stage still partially defined by capital, as Marx insightfully analyzes. Rather, he bizarrely sometimes seems to be asserting that capital and capitalism are

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essential, nonhistorical, metaphysical concepts, that there have always been and there will always be capitalists, and that human nature requires this. This contradicts what Gandhi knows and expresses elsewhere, even if it appeases powerful capitalists in his lifetime.

We can present a similar critique of Gandhi's weakness and Marx's strength in relating their approaches to the capitalist mode of production, class relations, and class struggle to our previous clarification of violence and nonviolence. With his focus on the need for nonviolence, Gandhi repeatedly asserts that his project is to use nonviolence to win over and convert to nonviolence the big capitalists, the high-caste Hindus, the males privileged by sexist patriarchy, and others with unjust, systemic, violent power. That is how to bring about permanent nonviolent transformation. Marx would insightfully regard this as at best completely naïve and at worst completely complicit with and supportive of the exploitative, violent, multidimensional and structural capitalist status quo, that Gandhi so often emphasizes elsewhere. For Marx, this greatly explains why the big capitalists so often support Gandhi in the Indian *swaraj* freedom and independence movement and view him as no threat, completely unlike how they view Marx as a revolutionary threat.

Developing the open-ended, dynamic, Gandhi-Marx relations, we now leave time only to rather briefly note three of many other possible ways of bringing Karl Marx and M.K. Gandhi into dialectical relations: ethics, the ego and self, and an organic interconnected approach to truth and reality. These three topics are integrally interconnected with the two major topics previously presented: Gandhi's greater focus and more developed perspectives on violence and nonviolence and Marx's greater focus and more developed perspectives on capitalism, class relations, and class struggle.

Ethics

I regard Mahatma Gandhi primarily as an ethical thinker and activist practitioner, even if I have evaluated some of his positions as blatantly immoral, as in his advice to Jews facing genocide in Holocaust Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Gandhi is primarily concerned with how we can live moral lives, lives of moral character and virtue, with selfless love and compassion, dedicated to alleviating the suffering of other beings. For example, in the Gandhi-informed view of education, as contrasted with dominant modern views of education, we focus on whether our students through their courses, research, and activities become more virtuous human beings, living lives of greater moral character. In terms of Gandhi's major means-ends formulations, Gandhi-informed students are taught that they cannot use immoral,

untruthful, violent, unjust, oppressive means in order to achieve their desired ends (even when those ends may appear to be very worthwhile). Means and ends are dialectically and integrally interconnected, and both our means and also our ends must be as pure, as ethical, and as spiritual as possible. In short, moral development, as transformed by moral education, is essential to human development with the greater self-realization of truth, nonviolence, and reality.

Although Karl Marx, unlike Gandhi, is not primarily an ethical thinker and moral activist, his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and several other works are profoundly significant expressions of a deep ethical humanism. This was recognized by the Marxist humanist philosophers in Yugoslavia ("Praxis Marxists"), by Eric Fromm (*Marx's Concept of Man*), and by other Marxists, especially in their critiques of what had become dogmatic Marxist-Leninist formulations. Such interpretations of Marx, as a humanist and as an ethical humanist, are very different from the dominant formulations of twentieth century Marxist thinkers, groups, and parties, who often dismiss ethics and morality as bourgeois concerns, completely subjective, unscientific, nonhistorical, and having no positive role in our modern world.

We have witnessed and continue to witness the disastrous consequences of such undermining and dismissal of ethics by both capitalists and Marxists, including some who still use the term communist. By way of contrast, I propose that we cannot understand the passion and legacy of Marx without recognizing the ethical dimension of being human and relating morally to other beings. Although not as obvious, we have also witnessed how so many rigid dogmatic Gandhians, as well as anti-Gandhians, have undermined or completely ignored a Gandhi-informed focus on ethics with disastrous consequences with regard to gender equality and other relations. In this regard, Marx and Gandhi are often not so different with complementary different strengths when it comes to moral living.

The Ego, Ego-Attachments, and the Self

Mahatma Gandhi has thousands of passages in which he focuses on the nature, the construction, and the negative consequences of the traditional, violent, illusory, immoral, I-me, ego-self and its modern expressions as the ego-driven and ego-attached self, as evidenced in the capitalist self. Gandhi repeatedly proposes the imperative, admittedly difficult to achieve, of the need to reduce the ego-self to zero in order to experience deeper self-realization, often identified with nonviolent realization and truth-realization.

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This is a lesson that has often been ignored by many rigid, close-minded, reactionary Gandhians, who I've sometimes interpreted as Gandhian fundamentalists. They dogmatically attach their egos to Gandhi as some perfect cult leader and to Gandhi's writings as their perfect sacred scriptures. In addition, contemporary Marx-informed thinkers, parties, and states can learn a lot from Gandhi's greater focus on the ego-self and the need to deconstruct the ego in order to realize Marxist, socialist, and communist proposed goals.

It is often forgotten or ignored by Marxists that Karl Marx also focuses on the historical, social, and contextualized nature, the construction, and the negative consequences of the ego-driven, greedy, violent, exploitative, and oppressive modern self, especially as constituted by relations and contradictions within capitalism. As Herbert Marcuse and others have insightfully shown, Marx creatively interprets and challenges us revealing how the rejection of the capitalist ego, with its ego-relations and ego-oriented ways of being, discloses and requires quantitative and especially qualitative breakthroughs on the biological, bodily, psychological, mental, material, historical, social, cultural, experiential levels of being human and of self-realization.

We have seen the consequences of ignoring such lessons from Marx in modern societies, often self-labeled or labeled by others, as Marxist, socialist, or communist. Such societies are often driven by greed, possessiveness, inequality, violence, corruption, and injustice, with the accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of their elite ruling classes. In addition, Gandhi-informed thinkers, activists, ashrams, and organizations can learn a lot from Marx's greater focus and more rigorous analysis of key features of contemporary capitalist ego-orientations in order to realize their Gandhi-proposed socialist and even communist goals.

Organic, Holistic, Interconnected Approaches to Truth and Reality

We'll consider only briefly the huge topic of Karl Marx and Mahatma Gandhi on their approaches to truth and reality. Without mentioning their many differences, we'll only note several key remarkable similarities. Both, in diverse ways, emphasize the need for an organic holistic approach, recognizing and developing the dynamic, open-ended, interconnectiveness of all life, nature, and reality. Both, in diverse ways, emphasize relational and structural interconnectedness, as revealed and constituted in the complex dynamic interconnected relations between wholes and parts.

In complex contextualized ways, both Marx and Gandhi analyze, critique, and reject dominant modern philosophical, political, and

capitalist views of the individual autonomous ego-defined self; of modern views of particular objective unconstituted and uninterpreted data, phenomena, or other givens; of claims of value-free particular technology and science, and more. For Marx and for Gandhi, we cannot understand and relate to such particulars without understanding how they are greatly constituted dialectically, both positively and negatively, violently and nonviolently, adequately and in diversionary and illusory ways, by the larger systemic and structural interconnected historical, economic, political, social, cultural, environmental wholes of which they are particular expressions.

For example, Marx critiques the modern capitalist approach to and view of technology as some abstracted and essentialized instrument or thing. Instead, he situates, approaches, and views dominant modern technology as capitalist technology, as grounded in the capitalist mode of production, and as expressing interconnected capitalist relations of production. This is qualitatively different from how technology will be approached and constituted relationally in a post-capitalist mode of production and socialist and Marxist ways of living.

Similarly, one notes Gandhi's approach to and view of the dominant perspectives on technology, as better understood, critiqued, and transformed as a contextually expressed orientation of Modern Civilization. Gandhi's often describes this as the reductionistic dehumanizing "machine craze," viewing and constituting technology as some end in itself, or usually as some means to realizing modern ends of dominating human beings and nature, accumulating wealth and power. Gandhi challenges us with a radically different approach to technology, as one of numerous ways expressing human related interconnectedness with others, nature, truth, and reality and qualitatively different ways that are relationally constituted and sustainable.

For both Gandhi and for Marx, when we relate interconnected wholes with particular expressions, something quantitatively and especially qualitatively emerges that cannot be reduced to or be found in any of the particular parts or even in the sum of the parts. This is a key lesson for both Marxist and Gandhian perspectives in revealing weaknesses of their past and present approaches and interpretations.

Interactions With Other Respondents

After the presentation part of my program on November 21, 2024, I received many questions and comments from some attending in person or by Zoom. I responded, and this resulted in a lively discussion period. Then, almost immediately after we had finished the program,

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I received excellent email questions and comments to which I sent immediate responses. What follows are three of those email questions and responses.

First, a professor, who teaches peace and reconciliation courses and has deep Irish roots, wrote that he has previously never thought of linking Marx and Gandhi, so the presentation was a great revelation. He had been investigating a newly published edition of Marx's *Capital* and found that ten pages were devoted to the Irish Famine of 1846-1849. After reading them over, he saw Marx in a new light when he expressed his concern for Irish agriculture following the Famine. It was evident that Marx was a deeply compassionate thinker in his treatment of Irish poverty. Therefore, he proposed that "compassion" was another way to connect Gandhi and Marx.

I responded that I agree that compassion is a great term for the kind of dialectical comparisons and relations I was suggesting. Compassion is prominent in Gandhi's writings and living, especially with deep formative influences from Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. In fact, in his approach to Ahimsa, Gandhi often uses terms such as nonviolence, benevolent harmlessness, loving kindness, compassion, and selfless service interchangeably. He even uses Ahimsa and Satya (truth, being, what is real) interchangeably, so that one cannot realize Truth, the spiritual Self, etc., without compassion.

Relating Marx with compassion may not seem so obvious. Interpreters often focus exclusively on an impassioned, angry, caustically sarcastic Karl Marx. Such a Marx is so outraged, so furious at class exploitation and injustice, so that "compassion" seems to be an inappropriate way of characterizing him. What is ignored are the thousands of passages in which Marx expresses great compassion for the downtrodden, the exploited, the impoverished, the marginalized, the oppressed; those with the least freedom and the greatest suffering.

Second, a medical professional who also has a research position at a school of education, expressed appreciation for how much she learned from the lecture. She then wrote that she had the following question: How would Gandhi and Marx each set social standards that would encourage "each from their abilities" since most today see a good portion of their jobs that need to be done as not fully using their abilities? She asked this because currently there is the highest percentage of working young and middle-aged men out of the U.S. workforce not using their full or a significant part of their abilities, and also because of the current issue of who will do the jobs that undocumented immigrants and so-called "illegal aliens" have been doing and not fully using their abilities?

I responded that this participant raised many good questions for

Marx and for Gandhi. Marx's famous "from each according to their abilities to each according to their needs," with its best-known formulations in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, is his dictum for some future post-capitalist and communist ideal of some classless society. He fully agrees and analyzes why most (almost all) do not see their jobs under capitalism (and other class societies) as fully using their abilities (under relations of domination, dehumanization, mechanization, objectification of humans as things to be exploited, etc.). Also, consistent with what this respondent wrote, Marx analyzes the increasing expulsion of labor by capital that no longer needs such surplus labor to generate profit. Also consistent with what she wrote about jobs and "illegal aliens," Marx analyzes how based on the imperatives of maximizing the exploitation of labor power as integral to the accumulation of capital, capital will be increasingly directed at cheaper labor abroad (globalization, outsourcing) as well as the cheapest labor at home (undocumented farm workers, etc.).

It is revealing that Gandhi agrees with all of this, but with his own Gandhi-informed perspectives. For Gandhi, class exploitation, caste oppression, racism and sexism, etc., all prevent human beings from using all or even a small part of their human abilities. Instead, as evidenced under capitalism and other forms of "Modern Civilization," the oppressed are used by those with economic, social, cultural, political, and other power as mere means to further their ends. In our modern "machine craze" orientation, humans are devalued, violently and immorally dehumanized, expelled from their lands and jobs, and denied their abilities and potentials to develop and flourish as self-empowering subjects.

Of course, how one understands, applies, and transforms such Gandhi-informed and Marx-informed Gandhian and Marxist approaches in terms of our specific contextual situations in 2025 and the future is open to different perspectives, questions, debates, and practices.

Third, a young scholar in India, who received his Ph.D. from an Indian Institute of Technology and now teaches in India, responded how the presentation had been very thought-provoking. He then shared many pages of excellent reactions, comments, and questions regarding Marx and primarily regarding Gandhi, and comparing them on a wide range of topics. To share only some of what this respondent wrote, he claimed that Marx, focusing on economic exploitation, class structure, mode of production, and capitalist relations of domination, was much more radical; he was far more revolutionary than Gandhi in his vision, theory, and proposed struggles and practices. Gandhi, by way of comparative contrast, was more of a morally motivated,

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self-empowering reformer with regard to production, class, caste, and other topics. Gandhi was for burning British clothes so that Indians could produce khadi and be more self-reliant in achieving swaraj. He accepted much of what existed in India, while then attempting to morally reform manual labor, scavenging, sanitation, health practices, and more. With his Hindu morality, Gandhi, unlike Marx, did not propose abolishing as unacceptable dominant Indian class and caste structures, relations, and oppressive practices, but rather to work for societal reforms. For example, on the topic of the Hindu caste system, the respondent offered clear-cut oppositional contrasts between the more radical and worthy Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, with his position on the *Annihilation of Caste*, and the limited Gandhi, who accepted the Hindu caste system and was then committed to transforming the perspectives, values, and practices of the dominant upper castes, who needed moral refinement, so that they will respond to the suffering of the oppressed lower castes.

I responded that the respondent's thoughtful comments raise many open-ended dialogical issues for ongoing questions, debates, and new creative formulations and practices. His comments on khadi, the satyagraha burning of clothes made in Britain, various kinds of manual labor, etc. go beyond what I shared in my original presentation. I acknowledge that what Gandhi literally said about these and other topics and what he actually did are important topics for our reflections, interpretations, evaluations, and applications. But for me what is far more important is, say, how salt in the famous Salt Satyagraha (Dandi March Satyagraha) in 1930, the boycott of British goods with the burning of British clothes (1920 Satyagraha), etc., were constituted by Gandhi in larger symbolic ways, on deeper complex levels of meaning, such as expressing and realizing the struggles for freedom, independence, nonviolence, and truth, and how they can be reimagined in new creative ways today.

I accept but give different interpretations to some of many key terms that the respondent kept repeating about collective production, caste and moral reform, social adjustments, other moral reforms, adopting manual labor, and more. All of that is in Gandhi's writing, speeches, and actions, and there, indeed, is often a sharp contrast with some of what one finds in Marx and in Ambedkar. I attempted to be selective in my approaches and interpretations, in recognizing strengths and weaknesses, in Gandhi and in Marx, and I proposed the potential for radical revolutionary Gandhi-inspired and radical revolutionary Marx-inspired formulations and practices. In my selective presentation, for example, Gandhi does not simply accept and attempt to reform what is contextually existing, but, instead, he

often rejects old and reformulates new views of the collective, finally rejects and does not want to reform caste, rejects and does not adopt old views of manual labor, and instead reformulates this in new holistic, qualitatively different ways, and more.

Since the respondent devoted much of his response to the important topic of the caste system in India, with the extreme oppositional contrast of the radical, more adequate Ambedkar and the more limited, inadequate, caste reformer Gandhi, I'll only allude to a few thought-provoking comments from my own work. Followers of Ambedkar, as well as supporters of Gandhi, typically focus on and present in static essentialized ways the true (or false) Ambedkar, the true (or false) Gandhi, and their specific contextualized disagreements and conflicts that then are presented as their real unchanging positions on caste and other topics. Such static rigid debates and perspectives are often oversimplified, lack nuance and complexity, and lead to dead ends that block our potential for new creative research and applications. I do not ignore these serious differing positions, but by focusing exclusively on these differences, what is ignored is how much Gandhi and Ambedkar share in relating to exploitation, oppression, violence, and other concerns.

In addition, to reverse the common presentation of Gandhi and Ambedkar, one can propose for ongoing debate that M.K. Gandhi may be more radically anti-caste! While rejecting earlier unacceptable caste positions in Gandhi, one can submit that there was something radically anti-caste in Gandhi's personality and character, how he organized his ashrams, how he evolved and lived his daily life and moral and social values and relations with Dalits and others, and how, late in his life, he no longer wanted to debate issues of caste because he found caste to be completely indefensible. By contrast, and in larger terms, one can submit that Ambedkar was more of a liberal, bourgeois, modern, constitutional thinker and practitioner, whereas Gandhi radically critiqued this as expressing limited, violent, dehumanizing, immoral, untruthful, dominant "Modern Civilization." Gandhi proposed a far more revolutionary means-ends, radical, qualitative paradigm shift far beyond Ambedkar's position.

My aim here is not to uphold Gandhi and reject Ambedkar, but rather to call for an open-ended, creative, dialogical process that will embrace the interactions of radical challenging Ambedkar-informed insights and contributions with radical challenging Gandhi-informed insights and contributions. As expressed throughout this essay, Karl Marx and selectively and creatively Marx-informed values, insights, perspectives, and practices will be central to such dialogical interactions.

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Concluding Reflections

This provides a nice transition to my brief ending on the topic of Mahatma Gandhi, Karl Marx, and their creative dialectical relations in 2025 and for the future. I've attempted to suggest numerous ways for relating Marx and Gandhi, recognizing their differences but also their complementary similarities. Each can provide insights to render more adequate the approaches, views, and practices of the other. In this dialectical relational way, the other, whether Gandhian or Marxist, is integrally related to the constituting self and serves as an invaluable catalyst pushing the self beyond its rigid presuppositions and concepts, its closed boundaries, and its normal comfort zones. This can provide insights and openings for new ways of thinking, acting, and being. I've also suggested numerous ways in which dialectically relating Marx and Gandhi, Marxist and Gandhian perspectives, can involve radical paradigm shifts, perspectival breakthroughs, revealing new ways of understanding and responding to the many existential, moral, economic, political, social, cultural, violent, environmental, and other crises that challenge us in 2025 and in the future. This expresses what is challenging and what also makes contemporary life hopeful, resilient, meaningful, and worth living.

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Information for Authors

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

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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.

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