

**RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN ECONOMICS IN THE
MODERN SOCIETY WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS THEORY OF KHADI**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
TILAK MAHARASHTRA VIDYAPEETH, PUNE
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JUNE 2012

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled “ *Relevance of Gandhian Economics In The Modern Society With Special Reference To His Theory of Khadi* ” completed and written by me has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree or other similar title upon me of this or any other Vidyapeeth or examining body.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “ *Relevance of Gandhian Economics In The Modern Society With Special Reference To His Theory of Khadi* ” which is being submitted herewith for the award of the Degree of Vidyavachaspati (Ph.D.) in History under the faculty of Mental, Moral and Social Sciences of Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune is the result of original research work completed by Shri Ramesh Verma under my supervision and guidance. To the best of my knowledge and belief the work incorporated in this thesis has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree or similar title of this or any other University or examining body upon him.

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CHAPTER - I

SWARAJ AND SWADESH

In ancient Indian political thought the notion of self-government as to the collectivity of members of a polity in ancient Indian political thought was closely related to the conception of self-rule as applied to the moral growth of every human being. The maturity and development of polity were regarded as a reflection as well as index of the degree of moral maturity and self-cultivation of an elite or a generality of individuals. At the centre of ancient Indian political thought lay the concept of Swaraj or self-rule connected with the notion of Swarajya which referred to a particular mode of securing self-determination in a polity comprise of several distinct sectors. In modern India the term Swaraj was exclusively identified by Dadabhai Naoroji, B. G. Tilak and Sri Aurobindo with the goal of national independence.¹ The emphasis was wholly shifted from the positive to the negative connotation of the term and its application entirely transformed from its individual to collective scope. Towards the end of the nineteenth century even before the term Swaraj, in its new sense, acquired common currency in the nationalist movement the Bengali militants sought to justify their doctrine of boycott of British goods in the name of Swadeshi or patriotism.²

Gandhi when entered the Indian scene, was able to restore to the term 'Swaraj' as its older meaning while retaining its newer sense to interpret the term Swadeshi and considerably extended its application. He restored the close connection between Swaraj and Swadeshi, between self-government and national self-dependence. Instead of assimilating the concept of freedom to that of community by merging the individual into an organic conception of society, he derived the very notion of communal

self-reliance from his doctrine of individual self-rule, and showed how the pursuit of swaraj must necessarily involve the acceptance of Swadeshi.³

The appalling poverty of India and the rapidity with which it has increased during the period of British rule on account of the deliberate destruction of our handicrafts created a deep impression on Gandhi's mind even in his early days. He has been on the look out for the ways and means of relieving it. As early as in 1908, he spoke of 'the ancient and scared handlooms' in his 'Hind Swaraj' and advised lawyers and doctors to take up the wheel and wealthy men to devote their money to its encouragement.⁴ He was of the view that it is necessary to attend to the primary needs of human being and satisfy them by the use only of things that are predicted by himself or his immediate neighborhood. The primary needs are food, shelter and clothing. Gandhi realized that the country has not altogether lost the art of providing and producing the food for its needs. In matter of clothing we were not only self-sufficient but used to produce a large quantity for sale and export to other countries.

True Swadeshi according to Gandhi is the revival and presentation of village industries which is the life line of rural economy which in turn is the heart of a national economy. It could be understood from his own words, "what is needed is protection of the village crafts and the workers behind them from the crushing competition of the power-driven machinery whether it is worked in India or in foreign lands claim that this is true, fruitful and cent per cent Swadeshi".⁵

Gandhi was more practical. He saw that the Swadeshi and the boycott movement could not prosper without an increase in indigenous production which would be independent of the mills. He also realized that

in olden days the agriculture masses in India had always some subsidiary industries to add to their meager income. Gandhi thought to add to their meager income. Gandhi thought that the only industry which could be universal was the textile industry. This was also the biggest item of import from England. It had made for prosperity not only of Manchester but also of Great Britain. For centuries there had been a tradition in India of hand spinning and hand weaving. The former had been given up in many parts of the country owing to the import of mill yarn from England for manufacture in Indian mills. But weaving was yet common in all parts of India; though the handloom industry was being progressively wiped out in competition with indigenous and foreign mill cloth. Gandhi considered spinning and weaving to be the industries which could best provide subsidiary work to the agricultural masses of India. Therefore, he worked for the revival of this industry. Gandhi also believed that if import of cloth from abroad superfluous, it would greatly add not only to its economic but also its social and political strength.

In a speech delivered before the Missionary Conference, Madras, on 14 February 1916, he defined Swadeshi in the following terms: “After much thinking I have arrived at a definition of Swadeshi that, perhaps, best illustrate my meaning. Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restrict us to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of definition, I must restrict myself to ancestral religion. That is the use of my immediate surroundings. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects. In domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics, I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve

those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting”.⁶

Khadi was not confined to the hand spun and hand woven cotton cloth. Silk and woolen cloth was also included, and in fact coarser fibers like just from which carpets and the like were produced were also exhibited and their processes demonstrated but the experts brought from various parts of the country. Later on small scale and cottage industries were also included in this programme. All this gave a fillip to the khadi movement with immense political potentialities. Thus it was made the most effective way of mass mobilization and political consciousness. Every spinner, weaver, printer, dyer, artisan etc. and the family members, become conscious of the fact that they are a part of a great national organization and though they work for their wages, their work is patriotic and helps the nation. The Hindu, the Muslim, the Harijan, the Casteless and the Casteless all worked together within the organization. Working together they tend to forget their differences. This happened in a mill too, but in organized cottage industry the extent and degree of this unity achieved was greater supported as it was by the consciousness of unity of national purpose. The organizer of village and cottage industry were a body of disciplined volunteers from whose ranks, satyagrahis were recruited. As a matter of fact constructive workers constituted a standing army of Satyagrahis.

“One can imagine nothing from western standpoint, more fantastic. To spin had become for Gandhi’s devout followers a species of rituals. One came down to breakfast to discover one’s host, a doctor with a Scottish training, squatting at his antiquated hand spindle, bent on completing his obligatory hour’s work. In the train a lady will take a

folding spindle from a case, assemble it, and calmly set to work. These were the edited of a most original movement".⁷

In 1929 regarding Dandi March, Brailsford wrote, "One enters the zone of sedition with the next method, the attempt to smash the Government's salt monopoly. It is the kindergarten stage of revolution. One smiles at the notion that the king emperor can be unseated by boiling sea water in a kettle. He himself admitted the impact of these activities. Even these mild activities are however an attack on the revenue, and landed thousands of Indians in imprisonment, including Gandhi himself. He knew his public. He staged his salt making as a quasi-religious pilgrimage. Its pathetic innocence helped this law abiding people to take the first plunge into disobedience.

In the opinion of Alvin Toffler who is the author of "Future Shock" and the "Third Wave". Gandhian model is the best and next best alternate to the whole of the world. He mentions three waves one is the wave of capitalist another is the Marxian wave and third is the Gandhian wave.⁸

Gandhian wave

Builds a desirable ideal society, in which social change is possible through non-violence accomplishment.

An important consequence of the idea that our freedom or self-rule depends entirely upon our self-awareness, self-respect and self-discipline is the notion that when the masses of a nation are awakened to a sense of their collective and undivided claims to freedom, they have already attained to swaraj, in a sense. Swaraj can not be attained by a nation even in the formal sense unless it is gained as the result of a mass movement involving the willing and conscious participation by most of the

individuals who make up a nation, “Purna Swaraj denotes a condition of things when the dumb and the lame millions will speak and walk. That Swaraj can not be achieved by force but by organizations and unity.”⁹ In 1931, he was asked to explain the significance of the phrase ‘Purna Swaraj’ or ‘complete independence’, which had become the declared goal of the Congress. He replied. I do not know any word or phrase to answer it in English language. I can, therefore, only give an explanation. The root meaning of Swaraj is self-rule. Swaraj may, therefore, be rendered as disciplined rule from within and purna means “complete”. Independence has no such limitation. Independence is negative. Purna Swaraj does not exclude association with any nation much less and with England. But it can only mean association for mutual benefit and it will. Thus there are countries which are said to be independent but which have no Purna Swaraj e.g. Nepal. The word Swaraj is scared word a Vedic word meaning self-rule and self-restraint, and not freedom from all restraint which independence often means.

Gandhi’s Swadeshi spirit lays emphasis on the production and consumption of unutilized and under utilized resources available in the country. He did not want that a nation should be dependent on foreign countries for her basic needs. But at the same time, he did not discard every thing, foreign. In 1926, he wrote, “I have never considered the exclusion of everything foreign under every conceivable circumstance a part of swadeshi. The board definition of swadeshi is the use of all home made goods things to the exclusion of foreign things, in so far as such use is necessary for the protection of home industry, more specially those industries without which India will become pareperized. In my opinion, therefore, swadeshi which excludes the use of everything foreign, no matter how beneficent it may be, and irrespective of the fact that it

impoverishes nobody, is a narrow interpretation of Swadeshi.”⁹ Thus, he was willing to allow international trade and exchange of commodities if this meant an exchange of equal advantages and did not involve injustice. However, if it was to be question of choice, he would have preferred self-sufficiency. He defined a Swadeshi article which sub-serves the interest of the millions even though the capital and talent are foreign but under effective Indian control. To reject foreign manufactures merely because they are foreign, and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion in one’s country manufactures for which it is not suited would be criminal folly and negation of the Swadeshi Spirit.¹⁰

Gandhi was not completely against the use of foreign capital and technology for development. All he wanted was moderation in imports suitability, appropriateness, decision making power and management in the Indian hands. In other words, he wanted technology transfer but not foreign management and control.

An industry to be Indian must be demonstrably in the interest of masses. It must be manned by Indians both skilled and unskilled. Its capital and machinery should be Indian and the labour employed should have a living wage and be comfortably housed, while the welfare of the children of the laborers should be guaranteed by the employers. This is an ideal definition of effective Indian control or what industry could satisfy Gandhi as being Indian.¹¹

Thus, when Gandhi allowed foreign trade, investment and technology, he attached these conditions with it, injustice. But these conditions are missing in the present context. With the opening of the economy, a large number of foreign companies are being lured to invest

in various sectors in the country and the disastrous effects of this have started showing their ugly face.¹² These concerns with the advanced foreign technology are better with lesser cost. They are using the labour saving techniques because most of the production is done by the highly sophisticated automatic machines. The quality of goods produced by them too is of course better than the quality of goods produced by the Indians with the indigenous technology and raw-material. The result of this is that there are no buyers of the Indian goods in the country itself. The whole of the market has been snatched by these multinationals and other concerns based upon the foreign technology. A large number of Indian companies are at the brink of closure while the multinationals are flourishing at their cost. The perfect competition or the survival of the fittest is the main essence of the market economy but should not forget one basic element that there can be no competition among unequal. The Swadeshi concerns in general and small scale and cottage industries with the multinationals. The latter have huge financial resources at their disposal. Their products are better in quality and spend a very large amount on selling their products in the form of advertisements on a Television, Radio, Newspapers, Magazines, etc. they can throw any small producer out of the market within no time and precisely this is the fate of the Indian producers.¹³

When a low cost better product replaces the high cost product, this is no doubt the progress. The cost which matters the most is the 'opportunity cost'. If the high cost producer has no opportunity of engaging in alternative production, the opportunity cost of the labour is nil. This means that there is a small gain only if the non-labour costs of the low cost products are lower than the non-labour costs of high cost producers who are being displaced.¹⁴ Labour costs, in this context are not

confined to the labour actually employed in any particular establishment, but extend also to the native labour content of materials used in the manufacturing process, unless such materials themselves have a scarcity value due to natural causes. In a country like ours, in which the opportunity cost of labour is nil, high cost products produced by indigenous labour from indigenous materials are normally very much more advantageous than low cost products produced with the help of highly efficient machinery from special materials which may themselves have been imported or else prepared by a further set of special machinery.¹⁵ It is of course unfortunate that prices actually charged, do not reflect the basic fact that the opportunity cost of labour may be nil. Many of the paradoxes of economics result from precisely this divergence between private cost accounting and true social cost. That is why Khadi is produced by labour which would otherwise do nothing at all, it is for the economy as a whole, the cheapest cloth of all, a fact very clearly appreciated by Mahatma Gandhi.¹⁶

Thus the recent trend in our economy is complete deviation from the path shown by the father of the nation. We are becoming more and more dependent on other completely ignoring the swadeshi spirit of self-reliance. It is an old saying that financial dependent man or a nation can not remain independent for a larger period. J.D. Sethi in his publication 'International Economic Disorder'¹⁷ gave a timely stern warning to the poor nations and their people against their becoming willing victims of the allurements and blackmail by the rich countries.¹⁸ In his own words, "If the present trends is projected trends is projected to the future, there is no scope for economic survival and political stability of the majority of the less developed countries. It is ironic that ruling elite of these countries get enormous benefit from the present order."¹⁹ Indeed they have become

its salesman and partners of their exploiters. It is even more ironic that medical interpretations or theories of iniquitous order, such as imperialism and dependency, fit very well in its game.²⁰ Without getting detached from the global order till such time that the less developed countries become self-reliant and build a system of mutual cooperation as well as follow the principles of moral and political economy as suggested by Mahatma Gandhi, the less developed countries are threatened to become international ghettos of the global order.”²¹

Thus it is the high time for the countrymen in general and the ruling elite in particular to do some heart searching. They (the foreign concerns) are not coming here to bale us out from the present economic crisis but to make a fast buck. The sooner we realize this, the latter it will be otherwise we are in the process of mortgaging our swaraj by neglecting swadeshi.

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CHAPTER - II

GANDHIAN STRATEGY : THE EXCLUSIVE MANTRA FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS, IN MODERN CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Gandhian Strategy

2.2.1 Satyagraha

2.2.2 Truth

2.2.3 Non-violence

2.3 Relevance of Gandhian Strategy in Modern Context

2.4 Conclusion

CHAPTER - II

GANDHIAN STRATEGY : THE EXCLUSIVE MANTRA FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS, IN MODERN CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was ‘a man of millennium’ who imparts the lesson of truth, Non- violence and peace. The philosophy and ideology is relevant still today. The philosophy of Gandhi was based on truth, sacrifice, non- violence selfless service and cooperation. In modern times, nonviolent methods of action have been a powerful tool for social protest. According to Gandhi one should be brave and not a coward. He should present his views, suggestions and thoughts without being violent. One should fight a war with the weapons of truth and non violence. Gandhi said that “There is no god higher than truth.”¹ According to Gandhi’s thoughts non- violence is ultimate solution of every kind of problem in the world. Gandhi was single person who fought against the British with the weapons of truth and Non-violence by persuading countrymen to walk on the path of non-violence. Gandhi leading a decades-long nonviolent struggle against British rule in India, which eventually helped India, wins its independence in 1947. By the efforts of Gandhi India became independent. Gandhi initiated non violence activities like Quit India movement and non-operation movement. Gandhi could never have done what he did alone – but with his ability to identify a seed here, a seed there and nurture it, he was able to create a forest of human change. He understood that it was not enough to be a leader, but to create leaders.

In quite simple and clear words, Gandhism consists of the ideas, which Mahatma Gandhi put forth before human world. Along with that, to the maximum possible extent, Mahatma Gandhi treated his individual life in accordance with these ideas. Clearly, Gandhism is a mixture of Gandhi's concepts and practices. I do not hold merely his theory to be Gandhism. The basic ground ship of Gandhism happens to be non-violence. The non-violence is the most ancient eternal value. This non-violence is the ground of ancient-most civilization and culture of India. Mahatma Gandhi said on this very account while making his concepts and practices based on non-violence: "I have nothing new to teach you... Truth and non-violence are as old as hill."² As we know, non-violence and truth are two sides of the same coin. After knowing Gandhism, it is imperative for us to know clearly the concept of non-violence also as it accords the ground for Gandhism. Gandhi's importance in the political world scenario is twofold. First, he retrieved non-violence as a powerful political tool and secondly manifestation of a higher spiritual goal, culmination in world peace. For Gandhi, means were as important as the end and there could be only one means - that of non-violence.

As a situation opposite to violence is non-violence, we can firmly state, "Total non-violence consists in not hurting some other one's intellect, speech or action per own thought, utterance or deeds and not to deprive some one of his life." Mahatma Gandhi fully agrees with above-mentioned derivation of non-violence. He himself has said, "Non-violence is not a concrete thing as it has generally been enunciated. Undoubtedly, it is a part of non-violence to abstain from hurting some living being, but it is only an iota pertaining to its identity. The principle of non-violence is shattered by every evil

thought, false utterance, hate or wishing something bad unto someone. It is also shattered per possession of necessary worldly things.”³ In this chain Mahatma Gandhi clarified in an edition of Young India: “...To hurt someone, to think of some evil unto someone or to snatch one’s life under anger or selfishness, is violence. In contrast, purest non-violence involves a tendency and presuming towards spiritual or physical benefit unto every one without selfishness and with pure thought after cool and clear deliberations... The ultimate yardstick of violence or non-violence is the spirit behind the action.”⁴ There are many examples of their use like resistance, non-violent resistance, and civil revolution. Mahatma Gandhi had to struggle in his whole life, but he never disappointed, he continued his innate faith in non-violence and his belief in the methods of Satyagraha. The significance of Satyagraha was soon accepted worldwide. Martin Luther King adopted the methods of Satyagraha in his fight against the racial discrimination of the American authorities in 1950. Gandhism is very much contextual today on this accord. It is significant. We should grasp importance of Gandhism while analyzing it.

Presently a big portion of the world happens to be under Democratic system of Government. Theoretically, this system stands out to be the best up to now. This is a truth. It is the best because people are connected with it directly or indirectly at every level. Not only this, it is this very system, which provides maximum opportunities of public progress and development. People can themselves decide in this system the mode of their welfare. However, even though being theoretically the best system of government, if we peruse the democratic nations, we first of all find that there is non-equal development of the citizens. We subsequently find that these

nations are more or less victimized by regionalism. They have problem relating to language. They are under clutches of terrorism and communalism. There is also the problem of negation of human rights in these nations. There are other vivid problems akin to mention above and peace is far away so long as these problems exist. All citizens must have equal development and they should have communal harmony towards making all citizens collective and unified partners in progress. But, in reality, it is not so. It is essential that the nations of democratic system of government should be free from above-mentioned problems, must be capable of ensuring equal development of their all citizens and the citizens concerned must march forward on path of progress in unified way along with rendering contribution to world peace.

Gandhi demonstrated to a world, weary with wars and continuing destruction that adherence to Truth and Non-violence is not meant for individuals alone but can be applied in global affairs too. Gandhi's vision for the country and his dreams for the community as a whole still hold good for India. He got the community to absorb and reflect true values of humanity and to participate in tasks that would promote the greater good. These issues are still relevant to what free India is and represents. The main cause of worry today is intolerance and hatred leading to violence and it is here the values of Gandhi need to be adhered to with more passion.

2.2 Gandhian Strategy

Gandhian strategy is mainly comprised with:

- Satyagraha
- Truth and honesty
- Non-violence

- Co-operation
- Peace and love

2.2.1 Satyagraha

‘A holistic approach towards life, based on the ideals of truth and moral courage.’

“Satyagraha’s goal is winning over people’s hearts, and this can be achieved only with tremendous patience,”⁵ Satyagraha is more than a political tool of resistance. The similarities of the Satyagraha to some of the greatest philosophical and religious tenets of the world have been observed and much written about. However, in the specific context of India, Satyagraha was an immense influence. It went a long way in instilling among the Indians a dignity for hard labor and mutual respect. In the traditional Indian society torn apart by caste and creed based discriminations, Satyagraha stated that no work was lowly. It championed secularism and went a long way in eradicating untouchability from the heart of India's typically stratified society. Satyagraha glorified the role of women as an important member of the society. All in all, Satyagraha instilled in the Indian mind a dignity and a self respect that is yet unprecedented in its modern history.

Gandhi’s system of Satyagraha was based on nonviolence, non-cooperation, truth and honesty. Gandhi used non violence in India’s freedom struggle as main weapon and India became independent from British rule.

2.2.2 Truth - The most powerful weapon.

Gandhism is more about the spirit of Gandhi’s journey to discover the truth, than what he finally considered to be the truth. It is the foundation of Gandhi’s teachings, and the spirit of his whole life to

examine and understand for oneself, and not take anybody or any ideology for granted. Gandhi said: “The Truth is far more powerful than any weapon of mass destruction.”⁶ Truth or 'Satya' was the sovereign principle of Mahatma Gandhi's life. The Mahatma's life was an eternal conquest to discover truth and his journey to that end was marked by experiments on himself and learning from his own mistakes. Fittingly his autobiography was titled 'My Experiments with Truth.' Gandhi strictly maintained that the concept of truth is above and beyond of all other considerations and one must unfailingly embrace truth throughout one's life.

Gandhi pioneered the term Satyagraha which literally translates to 'an endeavor for truth.' In the context of Indian freedom movement, Satyagraha meant the resistance to the British oppression through mass civil obedience. The tenets of Truth or Satya and nonviolence were pivotal to the Satyagraha movement and Gandhi ensured that the millions of Indians seeking an end to British rule adhered to these basic principles steadfastly.

2.2.3 Non-violence is ever lasting.

Gandhian strategy is the collection of inspirations, principles, beliefs and philosophy. The fundamentals of Gandhi's non violence theory, Jainism and Buddhism were the most important influence. Both Jainism and Buddhism preached non-violence as the basic principal of existence. Gandhi was also influenced By Bhagvad Gita with its stress on non attachment and selfless action, Christianity, along with its message of love and compassion, extended even to one's enemies, was another important influence on Gandhi's life. Gandhi's life was based on truth, honesty and moral courage.

Mahatma Gandhi was great national hero, who served the nation with truth and non violence. Gandhi was against violence. He always disliked war on the ground of its violent nature. That's why when the Second World War began in 1939; he opposed the stand of British government dragging India into war without consulting Indian leaders. Gandhi was in favor of non violence; therefore he was against in any co-operation in war efforts. According to Gandhi the use of non violence consists of anger, selfishness, hatred and enmity. According to him violence cannot do anything good to human beings. A Gandhian strategy for confronting terrorism, therefore, would consist of the following:

Stop an act of violence in its tracks. The effort to do so should be nonviolent but forceful. To focus solely on acts of terrorism, Gandhi argued, would be like being concerned with weapons in an effort to stop the spread of racial hatred. Gandhi thought the sensible approach would be to confront the ideas and alleviate the conditions that motivated people to undertake such desperate operations in the first place.

As we know, non-violence and truth go side by side. After knowing Gandhism, it is imperative for us to know clearly the concept of non-violence also as it accords the ground for Gandhism.⁷

For Gandhi, means were as important as the end and there could be only one means- that of non-violence.

What is non-violence? Ordinarily, we attribute non-violence as a dictum that prescribes non-snatching of anyone's life. Really, this is not complete derivation pertaining to the concept of non-violence. Non-violence is quite opposite to violence. As such, it would be better

to know the position relating to violence in order to know non-violence and to be in knowledge of its meaning. According to a Jain scholar:

“Whenever, we hurt some other living being through our thought, utterance or action under non-cordial stipulation and non-apt learning, such an impure spirit or act of destroying life of some other one, including the impure tendency, utterance or presuming, is taken to be full of vice of violence. In such a situation, even if there is no sort of violence externally, it intrinsically ipso facto remains a tendency of violence.”⁸ There are three categories of violence:-

- 1 When we hit physically anybody.
- 2 When we think wrong and feel jealous with anybody.
- 3 When we aggressively speak and abuse to anybody.

All these categories create negative energy in human body. The negative energy has adverse affect on human body. Gandhi criticized violence. It is a body of ideas and principles that describes the inspiration, vision and the life work of Gandhi. It is particularly associated with his contributions to the idea and practice of non violence resistance, sometimes also called civil resistance. The term "Gandhism" also encompasses what Gandhi's ideas, words and actions mean to people around the world, and how they used them for guidance in building their own future. Gandhism also permeates into the realm of the individual human being, non-political and non-social. A Gandhian can mean either an individual who follows, or a specific philosophy which is attributed to, Gandhism.

In context of non-violence being perpetual, Mahatma Gandhi states, “...When we peruse the era from beginning unto now relating to the period for which we gain historical evidence, we find that man has

been ultimately treading path of non-violence.” It is, as such, that non-violence came into existence along with man. “In case it has not been with man from the very beginning, there might have been self-doom by man.” As Martin Luther King Jr. said: "The choice is not between violence and nonviolence but between nonviolence and non-existence."

However, it has not been that and not only human race is alive in such a huge number but there has been gradual enhancement in development and nearness in spite of presence of various obstacles and nuisances. This could never have been, but because non-violence is perpetual, it happened.

Mahatma Gandhi was against any form of exploitation and injustice. According to him, evils must be opposed at any cost. But he insisted that the weapons must be non violent and moral ones. The adoption of peaceful method made one superior and put the enemy at a disadvantage but the condition is the opponent must be dealt with mutual respect and love. Gandhi believed that only through love an enemy could be permanently won.

Non violence is not passive. It is active, creative, provocative and challenging. Gandhi described non-violence as “A force more powerful than all the weapons of world combined.”

“Non violence is the greatest and most active force in the world.” Gandhi wrote, “It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of humanity. When we tap into the spirit of non-violence, it becomes contagious and can topple empires.”⁹ In relation to violence, there are two options in the world. These options are, we fight –back or run away. Non violence gives us third option: creative active, peaceful resistance to injustice. Non violence means

standing unmoving against injustice until injustice is transformed into justice. Non-violence does not harm to others and does not adversely affect others directly. But it works internally. Instead of killing others, we should do in the nonviolent struggle for justice and human rights. Non-violence begins in the heart then it moves out to our families, local communities, cities, nation and world.

Gandhi thought, debased those who adopted it. A violent posture adopted by public authorities could lead to a civil order based on coercion. For this reason Gandhi insisted on means consistent with the moral goals of those engaged in the conflict.

2.3 Relevance of Gandhian Strategy in Modern Context

In modern times, nonviolent methods of action have been a powerful tool for social protest. There are many examples of non-violence like civil resistance, non-violence resistance, and civil revolution. Here certain movements particularly influenced by a philosophy of nonviolence should be mentioned, including Mahatma Gandhi leading a decades-long nonviolent struggle against British rule in India, which eventually helped India win its independence in 1947, Gandhi had to pay for his ideals with his life, but he never veered from his innate faith in non-violence and his belief in the methods of Satyagraha. The significance of Satyagraha was soon accepted worldwide. Martin Luther King adopted the methods of Satyagraha in his fight against the racial discrimination of the American authorities in 1950.

He dreamt that of ethics and values practiced in daily lives. But more than half a century after independence is it really so? But should we judge Gandhi and nonviolence only by the test of short-term success? If there lies inbound strength in truth that could free us from

the chains of the British rule then why can't it rid us of the corruption prevalent everywhere? It's not the principles that have become irrelevant rather it is the impatient nature of today's progress that has made "corruption" so popular. Violence is definitely not the answer to burning issues. The need for the day is to shut down the egoistic attitude and mutual distrust. Non-violence can be a good force if practiced. If we "shoot the messenger" we can't progress. There is no room for patronage among equals. M. N. Roy, who founded Radical Humanism, said: "When a man really wants freedom and to live in a democratic society he may not be able to free the whole world . . . but he can to a large extent at least free himself by behaving as a rational and moral being, and if he can do this, others around him can do the same, and these again will spread freedom by their example."¹⁰ If that is the goal, then Gandhi is more relevant than ever. In present times, there are some live examples which show the success of Non-violence resistance by using Gandhian strategy.

On 5 April 2011, a 73-year-old man in central Delhi stopped eating. The man in question was Kisan Baburao Hazare, and he was protesting the Congress-led central government's lackadaisical attempts to punish those guilty of large-scale corruption. His specific demand was that "civil society" should have a say in drafting a stringent anti-corruption law, the Lokpal Bill. The government draft was eyewash, he claimed; outside participation was the only way to ensure an anti-corruption law with any teeth. Hazare, "Anna" to his followers, was by no means the only man on a hunger strike there. But he was onto something. While the government was drowning in a flood of corruption scandals most prominently, the 2G spectrum allocation controversy and the Commonwealth Games fiasco – Anna Hazare's

perfectly timed protest managed to ride the wave. A throng of civic activists, movie stars, and well-heeled supporters from the urban middle classes took his side. Though estimates of its popularity are hard to gauge, it is fair to say that the Anna Hazare movement spread beyond Delhi and to the rest of urban India, which is why the Congress Party soon capitulated. On 8 April the government agreed that five members, chosen by Anna Hazare, would be part of the Lokpal Bill drafting committee. Neither Anna Hazare's methods nor the cause were particularly original. Yoga guru Baba Ramdev had previously fasted on the corruption issue; he fasted again soon after Anna Hazare's fast ended. The move to enact an effective anti-corruption bill also has an old genesis. In the 1960s itself, the idea of the Lokpal was suggested by the first Administrative Reforms Commission. Even before Anna Hazare's fast, Aruna Roy and other civil society members had been

Anna Hazare is one of India's well-acclaimed social activists. A former soldier in the Indian army, Anna is well known and respected for upgrading the ecology and economy of the village of Ralegan Siddhi which is located in the drought prone Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra state.

On the extraordinary 12th day of Anna Hzare's anti corruption fast, the parliament responded with extraordinary grace to show what it could do to honor a crusader's urge. After over eight hours of debate around the structure of Lokpal Bill the Government and the opposition in both the Loks bha and Rajya Sabha came together to agree "in-principal" to the three major demands the activist had raised in his letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as a condition to end his protest. Anna Hazare's previous achievements which are based on truth and Satyagrha are following:

The erstwhile barren village has metamorphosed into a unique model of rural development due to its effective water conservation methods, which made the villagers self-sufficient. Earlier, the same village witnessed alcoholism, utter poverty and migration to urban slums. Inspired by Hazare's unique approach of salvaging a hopeless village, the state government has implemented the 'Model Village' scheme as part of its official strategy. Hazare is now synonymous with rural development in India. Integrated village Development Project as a part of Golden Jubilee celebration of "Bharat Chhodo Andolan "Adarsh Gaon Yojna" was started under his chairmanship "Model Village" project. Watershed development is one of the key tools contributing towards the overall objective of reducing poverty through sustainable development.

The common man is put to lot of hardships and it has become difficult to make both ends meet as prices of essential commodities are rising constantly due to corruption. Hazare believes that our freedom is at the teeth of danger due to corruption and unless it is eliminated, the country will not be free in its true sense. Therefore, a peaceful war has been waged against corruption with the help of immense support from people.

Right to Information includes the citizens' right to inspect works, documents, and records, take notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records, take certified samples of material, obtain information in form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, video cassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts. The citizens can obtain the above from all government departments to ensure transparency. All they need to do is to invoke the Right to

Information (RTI) Act. The state of Maharashtra leads in RTI activism and use, thanks to Anna Hazare's inspiring leadership.

Gandhigiri The public face of the movement, Anna Hazare, describes himself as a Gandhian. His social movement, centered in Ralegaon Siddhi in rural Maharashtra, harks back to Gandhi's Phoenix farm and Sabarmati ashram. Many of his campaigns, against alcoholism or untouchability, make the Gandhian connect between social reform and political emancipation. His preaches non-violence is comfortable with religious idioms (a portrait of Bharat Mata hung behind him while he fasted for the Jan Lokpal Bill),¹⁴ and makes personal probity the centre piece of the campaign. Yet, while the movement claims Gandhi's morals and employs his methods, its political vision is as far as can be from Gandhi himself. Ironically, this is what makes it so successful in 21st century India. Understanding this neo-Gandhian activism, "Gandhigiri" is key to understanding the Anna Hazare movement. Two makers of modern India were quick to distance themselves from Gandhi's idea of a state.¹¹ As has been well chronicled, Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of a modern, centralized, powerful Indian state that could bring about both economic prosperity as well as social justice was anathema to Gandhi's union of village republics. Gandhi, an early critic of modernity, was disillusioned with the violence and illegitimacy of the State. Independent India is a testament to exactly the reverse impulse: of a centralized state driving large development projects in the name of the greater common good.

2.4 Conclusion

Gandhi dreamed of a new world of non-violence with overall peaceful environment. Non-violence is a universal phenomenon and it has great relevance and significance. It is the ultimate solution of all kinds of

problems and conflicts in the society, nation and world. However, its result depends upon its understanding and proper application. The present scenario of violence and exploitation all over the world has raised an important issue. Any nation which has been suffered with communalism, dictatorship, corruption and power games really needs to go back to Gandhi's conviction of nonviolence and truth as his mission. By adopting nonviolence, social, political, economic and religious conflicts shall be removed. Undoubtedly, the social doctrine of non violence that has emerged from Gandhian ideas has now become the key to forge and sustain the new social and political order. Today, there is need to adopt Ghandhian philosophy and ideology in overall world to remove all kind of problems and creating peaceful environment. Gandhi is not the past, he is the future. He is an early sign of what we can be.

Presently a big portion of the world happens to be under Democratic system of Government. Theoretically, this system stands out to be the best up to now. This is a truth. It is the best because people are connected with it directly or indirectly at every level. Not only this, it is this very system, which provides maximum opportunities of public progress and development.¹² People can themselves decide in this system the mode of their welfare. However, even though being theoretically the best system of government, if we peruse the democratic nations, we first of all find that there is non-equal development of the citizens. We subsequently find that these nations are more or less victimized by regionalism. They have problem relating to language. They are under clutches of terrorism and communalism. There is also the problem of negation of human rights in these nations. There are other vivid problems akin to mention above

and peace is far away so long as these problems exist. These nations should get themselves rid of these problems, all citizens of them must have equal development and they should have communal harmony towards making all citizens collective and unified partners in progress. But, in reality, it is not so.

It is essential that the nations of democratic system of government should be free from above-mentioned problems, must be capable of ensuring equal development of their all citizens and the citizens concerned must march forward on path of progress in unified way along with rendering contribution to world peace. Gandhism is very much contextual today on this accord. It is significant. Let us grasp importance of Gandhism while analyzing it in brief.

Gandhi inspires an alternative vision of politics and resistance at a time when oppression is not only getting more overt and physical but also more insidious. His ideology of nonviolence is a good point to start from. It may not succeed, but it opens a world of possibilities and encourages us to think outside the box. His life also illustrates how radical ideas are first dismissed, only to be tested and embraced later. Gandhi demonstrated to a World, weary with wars and continuing destruction that adherence to Truth and Non-violence is not meant for individuals alone but can be applied in global affairs too. Gandhi's vision for the country and his dreams for the community as a whole still hold good for India. He got the community to assimilate and reflect true values of humanity and to participate in tasks that would promote the greater good. These issues are still relevant to what free India is and represents. The main cause of worry today is intolerance and hatred leading to violence and it is here the values of Gandhi need

to be adhered to with more passion. He is relevant not yesterday or today but forever!!

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CHAPTER - III

RELEVANCE OF GANDHI

3.1 How to Make Religion Relevant?

3.2 Changed Concept of Politics

3.3 Is Gandhian Democracy Acceptable?

3.4 Foundation of Social Dynamics

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CHAPTER - III

RELEVANCE OF GANDHI

The last interview which Mahatma Gandhi gave to Margrate Bourka White in the early afternoon on 30th January, 1948 was on “His persistence in his theory of non-violence in the event of a nuclear attack on a city.” The Mahatma’s reply was that if the defenseless citizens died in a spirit on non-violence, their sacrifice would not in vain; they might all pray for the soul of the pilot who had thoughtlessly sprayed death on the city. This was the last message of compassion to mankind. Gandhi had said, “Non-Violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man”.

Gandhi had further said, “I do not believe in shortcuts which involve violence. However, much I sympathize with admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest causes. There is, therefore, really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself.”¹

The heart that bled at the sight of the misery of others was bled to death on 30th January, 1948 with the three death dealing slugs buried deep in it. The Mahatma has given the way of all saints? India has lost her soul, but his spirit lives and that spirit will continue to live among us as long as India survives.²

Hence, relevance of Gandhi is unquestionable and it is so much time tested that in spite of the global apprehension and debate about it, the last hope of human kind is Gandhi and Gandhi alone, but Gandhi is so humble and docile that he warns the posterity to refrain from his views, ideas and thoughts as “Gandhism.” Gandhi rightly said, “There

is as yet nothing like Gandhism” but Kripalani prefers the title “The Gandhian Way.” Gandhi all through, went on his experiments in the practice of Truth and Non-violence. Gandhi was neither an academic philosopher nor a system builder. He was essentially a freedom fighter, a social reformer and a practical man. Not like a social scientist, but like a scientist, Gandhi was highly experiment oriented. So his aim was to bring every problem, social, political, economic or otherwise, face to face with truth as it may present itself at a given moment.

Gandhi’s autobiography is called “The Story of My Experiment with Truth.” His close associate, Dharendra Majumdar says that philosophy is nothing but only a way of life. So is the case with Dada Dharmadhikari, one of the greatest interpreters of Gandhian ideology, when he says that there is nothing like “ism” with Gandhi.

As a freedom fighter, as a philosopher, as a moralist, as a spiritualist and above all as practitioner of truth, the Mahatma is relevant not for today only but for tomorrow as well. At a global level, when violence is being condemned, religious fundamentalism is rebuked, high technology with its high profile is not going to solve the problem of the teeming millions of people of the world, Gandhi is the only hope of survival for the whole of the humanity at large. We see E. M. Sumachar’s “Small is beautiful” in Gandhi’s thought, which is the only hope for survival.

In the preceding paras, a detailed study of relevance of Gandhian Thought from different angles shall be presented as follows:-

3.1 Religious Relevance

From time immemorial, human being is practicing some religion or other in their day to day life. Every body considers his religion as

the supreme and others religion as inferior. This feeling of superiority of one's own religion has manifested into a number of wars to prove one's own superiority and thus killings of innocent persons at the alter of religion is so dangerous that even now terrorism is vividly viewed from the angle of religion. Recently Osama Bin Laden and his Al-quiada have advised President Bush and his men to accept Islam or face the music. This dreaded approach has made human being savage and brutal but Gandhi has a beautiful answer to such an evil. He says, "All religions adhere to the fact that "his God is the Truth." If it is so with one religion, it is true with other religions also. Thus Gandhi brings out the common point from all religions and for him "Truth is God." If this concept is accepted by all there shall be no war/ hatred or ill-will against any religion. Why not adhere to this beautiful principle? If this is brought into practice, religions of all will be respected by all. Hence, Gandhi has to be studied in a simple way as regards religion is concerned.

However, over and above this, Gandhi has more to say about religion. After a long study and experience, Gandhi came to conclusion that " (1) All religions are true; (2) All religions have some error in them;(3) All religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism"³ Gandhi upholds different religions like different roads coming to the same point."⁴ However it is useless to make distinction between different abodes of god-temples, mosques and churches. Though religions are many but Religion is one. As a tree has single trunk but many branches and leaves, so there is one true and perfect religion but it becomes many, as it passes through the human medium.⁵ Here, there is no scope for fanaticism or exclusiveness in religion. Gandhi Ji rightly said that 'Mine is not a religion of the prison

house.⁶ This statement is a proof against insolence, pride of race, religion or colour. He never subscribed to the fanatic view “that there can or will be on earth one religion.”⁷ He was always adhering for mutual tolerance. His religion is “Sarva Dharma Sambhava (Equal Approach to All Religions.) It is very near to Swami Vivekanand’s ‘Universal Religion’ or Tagore’s ‘Religion of Man’. His Religion unites men of different faiths and brings them on the same platform to reach the ultimate truth i.e. the spirit of huminity and thus conflict shall be resolved amicably and with temperance and not with superiority of one over other. Gandhi’s Religion makes a man spiritual and scientific. As Vinoba rightly describes that spirituality plus science means Sarvodaya (total upliftments) but spirituality minus science means Sarvanas (total destruction).

Thus, if Gandhi’s concept of religion is practiced, there shall be no scope of hatred, animosity, enmity, war and destruction. If we have to save the world of today from catastrophe, there is only way and that is the Gandhian way to practice the universal religion which shall herald an era of peace, tranquility and harmony on earth. This is how Gandhi’s concept of Religion is of eminent value for all time to come.

3.2 Changed Concept of Politics

Politics has regarded as a game to achieve power, to regain power and to retain power. In the western concept, politics till date, has been viewed as power politics, where morality or value had no place but now this concept has almost been abandoned. Now even western thinkers have started talking about the moral values in politics, whereas from the very beginning, from Gandhi, politics was all pervading and hence, his war of Indian Independence had to be fought with the twin weapons of Truth and Non-violence, which ultimately

became a movement and he called it Satyagrah. For him, politics opens the door of 'service' and not for using or usurping power.

For Gandhi, politics is moral problem of value. This has been beautifully described by Arnold Brecht as "Scientific Value Relativism"⁸. Need of the hour is to revolutionise politics by ethics. "Unless the moral and spiritual qualities of the people are appropriate, the best of political system and constitutions will not work."⁹ "Morals serve the cause of progress. Morality serves the great task of the social revolutions of our times" – Prof. A. Shishkin of the Institute of Philosophy of Academy of Sciences (Moscow).¹⁰

In Modern times, we see that politics is rooted in deceit and dishonesty and is bound to create greater deceit and greater dishonesty. Hate must generate hate and violence greater violence. Thus the need of the hour is to "moralise politics."¹¹ Gandhi's prophetic emphasis is "there is no politics devoid of religion."¹² All through the Indian Freedom Movement, it was Gandhi and Gandhi alone who, in reality, practiced politics on religious foundations as he always used to put emphasis on his often repeated saying i.e. " Politics bereft of religion is a death trap."¹³

So far, the world has seen only the use of physical force and the force of law but Gandhi had carved out the Third Force¹⁴ or the self reliant moral power of the people.¹⁵

Gandhi stands for people's politics and not Party Politics. Actually, power must pass into the hands of the people at all levels; initiatives must pass to the people. He pleads for partyless democracy. Emergence of people's democracy will herald a new era of democratic decentralization i.e. the Swaraj (Self Rule) is needed from below.¹⁶

In Gandhian Politics, democracy becomes the rule of the people and depends more and more upon the power of the people and not upon the power of the police or military. Thus democracy and violence can not go together.¹⁷ Hence Gandhi pleads for the “Moralisation of Wishes.”¹⁸ and “Voluntary Action”¹⁹ must remain the basis of democratic life and culture.

Through Satyagrah (Non-Violent Resistance), Gandhi resists injustice and exploitation and thus purifies the politics. This gives an alternative to the bullet²⁰ Dr. Martin Luther King II in the USA and the Norwegians School Teachers in 1942-43 against the Quisling Government amply demonstrates the power and strength of the Non-Violent Resistance (Satyagrah) against the authoritarian regimes.

Thus Gandhian Politics has a dominant and constructive role to play. He was against narrow nationalism. His concept of politics was for higher values. “Through deliverance of India”, he said, “I seek to deliver the so called weaker races of the earth from the crushing wheels of western exploitation.”²¹ And it happened so and in due course most of the weaker nations emerged as free nations after India achieved Independence. We fought for others Independence also and the latest in the series is the war of Bangladesh’s freedom in 1971. Now, the politics of exploitation has been uprooted and the politics of service is visualized through democratic ideals. Party Politics is being replaced by people’s power. Service to the people and their amelioration is gradually becoming the summum bonum of the states all over the world and hence relevance of Gandhian Politics can not be minimized.

3.3 Is Gandhian Democracy Acceptable?

Gandhian concept of Self Rule (Swaraj) is real democracy, where people's power rests in the individuals and each one realizes that he or she is the real master of one's self. Thus people are sovereign in a democracy but in a parliamentary democracy, party system has a vital role to play. However, Gandhi was highly critical of the parliamentary democracy and in his monumental book "Hind Swaraj" (Self Rule or Home Rule, he has called the British Parliament as a "sterile woman and a prostitute"²², though for him "good government is no substitute for self-government."²³

There is contradiction in the statement of Gandhi about parliamentary democracy but while diving deep into the democratic ideals, he has said, "Democracy, disciplined and enlightened is the finest things in the world."²⁴ At the same time, he also cautions people against a whole-sale copying of the Western Model of democracy, where there are only nominal democracies. However, he has highest regards for Democracy and he calls it as "a great institution" and again cautions people and says, "It is liable to be greatly abused."²⁵ Even today, all over the world, democracy is widely accepted principle of the system of governance and there is no alternative to democracy.

Thus it is abundantly clear that for future, Gandhian concept of democracy is the only hope, where it must be practiced at the grass-root level, party system to be built up on accepted principles and not on partisan line, defection should be done away with and recall of recalcitrant representatives must be adhered to. Defects and demerits must be removed from the present democratic form of governance. People's power must be accepted to make democracy safe, otherwise if the democracy is abused or misused, the future of people is doomed.

3.4 Foundation of Social Dynamics

Dr. V.P. Verma discusses thoroughly about the social philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and he says, “Gandhi never sanctioned the doctrine of caste war, class struggle and fight between races. The very survival of mankind amidst all adverse challenges and antithetical impediments is a testimony to the significance of non-violence and he stated that Rishis (Saints) who affirmed the efficacy of ahimsa (non-violence) were greater geniuses than Newton, the celebrated founder of the laws of gravitation and motion. Hence, Gandhi wanted to solve problems of social tension, social disharmony and social disequilibrium by resorting to the techniques of collaboration, sympathetic accommodation and genuine brotherly solidarity.”²⁶

For Gandhi, removal of untouchability was not a matter of political arithmetic but it was to be the genuine transformation of the heart. Like a devotee of the Gita, he was trying to see the Eternal Spirit in the suppressed populations and sub-human creatures.” Says V.P. Verma.²⁷

“Gandhiji’s unremitting crusade against social inequality and the humiliating conditions to which the backward sections and the so called untouchables were exposed in Indian society and this has been epoch-making. No other social prophet in the long span of India’s history has been so Catholic, so universal and as humane in his attitude to the untouchables as Gandhi.”²⁸

Gandhi was a protagonist of the common good of all the inhabitants of India because as a religious man, he believed in Hindu-Muslim unity on moral grounds.²⁹ He never made distinctions among people on social, religious and caste consideration. His Satyagrah in South Africa was launched to redeem the civic rights of the Indian

community amongst whom the Muslims constituted a majority and controlled the larger share of wealth.”³⁰

Gandhi all through his life practiced and stood for the communal harmony. This was the cardinal philosophy of his social dynamics. He was of the opinion that without communal harmony, nation can not progress because in its absence, communal hatred would eat away the vitals of the society. He always stood for communal peace and he wanted to teach through his life and activities that society without peace and tranquility can not progress and development shall remain a far cry. Even now, this is but essential as we know that terrorist tries to create communal disharmony and tensions in the society. The recent series of bomb explosions in many parts of Maharashtra including Mumbai and Maleogon must be eye opener for all of us that without Gandhian approach to social dynamics, India can not progress. This is not true for India alone but for the whole universe as communal harmony is the need of the hour for all round progress, peace and prosperity. Thus, here also, Gandhi seems to be relevant for all time to come. If we ignore Gandhi, we are ignoring our future and posterity will take serious note of our failure to establish communal harmony.

Gandhi was candid enough to recognize the grave social evils with which the original vedic Varna (caste) had become encumbered in the course of its evolution, and he condemned in unmeasured terms the social enormities and perverse exploitation practiced in the name of caste superiority.

Untouchability, too, for him was irrational and denial of Ahimsa (non-violence). As a Vedantist and a Vaishnava, Gandhi believed in the spiritual oneness of all lives, and hence, he was absolutely opposed to untouchability. The eradication of untouchability, root and branches,

was a matter of atoning for the sins of the cruel sections of the Hindu World. Eradication of untouchability was an issue of transcendental value, surpassing even political independence. All through his life, he fought for this noble cause and spent sleepless night with the scavengers and he considered it as a slur on Hinduism and therefore, he has said out of anguish that if he takes rebirth, he would like to be born in the Scavengers family. Against Communal Award, he went unto the fast unto death and ultimately, it was Dr. Ambedkar, who saved his precious life through the historic Poona Pact as the Macdonald Award would have fragmented India into many parts.

Gandhism is an inarticulate and mostly unwritten philosophy but nevertheless, it presents a definite pattern of beliefs and the world, capable of generating very active force forwards 'social change' or social revolution'. For developing Gandhian Thought, Acharya Vinoba and to great extent, Jai Prakash and Dada Dharmadhakari adhered hard to bring about social changes purely on Gandhian pattern and principles. Hence, Vinoba puts emphasis on Third Force (Tisri Shakti) and women power (Stri Shakti) and J. Ps. emphatic pursuit of people's power (Lok Shakti) and Youth Power (Yuva Shakti) have to be studied very carefully. It is in the fitness of things to accept the fact that it was imperative to strengthen peoples power through the formation of 'Peoples Committees' (Lok Samiti) as a safety-value against civilian or military dictatorship. To strengthen the Youth Power (Yuva Shakti), Youth Peace Force (Tarun Shanti Sena) was to be formed at all levels to bring about social changes. In 1974, Revolution, Youth Force (Yuva Shakti) was renamed as Chatra Yuva Samgarsh Vahini (Student-cum-Youth Action Force). This organization became the vanguard of total revolution during 1974-77.

Now, it is an accepted fact that, Sarvodaya concept of social change is multidimensional and a safety valve against abuses of State Power. Intellectually, it is a better guarantee of democracy than any thing else. However, this is still not mature enough to bring about social changes as per expectations of Gandhian Thought. Hence, the information of a World Peace Force (Vishwa Shanti Seva) has been conceived to bring about desired social change on Gandhian Principles at the World level. Cautious efforts in due course will bring expected results when peaceful and non-violent social order could be visualized. The road is difficult but aim is laudable and we have no alternative also as we have either to live together or perish together.

3.5 Economic Relevance including Trusteeship

Gandhi's economic philosophy is inspired by John Ruskin (1819-1900) and he was immensely inspired, almost 'captured' by his book "Unto This Last"³² He established Phoenix Settlement in 1904 near Durban in South Africa based on Economic Philosophy of John Ruskin. This settlement was ultimately converted into a Public Trust.

Gandhi Condemned the nineteenth century doctrine of laissez-faire which is the political basis of capitalism³³ and he said that labour was superior to capital.³⁴

As we all know by now that Gandhi was against industrialism and Big Machines and not against machines as such. Gandhi was firm believer in Rural Economy and ownership of the land by its tillers.

His heart bled to see the misery of the Indian villagers and hence he formulated his famous "Constructive Programme" for thorough improvement in the life of the simple peasant. He was an eloquent prophet of cottage industries.

Khadi stood for the revival and rejuvenation of the Indian Village communities. For him, khadi was the symbol of Swadeshi.³⁵

Man should earn his bread by the sweat of his labour. This idea was initially sponsored and supported by St. Paul, St. Augustine and T. M. Bonareft. Gandhi not only preached but also practiced this concept of bread labour in his South African days.³⁶ Here, he was inspired by Leo Tolstoy and even Peter Kropotkin, the Russian anarchist.

Concept of Trusteeship was derived from the conception of Aparigrah (non-possession) of the Gita. With the passage of time, Gandhi³⁷ went on adding on economic and sociological content to the rather moralistic conception of trusteeship. He stated that in case, the rich would not become willing trustees, satyagrah was to be resorted to, against the holder of wealth. In 1938, he said, “A trustee has no heir but the public.”³⁸

This implies that the community or the state has also a right in the prosperity of the moneyed classes. He wanted that the rich should become trustees of their surplus wealth for the good of the society. Thus the society was to be regarded as an extension of the family.³⁹

Modern economics has solved almost all the problems of the production but the problem of distribution is a far cry even today. According to the Gandhian Theory in the ideal society, there should be equality of wages not only for labourer but also for the other members of the different professions. All persons should be supplied with the necessaries to satisfy their natural needs. Thus Gandhi inculcated the revolutionary doctrine of equality of wages for lawyer, the doctor, the teacher and the scavenger as the panacea for socio-economic evils. He extends Ruskin's conception⁴⁰ of the equality of wages to all kinds of labour and pleads for equal distribution⁴¹. Thus, it is amply proved that

only through Gandhian Economic thought the gigantic problem of distribution could be solved, which is the heart searching difficult exercise among the well wishers of the society as without this, the future of humanity seems to be dark and the greatest catastrophe is an on anvil and no one could avert it for all time to come. Hence, the relevance of Gandhian Economic Thought and Trusteeship principles has to be given a serious exercise.

3.6 Educational Relevance

True education is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties.⁴² According to Gandhi, the aim of education should be build the whole man and develop his integral personality. “Literacy in itself is no education. It is no the end of education nor even the beginning.”⁴³ Aim of education should be to develop to the full potentialities of energy of the children. Education is simply the process of bringing out what is latent in man.

External education is neither Sat (True) nor Asat (Untrue), but different from both, hence Anirvachaniya (beyond explanation). Therefore, it is an illusion to think that education alone can develop the soul. In that sense, it has very little reality.⁴⁴

Learning without courage is like a waxen statue, beautiful to look at but bound to melt at the least touch of a hot substance.⁴⁵ On the other hand, if the foundations of moral training are firmly laid “the children could learn all other things themselves.”⁴⁶

Gandhi wanted to build up a new society but he was apprehensive that it cannot be build up with old educational system. Education is worthless, if it fails to inculcate the spirit of service and sacrifice. ‘Education, if it is vital thing, it must shed its fragrance on its

surroundings.”⁴⁷ It must reflect and respond in a genuine way to the life of the people living around.⁴⁸

A school should not be attached to workshop. The workshop itself is the school. We should learn while we earn and vice-versa. The whole of general education should come through crafts and simultaneously with their progress. This is the only method of producing⁴⁹ fully developed human beings.⁵⁰ Except for the scholastics all others agree that work should find a place in the educational curriculum. Some regard work merely as an appendage⁵¹ without accepting its needs. However, the real technique of education should be the technique of correlation.⁵² Activity draws out the latent capacities of the child which is the aim of education. Hence, it is the best technique of education judged even from the purely educational and psychological view points.⁵⁴ So, on the one hand, there is the explosion of knowledge, on the other, there is the explosion of man himself. Jawaharlal Nehru speaks the Gandhian language, when he says “Education must develop individuals with harmonious personalities for the establishment of a peaceful and harmonious world.”⁵⁵

Gandhi’s concept of Basic Education has got the maximum attention. It aims at all round development of human personality. His primary emphasis is on the 3’H’s i.e. – Head, Heart and Hand, rather than on 3 R’s i.e. – Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. For Gandhi, The true development of head, heart and soul are necessary for a satisfactory system of education.”⁵⁶

“In his scheme, vocational training or work experience occupied a central position as he wanted education to be responsive to socio-economic need of the Indian society. Perhaps, this was one of the

reasons for his aversion to book oriented/Central Education at the expense of education through crafts.”⁵⁷

The Basic Education envisaged by Gandhi aimed at producing self reliant and good citizens. In order to regain India’s lost glory and prestige, Gandhi’s educational ideas based on value-orientation have to be reemphasized. The education curricula should be value laden as well as information oriented. Eradication of illiteracy and spread of education is the prime need of the hour so that the citizens of Twenty First Century can be alert and enlightened.”⁵⁸

Before, Gandhi’s concept of education through “Basic Education” could take off and materialized, it could not be implemented with true spirit and hence, there is apprehension in the mind of the educationists about its efficacy, usefulness and relevance for modern time. However, men of higher thinking always ponder over the failure of the present educational system, which has simply multiplied the number of so called educated unemployed and this huge army of educated unemployed is becoming a menace for the polity and society both. Still there is a ray of hope to get the Gandhian concepts of value education implemented to save the society from peril and total destruction.

3.7 A Gandhian Idea of World Government and World Peace

Mahatma Gandhi wrote: “Nationalism is not the highest concept; the highest concept is world community. I would not like to live in this world, if it is not to be one.” The quintessence of divine wisdom, “Vasudhaiv Kutumbkum” or (“Mankind is one family”), proclaimed by India millennium ago, was the ultimate aim of Mahatma and his thought. Hence, his greatest follower, adviser and interpreter, Achary Vinoba Bhave has a great slogan ‘ Jai jagat ‘ or ‘Hail one World.’”

Nation States have seen a plethora of wars and devastations on large scale and hence idea of world government, if materialized will end the disparity a real cause of disharmony among the people of the different nations. This is why supra- national institutions like the E-E.C. are becoming more necessary today than before. The institutions like the IMF, G.A.T.T., IBRD, FAO, WHO, ILO etc. are charged with the solution of humanity pressing problems of hunger, disease and illiteracy. At the same time compulsion of war expenditure is another constant reminder for us, to consider seriously the question of bringing the whole world under one government. So Prof. Arnold Toynbee also said, “If we do not abolish war, war is going to abolish us.” The warning of the Father on the Nuclear Bomb, Albert Einstein is much more serious: “I do not know about the Third World War but in the Fourth World War, they will fight with sticks and stones.”

“Peace is after all indivisible. There can not be peace in one part of the world and war in another. Peace can be ensured in the world if a single government wields control over the armaments. In fact, no sacrifice would be too big to achieve world peace – be its surrender of a part of the national sovereignty or renunciation of the use of force in settling, international disputes. And, if humanity is to survive, it will have to bring itself under the control of one authority and the sooner it is done, the better will be for its own sake.”⁵⁹

Gandhi’s nationalism, fierce though it is, is not exclusive, not designed to harm any nation or individual.⁶⁰ His nationalism was the essential precondition of sound internationalism. “Through Swaraj (Home Rule), we would serve the whole world.”⁶¹ Indian nationalism is not exclusive, or aggressive nor destructive. It is health giving, religious and therefore, humanitarian, “India must learn to live before

she can aspire to die for humanity.”⁶² He further said, “ I would like to see India free and strong so that she may offer herself as a willing and a pure sacrifice for the betterment of the world.”⁶³ He went further..... “My idea of nationalism is that my country may die so that the human race may live.”⁶⁴ Gandhi frankly hints at some sort of world federation, when he says: “ The better mind of the world desires today not absolutely independent states warning one against another but a federation of friendly interdependent states.”⁶⁵ Further he said, “ The only condition on which the world can live is being united under one central governing body composed of representatives of the component parts.”⁶⁶

In 1931, while speaking about the League of Nations at Geneva, he said, “It is expected to replace war, and by its own power to arbitrate between nations.”⁶⁷ but the same time, he candidly said, “That League lacks the necessary sanction.”⁶⁸ As the arch patriot of his own ideology of non-violence, Gandhi was against any sanction of brute physical force. At the same time of San Francisco Conference for the formation of the UNO, Gandhi had said, “The retention of an International Police Force is by no means an emblem of peace. Shedding of belief in war and violence is essential to the establishment of real peace based on freedom and equality of all races and nations”(17.04.1945). He was dead against an armed peace imposed upon the forcibly disarmed.⁶⁹

Thus, Gandhi had categorically pleaded for a world government because it would have heralded an era of peace. However, peace keeping force is not supported by him, Vishwa Shanti Sena (International Peace Force) is the only solution. In the present Uni

polar world, its importance has further increased and Gandhi is becoming relevant day in and day out.

Conclusion

Gandhi was a perpetual moral rebel who called for organized movement against imperialistic, virulence, social exploitation, economic oppression and slavery to immoral propensities.

At a time when thinkers in the realm of philosophies and social sciences are trying to take stock of the Eastern Heritage and Western Thought, Gandhi stands as a symbol of the conjunction of the East and the West. The service of Gandhi in awakening the soul of Asia and Africa is of immense importance. Ho-Chi-Minh and Nelson Mandela have testified to the inspiration of the leaders and activists of the two continents Asia and Africa, received in their work from the trials, sufferings and teachings of the Mahatma. Even the Negro liberationists in North America under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King II received inspiration from him.

Romain Rolland had recognized the moral significance of the work of the Mahatma. Both Einstein and Tagore testified to the spiritual eminence of Gandhi. At a time, when cultural norms are collapsing and structure of civilization is imperiled, the deathless spirit of Gandhi stands as a mighty Himalaya an immense source of strength to those devoted to the emancipation of mankind.⁷⁰

Now in the twenty first century, Gandhi is a world phenomenon. It means, as if he has been reborn. The world knows that Dr. Martin Luther King II, Lekh Walesa, Nelson Mandela, Ho-Chi-Minh, Yung - Su - Ky, Mr. Aryaratna, Daisaku Ikeda and a host of the geniuses of the world have followed the footprints of the great Mahatma. In 1981,

53 Nobel Prize winners' men and women of the both Hemisphere warned us of an unprecedented holocaust, encompassing all the horrors of exterminations and extending the frontiers of barbarism and death. Strangely enough, they all unanimously look to one man-Gandhi and his non-violent action to fight the most fundamental battle of human rights- the right to life.

After almost 60 years of martyrdom, Gandhi is now more relevant on global level than before. Specially, after 9/11 of 2001, the terroristic attacks on Twin Tower World Trade Centre and Pentagon buildings of the USA, Gandhi is remembered more with reverence than merely casually. He is being recognized as a great leader of action, a Liberator and a Prophet Martyr all over the universe. What is needed at the hour is to implement his deeds, actions and thoughts into practice and thus, his relevance in different fields is unquestionable and unchallengeable. For the very survival of human being, it is imperative on our part to act upon his advice because only on his relevance, we shall survive together or if we fail in our venture, we are bound to perish together. He is the only hope of the future as he is the only Shining Star on the Horizon.

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CHAPTER - IV

GLOBAL PEACE MOVEMENT AND RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN VIEW

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Martin Luther King Junior in his above-mentioned statement clearly emphasizes the following about Mahatma Gandhi:

One, Gandhi's life was brimming with certain universal principles or values; secondly, the impossibility to escape from the reality of universal principles or values. In other words, acceptance of these important universal principles or values cannot be denied.

King Junior also highlighted that there is a moral structure for the human world and universal values identify the human world, and they are the conditions of a civilized life. In this regard my own view is that morality itself is one of the three¹ fundamentals of civilization. I have explained this in length in my book entitled, *The Fundamentals of Civilization*. But, without deviating from the topic in hand it suffices to say that without morality there is no possibility of a civilized life. In the absence of morality, civilization is completely meaningless. Finally, morality is the true ornament of human life and as Mahatma Gandhi himself pointed out, it helps "in finding out the true path for us and in fearlessly following it."²

Further, placing the Mahatma in the centre of the statement by King, we may arrive at the conclusion that morality, one of the chief universal values that conditions civilized life, was among those universal principles that characterised Gandhi's life.

And, it is true. Gandhi's life was imbued with morality. It was the basis of his ideas, activities and works. He stressed on this aspect urging humanity to adopt it "consciously and as a matter of duty."³ More particularly, the supreme human value Ahimsa [non-violence], of which morality itself is one of the supplementary values or one which absolutely stays within its domain, was the nucleus in the life and works of the Mahatma. In this context the words of Mahatma Gandhi that "I will not sacrifice Truth and Ahimsa even for the deliverance of my country or religion"⁴, are sufficient to exemplify this fact.

Ahimsa, an essential condition of existence, development and achievement of the life's goal, was the core of all of Gandhi's activities. Perhaps for the first time in the entire human history Mahatma Gandhi applied non-violence in its refined form and as per the demand of time and space in the political sphere. He adopted Ahimsa as a means to achieve unprecedented success. He established with certainty that on the strength of non-violence, evils like exploitation, inequality and slavery could be eliminated. All kinds of estrangements, disputes, conflicts, hostilities and struggles could be settled amicably whereby conflict and disagreement could be transformed into a state of harmony and peace. That is why; a great man like Martin Luther King Junior spoke about the Mahatma the way he did. Gandhism [amalgamation of Ahimsa-based ideas and practices of Mahatma Gandhi] essentially and inevitably became in one way or

the other, the centre of every movement launched by him and his colleagues for achieving equality and freedom. Many others like Martin Luther King Junior followed Ahimsa with the purpose of establishing peace and justice.

My emphasis on the subject could easily bring up the question why Gandhism is necessary today. To deliver a satisfactory answer I think it would be appropriate to discuss first why we need to launch movements for peace? More particularly, why peace-movements are necessary internationally in these days when the world is fast converting into a global village?

In fact, peace is an active and dynamic state in which one gets the opportunity to move forward towards development without confusion, fear or worry. On the other hand conflicts, disputes, dissensions, fights or struggles are illustrative of the absence of peace. Undoubtedly, harmony, cooperation and love emerge as chief characteristics of the state of peace. Despite several negative human tendencies, efforts for progress are desired by all since advancement at all levels and in all walks of life is a prime necessity of human life. In other words, it is a part and parcel of human endeavours. Hence, through the ages man has made constant efforts to gain peace either by individual or by collective means. This state remains intact today and will be so in the times to come.

Before proceeding further one more thing should be clarified. Peace is a dynamic state and not a situation of the status quo. Furthermore, it has nothing to do with inactiveness. In a state of peace, man accepting the reality of Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam⁵, and freeing himself from the state of confusion, fear, tension, conflict, struggle or war, through harmony and cooperation of others in society

continuously work to ensure welfare of humanity. Peace is also the best means to progress.⁶ Hence, it can be asserted that through the ages efforts for peace have been made individually or collectively and for this the method of non-cooperation has also been adopted from time-to-time.⁷ Today, because of the unprecedented scale of globalization, the importance and the need for such an effort multiplies many folds, more than in the past.

Now, let us talk about the subject in hand, i. e. peace and Gandhian view, in particular the adaptability, importance and significance of Gandhian view and vision of the establishment of peace globally!

As we know, the Gandhian view in general pertains to the welfare of the human world. Moreover, Mahatma Gandhi carried out his practices accordingly. Whatever he preached he practiced them to clearly illustrate to the world that his life itself was his message. Therefore, it is necessary to take his ideas and practices together while discussing or analyzing his views. We can categorically say that Gandhian approach or view can be comprehended in real sense only if his ideas and practices are both put together in perspective.

Firstly, the basis or the centre of Gandhian view is Ahimsa [non-violence] as the highest human value. Ahimsa is a natural and eternal value. Besides being the essential condition for the existence Ahimsa is the means of development and achieving the goal of life. All high human values, including morality, at the centre of this discussion, originate from Ahimsa. Furthermore, Ahimsa itself is also the protector of all human values and the basis of ethics. Therefore, thousands of years ago, Ahimsa was declared as the Parmodharma⁸ by the Vedic-

Hindu philosophy and it was also accepted as the Parmabrahaman⁹ by Jainism.

Hence, Ahimsa is interpreted as the basis of the supreme moral law. It is the foundation of universal principles and also its leading force. It is an eternal law or the rule. To repeat, Ahimsa is the essential condition for existence and continuity. This fact is emphasized by Martin Luther King Junior who underlined the non-violent philosophy of the Mahatma many a time. For example he said, "I found in the non-violent resistance philosophy of Gandhi... the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom."¹⁰

Secondly, Gandhian view admits the reality of differences, disputes, conflicts and struggles, and their impact on various walks of human life.¹¹ It accepts cooperation and struggle both as the necessities of society.¹² But, at the same time it is determined to settle or resolve all states of violence by adopting Ahimsa in its refined form as per the demand of time and space. Thus, admitting the reality of the law of change Gandhism calls for resolution and solution of each and every struggle and dispute through the value of Ahimsa. In comparison to other available methods of conflict resolution Gandhism has a certain distinct and striking sense of justice. That is why; for almost a century the people of the world have looked at this method with high hopes and expectations. Not only this, some of the non-violent actions launched per the Gandhian way in different parts of the world achieved unprecedented successes. The actions launched by Afro-Americans under the leadership of Martin Luther King Junior himself in the United States of America could be well counted in this very perspective.

The attraction and curiosity of people all over the world towards the distinctive Gandhian view seems to increase day-by-day to revitalize high hopes in the hearts of people more than in the past. With on-going globalization, the genesis of new problems, disputes and conflicts seems inevitable. That is why; the Gandhian view in resolving these problems emerges as one of the best and noble alternatives available to the world. It can show the people the pathway to prosperity and peace opening the doors to both prosperity and peace through mass awakening, cooperation and participation of people. This is the uniqueness of the Gandhian view. For, Martin Luther King Junior [quoting him again] went to the extent of observing the personality of the Mahatma in the sixth decade of the last century:

“Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force...”¹³

In the current perspective, when globalization is on rise day-by-day, Gandhian view fully imbued by Ahimsa, has special significance for those working for peace at the global level. It is because Gandhian view accepts all the spheres of human life as the essential parts of an ‘Indivisible Whole’. To quote the Mahatma himself, “You cannot divide life, social, economic, political and purely religious, into watertight compartments.”¹⁴ Furthermore, Gandhi accepted the reality of interconnectedness of all spheres of life and discussed their essential and inevitable effect on one-another and, therefore, called for solution of conflicts, disputes, problems and struggles without any prejudice. He particularly inspired and encouraged the people to be ready to action to win justice, freedom and equality on the basis of high human

values, particularly Ahimsa. He called for readiness to compromise always, but without surrendering self-respect, and by abiding to truth and morality.

This reality could be well testified particularly in the two local-regional level Satyagrahas namely Champaran¹⁵ and Kheda¹⁶ [1917-8], which were carried out under the leadership of Gandhi himself and in Nagpur¹⁷ Flag Satyagraha [1923], Borsad¹⁸ Satyagraha [1924] the Bardoli¹⁹ Peasants' Struggle [1928], fought under the leadership of Vallabhbhai Patel, the Rajkot²⁰ Satyagraha [1938-39], initiated under the leadership of both the Mahatma and the Sardar, Vaikom²¹ Satyagraha [1924-25], initiated under the leadership of T. K. Madhavan²², and at national level Civil Disobedience Movement [1930]²³, launched by Gandhi by breaking the Salt Law.²⁴ All of them were more or less successful. However, the Bardoli Peasants' Struggle was unique and unprecedented as it created history. All of them greatly inspired the people, not only Indians, but so many others in the world. They set a clear direction for non-violent struggles [Satyagrahas] to be launched in times to come in different parts of the world. Although an account of the series of events pertaining to these is available in the history books, there is still a need for their fair and comprehensive analysis.

Along with this, a comprehensive and critical analysis of Afro-American struggles, particularly the ones that commenced in the sixth and seventh decades of the Twentieth Century²⁵, in particular the initiatives of Martin Luther King Junior that acquainted the present generation of the impact of Gandhian view is also required. As we all know King accepted and adopted Gandhian way in the Afro-American struggles as he saw it fit, the best means among all the ways and

methods available for depressed classes in their fight for equality and freedom in his own land. By doing so, the relevance and aptness of Gandhian view in the peace movements at national and global levels would become apparent to us to step forward on the pathway to peace in the Twenty-First century.

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would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of sound and fury signifying nothing.”

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16. Presently in Gujarat.

17. Presently in Maharashtra.

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20. Ibid.

21. T. K. Madhavan [1885-1930], a leading and popular Indian social reformer, a Samskrit and English scholar from Kerala, who besides working for the uplift of the oppressed and down-trodden, social equality, freedom, rights and justice, led the struggle at Vaikom during 1924-5 against untouchability in orthodox Hindu society. This struggle is known as Vaikom Satyagraha. Earlier in the year 1917 he started Desabhimani, a daily, with the purpose of awakening among the masses, particularly those who were poor and underprivileged. T. K. Madhavan was known as the founder of the temples entry movement in the province of Kerala.

22. Vaikom Satyagraha was a historical agitation in Travancore, one of the India Princely States, [presently a part of Kerala Province]. The movement particularly was centered at the Shiva Temple at Vaikom, near Kottayam and the chief aim of the Satyagraha remained at securing freedom of movement for all sections of society through the public roads leading to the Sri Mahadevar Temple of Vaikom.

23. The Civil Disobedience Movement besides being the second nationwide struggle of Indians for the freedom under the leadership of

Mahatma Gandhi was also unique as people at large scale participated in it.

24. At Dandi [currently a seaside village in Navsari district of Gujarat region], which began on March 12, 1930 from the Sabarmati Ashram of Mahatma Gandhi i in Ahmedabad and concluded on April 6, 1930 with the breaking of the Salt Law by the Mahatma. It was in fact a unique and strategy-based non-violent protest or the campaign against the monopoly of English colonialists over Salt in its beginning, and further to trigger the Civil Disobedience Movement at wider scale or national level involving masses, especially rural people and peasants of the country.

25. Especially, the Montgomery Bus Boycott [1955], the Albany Movement [1961], the Birmingham Campaign [1963], and the March on Washington [1963]

CHAPTER - V

GANDHIAN APPROACH TO RURAL INDUSTRIALIZATION

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Logic and Approach to Rural Industrialization

5.3 Review of Ideology Based Approach Practised in India

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CHAPTER - V

GANDHIAN APPROACH TO RURAL INDUSTRIALIZATION

5.1 Introduction

It is a tragedy for India that we have never given a chance to 'Gandhian Philosophy'. However, Gandhiji's views on Khadi and Village Industries, were being followed by appointing the Khadi and Village industries Board since 1946. This article is an attempt to characterize the rural industrialization approach evolved in Gandhian Philosophy. It also briefly reviews and analysis our approach to implement this ideology based approach in practice. Some specific policy suggestions are also attempted in light of the most dominant issues experienced by us in the last fifty years.

5.2 Logic and Approach to Rural Industrialization

Adam Smith in the British parliamentary debate had depicted the picture of a prosperous India prior to the colonial period saying that "East India offered a market for the manufacturers of Europe greater and more extensive than both Europe and America put together". This India was destroyed by British industrialization and its backwash, disintegrating self-assured villages through progressive impoverishment of the peasants and destruction of the artisans.

Gandhi had grasped the history of India very well which he well reflected in his Hind Swaraj where he provided the main constituents of his strategy of India's reconstruction. Gandhi made it clear that 'modern civilization', nourished by British rule, was the real cause of

‘economic distress’. Against that, Gandhi envisaged that the salvation of India was in the revival of its ancient civilization. Under the shadow of ancient civilization, Gandhi wanted to develop a New Social Order which was based on the foundation of non-violence and truth, where economic progress and moral progress go together and the focus is on the development of man. Life and human relations in society, village and nation in the new social order were envisaged not like pyramids with an apex sustained at the bottom but, as an oceanic circle.

To achieve this New Social Order Gandhi’s development model was evolved around “Village Development” and it is so much emphasized that it is truly coined “VILLAGISM”. Gandhi’s emphasis on village reconstruction was negatively viewed as an onslaught on the exploitative tendency inherent in industrialism and dominance by urbanization and positively viewed as an attempt to establish a non-violent social order from which exploitation is completely done away with.

‘Rural Industrialization’ was never the term used by Gandhi. However, two basic components of Gandhian development, self-sufficient villages and decentralization of economic and political powers, gave a very important place to development of Khadi and Village Industries. According to a recent study the Khadi movement was not only a mass mobilization movement against anti-imperialist struggle, it was also a social movement of recognizing women’s capacity as economically and politically active beings without whose support the goal of freedom or Swaraj would be unattainable and meaningless. In fact, Gandhi’s well known concept of ‘Living Wage For Spinners’ originated in his realizing the danger of women being paid low wages even by constructive workers.

Gandhi's clear rationale behind the choice of Khadi was led by his anxiety of "Work to all". He believed that Khadi and Village Industries were the only alternative. This is evident from his statement of challenge to rulers to whom he stated that, "If the government could provide full employment to all without the help of Khadi and Village Industries, I shall be prepared to wind-up my constructive programme in this sphere". He said, "Production of Khadi includes cotton growing, picking, ginning, cleaning, carding, slivering, spinning, sizing, dyeing, preparing the warp and woof, weaving and winding. These, with the exception of dyeing, are essential processes every one of which can be effectively handled in the villages".

Although 'Khadi' is the sun of the village solar system, various other industries, like planets, do have a place in the village solar system and in fact, "Those who do not see Khadi as the centre of village activities, they are welcome to concentrate their efforts on these other industries", because a village economy can not be complete without essential industries such as hand grinding, hand pounding, soap making, paper making, metal making, tanning, oil processing, etc. Gandhi had anticipated a complimentary relationship between Khadi and Village Industries. He believed that these industries come in as hand made to Khadi. They can not exist without Khadi and Khadi will be robbed of its dignity without them.

Gandhi had not perhaps conceptualized the Khadi and Village Industry except once when he stated that 'Khadi of my conception' is that hand spun material which takes the place entirely, in India, of mill cloth.....and indirectly explained what is Khadi. If men and women will not take to hand spinning as a sacred duty, that is, the same person will not do carding, slivering and spinning, there is little hope for

Khadi. Similarly conceptualization of village industries was left to Kumarrappa who provided the conditions to consider the industry as a village industry.

1. Those that produce essential commodities in villages for villages.
2. Using the local raw materials and using simple processes which are within the easy reach of villages.
3. Requiring only such tools and implements which can be acquired within the financial capacity of the villages.
4. With the aid of human or animal power since they are easily available in the villages.
5. Meeting the demand of local or immediate surrounding population.
6. That which does not cause displacement of labour.

These characteristics widened the scope of village industries and at the same time ensured the absence of concentration, violence, exploitation, inequality and anti-nature industrialization.

The question of market, method of production by machine tool or technology and credit etc. which have occupied a major significance in the post-independent period of rural industrialization, did not have a place in the initial stages, but came into the picture during the post independence period and Gandhi's stand on the issues have undergone change.

The question of a market for Khadi was not significant to Gandhi. In the sense, that Khadi was conceived with a much more ambitious object i.e. to make our villages starvation-proof. He believed that, "This is impossible unless the villages will wear Khadi themselves, sending only the surplus to the cities. The singular secret of Khadi lies

in its salability in the place of its production and use to the manufacturers themselves”. However, finding problems for a market for Khadi, Gandhi in 1946, accepted “Commercial Khadi” as a “go-cart”. He said, “We ourselves are responsible for the creation of this problem, we did not know the science of Khadi, we do not know it fully even now. Therefore, like children, we stumble again and again and thereby learn to work. In order that we may not fall so as never to rise again we made use of a go-cart and are still using it”. In so far as the village industries are concerned Gandhi believed that the question of demand does not arise as the expansion of village industries is related to demand which did exist in the villages. He said, “Given the demand, there is no doubt that most of our wants can be supplied from our villages”.

Gandhi insisted on “Primitive methods” of production in the village industry and explained that, “I suggest the return because there is no other way of giving employment to the millions of villagers who live in idleness”. Mechanization he regarded as evil in view of more hands than required in work. However, in the later periods, Gandhi accepted the role of small equipments, machines, tools and technology, which should not replace labour but reduce the cost and drudgery of labour and increase efficiency of labour. Thus, Gandhian design of rural industrialization was developed in the passage of time.

5.3 Review of Ideology Based Approach Practised in India

There are three basic evidences of accepting Gandhian rural industrial approach in India. First, right from the industrial policy of 1948 till the New Small Enterprise Policy of 1991, we have placed Khadi and Village Industries as the prime instrument of promotion of rural employment and rural economy. There are specific studies which

analyzed the role of village industries as expressed in all the industrial statements. These statements have become the guide lines of the plans relating to K.V.I. As early as 1953 we established an exclusive institution of Khadi and Village Industries Board and later established a Khadi and Village Industries Commission in 1957. It was asked to assume responsibility for initiating, assisting and financing Khadi programmes on a much wider basis, make it a part of the whole development programme of the country and an essential constituent of a planned economy in the making.

The first plan had adopted a complete 'Gandhian' perspective in development of KVIC as it was decided to be developed 'with processing of local raw material for the local market with simple techniques (1951). As an appropriate method of protection a "Common Minimum Programme" was formulated, which was mainly related to reservation of production, restriction on capacity expansion and continuation of research. A multi-institutional approach was developed by establishing a separate institution like the KVIC Board, Hand-loom Board, Handicraft Board and Small Scale Industries Board for their development.

The Second Five Year Plan gave a very strategic place to village industries to generate marketable surplus as consumer goods to support heavy industry development without inflation and also gave a task to liquidate unemployment as quickly as possible. The basic approach for the KVIC was worked out by the panel of economists appropriate to the development of these sectors. The Kurvey Committee of 1955 led to the establishment of KVIC and it also suggested distribution of 2-5 million ambar charkhas—technologically improved hand spinning equipment. The Zaman Committee advocated the decentralization of

Khadi work, recognition of large certified institutions and formation of co-operatives (1959). The Gyanchand Committee appointed to evaluate Khadi, pointed out the vicious cycle of low output, low wages and even falling wages as the central problem. It advocated that the yarn production through the traditional charkha to provide relief to distressed persons should be separated from the economic problem for Khadi production as an employment generation activity. The Nathu Committee in 1962 recommended that the policy of production and sales should be reoriented to effect at least 40% of sales within the district and 80% within the state and export to other states should not exceed 20%. The Ashok Mehta Committee on KVIC in 1968 attempted to evolve a fresh approach to development based on the three basic components of producing salable articles, providing employment to people in backward areas, tribal and inaccessible areas, famine and drought stricken areas and also the backward and less privileged section of the population and to create self-reliance and community spirit among rural people.

Apart from suggesting specific target groups, it also recommended minimum wage for spinners at a level equal to off-season agricultural wages and a seven year programme for progressive improvement of techniques was recommended to achieve viability defined in terms of minimum earning of the artisan without any protection. It also recommended that the Khadi programme of the new model charkha should be developed on a commercial basis, keeping the element of grants and subsidies to the minimum. However, without an ensured market, at a given level of output, it created a problem of unemployment for traditional spinners and weavers, though marginally subsidy element could be reduced.

However, our efforts to implement the recommended approach in various Plans, are the feeble exercises initiated in the Second and Third Plans to integrate Khadi and Village Industries with larger programmes of rural development, came to an abrupt end with an abandonment of the Community Development Programmes and the dismantling of block machinery in most of the states. Programmes like Crash Scheme of Rural Employment and Drought Prone Area Programme were introduced to battle the rising unemployment, they remained and continue to remain land based activities oriented to agriculture. KVIC with its character of skilled based activities and artisans was by and large not drawn in these special employment programmes.

In the policy packaged for KVIC in the Eighth Plan there was nothing notable except, (a) encouragement for modernization and technological up-gradation and (b) to set up a monitoring agency to ensure the genuine credit needs of this sector and also insurance to review all the statutes, regulations and procedures to ensure that their operation does not militate the interest of the small and village industries. It also stated that it is possible to dovetail the programmes of Khadi and Village Industries, Handlooms, Sericulture and Handicrafts to integrate local areas of development programmes for villages for poverty alleviation through increase in employment. However, no steps are suggested to implement this policy in practice.

We find that during the Second Plan period KVIC was given great significance which went on declining. Its approach changed and the direction of the change was pointing towards sacrificing the ideological character of KVIC envisaged by Gandhiji in the name of a pragmatic approach. The diminished significance of KVIC is reflected in the allocation of the resources in various Plans.

5.4 Dominant Issues and Major Policy Suggestions

Our failure to achieve an impressive dent in our problem of poverty and unemployment alleviation through an ideology based on Gandhian rural industrialization approach we may address these problems and solutions as follows:

1. After almost five decades, we have not been able to resolve the age old problem of adequate earnings for those who choose to work on Khadi. Our attempts to introduce new technology in spinning failed to generate adequate and attractive earnings. A recent study conducted by the Centre for Women's Development Studies have shown that even in Gujarat the per capita income of a Khadi worker was not only inadequate to cross the poverty line but was consistently lower than any other sector in recent years.
2. The major problem faced by the KVIC is that of a market for their goods.
3. The marketable surplus with KVIC has failed to popularize the new technology of production. In fact, at a given level of output without an adequate market technology leads to unemployment of those who are already engaged in the Khadi industry.
4. All the evidence of performance like that of output, productivity, employment, technology transfer, investment allocation and utilization, preference for workers for alternate occupation, consumer's presence and even government etc. show the fact that Khadi is declining, while village industries have a better scope and potential.

5. Institutional development to promote marketing and production via 'Co-operatives' has failed. Co-operatives provided an opportunity to establish a non-exploitative, self-employed and self-reliant rural community. Hardly 5% of the production of Khadi was accounted for by the co-operatives. Most of the co-operatives in Khadi were found dormant and "displaying the characteristics of ignorance and non-participation".
6. 70% of KVIC time and energy was being spent on routine administration, leaving little time for its main function. Their cost of operation has gone on increasing as indicated by declining earnings and increasing non-wage cost.
7. Finally, KVIC is expected to alleviate poverty in those areas that are really backward. It is expected to play a greater role in such areas. However, KVIC work is very poorly spread in those states where they are supposed to work most effectively.

There are a large number of Review Committee Reports and even some research studies to provide policy guidance. It is unfortunate that Plan documents have not taken note of such documents. Some broad policy suggestions are:

1. We must accept that village industries have a better scope for development. KVIC should concentrate only on the most potential industries as pointed out in the Eighth Plan. Though there are 96 industries presently within the preview of KVIC, it would be better to concentrate on those 15 industries for which there is enough infrastructure, powerful tools and technology and adequate provision for training as well as a potential market. These industries should be ensured of getting raw materials. The

raw material function alone can enhance the artisans earnings from 5% to 35%.

2. The intervention of voluntary agencies with innovative approaches could certainly help in the promotion of village industries.
3. The marketing of the Khadi product is a crucial issue. If there is a strong intervention of devoted voluntary agencies Khadi production could be sold in the local market.

In Gujarat state, there are institutions which have sold 90% of Khadi amongst tribals who have themselves produced it. Apart from aggressive marketing, taking into account the consumer's preference, taste, price and other related factors including cost of production, we should try to educate the consumers and cast on them social responsibility. Consumers should be oriented to think of the origin of Khadi, production process, relevance of buying it, ecological significance, etc. The government itself could help in the promotion of Khadi by becoming a bigger buyer than the 5% it now buys mostly in the form of woolen blankets. There are a large number of products the government could buy from KVIC which would help more than blanket subsidies.

The performance of KVIC in the technology development sector is very poor. It is the key to the development of KVIC. The withdrawal of the Department of Science and Technology from KVIC is disappointing and they need to review their relationship. The KVIC should have very strong links with national laboratories, research organizations and manufacturing institutions for transference of technology.

Gandhiji's approach to rural industrialization was evolved over a period of time. Our success in its implementation was less than desirable. However, it should not lead us to believe that we must get rid of this as a burden of 'Gandhian Legacy'. We should keep in mind the following words of Pandit Nehru in his famous Gandhigram Speech, "I begin to think more and more of Mahatma Gandhi's approach. It is odd that I am mentioning his name in this connection: that is to say, I am entirely an admirer of the modern machine and want the best machinery and the best technique. But taking things as they are in India, however rapidly we advance in the machine age and we will do so the fact remains that large numbers of our people are not touched and will not be touched by it for a considerable time. Some other methods will have to be evolved by us for a considerable time. Some of the methods have to be evolved so that they become partners in production even though the production apparatus of theirs may not be efficient as compared to modern techniques, but we must use that; otherwise, it is wasted". This statement is self-explanatory and in favour of more sincere and sustained efforts to develop rural industries on Gandhian lines.

5.5 Gandhi In the Globalised Context

The fast emerging global socio-political and scientific scenario is an eloquent reminder of the speed with which the forces released by science and technology and aided by human greed has dismantled almost at one stroke all humanity hitherto believed invincible. Nothing is sacrosanct now. The geopolitical compulsions and the mad frenzy of both developed and developing nations, to appropriate for themselves all what they can lay their hands on, reminds us of the haste and anxiety seen among the nocturnal thieves to plunder completely and

decamp with the booty before anyone wakes up in the house. It appears that a kind of colonial instinct also guides modern man in all his activities. Only the label changes, the bottle and the decoction continue to be the same.

5.6 The Major Challenges

It appears that among the major challenges of the twenty-first century will be:

- i) Taming the monster of violence and keeping it within limits besides eliminating terrorism.
- ii) Ensuring equitable distribution of wealth and natural resources; also to cry a halt to the exploitation and insensitivity shown in preserving balance in nature.
- iii) Elimination of poverty and hunger.
- iv) Increasing reliance of rulers and politicians on religious fundamentalist elements and forces to capture power and sustain themselves in power by exploiting religious sentiments, and
- v) Decline of moral, spiritual and ethical considerations and extending tentacles of consumerism and materialism.

Of all these, the most disturbing is the alarming manner in which violence is spreading like a cancer. The biggest challenge to the present century will be how to tame this monster. Besides eating into the vitals of all what humanity has been able to achieve, it threatens to hold humanity to ransom and is in the driver's seat now. The chilling factor in this sordid and frightening scenario is the speed with which violence has sent shock waves everywhere. Violence is no longer the luxury of the industrialised or developed nations or those kept under long years of colonial rule but it is everywhere. Let us look at what the

National Centre of Education Statistics of the Department of Education in Washington DC pointed out at a news conference:

- a) 100,000 children take a gun to school every day (Children's Defence Fund says as many as 135,000)
- b) 160,000 will miss school because of fear of injury 320,000 per month, 60,000 per day
- c) 2,000 young people attacked before every hour in a working day
282,000 per month, 14,100 per day
- d) 900 teachers threatened and nearly 40 attacked per hour 125, 000 Threatened each month
- e) 8,250 threatened per day 5, 200 physically attacked each month
260 per day 37 per hour
- f) Every 36 minutes a child is killed or injured by a firearm—over 14,000 per year.
- g) 1986-1990—250 hostage incidents using guns in 35 states.

The socio-economic and political scenario all over the world has undergone tremendous changes during the last five decades and a new culture has taken over and the talks about the global village also seem to have landed humanity in a new mess-up in the sense many do not know what all these things are. Traditional values, concerns and strivings seem to have been replaced by a new set of attitudes and lifestyle which are steeped in materialism and consumerism, assiduously propagated by the champions of unlimited material progress and values, and attitudes associated with Gandhi and other visionaries are being reduced to topics for academic discussion. Gandhian scholars, peace activists, development experts, scholars and writers of eminence are busy looking at the legacy of Gandhi, particularly the holistic

vision of Gandhi and the emphasis and the strategies associated with him, against the background of the emerging challenges in various fields in the post-Gandhian period.

5.7 Development: New Perceptions

All of a sudden, economics has pushed all other branches of human endeavour. Religions and ethical values that have been nourishing and sustaining civilisations for centuries are no longer of any significance. Traditional societies are breaking-up, and there is a spread of the cult of violence. Nurturing of unprincipled political order and fostering irrelevant cultural semantics and appearance of militarisation in a new garb and stalking of dehumanising poverty and malnutrition which still affect more than one third of the global community are of no concern to the managers of human destiny now. The general discrimination despite all brave talks and initiatives, the apathy and the kind of cynicism with which morality and ethics are being viewed and abused, the callous indifference shown to Mother Earth and the manner in which nature is being exploited thinking that there is inexhaustible wealth hidden beneath the surface and many similar disturbing and unhealthy trends with which modern civilisation is associated with, have been sending dangerous signals and all those who care for human survival are desperately looking for signals which would send some rays of hope—hope that every thing is not lost and that it is not too late.

And it appears that at one go, humanity has been seized by those who believe that economic growth is the real index of both development and real power. While the power of money was never under-estimated anywhere, never before in human history everything is being measured in terms of per capita income or GNP or the relative

purchasing power or such other material considerations. This pre-occupation on the part of the twentieth-century-man, which has created a situation where family ties, inter-personal, cultural, ethical, even religious and social aspects have been relegated to the background, is really sending shock waves all around. No body seems to be worried about the terrific manner in which all aspects that sustain humanity and regulate growth and other issues receive scant attention from those who control our lives. This has become a universal phenomenon and no society or country can feel that the situation is different with them. All what we hear is the talk about sharing of wealth, arms reduction and nuclear non-proliferation by those nations who produce all lethal weapons that could wipe out humanity several times in the event of a war and advocating acceptance of NPT, which several countries like India genuinely feel discriminatory in its present form. The warning and spirited campaigns undertaken by the environmentalists to stop many of the harmful steps by the managers of our destiny receive practically no attention and unfortunately these warnings by and large, remain cries in the wilderness.

5.8 Degradation of human being to the level of a commodity

Another frightening aspect is the sad fact that man is nowhere in the reckoning now. He has been pitifully reduced to the status of a consumer and now he is first and last a consumer. His purchasing power is all that matters. Similarly, the purchasing power of a nation is all what the other nation now cares for. The talk in the world capitals are all centred on the biggest markets in the world and our newspapers devote more than a bulk of their space for market trends, stock markets and bullion rates while a bulk of the remaining space in the newspapers deal with violence of various forms, political gossips, coup attempts,

private lives of celebrities and such other hot items which would ensure a steady interest among the readers. The readers, who are caught in the web of a violent culture and are force-fed by the sweetmeat provided by an enticing consumeristic culture, are also satisfied by the 'kick' they get by reading these items. Why should they waste their time on news and features about culture, art or development? This attitude, unfortunately, seems to be gaining ground.

The relevance of Gandhi or for that matter any body else has to be examined against these emerging trends. The galloping horses of humanity, which are at the moment being goaded and whipped to run as fast as they can in order to win the coveted place of material achievements, have to be reigned in by the collective assertion of an awakened humanity which has the right to exist. But then, this will be possible only if we are prepared to ponder over the immense damage being caused to the edifice of humanity. It is not even slow poisoning, it is almost like 'sudden death', to borrow an expression from football.

It is over five decades since Gandhi was assassinated and there are all kinds of discussions both in India and abroad on what Gandhi left for humanity and whether many of his teachings would survive the test of time. What even the passionate critic of Gandhi cannot miss is the string of activities along Gandhian lines one can see in almost all countries of the world now. If not in a very significant measure, there are very few countries in the world where something or the other in the name of Gandhi is not being organised. In short, there is a global nonviolent awakening after Gandhi.

It is widely accepted now that the core of the legacy Gandhi left for humanity, is that he taught us that truth is greater than all worldly possessions, and that slavery, violence, injustice and disparities are

inconsistent with truth. What Gandhi left is not a set of theoretical formulations, on the contrary, a carefully evolved vision of an organically sound and mutually supportive and respecting independent world order. The six decades of Gandhi's public life in three continents, spearheading various movements for a new social and political milieu where all men and women will be treated as brothers and sisters, demonstrated with convincing sincerity a revolutionary zeal for change; change with consent; hitherto un-experimented in national or international politics. Tolerance, consent, reconciliation and a profound faith in the unity of all sentient and non-sentient beings have been the core of the Gandhian vision of a world where harmony among the various segments of God's creation would nurture the essential goodness in each one; both the visible and invisible threads; uniting all humanity into a single entity. Does this sound Utopian? Yes, quite a large number of people still believe that the new social order Gandhi envisioned is too idealistic and an unattainable utopia only fit enough for academic and semantic interpretations.

5.9 Gandhi's critique of the emerging scenario

Gandhi warned humanity of this dangerous situation as early as 1909 when he pointed out in the seminal work 'Hind Swaraj', that unprincipled growth will land humanity on the brink of disaster. Even his own close disciples raised their eyebrows of disagreement when he said this. The evil that we are to fight is within us and that we are ignorant of it is the basic problem. Motif such as give and take, live and let live, love and to be loved have become clichés in the new dictionary compiled by the champions of unlimited growth. This can be possible only if we adopt a holistic vision of life and ensure equality and justice which presupposes the simple truth that each individual is

unique and we should respect his individuality and let him maintain his uniqueness and what applies to an individual should apply to a nation or at a global level.

Gandhi further warned against a series of social and political turmoil, ecological devastation and other human misery that might arise unless modern civilisation takes care of nature and man tries to live in harmony with nature and tries to reduce his wants. Unlimited consumeristic tendencies and callous indifferences to values will not help humanity to progress towards peace, he warned. Hatred of all forms, exploitation in whichever manner it exists, are negation of humanity's basic right to exist. The Gandhian legacy of simple living in conformity with the basic rhythm of life typifies the age-old wisdom of humanity. Gandhi tries to convince humanity that wars never solved any problem. On the contrary, reconciliation should help humanity sort out the various problems. Thus, in Gandhi, as has been pointed out by many thinkers in different parts of the world, we have a world leader who dreamt of a warless world and promoter of a social order where exploitation and injustice will not become the dominant tendencies.

5.10 Gandhi's experiment contemporary relevance

Two of the important factors that brought Gandhi closer to the millions are the genuine inspiration he was able to offer to the freedom-loving citizens and the generation of a feeling among a considerable section of the masses that he was motivated only by the spirit of service and not by any personal or ulterior desires. His South African experiments won him respects from even those who opposed him and those who never met him or knew him.

Tolstoy comments that what Gandhi was doing in South Africa was the most important thing in the world at that time, were a case in point. Gandhi demonstrated that the life of a leader should also be open, capable enough to influence the masses so that they will also emulate the leader unreservedly. Gandhi did both these with remarkable success, which in turn resulted in millions following him like charmed moths. The two settlements that Gandhi started in South Africa, the Phoenix Ashram Settlement and the Tolstoy Farm bear eloquent testimony to the leadership qualities and the visionary nature of Gandhi which in turn generated great understanding, sympathy and enthusiasm among almost all dumb Indians and others in South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century. His life, both as an initiator of new experiments and as a private individual and lawyer of great promise, were all open. He was against anybody possessing anything more than what the other person had. The members of the settlement ate in the common kitchen, worked in the farm together, their children attended the general school and nobody entertained or desired to accumulate or acquire anything of his own. Not that Gandhi did not have problems in this. It was difficult for him to convince even his own wife and Gandhi was harsh when he detected that his wife had a few things of her own. Gandhi's children were disappointed and even they nourished an ambition of attending better schools and pursuing their higher education outside South Africa. Gandhi resisted all these attempts and insisted on his children attending the same school where the children of other members of the settlement were studying. He kept account of every pie that was spent. He stopped even charging for his own services as a lawyer. All this, not only endeared him to his followers but inspired them also to follow him as far as possible. This

naturally resulted in a kind of joy and willing participation in the cause he was espousing.

5.11 The efficacy of Satyagraha

Back in India, the first major movement Gandhi launched was in a place called Champaran, near Bodh Gaya, a place associated with Shakyamuni Buddha. Gandhi's visit to this sleepy village, where he launched his first Satyagraha movement, also witnessed joyful participation of the people in large numbers. He proved that people will respond to any genuine call for action provided they are convinced that the issues identified are their own and one who leads the movement should also be a source of love, respect and dedication and in Gandhi his followers found these qualities in abundance.

The Ahmedabad Mill strike, the Salt Satyagraha, the Non-Cooperation Movement—all witnessed large numbers of people jumping into the massive Civil Disobedience Movement sacrificing their wealth and comfort and courting sufferings, injuries and sacrifice.

The songs sung by those who participated in this heroic struggle extolled virtues of unprecedented magnitude. Nothing would deter these people from marching forward. Jails were filled with satyagrahis and schools and factories were also converted into temporary jails having found no room to accommodate the surging and ever growing number of those who were defying the orders of the Government. There were instances of prisoners being sent out of the main land to the Andaman Islands. Facing bullets and even death did not matter. It was the conviction, and that too, unmistakable and a grim determination to march forward like inspired souls to achieve their goal, that characterised their mood and by no means could it be said impulsive. That was the spirit of those heroic days. In this heroic struggle, the

central figures who not only inspired all those who participated, as also those who proved to be the sheet anchor of the resurging fighting for self discovery and articulation of their suppressed voice, were Gandhi and those inspired by Gandhi. This remarkable achievement was possible because Gandhi convincingly demonstrated through his simple life that his identification with the masses was complete.

Gandhi was not a philosopher in the conventional sense of the term. His views, mostly based on his profound understanding of human nature and the insights he developed from the numerous experiments he conducted with scientific precision, have been found to be not a philosopher's articulations but the records of the experience of a visionary who was searching for ways and means to lessen tension and promote harmony in the various spheres of human endeavour. The breathtaking development of the second half of the present century proved that Gandhi was correct as Martin Luther King (JR.) said, "If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. His life, thought and action are inspired by the vision of a humanity evolving towards a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore him at our own risk".

5.12 The core of Gandhi's scientific humanism

By equating Gandhi with any saint or philosopher who couched transcendental truth and spoke in riddles offering a plethora of aphorisms, we will be missing the essential Gandhi. He was a revolutionary in the sense that he aimed at changing certain social and political structures but the means he adopted were not the usual violent methods associated with revolutions. He offered a package of alternatives to humanity. His insistence of nonviolence to violence; persuasion and reconciliation to end hostilities; trusteeship to end economic injustice; improvement of the lot of the depressed sections

by abolishing factors that perpetrate social iniquities; ending man's tyranny on nature by respecting nature as the protector of the human race; limiting one's wants; and developing equal respect for all religions offered humanity the blue-print for a holistic vision. Gandhi convincingly demonstrated through his ashram experiments, the use of an alternative source of energy, appropriate technology etc. In short, an ardent practitioner of truth that he was, Gandhi showed to humanity that there are workable alternatives which will be creative and sustainable. The only thing in this is that we have to muster courage to accept it, for it demands self and collective discipline of various kinds. It is not the gratuitous and condescending offer of a bit of whatever we are willing to part with that is required, but a willing and spontaneous readiness to share with the less privileged fellowmen and women what one has in excess and to work for happily ushering a new order. The Gandhian humanism was not restrictive but transcendental and scientific. To describe it as revivalist, reflects the closed minds of those who try to put all creative and revolutionary ideas and efforts in straight jackets.

It is said in certain quarters that Gandhi was successful only to a limited extent, that too his impact is felt only in a certain cultural context. There is no denying of the fact that Gandhi was deep-rooted in his cultural and religious traditions. The phenomenal success Gandhi registered in far-away South Africa, fighting for human rights and civil liberties in the first two decades of this century and later the adoption of the Gandhian techniques, if not fully, by Nelson Mandela and the subsequent revelations made by the former South African President Mr. De Klerk that he was also influenced by Gandhi in adopting the

path of reconciliation and forgiveness, certainly show that Gandhi had not spent twenty-one years in South Africa in vain.

In the American continent, Martin Luther King's heroic fight for civil liberties on Gandhian lines and his own admission that it was from Gandhi that he learnt his operational tactics, is not an isolated instance of the relevance of Gandhian tactics. The manner in which the Greens, particularly in Germany, adopted Gandhian techniques to arouse human consciousness and how they operationalised their strategy, and the bold assertions made by Petra Kelly about the way they were influenced by Gandhi, also indicate that it is not the cultural traditions of a country or continent that would make the efficacy of a certain philosophy or attitude viable, but it is the willingness and readiness of people to react and respond that matters. One can give quite a few instances from almost all parts of the world to show how in different measures the Gandhian vision and approach is found to be an effective weapon in the hands of freedom fighters and social reformers. Gandhi at no stage claimed that he was trying to teach anything new. In fact, he himself said more than once that he was not involved in any such mission. Truth and nonviolence, he said, are as old as the hills and he was only trying to appreciate and understand the marvel and majesty of both. He said in this connection, "We have to make truth and nonviolence, not matters for mere individual practice, but for practice by groups and communities and nations. That at any rate is my dream. I shall live and die in trying to realise it. My faith helps me to discover new truths every day. Ahimsa is an attribute of the soul, therefore life practised by everybody in all affairs of life".

Dismantling of apartheid - message for the rest of the world to end social discrimination including practice of untouchability in India

There is a surprising similarity between UNESCO's statement in its preamble that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed and Mahatma Gandhi's assertion that the world either progresses with nonviolence or perishes with violence. Mahatma Gandhi's heroic work in South Africa for 21 years and over 32 years of work in India have given humanity a blue print of strategies for a peaceful transition of humanity where respect for all forms of life, human dignity, self-respect and tolerance would characterise humanity's progress. The year 1994 bore witness to the efficacy of Gandhi's strategies and philosophy as could be seen from the manner in which the fight Gandhi began a 100 years ago in South Africa, i.e. in 1903, bearing fruits when the blacks and the whites in South Africa were able to work out a satisfactory solution to peaceful transfer of power which resulted in the holding of elections and Dr. Mandela taking over the reigns of power.

5.13 Spiritualisation of Politics

Gandhi's contribution to the political awakening and freedom movement in different parts of the world and adoption of nonviolent strategies, which help both the opposing groups respect each other's sentiments and accommodating the views of others, has much in common with UNESCO's decision to propagate the message of tolerance for human survival. Asia and the African continent particularly have seen a peaceful transition of power and social change, thanks to Mahatma Gandhi's initiative which included different methods. One important thing that keeps apart Gandhi's teachings and strategies is the utmost importance Gandhi attached to pure means to

attain lasting ends. Gandhi's attempts to make politics value based were part of a new world vision. He emphasised that politics bereft of spiritual and ethical consideration will not sustain humanity.

The unending savagery of ethnic cleansing in erstwhile Yugoslavia, rediscovery of war as a "realistic means" to resolve conflicts, proliferation of sources and targets of violence and the deepening socio-economic divide between and within nations despite the widening of the boundaries of democracy has triggered a new awakening. This is evident in the quest for a new paradigm rooted in Gandhian values and a negation of the virtues of developmentalism, discredited socialism and reformed capitalism.

Bosnia, the most obvious but not the only conflict, haunting post Cold War Europe, serves as an illustration of the search for solutions to the many guises of 'barbarism' which have caused the continent to move away from western intellectual tradition to a deeper study of Mahatma Gandhi, his philosophy and the contemporary relevance of his political 'arts' and 'skills'.

With successive multi-nation peace missions coming a cropper, peace activists, political scientists, social critics and philosophers are at the force, canvassing that nonviolence and Gandhian form of intervention alone hold out hope of political peace.

The most celebrated quote among European peace activists and scholars is, Gandhi's retort on being asked his view of western civilisation, "it would be a good idea".

Extensive research on Gandhi is on in several Western universities. There is a belief that Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence humbles the arrogance of modern civilisation and values. Pioneering

work to delineate nonviolent ways of intervention for peace and human rights is gaining acceptance. The question 'what is the way to peace' is sought to be answered in Gandhian dictum: "There is no way to peace, peace is the way". Getting this message across is not easy in a milieu where even peace-keeping is militarised and Gandhian social and political values are ignored as archaic. But that is precisely what the whole political revival and intellectual ferment is about.

5.14 Gandhi and global nonviolent awakening

Why is the world turning to Gandhi? The reasons are many. The ideological battle lines of the Cold War between competing social orders have disappeared with the demolition of the Berlin Wall and the demise of socialism. This has resulted in a vacuum, which discourages exploration of alternatives. That the model of development being imposed by elites is removed from popular aspirations, is borne out by the success of the Green movement. The success of the Greens underscores the failure and rejection of the Western model of development against which Gandhi had warned humanity as early as the first decade of the 20th century.

The Green perspectives on development has radicalised politics by creating an awareness of ecological risks and forcing a genuine search for global solutions. Groups inspired by Gandhi are now seeking to widen the relevance of the Mahatma's teachings to encompass issues of peace, human rights, economic equality and democracy. They are convinced that it was the Gandhian critique of industrial economics, which earned the Greens a global constituency. It is a search to communicate and revive a sense of community among peoples.

The growing appeal of this search attests to Gandhism being seen as a wider societal prescription, as a political approach that could overcome not only military and ethnic conflicts, but also address the violence of the confrontation between state and civil society, the economic imbalances created by "development" and the resultant social tensions rooted in cultural antagonisms.

The rationale is that nonviolent resistance has brought deeper changes from the build-up to the overthrow of the Shah of Iran and Marcos in the Philippines to the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia and the uprising in East Germany. A Hungarian speaking minority in Slovakia, deprived of education in their language and resorting to 'Civil-disobedience' is cited as an example of ongoing Gandhian struggles.

The market and its instruments such as the EEC, are ill-equipped to deal with aspirations for peace, democracy and human rights because they have reduced these values to economic interests. Hence, the overriding need to socially re-locate these as values in a new political framework, namely Gandhism.

5.15 Growing violence and dehumanising hunger

What would Gandhi have done in the face of widespread violence, hunger, inequality are questions often asked. Communication is critical and yet it seems to be missing despite the technology at hand. This shifts the focus back to Gandhi. As a communicator he would have gone to the people, is one answer. He effortlessly united people across barriers of literacy, language, ethnic identity, class, caste and privilege. Somewhere in this answer could be clues to transgress the social divisions that are threatening the whole world or at least this is the hope inspired by Gandhism.

Such enquiries, however hesitant, bear testimony to the vigour and insight that informs the quest for a new vision being shaped by the mahatma.

Today, Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy is looked as a live experience with potential for transformation leading to a Global Awakening. From the general attitude towards Gandhi as the chief architect of India's nonviolent freedom movement and as someone who interprets nonviolence as a new idiom the international community has been showing signs of analysing Gandhian options very seriously, as the previous century came to a close and many of the overriding political and philosophical positions were either proved to be defective or died their natural death. From Martin Luther King Jr. to Aung San Suu Kyi, the list of freedom fighters, nationalists, Human Rights activists, environmentalists, feminists and the whole, with honour and dignity have shown a remarkable understanding of the growing relevance of the means Gandhi adopted and the vision and legacy bequeathed to humanity.

5.16 Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

It is widely acknowledged now that Gandhi, who through his innovative approaches and daring initiatives, succeeded in initiating a new era in human history, an era which signifies man's immense potentiality to rise above narrow considerations and to strive for ushering in a new level of achievement. The new methods, strategies and ideas Gandhi successfully demonstrated influenced not only the freedom fighters and social reformers of most of the continents but also those who are involved in the serious search for alternatives in their efforts to sustain all what is dear to humanity. The Gandhian vision of holistic development and respect for all forms of life;

nonviolent conflict resolution embedded in the acceptance of nonviolence both as a creed and strategy; were an extension of the ancient Indian concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. The much talked about concept of global human family and humanity's effort to dismantle manmade barriers among nations peoples and the Indian ideals of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as enshrined in the Vedic and Upanishad wisdom, are almost the same. It is true that Gandhi always began at the micro level, but then, his vision surpassed the exigencies of local or national barriers. Gandhi said, "It is impossible for one to be internationalist without being a nationalist... I do want to think in terms of the whole world. My patriotism includes the good of mankind in general. Therefore, my service of India includes the service of humanity".

The Gandhian vision of society does not recognise man-made barriers but at the same time as Gandhi often insisted while we should welcome all that is best in other traditions when we allow the winds of other cultures to blow in, we should refuse to be swept off our feet. This indicates that one cannot be internationalist without being a nationalist. Gandhi once said, "My mission is not merely the brotherhood of Indian humanity. My mission is not merely freedom of India, though today it undoubtedly engrosses practically the whole of my life and the whole of my time. The true realization of freedom of India, I hope, would realise and carry on the mission of the brotherhood of man. My patriotism is not an exclusive thing. It is all embracing and I should reject patriotism which sought to mount upon the distress or the exploitation of other nationalities. I want to realise brotherhood or identity not merely with the being called human, but I

want to realise identity with all life, even with such thing as that crawl on earth".

It is this vision of the Mahatma and the ceaseless strivings he undertook through the numerous experiments he conducted which endeared him to millions of his countrymen and others who joyfully threw themselves into the vortex of one of the glorious movements in human history. The nonviolent national struggle for freedom waged under Mahatma Gandhi had the able support of a galaxy of such illustrious men and women of the century like Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Rajagopalachari, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel, Sarojini Naidu, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and several thousand others. Gandhi knew no fear and he released his country from fear and inducted into his countrymen fearlessness and offered them brave initiatives for social transformation which saw India taking courageous steps in the dismantling of some of the age-old customs and practices such as untouchability. The manner in which a vast majority of Indians, who were segregated in the name of this dehumanising practice and how they came up in life in the post-independence era, speaks volumes of the impact Gandhi created on the Indian psyche to initiate steps to ensure social justice.

5.17 Gandhi's tackling of direct violence

The observations made earlier by Dr. Ikeda in his now famous Gandhi Memorial Lecture in New Delhi in 1992 have been considered very significant in our efforts to understand the course of events in the 21st century. In his views, Gandhian heritage forms an important part of humanity's efforts to live in peace. The four important elements related to Gandhi mentioned in the speech are optimism, activism, population and holistic vision. The optimism associated with Gandhi

"is not relativism determined by objective analysis of circumstances. Instead it is an unconditional, indestructible faith in humanity, a faith born of justice, nonviolence and penetrating self-observation". Agreeing fully with this observation of Ikeda, Galtung points out "... optimism was a basic condition for the astonishing major struggles that Gandhi carried out in only one life time: the battle for home rule (Swaraj); his work to elevate the people in general and particularly the self-reliant, small, coherent communities that he called 'Oceanic circles' (Sarvodaya); his battle to improve the condition of the casteless (to whom Gandhi gave the name harijan or children of God); his work to raise the status of women; his efforts in the name of equality on behalf of Indians in South Africa; his not very successful strivings for peace between Indian Hindus and Muslims; and the most important of all, his devoted support for and development of nonviolence (Satyagraha) as the only valid approach to the attainment of all his other goals". And he successfully attained all those goals inviting Albert Einstein to describe Gandhi as the greatest political genius of our times precisely because of his ability to maintain a subtle balance between the ideal and the practical. This ability found concrete, embodiment in the nonviolent resistance movement. Dr. Ikeda has also raised a very important question about the effectiveness of nonviolence in combating what is called structural violence in the Third World. Can nonviolence work in an imperial structure dominated by centre-periphery relations in which the centre is strong and the periphery weak?

Galtung is convinced that Gandhi answered direct violence with nonviolence defence. He answered structural violence with nonviolent revolution. These methods worked in the Soviet Tsarist-Bolshevik

structure, one of the most brutal of all worlds' empires. The basic formula for the effectiveness of these techniques is two-fold; to strengthen the periphery (that is, the weak) and to weaken the centre (the strong). Gandhi predicted accurately the downfall of political structures based on power and violence such as those of the former Soviet Union and its satellite nations in East Europe. The comments of Gandhi during his visit to Romain Rolland that (Gandhi) had a deep mistrust of the ultimate success of the experiment being carried out there may be remembered in this context. It seems that it is a challenge to nonviolence; assumes significance, as it is widely understood now. For Gandhi, ends and means always had to be consistent and subject to the same ethical principle; violence can only breed violence. Similarly, as can be seen in good relations between the British and the Indians today, nonviolence breeds nonviolence. The structures Gandhi laid at Russia's doors are applicable in the West too, points out Galtung: "The French Revolution, which is usually celebrated as a great liberation, was actually excessively cruel and bloody.... The United States was born in blood. Genocide was conducted against may be 10 million indigenous Americans in the period 1500-1900 who were later confined to reservations, a very vicious form of structural violence. Many Native Americans remain on reservations today with no hope of an end to their misery in sight. The struggle for independence between 1776 and 1812 was mostly violent, as was the cruel and bloody Civil War of 1861-65, the main goal of which was the preservation of the Union; abolition of slavery was only a secondary issue".

As Gandhi proved through his successful campaigns in South Africa and India, the goals of these revolutionary struggles could have been attained nonviolently without encouraging and strengthening the

strains of violence inherent in the people waging them, "What the Soviets had done was no more than a parody, a caricature, a kind of revolution Gandhi initiated; of course, the Soviet system failed. History is sometimes a harsh, but just judge", agrees Galtung.

5.18 Religion and social change

Galtung also makes a very useful analysis of Gandhi's basic approach to religion and societal change. "Being himself a reformer, Gandhi did not have any difficulty in absorbing the basic teachings of the Buddha whose revolutionary teachings are the core of Buddhism which is a reform movement within the great Hindu tradition. The word 'Hinduism' itself is a most inadequate term for a vast conglomerate of profound philosophies. I see Gandhi's Buddhist inclinations in three directions within this conglomerate", Galtung points out:

First is his instance on Ahimsa (nonviolence) not as a mere ideal but as a practice applied to all forms of life including animals. The importance of vegetarianism, which Gandhi adhered to and propagated with passionate conviction, cannot be lost sight of in developing a nonviolent attitude towards life.

The second is his outright rejection of the vertical caste-system. Shakyamuni's fierce fight against the dehumanising aspect of social segregation in the name of caste enabled the Indian society, to begin with, to exorcise this centuries-old inhuman practice. Following in the footsteps of the Buddha, Gandhi strongly opposed the verticality of the caste order. He envisioned a horizontal caste system in which all occupations are treated equally in a symbiotic union of diverse elements. Each profession should have dignity; and to the maximum extent possible, the dignity of all should be equal.

Third, in conformity with the Buddhist idea of the Sangha or small community of believers, Gandhi experimented with the developments of small autonomous communities, respecting everyone's needs but not for everybody's greed. Both misery at the bottom and excessive wealth at the top would be eliminated in his communities. It is a big question as to how deep the Gandhian vision made a dent in the otherwise stratified Indian society. These three and other departures from mainstream belief cost Gandhi his life at the hands of an assassin who is described sometimes as a fanatic and orthodox Hindu. Whoever he was, it appears he was someone who did not agree with Gandhi's opposition to verticality of caste system. Dr. Ikeda takes these points further up and believes that perhaps Buddhism and Hinduism refined Gandhi's rare personal traits. "Gandhi was a gradualist, not a radical. He thought good changes take time; they move at a snail's pace. This too is part of his sense of practicality and order, in which I see a reflection of the Buddhist idea of the middle way.... Buddhist wisdom has clearly and accurately perceived the middle way between existence and non-existence; between pain and pleasure; and between the doctrine of eternity, according to which conditioned elements themselves are external and the doctrine of annihilation. His practical approach leads me to believe that Gandhi too perceived this middle way.

Gandhi's views on machinery and large industries invited criticism from many quarters. He is branded anti-progressive on this score. Galtung makes a very interesting observation in this regard. To Gandhi, big cities and big industries were instruments of British imperialism for which Gandhi had no love. 'Is it not possible, however, to humanize citizens and industry? Citizens can become confederations

of relatively autonomous neighbourhoods. Industries can reform in a similar fashion; technologies that degrade neither human users nor the natural environment can be evolved. Large factories and office buildings may give way to more work at home'. Gandhi proposed nonviolence as an alternative to the choice between violence and capitalism. 'Citizens and industries remodeled as I suggest would provide similar alternatives to the choice between industry and cottage industry and agriculture'. "Gandhi certainly perceived the middle way but he did not develop it with regard to villages verses cities. It is the responsibility of the millions of people who were inspired by Gandhi to work out the middle way on the basis of his work and the message he left for posterity", concludes Galtung.

It is generally believed that Gandhi opened a new era by convincingly demonstrating that there is an alternative to the politics of confrontation, violence, manipulation and to the disregard of human sentiments love and compassion in action.

He also showed that in the nonviolent form of protest and fight he was leading there was no room for hate, violence and one should be able to stand up courageously and fight without hating those against whom the fight is directed. He said again and again that his fight was only against the British system which allows imperialism and exploitation and not against the British. The way India and Britain parted company in 1947 speaks volumes of Gandhi's influence on both the rulers in Britain and the Indian nationalists fighting for freedom. It was the first-ever happy parting of ways in recent times between the masters of a colony and the nationalists who were fighting for freedom. Gandhi was the unquestioned leader of the Indian masses who, but for Gandhi, would have resorted to the extreme form of violence in

realizing the goal of freedom. There is no parallel in human history of several hundred millions of freedom-loving people marching towards their cherished goal without shedding blood. It was the triumph of human will over forces of oppression and injustice. It was an indication that human revolution is possible through dynamic leadership and that a true revolution need not be violent.

5.19 Gandhi and Globalisation

What is the relevance of Gandhi in this all pervading materialistic, agnostic and consumerist culture? It is precisely these three tendencies Gandhi fought all his life. It is a fact of history that repudiation of one philosophy at a given time does not mean the death or irrelevance of it. The men and women who moved the world were mostly either crucified, burnt alive, or were branded heretic, or excommunicated. Still independent inquiry and pursuit of truth and to express themselves against injustice were continued in all ages, probably with added vigour. The irreversible fact of history, again, is that the list of such 'rebels' steadily grows despite all attempts to ward off the perceived threat.

Despite all the impressive gains mankind has achieved in the present century through intelligent harnessing of science and technology which brought in unexpected and unimaginable results in various fields, the world today is on the throes of several global crises. Conflicts and tensions of all sorts are increasing, sending shock waves all around. With the disappearance of the Soviet Union as the leader of block-of nations, the world has become unipolar. If anybody believed that the cold war years have ended and humanity could live in peace henceforth, his hopes have been completely belied as could be seen from the various disturbing fighting and raging violence and senseless

killings in various parts of the world. Notwithstanding all high sounding assurances on arms reductions and cuts in military expenditure, we see an alarming escalation in the production of lethal weapons. It is estimated that there is an annual world- wide consumption of 1000 billion dollars on arms alone. Even one-sixth of this huge amount is sufficient enough to remove world hunger in the next six years.

Where have we gone wrong? Have we lost all our concern for our less fortunate brethren? Almost all the planning models we have experimented have strong elitist bias, and connotation of moneymaking and influence building seem to be the basis of all the models we have been experimenting within recent times. This has led to serious consequences in many areas.

The tendency of urbanisation is as old as human civilisation and it is a natural consequence of a changing society. In fact this process was considered a welcome development on grounds of economies of scale reduction of disturbances, and efficient sharing of resources generated through the adoption of urbanisation. With industrialisation, a new element was introduced and people who own means of production gradually usurped the fruits of industrialisation and a new class of people emerged. Impoverisation and marginalisation have increased. Instead of offering vast opportunities to the worker what happened was the growing awareness that jobs are becoming fewer and scarce. A vast majority was denied access to jobs and the gulf between the organised labours also increased. More distressing than any of these is the untold miseries industrialisation has brought which led to the sprouting up of slums; those veritable hells where humanity is crushed beyond any sign of redemption.

Introduction of high technology has inevitably made agriculture, the oldest human profession, into an industrial activity. This rendered many farm hands surplus. Where do the labour forces go? Inevitably, to the urban centres. Bombay is the best example. Out of the total population of the 10.5 million in 2000, six million are leading a subhuman kind of living in these veritable infernos called slums.

5.20 Development without justice and compassion

Energy which is so essential to all industrial processes is increasingly found to be one of the most important variables measuring economic activities. Solar energy in its varied forms, wind-generated electricity, bio-gas, solar collectors, photo-voltaic cells, etc. will inevitably lead to the emergence of a Solar Age beyond its technological meaning. Henderson visualises with the shift in emphasis on the Petroleum Age and the industrial-era, the emergence of a new culture. This culture includes the ecology movements, the women's movement and the peace movement.

An examination of the views and practices of Gandhi and J.C.Kumarappa and the theories of Schumacher, Henderson and Capra, in the light of what is described today as Sustainable Development, a term so in vogue, and heard from almost everybody who has anything to do with preservation of life on earth, would reveal the amazing fact that in Gandhian thought and action, humanity has sufficient tools it needs for sustainable development. As early as 1909, through his little book 'Hind Swaraj', Gandhi drew humanity's attention to what might happen to the globe if a proper check is not imposed in the various strategies and alternatives we examine. Gandhi said, "I must confess that I do not draw a sharp line or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurts the moral well-being of an individual

or a nation is immoral and, therefore, sinful". This indicates that sustainable development requires both biological and cultural diversity which in turn is inescapably linked to justice and compassion, toward each other and to nature.

"We notice that the mind is a restless bird. The more it gets, the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge in our passions, the more unbridled they become. Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgence. They saw that happiness was largely a mental condition. A man is not necessarily happy because he is rich, or unhappy because he is poor." Gandhi had written in his little classic *Hind Swaraj* that was published when the twentieth century was just being ushered in.

We are fostering a system which has inbuilt iniquities, power, wealth, knowledge and we have a culture/civilization bereft of any trace of compassion. It has all the trappings of Casino Capitalism which has infinite power to entice humanity through its charm.

We go on blaming science and technology but how many of us care to realise that technology by itself has no will. It is the social will which determines. The aeroplane which carries passengers can carry bombs.

Gandhi emphasised credible alternatives which the proponents of the present day corporate values assiduously seek to strengthen. Let us look at some of the principles Gandhi believed are of paramount importance.

1) Against the multiplication of wants, Gandhi suggested limitation of wants.

2) Instead of diffusion of large scale technology, Gandhi was in favour of large scale technology in few sectors co-existing with small scale technology and handicrafts in others.

3) Against mass production, Gandhi favoured production by the masses and small scale production except in a few sectors where mass production is unavoidable.

4) Gandhi was not in favour of centralisation of economic power. He favoured limited state ownership, wide-spread village ownership and trusteeship.

5) Rapid urbanisation did not find favour with Gandhi. He advocated self-governing village republics, self-sufficient in basic needs.

6) Inequality of all types particularly in wages, social justice and in gender reflects where there is denial of natural justice according to Gandhi.

7) As against increasing specialisation, Gandhi favoured universal physical labour.

By no stretch of imagination can anyone say that these are moral prescriptions by an orthodox social reformer. On the contrary, they reflect the profound understanding of a revolutionary thinker, philosopher activist, whose vision in life was steeped in pragmatism, love, compassion and change with consent.

Economic well-being appears to be the sole purpose of life and the manner in which value systems are being trampled upon raises the big question: where are we heading to?

The usherers, drum-beaters and self-styled (self-appointed) custodians of emerging trends, perhaps, are impervious to the following paradoxes:

1. While absolute poverty has decreased globally, relative poverty has increased.
2. More people have become literate. But access to information and technology have become concentrated and centralised.
3. More countries have become democratised but there is greater concentration of power.
4. Communication explosion but growing alienation, family break up, lack of communication at individual level has become rampant.

By 'growth', what is meant today is economic growth and man has all of a sudden been reduced to the level of a commodity whose worth is determined by factors other than what distinguishes them from the best. Moral values, ethics, spirituality, family values, religious insights have all seemed to have lost their place and values in the emerging global scenario. Ethics and morality appear to be out of tune with the ethos of the global village. Globalisation has thrust to the forefront. The death of religion and the deterioration of the nation-state, leading to global integration mostly on the strength of economic prosperity of the industrially rich and developed nations which by and large are in the driver's seat today, have led to a situation where vast iniquities that divided the small minority of haves from the huge majority of have-nots. Very few, unfortunately, appear to be conscious of the dangers of blind globalisation in their anxiety to take advantage of its so-called benefits. The economic liberalisation and technological automation threaten to widen even further existing economic, social, political and cultural disparity.

Global justice will be a far cry unless bold initiatives are undertaken to overcome these disparities. The declining in importance of nation-state in favour of global village concept has confounded the situation further since the present unipolar politics and hegemony of the superior currencies not only dictate terms to the poor cousins who are by and large at the receiving end.

A student, a couple of weeks ago, when asked at an interview for his views on relevance of Gandhi in the twenty-first century had the courage to look at the examiner and politely tell him: "Sir, I wish you had asked me to tell you why Gandhi is more relevant today."

I hope we will have the wisdom of this teenager in understanding the challenges facing us today.

5.21 Gandhian Concept for the Twenty First Century

The Gandhian concept of political empowerment of people and the role of the state shine in radiating brightness in an age of civilization by weapons of violence that arm the centralized authority in state super powers to hold in ransom the future of mankind. The nonviolent alternative around which the Gandhian concepts are woven has started claiming serious attention of academicians, political thinkers, social activists, reformers and visionaries. The landscape of human civilization has witnessed the dawn and decay of the guiding principles of organization of government and state monarchy, capitalism, socialism, communism and the like. But the basic issue of individual liberty and freedom could not be resolved against the onslaught of centralized bureaucracy. The fundamental tenet of democracy that lies in providing the objective conditions for human beings attaining their best have also been substantially belied. This

calls for a review of the ideologies that have carried the political institutions throughout the human history particularly in the preceding centuries. If we take them one by one we may come to a finding that human reasoning has been somewhat a prisoner of prevailing ideas on the advocacy of stalwart thinkers who ruled the rest. But there had always been a protestant voice, which was lost in the din and bustle of contemporaneous cacophony of ideas but ultimately emerged with a strong appeal because of the truth inherent in it. We may presently see that Mahatma Gandhi raised one such Protestant voice to traditional political institutions and thoughts that received scant attention during his lifetime, but is gradually assuming its legitimate place in the pedestal of thought where our political institutions are destined to mount upon with gradual maturity.

These protestant ideas have much in their content to shape the contour of the freedom and the power of people vis-a vis the state and that too on a nonviolent transformation.

The basic point of departure of the constitutional patterns conceived by Gandhi over that of others who still dominate the field, is that Gandhian concepts are borne out truth, nonviolence, love for all, while the others are borne out of mind of reasoning. And that makes all the difference.

The utilitarian philosophers of the west enunciated the concept of "greatest good of the greatest number" as the aim of the state policy. This has failed to take a holistic view of the entire human race and ignored man; that is to say, each and every man, as the prime concern of the state. A theoretical measurement of the greatest good for the greatest number is again a thoroughly subjective deduction and consequently lacks the universality of acceptance. As against this,

Gandhi propounded the theory of Sarvodaya which means the rise of all; that too in the fullest measure each man is capable of. This is a departure from traditional thinking clamped upon the society and which held human reasoning within a closed shell. Gandhi released it from that bondage and gave a definitional aim of the state, which leaves no ambiguity. That is what the 21st century has to adopt if closed reasoning has to yield place to universality.

In the next place, the rule of the majority has become a kernel to democracy. The entire world has been fed with the idea that the majority must have its way, but remember, it is not the exclusive majority that has always sought to be championed; even a simple majority is enough. The result is that the tyranny of the majority has gradually perverted into the tyranny of the virtual minority. In a system evolved by a multi party functioning in the political arena, a minority or even a simple caucus can impose itself on the rest. As against this, Gandhi advocated decisions by consensus as the main thrust of democratic functioning. At one time the idea was considered ridiculous, but it is gradually gaining acceptance in situations while the alternative to consensus is grave and serious. Even the United Nations at its Security Council has to decide everything by consensus since a single veto can undo a decision. At the national level, the trend in all the countries is to strike a political consensus amongst all the parties whenever grave national issues are involved. Gandhi wanted this system to enter into our culture as a decision-making process in every public affair so that the minutest may not feel ignored or tyrannized.

The Gandhian concept of consensus does not mean that there should not be any two opinions on an issue or people must have identical thinking about everything. It only means a process for resolution of all

differences, a process which will substitute the worn-out kernel of democracy with a fresh one with a view to richer fruition. He did not stop there; he was quite aware that a very big assemblage, with heterogeneity beyond control, is not a conducive arena where consensus can be reached. As we shall see presently, he advocated a direct democracy or a participatory democracy rather than a representative one, which has become ingrained in our present system.

Even since the Western scholars like John Stuart Mill and others upheld the case of representative as the pillar of statecraft, the concept has gripped the whole world. As power has concentrated more and more on centralized government, the tooth of the representative government has sharpened all the more. The government by representation has, however, a sad commentary everywhere. The representatives after elections hardly represent the people but only themselves. It is common knowledge how the representatives of the people have emerged as a class by themselves each having ambition of his own, each motivated by the power have emerged as a class by themselves each having ambition of his own, each motivated by the power to distribute favours, each lobbying for his own selfish end; and collectively, as a class, the representatives trying to entrench themselves with more privileges, authority and power. In the face of power struggle, the people are relegated to a dumping lot, gradually losing the efficacy of the right to vote a right, no longer a right to make a choice on one's own, but content with the limited choice as left under the political systems. The result is a negation of democracy at the grass-root level, which is conceived in his philosophy of Gram Swaraj. He wanted all adult people male or female of the entire village to be

involved in the decision making process on matters that concerned people at large.

The next question is what should be the quality of 'Village Republic' where a participatory democracy of all people of envisioned. Here lies the crux of Gandhism. Where all systems, capitalistic, socialistic or communistic, have inevitably resulted in centralization of power and authority at the apex, the Gandhian concept of Gram Swaraj unleashed a compulsive force in the opposite direction.

He believed in Panchayati Raj, which is certainly not the concept as enshrined in our constitution, however proudly it may bear the nomenclature of a Panchayati Raj. The Gandhian concept of Panchayati Raj is not a concept of decentralization but a pattern of "building from below". The Panchayati system projected in our constitution with the latest amendments is at best to be termed as a system to Panchayat administration of centralized governmental power.

5.22 Gandhian Gram Swaraj

Gandhi mooted the idea of Panchayat Raj with a concept of self-sufficient and self-reliant villages functioning as a Republic. In his dream, every village in India should be characterized by a direct and participating democracy, endowed with all the powers that enable it to function as a government in the true sense of the term. The power and functions, which cannot be effectively discharged at the local level, should alone be transferred to the government at the center. Thus, the policy in India shall take a pyramidic shape having a broad and strong base at the village level and a gradually narrowing one towards the upper hierarchy with delegation only of essential functions where a heavy splash on the water creates the most intense wave at the initial

circle, which gradually fades as the circle expands. This is what Gandhi meant by "building from below". That is one aspect. On the other, a republican village shall be self-sufficient and self-reliant in respect of its basic necessities like food, clothing, shelter, employment, education, health, social security etc. The modality of functioning of the village policy was also embroidered by Mahatma Gandhi in his various writings from which the essence that can be gathered consists in the following precepts, namely:-

1. All adult persons, male or female, of the village shall have a say in the village administration in order to make it truly participatory, as wide as the community.
2. All decisions in the village panchayat shall be on the basis of consensus, which eschew out divisive approaches arising from consideration of party politics, religion, caste, creed, class or culture.
3. "Antodaya" or unto the last, is the philosophy behind distribution of resources so that an equitable distribution of scarce resources can be ensured.
4. All village disputes have to be settled within the four corners of the village and not to be taken outside it so that the curse of litigation may not shatter the rural economy.
5. An approach of villagization to create community assets for the community to be independent of outside resources for further development of the community and to inform all measures for social security in the form of care for the old and infirm, widows and destitute women, orphans and neglected children, handicapped and mentally retarded and the unemployed and the helpless.

5.23 Touchstone for Government

we may not fall back on the concept of government as an institution. What really makes an authority a government? While we spin out the concept of local self-government, we have to bear in mind if the authority at the village level created by the constitution has really assumed the character of a government. What are the essentials for such a government? It has been recognized in the modern parlance of political theory that a government must have three essential powers:-

- i) Taxing power
- ii) ii) Police power and
- iii) iii) The power of the eminent domain.

By taxing power it is meant that the authority termed as government should have the right to raise revenue through compulsory exaction to defray the expenses of its obligatory functions. By police power is meant the right to regulate the behavior pattern of the people living within the governmental jurisdiction in such manner that the individual voluntarily sub-judge individual interests for the community interest since "Good of individual is in the good of all". The power of the eminent domain vests the authority termed as government to resort to preceding of acquisition of land, water, sub-soil rights, ambient air, mines, minerals etc. including the power to escheat. It is on these touchstones that one has to determine whether an authority is really clad with governmental power or not.

The 21st century is knocking the door of history. It will usher in a new millennium. It is time that the entire human race comes out of the bondage of traditional thinking and look out to the future with a liberated mind. As we look up at such a prospect, we may find the

precepts of Gandhi holding out a great promise for freedom and empowerment of the people vis-a vis a totalitarian and centralized state which has usurped all such freedom and power.

5.24 Gandhi's View on Swadeshi

Gandhi think about swadeshi of the poor of India every time that I draw a thread on the wheel. The poor of India today have lost faith in God, more so than the middle classes or the rich. For a person suffering from the pangs of hunger, and desiring nothing but to fill his belly is his God. To him any one who gives him his bread is his Master. Through him he may even see God. To give alms to such persons, who are sound in all their limbs, is to debase oneself and them. What they need is some kind of occupation, and the occupation that will give employment to millions can only be hand-spinning.

.... I have described my spinning as a penance or sacrament. And, since I believe that where there is pure and active love for the poor there is God also, I see God in every thread that I draw on the spinning-wheel.¹

...The spinning-wheel enables us to identify ourselves with cores. The millionaires imagine that money can bring them anything in the world. But it is not so. At any moment death might come and snuff them out.... Losing one's life...is not the same thing as shedding 'self'. One has to learn to efface self or the ego voluntarily and as a sacrifice in order to find God. The spinning-wheel rules out exclusiveness. It stands for all inclusiveness. It stands for all including the poorest. It, therefore, requires us to be humble and to cast away pride completely.²

Revival of the cottage industry, and not cottage industries, will remove the growing poverty. When once we have revived the one industry, all the other industries will follow.... I would make the

spinning-wheel the foundation on which to build a sound village life. I would make the wheel the centre round which all other activities will revolve.³

5.24.1 Message Of The Charkha

Gandhi ... claim for the Charkha the honour of being able to solve the problem of economic distress in a most natural, simple, nexpensive and business like manner..... It is the symbol of the nation's prosperity and, therefore, freedom. It is a symbol not of commercial war but of commercial peace.⁴

The message of the spinning-wheel is much wider than its circumference. Its message is one of simplicity, service of mankind, living so as not to hurt others, creating an indissoluble bond between the rich and the poor, capital and labour, the prince and the peasant. That larger message is naturally for all.⁵

The message of the spinning-wheel is, really, to replace the spirit of exploitation by the spirit of service. The dominant not in the West is the note of exploitation. I have no desire that our country should copy that spirit or that note.⁶

I do feel that it has message for the U.S.A. and the whole world. But it cannot be until India has demonstrated to the world that it has made the spinning-wheel its own, which it has not done today. The fault is not of the wheel. I have not the slightest doubt that the saving of India and of the world lies in the wheel.

If India becomes the slave of-the machine, then, I say, heaven save the world? ⁷

5.24.2 Return To Simplicity

If I preach against the modern artificial life of sensual enjoyment, and ask men and women to go back to the wimple life epitomized in

the Charkha, I do so because I know that, without an intelligent return to simplicity, there is no escape from our descent to a state lower than brutality.⁸

Gandhi believe that no other path but that of non-violence will suit India. The symbol of that DHARMA for India is the spinning-wheel as it alone is the friend of the distressed and the giver of plenty for the poor. The law of love knows no bounds of space or time. My Swaraj, therefore, takes note of Bhangis, Dublas and the weakest of the weak, and except the spinning-wheel I know no other thing which befriends all these.⁹

5.24.3 Wheel Of Life

Take to spinning [to find peace of mind]. The music of the wheel will be as balm to your soul. I believe that the yarn we spin is capable of mending the broken warp and woof of our life. The Charkha is the symbol of non-violence on which all life, if it is to be real life, must be based.¹⁰

Some will recall through the wheel the name of that Prince of Peace, Ashoka, the founder of an empire, who ultimately gave up the pomp and circumstance of power to become the undisputed Emperor of the hearts of men and became the representative of all the then known faiths. We would call it a legitimate interpretation of the wheel to seek in it the Wheel of Law ascribed to that living store of mercy and love.

The spinning-wheel thus interpreted adds to its importance in the life of billions of mankind. to liken it to and to derive it from the Ashoka disc is to recognize in the insignificant-looking Charkha the necessity of obeying the ever-moving Wheel of the Divine Law of Love.¹¹

... Spinning has become a part and parcel of the Ashram prayer. The conception of spinning as sacrifice has been linked with the idea of

God, the reason being that we believe that in the Charkha and what it stands for lies the only hope of salvation of the poor.¹²

It is my claim that the universalization of hand-spinning with a full knowledge of all that it stands for alone can bring that [conquest of inertia] in a sub-continent so vast and varied as India. I have compared spinning to the central sun and the other village crafts to the various constellations in the solar system. The former gives light and warmth to the latter and sustains them. Without it they would not be able to exist.¹³

5.24.4 Duty Of Spinning

Just as every one of us must eat and drink and clothe himself, even so everyone of us must spin himself.¹⁴

I do not know whether I am a Karmayogi or any other Yogi. I know that I cannot live without work. I crave to die with my hand at the spinning-wheel. I one has to establish communion with God through some means, why not through the spinning wheel? Him who worships Me, says the Lord in the Gita, I guide along the right path and see to his needs.¹⁵

If every woman in India spins, then a silent revolution will certainly be created, of which a Jawaharlal [Nehru] can make full use. Unless steam generated is put to proper use, the engine will not run and the person generating the steam may himself be scalded by it even unto death.¹⁶

A scientific study of the spinning-wheel will lead on to Sociology. The spinning-wheel will not become a power for the liberation of India in our hands unless we have made a deep study of the various sciences related to it. It will then not only make India free, but point the way to the whole world.¹⁷

5.24.5 Livery Of Freedom

... While Khadi is good for the poor as an honourable occupation for earning bread, it has an additional and far greater value as an instrument of winning Swaraj through non-violence means.¹⁸

In 1908, in South Africa, I conceived the idea that, if poverty-stricken India were to be freed from the alien yoke, India must learn to look upon the spinning-wheel and hand-spun yarn as the symbol, not of slavery, but of freedom. It should also mean butter to bread.¹⁹

Khadi to me is the symbol of unity of Indian humanity, of its economic freedom and equality and, therefore, ultimately, in the poetic expression of Jawaharlal Nehru, "the livery of India's freedom."

Moreover, Khadi mentality means decentralization of the production and distribution of the necessaries of life. Therefore, the formula so far evolved is, every village to produce all its necessaries and a certain percentage in addition for the requirements of the cities. Heavy industries will need to be centralized and nationalized. But they will occupy the least part of the vast national activity which will mainly be in the villages.....

Since the wanton destruction of this central village industry and the allied handicrafts, intelligence and brightness have fled from the villages, leaving them inane, lusterless, and reduced almost to the state of their ill-kept cattle.

5.24.6 Economic Regeneration

I feel convinced that the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving will make the largest contribution to the economic and the moral regeneration of India. The millions must have a simple industry to supplement agriculture. Spinning was the cottage industry years ago, and if the millions are to be saved from starvation, they must be

enabled to introduce spinning in their homes, and every village must repossess its own weaver.²⁰

It bears not a message of ill-will towards the nations of the earth but of good-will and self-help. It will not need the protection of a navy threatening a world's peace and exploiting its resources, but it needs the religious determination of millions to spin their yarn in their own homes as today they cook their food in their own homes.

I may deserve the curses of posterity for many mistakes of omission and commission, but I am confident of earning its blessing for suggesting a revival of the Charkha. I stake my all on it. For every revolution of the wheel spins peace, good-will and love. And with all that, inasmuch as the loss of it brought about India's slavery. Its voluntary revival with all its implications must mean India's freedom.²¹

5.24.7 Hope Of Rural Masses

I have often said that, if the seven lakhs of the villages of India were to be kept alive, and if peace that is at the root of all civilization is to be achieved, we have to make the spinning-wheel the centre of all handicrafts.²²

The spinning-wheel represents to me the hope of the masses. The masses lost their freedom, such as it was, with the loss of the Charkha. The Charkha supplemented the agriculture of the villagers and gave it dignity. It was the friend and solace of the widow. It kept the villagers from idleness. For the Charkha included all the anterior and posterior industries-ginning, carding, warping, sizing, dyeing and waving. These in their turn kept the village carpenter and the blacksmith busy.

The Charkha enabled the seven hundred thousand villages to become self-contained. With the exit of the Charkha went the other village industries, such as the oil press. Nothing took the place of these

industries. Therefore, the villages were drained of their varied occupations and their creative talent and what little wealth these brought them.... Hence, if the villages are to come into their own, the most natural thing that suggests itself is the revival of the Charkha and all it means.²³

I have no doubt in my mind that the wheel can serve as the instrument of earning one's livelihood and, at the same time, enable the worker to render useful service to his neighbours.... In order to ply the wheel intelligently, he should know all the processes that precede and succeed spinning.²⁴

The conviction dawned upon me even before I came to India that the revival of hand-spinning alone could restore India to its pristine glory. I have since compared the spinning-wheel to the central sun round which the solar system of our village economy revolves. It provides the golden bridge between the rich and the poor.²⁵

The Charkha is not like either the small or large machines of the West. There cores of watches are produced in a few special places. They are sold all over the world. The same tale applies to the sewing machine. These things are symbols of one civilization. The Charkha represents the opposite.

We do not to universalize the Charkha through mass production in one place. Our ideal is to make the Charkha and all its accessories in the locality where the spinners live. Therein lies the value of the spinning-wheel. Anything that goes wrong with it should be put right on the spot and the spinners should be taught how to do so.²⁶

5.24.8 Mill Industry

Our mills cannot today spin enough for our wants, and if they did, they will not keep down prices unless they were compelled. They are

frankly money-makers and will not, therefore, regulate prices according to the needs of the nation. Hand-spinning is therefore designed to put millions of rupees in the hands of the poor villagers. Every agricultural country requires a supplementary industry to enable the peasants to utilize the spare hours. Such industry for India has always been spinning. Is it such a visionary ideal-an attempt to revive an ancient occupation whose destruction has brought on slavery, pauperism and disappearance of the inimitable artistic talent which was once all expressed in the wonderful fabric of India which was the envy of the world?²⁷

Do I seek to destroy the mill-industry, I have often been asked. If I did, I should not have pressed for the abolition of the excise duty. I want the mill-industry to prosper-only I do not want it to prosper at the expense of the country. On the contrary, If the interests of the country demand that the industry should go, I should let it go without the slightest compunction.²⁸

In my opinion, the mill-hands are as much the proprietors of their mills as the share-holders, and when the mill-owner realize that the mill-hand are as much mill-owners as they, there will be no quarrel between them.²⁹

5.24.9 Meaning Of Swadeshi

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

In the domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting. It is suggested that such Swadeshi, if reduced to practice, will lead to the millennium.....

5.24.10 Religion

...Hinduism has become a conservative religion and, therefore, a mighty force because of the Swadeshi spirit underlying it. It is the most tolerant because it is non-proselytizing and it is as capable of expansion today as it has been found to be in the past. It has succeeded not in driving out, as I think it has been erroneously held, but in absorbing Buddhism. By reason of the Swadeshi spirit, a Hindu refuses to change his religion, not necessarily because he considers it to be the best, but because he knows that he can complement it by introducing reforms. And what I have said about Hinduism is, I suppose, true of the other great faiths of the world, only it is held that it is specially so in the case of Hinduism.

5.24.11 Education

We have laboured under a terrible handicap owing to an almost fatal departure from the Swadeshi spirit. We, the educated classes, have received our education through a foreign tongue. We have, therefore, not reacted upon the masses. We want to represent the masses, but we fail. They recognize us not much more than they recognize the English officers. Their hearts are an open book to neither. Their aspirations are not ours. Hence there is a break. And you witness not, in reality, failure to organize but want of correspondence between the representatives and the represented.

If during the last fifty years we had been educated through the vernaculars, our elders and our servant and our neighbours would have partaken of our knowledge; the discoveries of Bose or a Ray would have been household treasures as are the RAMAYAN and the MAHABHARAT. As it is, so far as the masses are concerned, those great discoveries might as well have been made by foreigners. Had instruction in all the branches of learning been given through the vernaculars, I make bold to say that they would have enriched wonderfully.....

5.24.12 Economic Life

Much of the deep poverty of the masses is due to the ruinous departure from Swadeshi in the economic and industrial life. If not an article of commerce had been brought from outside India, she would be today a land flowing with milk and honey. But that was not to be. We were greedy and so was England. The connection between England and India was based clearly upon an error....

If we follow the Swadeshi doctrine, it would be your duty and mine to find out neighbours who can supply our wants and to teach them to supply them where they do not know how to proceed, assuming that there are neighbours who are in want of healthy occupation. Then every village of India will almost be a self-supporting and self-contained unit, exchanging only such necessary commodities with other villages as are not locally producible.

This may all sound nonsensical. Well, India is a country of nonsense. It is nonsensical to parch one's throat with thirst when a kindly Mohammedan is ready to offer pure water to drink. And yet thousands of Hindus would rather die of thirst than drink water from a Mohammedan household. These nonsensical men can also, once they are convinced that

their religion demands that they should wear garments manufactured in India only clothing or eat any other food...

5.24 .13 Religious Discipline

It has often been urged that India cannot adopt Swadeshi, in the economic life at any rate. Those who advance this objection do not look upon Swadeshi, as a rule of life. With them it is a mere patriotic effort-not to be made if it involved any self-denial. Swadeshi, as defined here, is a religious discipline to be undergone in utter disregard of the physical discomfort it may cause to individuals. Under its spell the deprivation of a pin or a needle, because these are not manufactured in India, need cause no terror. A Swadeshist will learn to do without hundreds of things which today he considers necessary....

I would urge that Swadeshi is the only doctrine consistent with the law of humility and love. It is arrogance to think of launching out to serve the whole of India when I am hardly able to serve even my own family. It were better to concentrate my effort upon the family and consider that through them I was serving the whole nation and, if you will, the whole of humanity. This is humility and it is love.

The motive will determine the quality of the act. I may serve my family regardless of the sufferings I may cause to theirs. As, for instance, I may accept an employment which enables me to extort money from people. I enrich myself thereby and then satisfy many unlawful demands of the family. Here I am neither serving the family nor the State. Or I may recognize that God has given me hands and feet only to work with for my sustenance and for that of those who may be dependent upon me. I would then at once simplify my life and that of those whom I can directly reach. In this instance, I would have served the family without causing injury to anyone else. Supposing that every one followed this

mode of life, we should have at once an ideal state. All will no reach that state at the same time. But those of us who, realizing its truth, enforce it in practice, will clearly anticipate and accelerate the coming of that happy day.³⁰

5.24.14 Service Of Neighbours

My definition of Swadeshi is well known. I must not serve my distant neighbour at the expense of the nearest. It is never vindictive or punitive. It is in no sense narrow, for I buy from every part of the world what is needed for my growth. I refuse to buy from anybody anything, however nice or beautiful, if it interferes with my growth or injures those whom Nature has made my first care.

I buy useful healthy literature from every part of the world. I buy surgical instruments from England, pins and pencils from Austria and watches from Switzerland. But I will not buy an inch of the finest cotton fabric from England or Japan or any other part of the world because it has injured and increasingly injures the million of the inhabitants of India.

I hold it to be sinful for me to refuse to buy the cloth spun and woven by the needy million of India's paupers and to buy foreign cloth although it may be superior in quality to the Indian hand-spun. My Swadeshi, therefore, chiefly centers round the hand-spun Khaddar and extends to everything that can be and is produced in India.³¹

The votary of Swadeshi will, as a first duty, dedicate himself to the service of his immediate neighbours. This involves exclusion or even sacrifice of the interests of the rest, but the exclusion or the sacrifice would be only in appearance. Pure service of our neighbours can never, from its very nature, result in disservice to those who are far away, but rather the contrary.

'As with the individual, so with the universe' is an unflinching principle which we would do well to lay to heart. On the other hand, a man who allows himself to be lured by 'the distant scene', and runs to the ends of the earth for service, is not only foiled in his ambition, but also fails in his duty towards his neighbours.....

I believe in the truth implicitly that a man can serve his neighbours and humanity at the same time, the condition being that the service of the neighbours is in no way selfish or exclusive, i.e., does not in any way involve the exploitation of any other human being. The neighbours will then understand the spirit in which such service is given. They will also know that they will be expected to give their services to their neighbours. Thus considered, it will spread like the proverbial snow-ball gathering strength in geometrical progression, encircling the whole earth. It follows that Swadeshi is that spirit which dictates man to serve his next-door neighbour to the exclusion of any other. The condition that I have already mentioned is that the neighbour, thus served, has, in his turn, to serve his own neighbour. In this sense, Swadeshi is never exclusive. It recognizes the scientific limitation of human capacity for service.³²

5.24.15 No Chauvinism

Under this plan of life, in seeming to serve India to the exclusion of every other country, I do not harm any other country. My patriotism is both exclusive and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that, in all humility, I confine my attention to the land of my birth, but is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a competitive or antagonistic nature. SIC UTERE TUO UT ALIENUM NON LAEDAS is not merely a legal maxim, but it is a grand doctrine of life. It is the key to proper practice of ahimsa or love.³³

I have never considered the exclusion of everything foreign under every conceivable circumstance as a part of Swadeshi. The broad definition of Swadeshi is the use of all home-made things to the exclusion of foreign things, in so far as such use is necessary for the protection of home industry, more especially those industries without which India will become pauperized. In my opinion, therefore, Swadeshi which excludes the use of everything foreign, no matter how beneficial it may be, and irrespective of the fact that it impoverishes nobody, is a narrow interpretation of Swadeshi.³⁴

Even Swadeshi, like any other good thing, can be ridden to death if it is made a fetish. That is a danger that must be guarded against. To reject foreign manufactures, merely because they are foreign and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion in one's country of manufactures for which it is not suited would be criminal folly and a negation of the Swadeshi spirit.

A true votary of Swadeshi will never harbour ill-will towards the foreigner; he will not be actuated by antagonism towards anybody on earth. Swadeshism is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service that has its roots in the purest AHIMSA, i.e., love.

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CHAPER VI

GANDHI'S ECONOMIC REFERENCE TO KHADI

6.1 Introduction

6.2 What is khadi?

6.3 Gandhi's Khadi Movement

6.4 Gandhi's Economic Thought

6.5 Gandhi's economic reference to khadi

6. 6 Economic Decentralization

6.7 Gandhi at Sevagram

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6.9 Khadi-controversy

6.10 Conclusion

CHAPER VI

GANDHI'S ECONOMIC REFERENCE TO KHADI

“Khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support khadi in return for the heat and the sustenance they derive from it. Without it other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of other industries, khadi could not make further progress. For villagers to be able to occupy their spare time profitably, the village must be touched at all points.”¹

- M. K. Gandhi

6.1 Introduction

Indian political and spiritual leader, called Mahatma ("Great Soul"). Gandhi helped India's struggle for independence from Britain through a campaign based on nonviolence and civil disobedience. His doctrine of nonviolent action had a profound influence on Martin Luther King Jr., the leader of the civil rights movement in the U.S, and Nelson Mandela, the most prominent figure of the black opposition to apartheid in South Africa. However, Gandhi never received the Nobel Peace Prize.

"Nonviolence and truth (Satya) are inseparable and presupposes one another. There is no god higher than truth."²

"We may read the Gita or the Ramayana or Hind Swaraj", Gandhi said. "But what we have to learn from them is desire for the welfare of others." Gandhi strove to raise the status of untouchables, the caste whom everybody avoided. He gave them the name harijan, or "children of God", and founded the weekly paper Harijan, which was published in

English and Hindi. In an attempt to persuade the orthodox Hindus to wipe out the "blight of untouchability", Gandhi undertook fast in the summer of 1933 for three weeks. In order to promote village self-sufficiency, Gandhi popularized handspinning and made known khadi, hand-spun cloth, the "livery of freedom." ³

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the giants of the 20th century, who left an indelible impact on the social, economic and political forces of the day. He was a great revolutionary who even while he fought for the freedom of his country, was aware of the freedom of all the enslaved people in the different parts of the world. As an iconoclast he shook the foundations of the mighty British empire in India through such novel techniques as non-violent satyagrahas, fasting, hartals, non-cooperation, and mass civil disobedience.

Gandhi was a multifaceted person who applied his mind to a large number of problems of human concern. His social ideas exemplify a deep and abiding interest in a fundamental reformation of the society. Though he believed in a strategy of one step at a time yet through his immense wisdom and power of his analytical reasoning he could provide root and branch solutions to some of the obnoxious social evils like untouchability, casteism etc. In the economic sphere, he fervently believed that the economic salvation of India depended upon the economic regeneration of vast millions of Indians living in the rural areas. In the line with such a policy, he championed the cause of small scale village and cottage industries which could provide fruitful employment on a continuing basis to the simple people living in the rural areas. At the political level, Gandhi believed that the state was an instrument of coercion, since it was likely to undermine the cherished fundamental

freedoms of the individuals. As an individualist par excellence, he believed that individuals could enrich their personalities through truth and non-violence, saturated with an atmosphere of freedom. Though Gandhi was a charismatic leader with a mass appeal, yet he symbolized a new trend in the Indian context of an individual wielding immense power and influence on millions without occupying any formal positions of power and authority. He was not very much impressed by the doctrine of a majoritarian democracy since in his values every issue was judged from touchstone of morality rather than in terms of numbers.

Mahatma Gandhi was a towering personality who contributed in large measure to some of the highest values which Indians have stood for since the dawn of civilization. Physically, Gandhi appeared very frail but, he was a man of extraordinary courage, determination and perseverance in the face of adversity.

He had an original mind which probed into the matrix of human problems. His magnetic personality could command the loyalty of men and women of diverse temperaments and differing intellectual endowments.

The first true Indian designer was Mahatma Gandhi when he urged the people of India to wear khadi garments. It was not only a call to create self reliance but a call to create self reliance but a call to wear something that could prove the unity of India. Khadi was given a more important status by Gandhi after his return from South Africa. While in search of the charkha Gandhi felt that for a nation to turn self-reliant, it had to return to indigenous manufactured goods.

Gandhi wrote. Swaraj (self-rule) without swadeshi (country made goods) is a lifeless corpse and if Swadeshi is the soul of Swaraj, khadi is the essence of swadeshi. Therefore khadi became not only a symbol of revolution and resistance but part of an Indian identity.

Gandhi confessed though, When I first discovered the spinning wheel it was purely ascharkha with kargha (handloom).

6.2 What is khadi?

Khadi or khaddar refers to varieties of coarse cotton cloth, which have been hand woven using hand spun yarn. Peasants and artisans in pre-industrial India always wore Khadi that had been made from locally grown Organic cotton, harvested by local labourers, spun into yarn by their womenfolk and woven into cloth by men from various specialist weaving castes. The precise technology involved in the production of Khadi would vary from region to region, as would the techniques used for its decoration (dyeing, embroidery, printing etc)

Khadi shot into prominence in the early twentieth century when the Indian political and spiritual leader Mahatma Gandhi called for the public burning of British mill-made cloth, and urged patriotic Indians to wear only homespun Khadi.

What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labor-saving machinery...The impetus behind it is not philanthropy to save labor, but greed

Khadi weaving is labour-intensive. The fabric is hand-spun and hand-woven from cotton, silk or wool. First, farmers pick cotton and remove the seeds. This is rolled into slivers in a process known as

Ginning. These slivers are spun into yarn on a spinning wheel called the charkha, made famous by Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom struggle. The threads are then manufactured and hand woven into cloth. Indian national flag is also made up of khadi .

Unlike cotton, the material is starched and hence, does not crumple as easily. Khadi has the unique quality of being cool in summers and warm in winters.⁽³⁾

6.3 Gandhi's Khadi Movement

Mahatma Gandhi urged Indians to throw out their British colonial rulers with two weapons — non-violence and handspun cloth. A middle aged man when he realized the significance of Khadi as a symbol of independence and self sufficiency, Gandhi did not know how to spin or weave. With great difficulty, he found someone to teach him the skills of the spinning wheel, and spun every day of his life thereafter.

His plan was audacious – not only did he eschew Western wear himself, he also proposed a complete re-clothing of the nation. In its 1920 Nagpur session, the Indian National Congress first stated its aim to promote Khadi, the nationalist fabric. Gandhi henceforth referred to it as the "Livery of Freedom." Overnight, Khadi became the symbol of defiance as thousands of bonfires were lighted across the country and Indians rose up against colonialism by throwing their Manchester textiles into the flames. Thus, Khadi's growing importance caused a full scale reorganisation of India's textile industry.

Gandhi's Khadi movement was slightly different from the efforts of earlier swadeshi (home industry) activists in Bengal who had contented

themselves with the promotion of Indian produced mill cloth. For he decreed that to qualify as Khadi, cloth had to be not only hand woven and locally produced but also made from hand-spun yarn. ⁴

“Foreign cloth must be totally banished from the Indian market, if India is to become an economically free nation, if her peasantry is to be freed from chronic pauperism, if that peasantry is to find honourable employment during times of famine and such other visitations. Protection of her staple industry is her birthright. I would, therefore, protect the Indian mills against foreign competition, even though for the time being it may result in mulcting the poor people. Such mulcting can take place only if the mill-owners are so unpatriotic as to raise prices owing to the monopoly they may secure. Similarly and consistently, I would protect hand-spun Khaddar against the home mills. And I know that, if only foreign competition is avoided, Khaddar will be protected without difficulty. Foreign cloth will be banished when public opinion becomes effectively powerful. The same power will insure the protection of Khaddar against mills. But my strong belief is that Khaddar will come to its own without any unseemly war with the mills. But, whilst Khaddar has only a limited number of votaries, they, the votaries, must necessarily preach Khaddar in preference to, and to the exclusion of, yarn and cloth manufactured even in our mills. To give the option is to kill Khaddar.”

For Gandhi, it was an effective substitute for violent methods. Just as certain acts, such as abuse, irritating conduct, lying, causing hurt, and murder are symbols of violence, similarly courtesy, inoffensive conduct, truthfulness etc. are symbols of non-violence. And so to him, boycott of foreign cloth was a symbol of non-violence. Revolutionary crime is intended to exert pressure. But it is the insane pressure of anger and ill-will. He contended that non-violent acts exert pressure far more effective

than violent acts, for that pressure comes from goodwill and gentleness. Boycott of foreign cloth exerts such pressure. He said “ We import the largest amount of foreign cloth from Lancashire. It is also by far the largest of all our imports, sugar being the next. Britain’s chief interest centers round the Lancashire trade with India. It is the one thing more than any other that has ruined the Indian peasant, and imposed partial idleness upon him by depriving him of the one supplementary occupation he had. Boycott of foreign cloth is, therefore, a necessity if he is to live”. The plan, therefore, was not merely to induce the peasant to refuse to buy the cheap and nice looking foreign fabric, but also by teaching him to utilize his spare hours in carding and spinning cotton and getting it woven by the village weavers, to dress himself in Khaddar so woven and thus to save him the cost of buying foreign and, for that matter, even Indian mill-made cloth. Thus, boycott of foreign cloth by means of hand-spinning and hand-weaving, i.e., Khaddar, not only saves the peasant’s money, but it enables us workers to render social service of a first class order. It brings us into direct touch with the villagers.

It enables us to give them real political education and teach them to become self-sustained and self-reliant.” For him Organization of Khaddar is thus infinitely better than cooperative societies or any other form of village organization. It is fraught with the highest political consequence, because it removes the greatest immoral temptation from Britain’s way. He called the Lancashire trade immoral, because it was raised and is sustained on the ruin of millions of India’s peasants. And as one immorality leads to another, the many proved immoral acts of Britain are traceable to this one immoral traffic. If, therefore, this one great temptation is removed from Britain’s path by India’s voluntary effort, it

would be good for India, good for Britain, and, as Britain is today the predominant world power, good even for humanity.⁵

In 1953 when the Khadi and Village Industries Board was established it had only 156 registered institutions. Today every village however remote or small has its own khadi institutions. Initially the weaving of khadi was rather difficult as it was impossible to weave a full length of cotton with the uneven khadi thread and at one time Gandhi is believed to have threatened to wear a sack if he was not provided with a khadi dhoti.

6.4 Gandhi's Economic Thought

Gandhi's economic ideas were in a sense a logical corollary of his political and moral principles such as Swaraj, Sarvodaya, "Truth and Non-violence" and the like. Based on these wider social principles Gandhi derived his economic ideas which if brought together would give a picture of the economic system that he visualized.

The most important principles which influenced Gandhi, and which later became the guiding spirit behind all his ideas, was the principle of Sarvodaya - good for all. This principle originated out of his reading of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* which held that the good of the individual contained in the good of all. It was Gandhi's desire that the good should percolate even to the last of the socio-economic ladder - the poorest of the poor. Given the goal of Sarvodaya Gandhi was confronted with the question of what kind of economic system his country should evolve for itself. It was in this context that his wider social ideas of Swaraj, truth and non-violence inspired him to evolve an economic system which was consistent with his political and moral philosophy. From the idea of Swaraj emerged the ideas of Swadeshi and Self-sufficiency. And from the principle of truth and non-violence emerged a series of economic ideas

like non-exploitation, non-possession, trusteeship, bread labour and so on. All these ideas which in fact having originated under different context , formed the founding pillars of Gandhi's economic system.

Gandhi believed that the economic good of all lay in adopting the principle of Swadeshi or self –sufficiency. Though Gandhi used the principle of Swadeshi earlier as a political weapon to boycott the foreign goods, particularly of the British, it actually acquired economic overtones gradually .It would be noted that the concept of Swadeshi inculcated in the minds of Indians the imperative and the value of self – sufficiency both at the national and local village level. He later used this concept with the other economic idea- viz., decentralization, as a technique of building an economic system which was purely Indian and massbased.

His belief that India lived in villages led him to propound the concept of the village Swaraj ,which among other things, envisaged village self sufficiency. In its extreme form, village self-sufficiency not merely meant non-dependence of the village on other villages for its economic needs but it also meant self-sufficiency among households. This meant that each house hold would produce its own requirements- food, clothing, and other things – and never depend on others for its economic needs.

In Gandhi's system people are expected to live a life of simplicity. This according to Gandhi, is possible by “self-abnegation and abstermiousness” and not falling a victim to the charms of modern civilization which lays the trap of expanding material wants.⁶

6.5 Gandhi's economic reference to khadi

The Gandhian form of swadeshi sought to nurture forms of technology that were seen appropriate to the needs of the majority of the people. aimed to provide dignity for manual occupations and allow for a more equitable distribution of labour with all forms of work, whether public or domestic, being accorded an equal value. There was a space in this for labour saving devices and technologies, so long as they reinforce this process rather than undermined it, as factory based production was seen to do at range of levels. By valourising labour intensive work so publicly, Gandhi also emphasized that self reliance through labour would be required by all citizens of a future India. For Gandhi, the winning and maintenance of freedom was impossible without such work-discipline.⁷

The spinning wheel took pride of place in this campaign, as Gandhi believed that it provided the best means through which poor could earn a supplementary income or save money by producing their own clothes. For, him it epitomized the spirit of self-reliance.

He launched the spinning campaign in 1919, persuading one of his followers to offer a prize of Rs5000 for the best design for a wheel. A simple and portable wheel was produced in the following year. Gandhian activists raised funds to have these wheels manufactured and distributed to the poor. The thread was then supplied to handloom weavers to make into a cloth called Khadi. Khadi bhandars were opened to market the results, along with other Indian-made products and nationalist literature.⁸

It was in 1921 that Gandhi launched the movement of spin your own cloth and buy hand spun cloth which gained momentum making khadi the fabric of the freedom struggle.

Around that time Gandhi used khadi as the uniform for the first Non Cooperation movement and the Gandhi cap had strong symbolic overtones- that of the Indo-British battle over the looms of Manchester and a bid for a modern Indian identity. So deep rooted was the sentiment attached to this fabric that Pandit Nehru wove for his daughter Indira a wedding sari in salmon pink khadi while he was in jail. This sari is still worn by women of the Nehru-Gandhi family on their wedding day.

In 1953 when the Khadi and Village Industries Board was established it had only 156 registered institutions. Today every village however remote or small has its own khadi institutions. Initially the weaving of khadi was rather difficult as it was impossible to weave a full length of cotton with the uneven khadi thread and at one time Gandhi is believed to have threatened to wear a sack if he was not provided with a khadi dhoti. Today the range of khadi products is unlimited from garments to household linen to furnishings, etc.

The weaving of khadi is preceded by the spinning of the thread on the charkha after which it goes to the bobbin winder, warper, sizer and finally the weaver. While spinning is organized by the khadi Board, weaving is done by the weaver at his home in an individual capacity. Spinning is mostly done by the girls and women in the villages, while weaving is dominated by men. Because of the work involved, the price of the khadi cloth when it reaches the shops is more than that of the mill or handloom cloth.⁸

“ I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then, sooner or later, the fact must be recognized that the people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts not in

palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live in the palaces. They will have no recourse but to resort to both violence and truth.

I hold that without Truth and Non-violence, there can be nothing but destruction humanity. We can realize Truth and Non-violence only in the simplicity of village life, and this simplicity of village life can best be found in the Charkha and all that the Charkha connotes.

I must not fear if the world today is going the wrong way. It may be that India, too, will go that way and like the proverbial moth, burn itself eventually in the flame around which it dances more and more fiercely. But it is my burden duty, up to my last breath to try to protect India, and through India the entire world from this doom". **M. K. Gandhi**

Mahatma Gandhi used Khadi less as a garment and more as message to both Indians and the British. Gandhi became, perhaps, the best communicator of his age. The sheer simplicity of clothing as a medium of this communication, was an act of a genius.

"If we have the 'khadi spirit' in us, we would surround ourselves with simplicity in every walk of life. The 'khadi spirit' means illimitable patience. For those who know anything about the production of khadi know how patiently the spinners and the weavers have to toil at their trade, and even so must we have patience while we are spinning 'the thread of Swaraj'. The 'khadi spirit' means also an equally illimitable faith. Even as the spinner toiling away at the yarn he spins by itself small enough, put in the aggregate, would be enough to clothe every human being in India, so must we have illimitable faith

in truth and non-violence ultimately conquering every obstacle in our way.

The 'khadi spirit' means fellow-feeling with every human being on earth. It means a complete renunciation of everything that is likely to harm our fellow creatures, and if we but cultivate that spirit amongst the millions of our countrymen, what a land this India of ours would be! And the more I move about the country and the more I see the things for myself, the richer, the stronger is my faith growing in the capacity of the spinning wheel.”⁹

There is a quaint story of how Gandhi while visiting a poor village spoke to an old woman huddled in her dark dingy hut asking if there was anything she needed. The woman said she had everything pointing to an old charkha in the corner. Gandhi's greatest ambition in life was ‘to wipe every tear from every eye’. Describing his passion for serving the poor he said “God is found more often in the lowliest of his creatures than in the high and mighty... I am struggling to reach the status of these hence my passion for the service of the suppressed (and oppressed) classes.”

Over a period of time Gandhi gave up all privileges. He began to live a Spartan life in ashrams like a sanyasi. As he explained “whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo for me”. He wanted to reduce himself to zero for he believed that so long as man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures there is no salvation for him. And Gandhi wanted salvation not only for himself but for the oppressed in all of mankind.

Gandhi believed service to others was ‘moksha’ and service to the poorest the highest form of ‘moksha’, that is, liberation, self-realisation. For Gandhi the practice of service to others was not just

one possible route to 'moksha', it was the only possible way.

'Moksha' therefore meant public service for the poorest, and this inevitably led Gandhi to politics.

The life of millions was Gandhi's religion as well as his politics, as also his economics. He wanted to see that the poor have the basic necessities of life, even though we may have to sacrifice the 'toys of civilization'. And we have since realised that the 'toys of civilization' we have pursued have led us to a culture of inequality, violence, the destruction of the Earth's resources and of Earth itself.

Economic development has a different meaning for each age and for each culture. And it has a different meaning at the center and at the periphery. Gandhi's concerns of economic development were more with the 'periphery', that is, with the villages than with large scale industries promoted at the center.

There has been economic and spiritual violence at the way 'economic development' has been pursued—violence not only against the poor, with large scale projects of mining, forestry, building dams, in the kind of agriculture pursued, but also against the Earth itself. 'Development' seems to have created a milieu from which subsistence workers and subsistence activities have been eliminated. Gandhi's 'charkha' and 'khadi' were an expression of economic development which focused on the poor and on the subsistence worker.

Gandhi advocated 'khadi' as the beginning of economic freedom and equality for all.

"I think of the poor of India every time that I draw a thread on the wheel...what they (the poor) need is some kind of occupation, and the

occupation that will give employment to millions can only be hand spinning”.....

"It is the charkha that enabled the seven hundred thousand villages to become self contained. With the exit of the charkha went the other village industries such as the oil press. Nothing took place of the industries. Therefore the villagers were drained of their varied occupation and their creative talent and what little wealth these brought them..... Hence if the villages are to come into their own the most natural thing that suggests itself is the revival of charkha and all it means.”

“When I say that I want Independence for the millions, I mean to say not only that the millions may have something to eat and to cover themselves with, but that they will be free from the exploitation of people here and outside”.....

"I....claim for the charkha the honor of being able to solve the problem of economic distress in a most natural, simple, inexpensive and business manner.... It is the symbol of the nations prosperity, and therefore, freedom...” “The spinning wheel rules out exclusiveness. It stands for all including the poorest.”¹⁰

Further, Gandhi also advocated the charkha as an instrument of service and love for the poor, as a symbol of peace and non-violence, and as a path of inner and spiritual awakening.

“The message of the spinning wheel is really to replace the spirit of exploitation by the spirit of service”.....

“The charkha is the symbol of non-violence on which all life, if it is to be real life, must be based”.....

“Since I believe that where there is pure and active love for the poor, there is God also, I see God in every thread that I draw on the spinning wheel”.....

“I have often said that if the seven lakhs of the villages of India were to be kept alive and if peace that is at the root of all civilization is to be achieved, we have to make the spinning wheel the center of all handicrafts”.¹¹

Gandhi's hope was that the charkha would solve economic and poverty problems of India's villages. He also hoped that khadi would end India's exploitation. But we ignored Gandhi, and chose the path of industrialisation, because we wanted 'speedy' development. A return to charkha and khadi economy, said our elites and economists, would mean a return to primitiveness, a lowering of our standards of living. “Not so”, said Gandhi, “if by a high standard of living we mean that those who have not enough to eat should have plenty of fresh and wholesome diet, those who are naked should have durable clothes, those who have no shelter should have cosy dwellings.” Gandhi's development philosophy focused on providing the basic necessities of life for the masses, as his first priority and ignored what he called the 'toys of civilization'.¹²

In his dress and demeanour Gandhi almost belongs to the ascetic tradition of the East. Not only in his choice of such and image, but in the essential making of his philosophy and politics, he took recourse to an innovative set of words and symbols. In deed as a mass leader he had an uncanny knack for creating and using symbols and like most popular symbols, In deed as a mass leader he had an uncanny knack for creating and using symbols, Khadi has a complex and different appellation. Gandhi sought to convey multiple messages through

Khadi, arguable the focal one among them was a critique of modernity. Khadi was apt symbol of long Indian tradition on the one hand and a critique of modern western Civilization on the other hand. In relation to three important concepts, which form the very core of modernity in India again Khadi, has been used as a critique. These three concepts are nationalism, industrialism and western education.

“Khadi and Indian Tradition,” Indians have not only been weavers, but even exporters of cotton fabric since time immemorial. Historians have found clear evidence of Harappans supplying cotton textiles to Sumerians around four millennia back in the past. In the more recent history, British themselves imported huge quantities of clothes from India, before they introduced a colonial pattern of made. At the time of arrival of the British in India, next to cultivation weaving was the commonest economic exploitation by the British themselves imported huge quantities of clothes form India, before they introduced a colonial pattern of made. At the time of arrival of the British in India, next to cultivation weaving was the activity in the Indian country side. The saga of the economic exploitation British is replete with reference to the decline of cotton weavers. That the theme of hand –woven fabric, that is, Khadi was brought up and invested with new meaning by Gandhi was nothing but natural. In fact weaving has been a common metaphor, even in the spiritual discourse of many saints and philosophers, the most notable among than was Kabir, himself a weaver. His poetry is replete with reference to warp and woof or the mechanism of weaving. One of his many oft quoted songs is “Jheeni, Jheeni rebeenee chadria “Kabir expresses the spiritual endeavour of man through the metaphor of weaving. While not exactly forsaking the spiritual content, Gandhi reinvented the mundane human endeavor, no less complex through.

Innumerable songs were composed during the years of freedom struggle or afterwards how Gandhi will or did drive out the British with the help of his charka. It became symbol of freedom struggle. “Livery of freedom” as Nehru described Khadi which was however also a means of economic regeneration of the village and much more. Gandhi declared, “My Swadeshi chiefly centers around the hand – spun Khadar and extends to every thing that can be and is produced in India.”¹³

Many of us recall with relish the famous remark of Gandhi on western civilization being yet ‘a good idea’ He in deed had a deep suspicion of the material progress in the west and further, of the whole concept of modernity’. He identified the real enemy of the Indian people not as the British themselves but as their modern civilization. In the preface to the English edition of his seminal work *Hind civilization*, which is the Kingdom of God. The one is the God of War, the other is the God of Peace, My countrymen, therefore believe that they should adopt modern civilization to drive out the English. *Hind Swaraj* has been written in order to show that they are following a suicide policy, and that, if they would but revert to their own glorious civilization either the English would adopt the latter and become Indianized or find their occupation in India gone. Khadi was reversion to that ‘glorious civilization’ as “The sun of the village solar system”.

Among the borrowings from the modern west, uncritically accepted by the western educated intelligentsia, two crucial ones are the idea of nation state and modern industrialization. Gandhi had a different concept of both. Further down, he rejected the very system of education that made educated Indians modern.⁽¹²⁾

Against mechanistic and aggressive concept of nationalism in the west, Gandhi proposed a concept of People's Swaraj based on truth and non-violence for which Khadi was an apt symbol. Moreover, this symbol also linked the concept of Swaraj with the concern for the poor- the last man and village, the supported bastion of backwardness. Prior Gandhi, the nationalist leaders had acquiesced in by an large to a western concept of nationalism; Gandhi not only critiqued that but provided an alternative concept, more deeply rooted in the tradition and encompassing all Indians, rich and poor alike, He gave a moral perspective to the national movement for which a set of new symbols were created by him, Khadi Ramraj, and Satyagraha he was designing a new framework of ideology more appropriate for the teeming millions of India, eighty five percent of them residing in the country side. His critique was not merely, an alternative ideology, it was a plan of mass action that he visualized was again not merely a political programme but a social and economic agenda, to quote one of his sentences: "Khadi service, village service and the Harijans service are one in reality, thought three in name".¹⁴

True economics, according to Gandhi, 'never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics to be worth its name must at the same time be also good economics'.¹⁵

He was critical of pursuit of materialism which was the characteristic of the advancement of the west. He was generally opposed to machines and centralization of production and favored on the contrary a life of labour for everyone in the society, succinctly contained in his concept of bread labour. He believed in the ideal of economic self-sufficiency of the villages. He describes his idea of an ideal socio-economic order in the following words:

“Independence must begin at the bottom, Thus every village will be a republic or Panchayat having full powers. In this structure composed of innumerable village there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circles whose centre will be individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral parts.

In this there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has a unique place in a cultural human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place.

Khadi is evidently the centre piece of the strategy for such an economic utopia. It not only means compulsion of labour through spinning but a very decentralized mode of production contributing to the possibility of a self-sufficient rural economy. It is both a value system in it self and defines an alternative framework of economy. He writes clearly that ‘Khadi mentality means decentralization of the production and distribution of the production and distribution of the necessaries of life’.¹⁶

In this years of with – drawal from active politics from 1924, Gandhi devoted himself to the propagation of Khadi turning it into a cult, as a strategy of nation building ‘from the bottom up’ He suggested a ‘Khadi franchise’ for the organization and even ‘envisaged a ‘yarn currency’.¹⁷

B. R. Nanda comments 'that Gandh's almost emotional attachment to the spinning wheel should have baffled both the British and Western educated town – bred Indians, educated town-bred Indians, is not surprising' for 'they were both unable, the former from lack of will, the latter from lack of ignorance, to grasp the incredible poverty of Indian village. Even Tagore, otherwise an admirer of Mahatma, feared that spinning wheel and the economic stagnation it implied will cause a 'death – like sameness in the country.' Gandhi reply was loud and clear:

"I didn't want the poet to forsake his music, the farmer his plough, the lawyer his brief, and the doctor his lancet. They are to spin only thirty minutes every day as sacrifice. I have every day as sacrifice. I have in deed asked the famishing man and woman, who is idle for work whatsoever to spin for a living and the half-starved farmer to spin during his income."

Gandhi's appeal surely had a moral ground and further he would make spinning wheel the centre of his scheme of rural reconstruction building up anti-malaria campaigns, improvement in sanitation, settlement of village disputes, conservation and breeding of cattle and hundred of other beneficent activities required for the resuscitation of the village. He proposed that 'Khadi is the sun of the village solar system.'

It is well-known that Ruskin's book *Unto This Last* had an indelible imprint on his mind. Behind the whole Khadi campaign, it was this last man who was always in Gandhi's mind. On the other side, he opposed the tendency of ever increasing consumption and multiplication of wants. The self-abnegation and asceticism of Gandhi's economic prescription has often been criticized as too

idealistic and taken to the extremes. Even if it is true, now environmentalists are veering round to almost a similar position. Excessive consumption may not be sustainable and may result in depletion of the limited resources on the earth. Sidestepping this debate, it may be noted that the Khadi – centered scheme for rural development was typical of Gandhian economic framework, rather, its core principal.

Notwithstanding misgivings about the feasibility of his economic ideas, in the first ten years of its existence the All India Spinners Association had extended its activities to 5300 villages and provided employment to 220,000 spinners, 20,000 weavers and 20,000 carders and disbursed more than two crores of rupees in Indian villages. Gandhi, of course, knew the limitations of his efforts in the context of the magnitude of the problem. He decided to settle in a village, named, Segaon near Wardha, which was later renamed as Sevagram. Soon Sevagram became a centre of Gandhian Scheme of village welfare and several institutions started there including All Indian Village Industries. The Association set up a school for training village workers and published its own periodical, Gram Udyog Patrika. Hindustani Talimi Sangh was the other institution which experimented on Gandhi's ideas of education. Basic Education as Critique of Modernity.

Education was arguably the most important arena for the introduction of modernity in India. Designed as it was by the colonial masters, besides remaining generally divorced from India tradition, it was also oblivious to the needs and problems of the teeming millions in the countryside. Gandhi's basic education scheme was primarily a

system of rural education and handicraft constituted the medium of instruction. Spinning and weaving was again Gandhi's preference among the crafts and so his entire pedagogy and educational philosophy was intermeshed with his khadi based approach to life.

From his earliest days in Indian public life Gandhi was critical of the Western system of education for much of what it stood for in his opinion. A sample of his critique can be read below:

“The system of education at present in vogue is wholly unsuited to India's needs, is a bad copy of the Western model and it has by reason of the medium of instruction being a foreign language sapped the energy of the youths who had passed through our schools and colleges and has produced an army of clerks and office-seekers. It has dried up all originality, impoverished the vernaculars and has deprived the masses of the benefit of higher knowledge which would otherwise have percolated through the intercourse of the education classes with them. The system has resulted in creating a gulf between educated India and the masses. It has stimulated the brain but starved the spirit for want of a religious basis for education and emaciated the body for want of training in handicrafts. It has criminally neglected the greatest need of agricultural training worth the name....”

Judith Brown has rightly observed, it is difficult to appreciate quite how radical and abrasive Gandhi would have sounded to educated Indians as he castigated their educational training and their values and told them they were traitors to their mother land by being willing ‘victims’ of the current system’ (1989, 107). Despite their opposition to British rule, most their nationalists did not reject the British rule, most other nationalists did not reject the British system of education outright, since they viewed it as a means by which India

could become a materially advanced nation. But from the beginning of his career Gandhi thought differently.

Alongside Champaran Satyagraha, his earliest foray into local politics, he launched his experiment in education. In November 1917 the first school was opened in Barharwa just a week after. The experiment grew mature and eventually in 1937 after Wardha Conference fully developed was announced, although system was announced although it was indeed a modified version of Gandhi's own scheme of education. Even in June 1921, writing in *Young India* he had outlined his views with a great deal of clarity, "I can see nothing wrong in the children, from the very threshold of their education, paying for it in work. The simplest handicraft, suitable for all, required for the whole of India undoubtedly spinning along with the previous processes. If we introduced this in our educational institutions, we should fulfill three purposes. If we introduced this in our educational institutions, we should fulfill three purposes: make education self-supporting, train the bodies of the children as well as their minds and pave the way for a complete boycott of foreign yarn and cloth. Moreover, the children thus equipped will become self-reliant and independent.

It would be erroneous to think that Gandhi rejected ideas from the modern west in toto or that remained un-influenced altogether. It may be pertinent to note that he viewed his life as 'experiments with truth', ostensibly a tribute to science, to which he was sufficiently exposed as a student. Although he claimed that he was what he was 'in spite of western education', he didn't insulate himself from the western influence. Of course, he was both selective and innovative when it came to borrowing from the west. Two persons who deeply influenced

him were John Ruskin and Leo Tolstoy, but neither in deed was a typical representative of 'modernity'. They themselves were critics of modern civilization.

As Tolstoy saw it the false supposition of modern thinkers such as Renan, Strauss, Comte, Spencer and Marx was the human betterment effected 'not by moral efforts of individual men towards recognition, elucidation, and profession of truth, but by a gradual alteration of the general external conditions of life.' They believe that 'the chief activity of man who wishes to serve society and improve the condition of mankind should be directed not to the elucidation and profession of truth, but to the amelioration of external political, social, and above all, economic conditions... Let all those external conditions be realised', responds Tostoy, 'the position of humanity will not be bettered'.

Gandhi read a number of other nineteenth century of western civilization including Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), Henry David Thoreau (1817-62), Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82) and Robert Sherard (1861-1943). A list of such works forms appendix of Hind Swaraj.

In one of his works Bhikhu Parekh has neatly analysed the synthesis of East & West that can be noticed in Gandhi's Thought: (Gandhi) took over the concept of ahimsa (non-violence) from the Indian Traditions, especially the Jain. But he found it negative and passive and reinterpreted it in the light of the activist and socially oriented Christian concept, yielded the novel idea of an active and positive but detached and non emotive love.

Noted educationist Krishna Kumar too highlights his indebtedness to western thought in his scheme of education. He observes that if it were possible to read his plan as a anonymous text in

the history of world education, one would conveniently classify it in the tradition of (the) western radical humanists.

Khadi was not only a simple economic activity confined to the rural households, it was an active socially –oriented campaign, a drill for the shoulders of national movement and an occasion for creating a social dialogue in a hierarchical society. Khadi was a doubt a critique of the typical western modern civilization based on industrialism, materialism. And yet it shares many a feature of the radical humanist tradition in the west, while remaining firmly rooted in the indigenous tradition. Gandhi himself started his position with regard to influences in a picturesque manner. He declared that he did not want his windows to be stuffed and wanted free air to blow about from all sides. He simply added that he would not like to be swept off his feet.¹⁸

“ It was our love of foreign cloth that ousted the wheel from its position of dignity. Therefore, I consider it a sin to wear foreign cloth. I must confess that I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral wellbeing of an individual or a nation are immoral, therefore, sinful. Thus, the economics that permit one country to prey upon another are immoral. It is sinful to buy and use articles made by sweated labour. It is sinful to eat American wheat and let my neighbor that grain – dealer starve for want of custom. Similarly it is sinful to wear finery of Regent Street, when I know that I had but worn the things woven by the neighbouring spinners and weaver, that would have clothed me & fed and clothed them. On the knowledge of my sin bursting upon me, I must consign the foreign garments to the flame and thus purify myself, and thenceforth rest content with the rough khadi made by my

neighbours. On knowing that my neighbours may not, having given up the occupation, take kindly to the spinning wheel, I must take it up myself and thus make it popular".¹⁹

The environmental problems were also envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi a century ago when actually there was no environmental problem and hence Gandhiji was real visionary. According to Gandhian philosophy problem of environmental degradation is in the mind of individual. He should change himself from inside out for which individual must be spiritual and religious. Hence prayer was made part of daily routine in Gandhi ashram. The root cause is human greed, needs and wants. This gives rise to vicious circle that is consumerism-industrialisation-mass production-huge requirement of raw material and fuel-large storage space-heavy transportation and finish product in bulk quantity. The technology and machinery required will displace labour due to automation. This will give rise to another vicious circle that is displacement of labour-unemployment-poverty-environmental degradation. These two vicious circles will have negative effect on environment. Hence concept of swaraj was put forth by Gandhiji that is total liberation, self reliance and self sufficiency. Hence Gandhiji gave slogan for youth "to go back to villages". He insisted for village and handicraft industries which are less machine dependent, labour intensive, energy saver and protects environment. Hence Khadi industries were promoted.²⁰

6. 6 Economic Decentralization

Gandhi was not a professional economist in the true sense of the term. But in a large and eventful life he had occasion to develop his economic ideas based on the situation in India. Gandhian economic theory provides a new and realistic approach to contemporary

problems of poverty hunger and degradation. Beginning with the position that exploitation is at the root of the violence, Gandhi builds his ideas in such a manner that avoids exploitation of man by man. His panacea is to do away with the concentration of economic by proposing economic decentralization at various levels of the power hierarchy of the Indian society. Gandhi frequently asserted that “ if India is to develop along the non-violent lines,it will have to decentralize many things”.

Gandhi took the position that concentration of economic power created the capitalist class which was exploitative of the talent and resources available in the society.It does not require much argument to assert that concentration of economic power has created a gulf between the privileged few and under-privileged majority. In a traditional society the discrimination of individuals based on wealth made it more difficult for the development of a modern society.It must be observed that the concentration of economic power goes hand in hand with the concentration of the political power,leading to a dictatorial or an authoritarian system. In an underdeveloped country like India concentration of economic power in the hands of a few provides them with a great deal of privilege in the socio-political and economic milieu of the country. Taking into account all the obnoxious features Gandhi opted for decentralization of economic power.

In line with this reasoning of Gandhi the advocacy of cottage and small- scale industries for all round development of rural areas assumes great significance. Gandhi believed that decentralization of economic power could fruitfully serve the interest of the community by bringing about rapid development of the industries. Gandhi's advocacy of universal use of Khadi by fostering the patriotic spirit of

Swadeshi is part and parcel of his comprehensive understanding of decentralization through dispersal of economic power. Gandhi's concept of economic of Swaraj was co-equal with full self sufficiency in economic matters of every village . He visualized a communitarian village that would look after the food, clothing, shelter and educational needs of every individual in the rural area. In such a village of Gandhi's conception, consumption would be regulated through minimization on the basis of simplicity.

Gandhi gave a very liberal interpretation of the concept of Swaraj . He made it applicable to all spheres of life- religious, spiritual, social, political and economic. In the economic sphere it refers to self-sufficiency of the village as an economic unit. "The broad definition of Swadeshi is the use of all home made articles to the exclusion of foreign things, in so far as such is necessary for the protection of home industries, more especially those without which India will become pauperized". The spirit of Swadeshi is not contrary to anything that is alien. On the contrary a nation could import those goods that are needed for its growth; but such import should not interfere or hinder the growth of a nation. Gandhi was very eager to preserve and protect cottage and village industries through decentralization of economic power.

A corollary to Swadeshi was Gandhi's stress on Khadi . In the nature of the thing, Khadi required decentralization of production and consumption. Since Khadi is produced by the common man in every village the economic power is distributed to every village and to every man. Localised production and consumption helps to relieve the temptation to merely speed up production. There would be no unnatural accumulation of hoards in the pockets of the few, and want

in the midst of plenty in regard to the rest.” Gandhi says in unequivocal terms that Khaddar was not meant “to destroy all machinery but it does regulate its use and check its speedy growth. It uses machinery for the poorest in their own cottages. The wheel is itself an exquisite piece of machinery.”²¹

6.7 Gandhi at Sevagram

The establishment of the Sevagram ashram and the experiments subsequently carried out there is one particular period in Gandhi’s life which has received scant attention from the many historians drawn to the study of this phenomenal individual. The Sevagram experiment once represented once the inherently progressive nature of non-violence, and, stood as a guideline for all disposed and developing people struggling for their rights.

To improve the material conditions of the villagers and to provide them with a means of utilising their many hours of idleness a few new industries were begun under the auspices of the A.I.V.I.A (All India Village Industries Association). Khadi and animal husbandry were the first to be established. Gandhi regarded the adoption of the former as recognition of the purity of service and the need to foster a revolution in one’s life. Khadi is a very practical village industry since it requires a very little capital, the implements can all be manufactured in the villages, and the final article is primarily used in the area where it is produced. Critics of the Khadi programme pointed towards the remuneration received from Khadi production as opposed to more productive occupations. Gandhi’s response was always that he never intended the spinning –wheel to compete with, or attempt to displace any existing industry. His only claim was that Khadi offered an immediate, practicable and permanent solution to the prevailing

unemployment and underemployment in the rural India. From the beginning Khadi formed the foundation of the various activities started at Sevagram. Lessons in production of Khadi were the only form of industrial instruction offered to the villagers with a potentiality to serve as a permanent safeguard against destitution, Gradually the work developed to provide employment for a large number of people from Sevagram and the surrounding villages.²²

“I claim for the Charkha the honour of being able to solve the problem of economic distress in a most natural, simple, inexpensive and business like manner. The Charkha, therefore, is not only not useless, but it is a useful and indispensable article for every home. It is the symbol of the nation’s prosperity and, therefore, freedom. It is a symbol not of commercial war, but of commercial peace. It bears not a message of ill-will towards the nations of the earth, but of good-will and selfhelp. It will not need the protection of navy threatening a world’s peace and exploiting its resources, but it needs the religious determination of millions to spin their yarn in their own homes as today they cook their food in their own homes. I may deserve the curses of posterity for many mistakes of omission and commission, but I am confident of earning its blessings for suggesting a revival of the Charkha. I stake my all on it. For, every revolution of the wheel spins peace, goodwill and love. And with all that, inasmuch as the loss of it brought about India’s slavery, its voluntary revival with all its implications must mean India’s freedom.”²³

6.8 Khadi and women

Gandhiji thought unemployment to be a women’s issue, and therefore symbolically as well as practically he introduced the ‘charkha’ (spinning wheel) as an instrument of the freedom movement. The

propagation of khadi was to protect the employment of the poorest women. Spinning was an important home industry during the nineteenth century. It was source of livelihood for women of all castes, communities and even for the women of low income levels. Many widows supplemented their family income by spinning cotton yarn. Muslim women, who were not allowed to step out of their homes to earn livelihood, spent their time, spinning cotton thread. Thus spinning wheel brought economic independence, specially for women. For Gandhiji khadi was not a cloth but a thought, a philosophy that aimed at a self reliant economy, a link of concern between the haves and the have nots. Around that time Gandhi used khadi as the first Non-cooperation movement and the Gandhi cap had strong symbolic overtones that of the Indo-British battle over the looms of Manchester and a bid for a modern Indian identity.

In 1915 Gandhiji introduced a few handlooms in the Ashram and learnt the art of weaving. However, the yarn used was produced from Mills. Gandhiji was eager to start hand spinning in Ashram and was in search of spinning, who teach him and the inmates of Ashram of spin. But he would neither get a spinning wheel nor a spinner. The art of hand spinning was almost lost. His visit to Champaran in 1916 made him more aware of the pathetic condition in the extent of poverty of the people. Women in Bhitwara were unable to change their clothes due to lack of availability of another pair.

At this critical juncture, Gandhiji met Smt. Gangaben Mujmuder, an enterprising middle age widow from Vijapur near Baroda in October 1917 to whom he entrusted the important task of finding a spinning wheel.

Though immortalized in Gandhiji's autobiography and in his speeches and writings, Smt. Gangaben could find carders and after finding them, she trained some youngsters to make slivers from the carded cotton. She hired a house at Vijapur and started staying with her daughter Saraswati, sisters Hiralaxmi and Keshawlabhai and together they started a spinning centre. She faced greater difficulty in getting spun yarn women because handloom weaves at the time only wove finer yarn for mills. She met a Muslim weaver, who helped her to train weavers to weave hand spun yarn. Thus started a production centre of Khadi Vijapur khadi gained a name for itself.²⁴

In 1919 about one hundred and fifty women spinners worked at the centre. Soon she started a weaving unit at the centre and thus her khadi enterprise included Carding, Slivering, Spinning and Weaving. It was the first production centre for khadi manufacture. Gandhiji exhorted people and women in particular to follow her example and to start centres of khadi production in villages. Soon Gangaben expanded her activities and her enterprise thrived and prospered under her able leadership. She showed immense organizing capacity and innovative skills. In 1921 she had 2000 spinning wheels at the centre. Thus she restored the lost craft to hand spinning and weaving. Khadi become a new word in the vocabulary of India. Thus, plain and uneducated Gangaben Mujumdar become a pioneer in a new era. Through her, the khadi industry was born. Gandhiji had decided to bring the work of Gangaben to public notice and he published 'Pateri issue of Sani Vartaman that'.

With Gandhiji's inspiration and Gangaben's hard work, the khadi activity began. Gandhii's inspiration awakened many women for this khadi activity across different parts of the country. Among these women

were mainly Maniben Nanavati, Mithooben, Maniben Patel, Harshaben and Ushaben Mehta.

Maniben and three of her friends, Jayaben Desai, Shirin Havewala and Sunaben Rao started Khadi Mandir in 1934 at Vile Parle as an effort by women towards the liberation of the Nation. She had put a board “Khadi Mandir is run by women”. Women were confident and well equipped to work bringing khadi selling it and maintaining accounts.²⁵

6.9 Khadi - Controversy

Khadi is a controversial subject. Many people thought that in advocating Khadi Gandhi sailing against a headwind and was sure to sink the ship of the Swaraj and that he was taking the country to the dark ages.

To which Gandhi said “I do not propose to argue the case for Khadi in this brief survey. I have argued it sufficiently elsewhere. Here I want to show what every Congressman, and for that matter every Indian, can do to advance the cause of Khadi. It connotes the beginning of economic freedom and equality of all in the country. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Let everyone try, and he or she will find out for himself or herself the truth of what I am saying. Khadi must be taken with all its implications. It means a wholesale swadeshi mentality, a determination to find all the necessaries of life in India and that too through the labour and intellect of the villagers. That means the reversal of the existing process. That is to say that, instead of a half a dozen cities of India and Great Britain living on the exploitation and the ruin of a 700,000 villages in India, the latter will be largely self-contained, and will voluntarily serve the cities of India and even the outside world in so far as it benefits both the parties.

This needs a revolutionary change in the mentality and tastes of many. Easy through the non-violent way is in many respects, it is very

difficult in many others. It vitally touches the life of every single Indian, makes him feel aglow with the possession of the power of that has lain hidden within himself, and makes him proud of his identity with every drop of the ocean of Indian humanity. This non-violence is not the inanity for which we have mistaken it through all these long ages; it is the most potent force as yet known to mankind and on which its very existence is dependent. It is that force which I have tried to present to the Congress and through it to the world. Khadi to me is the symbol of unity of Indian humanity, of its economic freedom and equality and, therefore, ultimately, in the poetic expression of Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘the livery of India’s freedom’.

Moreover, Khadi mentality means decentralization of production and distribution of the necessities of life.

6.10 Conclusion

Gandhi incorporated his constructive programme in a people friendly manner comprised of three principles-Swadeshi (home – based production); Sarvodaya (aim of public welfare) and Aparigraha (non-possessiveness). This programme was inaugurated during 1920-21 and was very close to Gandhi’s heart.

A technology appropriate for the majority of people’s needs was to be encouraged .India required labour intensive technology as there were many hands available which would be unemployed if labour – saving technology was head , self-reliance through labour was also considered important for the Indians.The spinning wheel was a key example of this approach. A small portable design of spinning wheel was popularized. People were encouraged to make Khadi, did not prove to be a very profitable venture. It was expensive as compared to mill-produced cloth. It led to some criticism of Gandhi’s economic theory.

He was accused of promoting time-consuming, back-breaking devices instead of labour-saving devices. Actually to an extent, this criticism was not wrong because technology had made people's life easier in many ways and which were beneficial.⁽²⁵⁾

Khadi was not however able to compete with mill-made clothing terms of price and hand-spinning did not turn out to be an economically viable occupation. In the long run Khadi production survived through subsidies from the rich obtained through the All India spinners Association, founded by Gandhi in 1925. Khadi was kept alive because of its great symbolic importance for the cause. In strictly economic terms, this work did not provide a good example of self-sufficiency.

This failure gave an edge of criticisms of Gandhian economic theory in general. He was accused of shunning labour-saving devices in favour of older-style labour – intensive methods of production that have historically condemned the poor to long hours of back-breaking labour. Although there was argueably, some truth in this so far as Khadi and other labour-intensive activities were concerned, there were many other areas in which appropriate technologies have proved to be of obvious value to the poor. For example, working conditions for women have been greatly improved through improvements in Chula (stove), design, the development of gobar gas plants and solar cookers, and improvement of hand-pump.

Even Khadi might be made a success. Much of its problems has probably stemmed from the fact that Khadi – spinning and weaving were fetishised, while other elements necessary for sustainable and eco-friendly cotton-growing economy were neglected.²⁶

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CHAPTER VII

RELEVENCE OF KHADI

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CHAPTER VII

RELEVENCE OF KHADI

Khadi or khaddar is the term conventionally used in North and Central India to refer to varieties of coarse cotton cloth hand woven using hand spun yarn. This was the cloth commonly worn by peasant and artisan groups in pre-industrial India. It was made from locally grown cotton which would be harvested by peasants and labourers, spun by local women and woven into cloth by men from various specialist weaving castes. The precise technology involved in the production of khadi would vary from region to region, as would the techniques used for its decoration (dying, embroidery, printing etc.) Although hand spun hand woven cotton cloth of this kind was common throughout India, it was not until the early 20th century, when its production and use were in severe decline that the term “khadi” entered nationalist vocabulary and the cloth became a key visual symbol of India’s struggle from colonial rule.¹

The effectiveness of khadi as a visual symbol of the Indian freedom struggle cannot be understood without examination of the critical role played by M. K. Gandhi (known by many as Mahatma – Great Soul) in elevating it to the status of a national cloth imbued with quasi-sacred properties. Gandhi’s success lay in his capacity to pick up, embody and develop existing political and economic critiques of colonialism and rework these through his own clothing practices and through his elaboration of the symbolism of cloth a simple everyday material form to which people from all backgrounds could relate.

7.1 Gandhi’s Sartorial Biography

Gandhi’s recognition of the symbolic potential of khadi was born out of a combination of personal experience and growing nationalist

awareness. His own clothing changes and experiments are well described in his autobiography and have received considerable attention from scholars. To summarise, as a young man Gandhi was attracted to what he would later call “the tinsel splendours of Western civilization.” Like most other elite educated Indian men of his generation, he made considerable efforts to adopt Western dress and manners in public life, associating these with the values of modernity, civilization and progress. At the same time, he experienced the feelings of alienation and discomfort that the adoption of Western clothes often entailed. These feelings became most apparent to Gandhi during his years working as a lawyer and civil rights activist in South Africa (1893 -1914) where he found himself the target of racism in spite of his “civilized apparel”. At the same time he was impressed by early nationalist critiques of colonialism in India which attributed India’s poverty to the decline of the local textile industry and the mass importation of mill cloth from Europe.³ A growing disillusionment with Western definitions of civilization and progress combined with experimentations in self sufficiency, communal living, bodily labour, celibacy and the semiotics of dress – all of which later became important aspects of his social and political crusade in India.

By the time he left South Africa in 1914, Gandhi had already learned to weave handloom cloth and had already made public appearances dressed in simple Indian styles of white cotton dress as a means of political protest and identification with oppressed peoples. When he arrived back in India the following year, he staged a dramatic appearance dressed in a white turban, tunic and dhoti, an adaptation of Kathiawadi peasant dress which visually challenged the well established hierarchies that elevated Western over Indian, urban over rural and elite over popular.

It is easy to underestimate just how radical Gandhi's appearance and clothing policies were. Not only did he challenge long established hierarchies through his own dress but he also proposed a complete re-clothing of the nation as well as a full scale reorganisation of the textile industry. The revival of khadi was central to these aims.

To qualify as khadi, cloth had to be not only hand woven and locally produced but also made from hand-spun yarn. It was this stipulation that the yarn must be hand spun that distinguished Gandhi's promotion of home industry from the efforts of earlier swadeshi (home industry) activists in Bengal who had contented themselves with the promotion of Indian produced mill cloth.⁴ The difficulty Gandhi had in locating a woman who could teach him to spin is indicative of the extent to which the previously common art of hand spinning had been wiped out though mill technology, although it is likely that it was still practised in some rural areas. It was with Gandhi's spinning experiments, aided by local women in the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, that khadi was reborn as a national cloth. By 1918 Gandhi was wearing what he called pure khadi and by 1919 he was appealing to all Indians to follow suit and to take a vow of swadeshi.

7.2 From Rustic Robes to Sacred cloth

The Gandhian khadi was more than simply cloth. It was the material embodiment of an ideal. It represented not only freedom from the yoke of colonialism, but also economic self sufficiency, political independence, spiritual humility, moral purity, national integrity, communal unity, social equality, the end of untouchability and the embracing of non-violence. The spinning wheel was, he argued, the new weapon in the fight for swaraj (home rule). Through spinning their own yarn, Indians could regain their autonomy just as by wearing khadi, they

would not only struggle for independence but also experience the state of being independent. At the same time the revival of hand spinning would, he felt, usher in the revival of a more general craft based society built around the notion of self sufficient village republics.

The power of khadi as a national symbol lay in the fact that since everyone wore some form of clothing, everyone had the opportunity or, as Gandhi saw it, the duty to participate in the freedom movement by embracing khadi. And since this was traditionally the dress of peasant, artisan and tribal rather than the Indian elite, its potential wearers were in theory as numerous and varied as the Indian population itself. To this extent khadi was a powerful visual tool in the creation of an imagined national community which for the first time incorporated the non-literate majority. Khadi and the charka (spinning wheel) were also to forge the previously missing links between the personal and the political, thereby encouraging a new range of actors on the political stage. Many women, previously alienated from main stream social and political movements, lent their support to the khadi campaign, taking “vows of swadeshi” and donating their jewellery for social and political causes. This was a broad-based political and social movement that incorporated people of all ages, including children.

It was through a combination of Gandhi’s passion and existing economic and political strategies that the Congress Party placed khadi at the centre of the Non-cooperation campaign of 1920-21 and the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. These included boycotts on the import and sale of foreign cloth and the staging of public bonfires in which foreign cloth and clothes were burned and participants re-clothed themselves in simple white khadi garments which, Gandhi argued, represented self sacrifice, purity and service of the nation. In using such

highly charged symbolic language Gandhi was playing on existing semi-dormant “magical” and “moral beliefs” concerning the polluting potential of cloth, but he reversed conventions, attributing purifying properties to humble khadi rather than fine luxury silks and mill cloth.⁵ Gandhi’s insistence that European clothes were dirty, defiling our greatest outward pollution came under attack from those who felt he was in danger of reviving harmful and backward notions of untouchability.

Central to the infrastructure through which khadi was propagated was the All India Spinners Association which organised khadi tours throughout the country, replete with exhibitions, sales of cloth and demonstrations of spinning. These not only stimulated the spread of a shared visual culture but they also combined politics with entertainment in significant ways. In particular the new technology of lantern slides contributed to the visual spectacle, attracting mass audiences from rural communities. Meanwhile, at the political centre, the Congress Party adopted khadi as its official uniform, placing the image of the spinning wheel at the centre of the national flag (which was, of course made from khadi cloth), and even accepting Gandhi’s controversial proposal that every Congress member should spin for half an hour a day. Within a few years of his arrival back from South Africa Gandhi had effectively transformed the visual culture of Indian politics. White khadi cloth became a powerful presence in public protests, creating an image of visual unity as well as a sense of shared community in the struggle for freedom for swaraj (self-rule).

Gandhi’s invention of a small white khadi cap (which later became known as the Gandhi cap) represented an explicit attempt to create a single unifying piece of headwear that would be accessible to all Indian

men and boys, thereby downplaying existing sartorial diversity on the basis of region, religion, social status and occupation.

Converting the nation to khadi was, however, an ambitious quest that was only ever partially achieved. Indian clothing practices were highly diversified according to caste, religion, occupation, education and region as well as politics. Not all agreed with Gandhi's particular vision of a future India built around the notion of self sufficient village republics with the spinning wheel occupying a central place. Prominent amongst Gandhi's critics was the "untouchable" leader Babasahib Ambedkar who perceived the promotion of khadi as a means of keeping the poor in poverty. Many were dubious about the benefits of a return to hand-spinning, arguing that its demise was part of the natural progress that came with development. Amongst those high profile public figures who verbalised their criticisms was Rabindranath Tagore who suggested that "if man be stunted by big machines, the danger of his being stunted by small ones should not be lost sight of." Others complained that spinning was women's work and that it was a laborious and repetitive activity.

Uniting religious groups through khadi was also a difficult task. Whilst some Muslims did support the khadi campaign, others were no doubt alienated by the explicit Hindu imagery of much of Gandhi's rhetoric. A closer look at the clothing practices of different groups reveals that social and religious differences were not entirely wiped out. Rather different groups found ways of expressing difference through khadi, sometimes by dyeing it, making garments in particular styles or wearing particularly fine varieties of cloth. Hand woven cloth made from handspun silk and wool were also developed and referred to as "khadi silk" and "khadi wool".⁶ Fine hand spun hand woven cottons and silks, though conforming to definitions of khadi, did of course distance their

wearers from the rural poor who, if they could afford khadi at all, were likely to be dressed in the thicker weaves.

The problem of poor people's access to khadi was something that haunted Gandhi throughout the khadi campaign. The mass export of raw cotton to Europe had meant that cotton was in short supply in India where handspun thread competed in the market place with cheap imported machine spun yarn and mill cloth. This meant that obtaining raw cotton or hand spun thread was difficult and costly, making it beyond the reach of many of India's rural poor. This economics of khadi was a cause of constant frustration to Gandhi who recognised that many of the rural poor simply could not afford to discard their foreign cloth in favour of khadi. Gandhi's decision to adopt a short dhoti or loincloth in 1921 was partly a response to this situation. For two years he had been preaching that it were better for people to reduce their clothing to a mere loincloth made of khadi than to wear more ample garments made from foreign cloth but he felt that his words did not hold weight as long as he himself was fully dressed. It was the plight of the poor combined with what he considered the failure of the khadi campaign that finally drove him to reduce his own clothing, initially on a temporary basis "as a sign of mourning" that swaraj was still far off and as means of "making the way clear" for those who could only afford a minimum quantity of khadi.

As Gandhi grew into his loincloth, it became a permanent feature of his identity, codifying his principals and priorities, visually evoking and enacting India's poverty whilst simultaneously suggesting its solution through khadi. Whilst the subtleties of what Gandhi wished to evoke were often misunderstood, his humble appearance had a profound impact on his followers both in India and abroad. Though written as an adversary of state power, he was not above using it to further the cause of Khadi. As

he says in his essay 'Ministers' Duty' "each Provincial Government has to tell the villagers that they must manufacture their own khaddar.....The Governments should notify the villagers that they will be expected to manufacture khaddar for the needs of their villages within a fixed date after which no cloth would be supplied to them."⁷

7.3 KHADI : Gandhian Critique of Modernity

In his dress and demeanour Gandhi almost belongs to the ascetic tradition of the East. Not only in his choice of such and image, but in the essential making of his philosophy and politics, he took recourse to an innovative set of words and symbols. In deed as a mass leader he had an uncanny knack for creating and using symbols and like most popular symbols, In deed as a mass leader he had an uncanny knack for creating and using symbols, Khadi has a complex and different appellation. Gandhi sought to convey multiple messages through Khadi, arguable the focal one among them was a critique of modernity. Khadi was apt symbol of long Indian tradition on the one hand and a critique of modern western Civilization on the other hand. In relation to three important concepts, which form the very core of modernity in India again Khadi, has been used as a critique. These three concepts are nationalism, industrialism and western education.

"Khadi and Indian Tradition," Indians have not only been weavers, but even exporters of cotton fabric since time immemorial. Historians have found clear evidence of Harappans supplying cotton textiles to Sumerians around four millennia back in the past. In the more recent history, British themselves imported huge quantities of clothes from India, before they introduced a colonial pattern of made. At the time of arrival of the British in India, next to cultivation weaving was the commonest economic exploitation by the British themselves imported

huge quantities of clothes from India, before they introduced a colonial pattern of made. At the time of arrival of the British in India, next to cultivation weaving was the activity in the Indian country side. The saga of the economic exploitation British is replete with reference to the decline of cotton weavers. That the theme of hand –woven fabric, that is, Khadi was brought up and invested with new meaning by Gandhi was nothing but natural. In fact weaving has been a common metaphor, even in the spiritual discourse of many saints and philosophers, the most notable among them was Kabir, himself a weaver. His poetry is replete with reference to warp and woof or the mechanism of weaving. One of his many oft quoted songs is “Jheeni, Jheeni rebeenee chadria “Kabir expresses the spiritual endeavour of man through the metaphor of weaving. While not exactly forsaking the spiritual content, Gandhi reinvented the mundane human endeavor, no less complex through. Innumerable songs were composed during the years of freedom struggle or afterwards how Gandhi will or did drive out the British with the help of his charka. It became symbol of freedom struggle. “Livery of freedom” as Nehru described Khadi which was however also a means of economic regeneration of the village and much more. Gandhi declared, “My Swadeshi chiefly centers around the hand spun Khadar⁸ and extends to every thing that can be and is produced in India.

7.4 Khadi As a critique of Modern Civilization

Many of us recall with relish the famous remark of Gandhi on western civilization being yet ‘a good idea’ He in deed had a deep suspicion of the material progress in the west and further, of the whole concept of modernity’. He identified the real enemy of the Indian people not as the British themselves but as their modern civilization. In the preface to the English edition of his seminal work *Hindi civilization*,

which is the Kingdom of God. The one is the God of War, the other is the God of War, My countrymen, therefore believe that they should adopt modern civilization to drive out the English. Hind Swaraj has been written in order to show that they are following a suicide policy, and that, if they would but revert to their own glorious civilization either the English would adopt the latter and become Indianized or find their occupation in India gone. Among the borrowings from the modern west, uncritically accepted by the western educated intelligentsia, two crucial ones are the idea of nation state and modern industrialization. Gandhi had a different concept of both. Further down, he rejected the very system of education that made educated Indians modern.

7.5 Nationalism with a Difference

In his interesting book 'The Illegitimacy of Nationalism'. Ashis Nandy compares Tagore and Gandhi respect of their position on nationalism in the following words: "Both recognized the need for a 'national' ideology of India as a means of cultural survival and both recognized that, for the same reason, India would either have to make a break with the post-medieval western concept of nationalism or give the concept a new 'content'. As a result of Tagore, nationalism." Interestingly, Tagore who was no great votary of Khadi though, used it as metaphor in an article on Nationalism written in 1917:

"Before the nation came to rule over us (under British colonial rule) we had other government which were foreign, and these like all government, had some elements of 'the machine in them. But he difference between them and the government by the Nation is like the difference between the handloom and the powerloom. In the products of the hand-loom the magic of man's living fingers finds its expression, and

its hum harmonizes with the music of life. But the power-loom is relentlessly lifeless and accurate and monotonous in its production.”

While Tagore’s critique has a poetic flavour and a streak of romanticism. Gandhi’s critique as well as proposed alternatives is more robust and real, albeit, idealistic. Gandhi asserted that “violent nationalism, otherwise known as imperialism, is the curse, non-violent nationalism is a necessary condition of corporate or civilized life”.

He saw Indian freedom movement as ‘India’s contribution to peace.’ Gandhi defined his version of nationalism in terms of Swadeshi and Swaraj. He declared that his ‘Swaraj is to keep intact the genius of our civilization.

This is extended to include the principles of love and ‘freedom for the meanest of the countrymen’ on the other. Both of these are linked with the cause of Khadi, which was part of our long tradition as also the need of the poor.

He exhorted his fellow beings to spin and weave Khadi. “I would ask you to come in Khadi, for Khadi links you with the fallen and the down trodden.” Khadi epitomized the noble spirit of truthfulness and purity. He averred that ‘Khadi had been conceived as the foundation and the image of ahimsa, A real Khadi wearer will not utter an untruth. A real Khadi-wearer will harbour no violence, no deceit, no impurity.

Against mechanistic and aggressive concept of nationalism in the west, Gandhi proposed a concept of People’s Swaraj based on truth and non-violence for which Khadi was an apt symbol. Moreover, this symbol also linked the concept of Swaraj with the concern for the poor- the last man and village, the supported bastion of backwardness. Prior Gandhi, the nationalist leaders had acquiesced in by and large to a western concept of nationalism; Gandhi not only critiqued that but provided an alternative

concept, more deeply rooted in the tradition and encompassing all Indians, rich and poor alike, He gave a moral perspective to the national movement for which a set of new symbols were created by him, Khadi Ramraj, and Satyagraha he was designing a new framework of ideology more appropriate for the teeming millions of India, eighty five percent of them residing in the country side. His critique was not merely, an alternative ideology, it was a plan of mass action that he visualized was again not merely a political programme but a social and economic agenda, to quote one of his sentences: “Khadi service, village service and the Harijans service are one in reality, thought three in name”.⁹

7.6 An Alternative Frame Work of Economics

True economics, according to Gandhi, ‘never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics to be worth its name must at the same time be also good economics’. He was critical of pursuit of materialism which was the characteristic of the advancement of the west. He was generally opposed to machines and centralization of production and favored on the contrary a life of labour for everyone in the society, succinctly contained in his concept of bread labour. He believed in the ideal of economic self- sufficiency of the villages. He describes his idea of an ideal socio- economic order in the following words:

“Independence must begin at the bottom, Thus every village will be a republic or Panchayat having full powers. In this structure composed of innumerable village there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circles whose centre will be individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals,

never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral parts”.

In this there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has a unique place in a cultural human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place.

Khadi is evidently the centre piece of the strategy for such an economic utopia. It not only means compulsion of labour through spinning but a very decentralized mode of production contributing to the possibility of a self-sufficient rural economy. It is both a value system in it self and defines an alternative framework of economy. He writes clearly that ‘Khadi mentality means decentralization of the production and distribution of the production and distribution of the necessaries of life.’

In this years of with drawal from active politics from 1924, Gandhi devoted himself to the propagation of Khadi turning it into a cult, as a strategy of nation building ‘from the bottom up’ He suggested a ‘Khadi franchise’ for the organization and even ‘envisaged a ‘yarn currency’.

B. R. Nanda comments ‘that Gandhi’s almost emotional attachment to the spinning wheel should have baffled both the British and Western educated town bred Indians, educated town bred Indians, is not surprising’ for ‘they were both unable, the former from lack of will, the latter from lack of ignorance, to grasp the incredible poverty of Indian village. Even Tagore, otherwise an admirer of Mahatma ,feared that spinning wheel that spinning wheel and the economic stagnation it implied will cause a ‘death like sameness in the country.’ Gandhi reply was loud and clear:

“I didn’t want the poet to forsake his music, the farmer his plough, the lawyer his brief, and the doctor his lancet. They are to spin only thirty minutes every day as sacrifice. I have every day as sacrifice. I have indeed asked the famishing man and woman, who is idle for work whatsoever to spin for a living and the half-starved farmer to spin during his income.”¹⁰

Gandhi’s appeal surely had a moral ground and further he would make spinning wheel the centre of his scheme of rural reconstruction building up anti-malaria campaigns, improvement in sanitation, settlement of village disputes, conservation and breeding of cattle and hundred of other beneficent activities required for the resuscitation of the village. He proposed that ‘Khadi is the sun of the village solar system.’ It is well-known that Ruskin’s book *Unto This Last* had an indelible imprint on his mind. Behind the whole Khadi campaign, it was this last man who was always in Gandhi’s mind. On the other side, he opposed the tendency of ever increasing consumption and multiplication of wants. The self-abnegation and asceticism of Gandhi’s economic prescription has often been criticized as too idealistic and taken to the extremes. Even if it is true, now environmentalists are veering round to almost a similar position. Excessive consumption may not be sustainable and may result in depletion of the limited resources on the earth. Sidestepping this debate, it may be noted that the Khadi – centered scheme for rural development was typical of Gandhian economic framework, rather, its core principal.

Notwithstanding misgivings about the feasibility of his economic ideas, in the first ten years of its existence the All India Spinners Association had extended its activities to 5300 villages and provided employment to 220,000 spinners 20,000 weavers and 20,000 carders and

disbursed more than two crores of rupees in Indian villages. Gandhi, of course, knew the limitations of his efforts in the context of the magnitude of the problem. He decided to settle in a village, named, Segaon near Wardha, which was later renamed as Sevagram. Soon Sevagram became a centre of Gandhian Scheme of village welfare and several institutions including All Indian Village Industries welfare and several institutions started there including All Indian Village Industries. The Association set up a school for training village workers and published its own periodical, Gram Udyog Patrika. Hindustani Talimi Sangh was the other institution which experimented on Gandhi's ideas of education. Basic Education as Critique of Modernity.

Education was arguably the most important arena for the introduction of modernity in India. Designed as it was by the colonial masters, besides remaining generally divorced from India tradition, it was also oblivious to the needs and problems of the teeming millions in the countryside. Gandhi's basic education scheme was primarily a system of rural education and handicraft constituted the medium of instruction. Spinning and weaving was again Gandhi's preference among the crafts and so his entire pedagogy and educational philosophy was intermeshed with his khadi based approach to life.¹¹

From his earliest days in Indian public life Gandhi was critical of the Western system of education for much of what it stood for in his opinion. A sample of his critique can be read below:

“The system of education at present in vogue is wholly unsuited to India's needs, is a bad copy of the Western model and it has by reason of the medium of instruction being a foreign language sapped the energy of the youths who had passed through our schools and colleges and has produced an army of clerks and office-seekers. It has dried up all

originality, impoverished the vernaculars and has deprived the masses of the benefit of higher knowledge which would otherwise have percolated through the intercourse of the education classes with them. The system has resulted in creating a gulf between educated India and the masses. It has stimulated the brain but starved the spirit for want of a religious basis for education and emaciated the body for want of training in handicrafts. It has criminally neglected the greatest need of agricultural training worth the name....”

Judith Brown has rightly observed, it is difficult to appreciate quite how radical and abrasive Gandhi would have sounded to educated Indians as he castigated their educational training and their values and told them they were traitors to their mother land by being willing ‘victims’ of the current system’. Despite their opposition to British rule, most their nationalists did not reject the British rule, most other nationalists did not reject the British system of education outright, since they viewed it as a means by which India could become a materially advanced nation. But from the beginning of his career Gandhi thought differently.

Alongside Champaran Satyagraha, his earliest foray into local politics, he launched his experiment in education. In November 1917 the first school was opened in Barharwa just a week after. The experiment grew mature and eventually in 1937 after Wardha Conference fully developed was announced, although system was announced although it was indeed a modified version of Gandhi’s own scheme of education. Even in June 1921, writing in *Young India* he had outlined his views with a great deal of clarity:

“I can see nothing wrong in the children, from the very threshold of their education, paying for it in work. The simplest handicraft, suitable for all, required for the whole of India undoubtedly spinning along with

the previous processes. If we introduced this in our educational institutions, we should fulfill three purposes. If we introduced this in our educational institutions, we should fulfill three purpose: make education self – supporting, train the bodies of the children as well as their minds and pave the way for a complete boycott of foreign yarn and cloth. Moreover, the children thus equipped will become self-reliant and independent.”¹²

7.7 Khadi post Independence

Whilst khadi represented a powerful symbolic challenge to British imperialism, Gandhi’s dream that it would become the everyday dress of Indians after Independence was never realised. Even during the freedom struggle many had worn it more for its political effectiveness than for love of the cloth, just as many had spun their own yarn more out of self sacrifice and national duty than out of belief in the economic and moral benefits of hand-spinning. However, having played such a significant role in nationalist politics and in India’s self-definition, khadi could be neither abandoned nor forgotten.

In politics it has retained its place as national dress in spite of the fact that today the white khadi worn by politicians is associated more with hypocrisy and corruption than sincerity or purity. The image of the khadi-clad politician has long been a favourite with cartoonists for whom it functions as a visual shorthand for greed and insincerity in the recognisable guise of honour and humility. This has lead Chakrabarty to ask why Indian politicians continue to wear khadi given the ubiquity of its negative associations. They do so, he suggests, because even if Indians no longer hold Gandhian ideals, they have retained the desire for an alternative modernity and it is this desire that khadi continues to represent even as people’s lives are increasingly informed by capitalism.

Interestingly when artists, academics and social activists choose to wear khadi, their distance from the white-clad politician is generally marked by their choice of coloured and flecked weaves or by the particular combinations of clothes that they wear. Their khadi wearing is not associated with hypocrisy but rather with the lived reality of an alternative life style, aesthetics and politics for example, among self-professed radicals in university politics.

The ambiguous status of khadi in politics is echoed by its ambiguous economic position. In 1956 the Khadi and Village Industries Commission¹³ (hereafter KVIC) was established with a view to promoting and developing khadi production and other village industries in rural areas. Despite high levels of Government assistance in the form of grants, rebates and subsidies, the khadi industry has always struggled to sustain itself and had problems selling the goods it produces. The liberalisation and globalisation of the Indian economy in the 1990's has further contributed to khadi's marginalisation. The years 1997-2002 saw a steady decline in khadi production as well as the accumulation of large quantities of unsold stock. How to attract people into working in a labour intensive industry associated more with morality and crafts skills than profit or exciting new technologies remains a difficult challenge. In particular, hand spinning is perceived as an unglamorous activity which offers appallingly low returns and is pursued principally by poor women from marginal groups in rural areas. None the less the KVIC continues to pursue an expansionist policy and is optimistic that it may be able to provide increased employment in rural areas, thereby stemming the tide of unemployment and migration to cities. Is it worth mentioning that almost all Indian towns and cities have so-called 'Khadi Gramudyog

Bhawans, including large and chic ones in Delhi, that sell khaddar, along with other products of ‘village industries’

How to revive the khadi industry whilst retaining its particular moral and nationalist character remains a challenge that is currently being pursued in several directions. On the one hand the National Institute of Fashion and Technology (NIFT) and National Institute of Design (NID) have been charged with the role of updating khadi and introducing “new and trendy designs” to be taken up by the khadi sector. This strategy of making khadi more desirable by contemporary standards is to be matched by more aggressive marketing strategies, including the promotion of khadi abroad in such countries as the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and South Africa. Techniques of global capitalism such as e-commerce and the registration of khadi as a brand name and geographical indication have also been recommended. Meanwhile fashion designers and private companies have for the last two decades flirted with the potential of khadi as fashion. One astute Kolkata based clothing company has, for example, produced a successful range of brightly coloured khadi garments under the brand name Khadder. Whilst labels such as “bio-khadi” and “organic hand-spun cotton” indicate khadi’s entry into the elite global arena of “eco-friendly”¹⁴ capitalism, the development of something called “polyester khadi” by the KVIC reminds us that popular consumers in India are often more concerned with practicality than purity.

A development more in tune with Gandhi’s original aim to provide mass employment for the rural poor is the Railway Minister’s recent decision to replace all linen used on Indian trains with khadi and to consider introducing of khadi uniforms for railway staff. These proposals, though welcomed in some quarters, have been greeted with cynicism in

others, with people complaining of khadi's lack of durability, its high maintenance costs and its "stone age" associations.

What the history of khadi's revival in the 20th and 21st centuries reveals is an ongoing tension between capitalist development and a Gandhian-style modernity based on alternative economic and moral principles. Whilst khadi is never likely to become the popular everyday wear that Gandhi hoped it would be, it is likely that it will retain its important symbolic role in providing an alternative vision of modernity and evoking the texture and uniqueness of India's Freedom Struggle.

7.8 Gandhi and the Twenty First Century

"Khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support khadi in return for the heat and the sustenance they derive from it. Without it other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of other industries, khadi could not make further progress. For villagers to be able to occupy their spare time profitably, the village must be touched at all points."

It is a tragedy for India that we have never given a chance to 'Gandhian Philosophy'. However, Gandhiji's views on Khadi and Village Industries, were being followed by appointing the Khadi and Village industries Board since 1946. This article is an attempt to characterize the rural industrialization approach evolved in Gandhian Philosophy. It also briefly reviews and analysis our approach to implement this ideology based approach in practice. Some specific policy suggestions are also attempted in light of the most dominant issues experienced by us in the last fifty years.

Adam Smith in the British parliamentary debate had depicted the picture of a prosperous India prior to the colonial period saying that "East

India offered a market for the manufacturers of Europe greater and more extensive than both Europe and America put together". This India was destroyed by British industrialization and its backwash, disintegrating self-assured villages through progressive impoverishment of the peasants and destruction of the artisans.

Gandhi had grasped the history of India very well which he well reflected in his *Hind Swaraj* where he provided the main constituents of his strategy of India's reconstruction. Gandhi made it clear that 'modern civilization', nourished by British rule, was the real cause of 'economic distress'. Against that, Gandhi envisaged that the salvation of India was in the revival of its ancient civilization. Under the shadow of ancient civilization, Gandhi wanted to develop a New Social Order which was based on the foundation of non-violence and truth, where economic progress and moral progress go together and the focus is on the development of man. Life and human relations in society, village and nation in the new social order were envisaged not like pyramids with an apex sustained at the bottom but, as an oceanic circle.

To achieve this New Social Order Gandhi's development model was evolved around "Village Development" and it is so much emphasized that it is truly coined "VILLAGISM". Gandhi's emphasis on village reconstruction was negatively viewed as an onslaught on the exploitative tendency inherent in industrialism and dominance by urbanization and positively viewed as an attempt to establish a non-violent social order from which exploitation is completely done away with.

'Rural Industrialization' was never the term used by Gandhi. However, two basic components of Gandhian development, self-sufficient villages and decentralization of economic and political powers,

gave a very important place to development of Khadi and Village Industries. According to a recent study the Khadi movement was not only a mass mobilization movement against anti-imperialist struggle,¹⁵ it was also a social movement of recognizing women's capacity as economically and politically active beings without whose support the goal of freedom or Swaraj would be unattainable and meaningless. In fact, Gandhi's well known concept of 'Living Wage For Spinners' originated in his realizing the danger of women being paid low wages even by constructive workers.

Gandhi's clear rationale behind the choice of Khadi was led by his anxiety of "Work to all". He believed that Khadi and Village Industries were the only alternative. This is evident from his statement of challenge to rulers to whom he stated that,

"If the government could provide full employment to all without the help of Khadi and Village Industries, I shall be prepared to wind-up my constructive programme in this sphere".

He said, "Production of Khadi includes cotton growing, picking, ginning, cleaning, carding, slivering, spinning, sizing, dyeing, preparing the warp and woof, weaving and winding. These, with the exception of dyeing, are essential processes every one of which can be effectively handled in the villages".

Although 'Khadi' is the sun of the village solar system, various other industries, like planets, do have a place in the village solar system and in fact, "Those who do not see Khadi as the centre of village activities, they are welcome to concentrate their efforts on these other industries", because a village economy can not be complete without essential industries such as hand grinding, hand pounding, soap making, paper making, metal making, tanning, oil processing, etc. Gandhi had anticipated a complimentary relationship between Khadi and Village

Industries. He believed that these industries come in as hand made to Khadi. They can not exist without Khadi and Khadi will be robbed of its dignity without them.

Gandhi had not perhaps conceptualized the Khadi and Village Industry except once when he stated that ‘Khadi of my conception’ is that hand spun material which takes the place entirely, in India, of mill cloth.....and indirectly explained what is Khadi. If men and women will not take to hand spinning as a sacred duty, that is, the same person will not do carding, slivering and spinning, there is little hope for Khadi. Similarly conceptualization of village industries was left to Kumarrappa who provided the conditions to consider the industry as a village industry.

1. Those that produce essential commodities in villages for villages.
2. Using the local raw materials and using simple processes which are within the easy reach of villages.
3. Requiring only such tools and implements which can be acquired within the financial capacity of the villages.
4. With the aid of human or animal power since they are easily available in the villages.
5. Meeting the demand of local or immediate surrounding population.
6. That which does not cause displacement of labour.

These characteristics widened the scope of village industries and at the same time ensured the absence of concentration, violence, exploitation, inequality and anti-nature industrialization.¹⁶

The question of market, method of production by machine tool or technology and credit etc. which have occupied a major significance in the post-independent period of rural industrialization, did not have a place in the initial stages, but came into the picture during the post

independence period and Gandhi's stand on the issues have undergone change.

The question of a market for Khadi was not significant to Gandhi. In the sense, that Khadi was conceived with a much more ambitious object i.e. to make our villages starvation-proof. He believed that, "This is impossible unless the villages will wear Khadi themselves, sending only the surplus to the cities. The singular secret of Khadi lies in its salability in the place of its production and use to the manufacturers themselves". However, finding problems for a market for Khadi, Gandhi in 1946, accepted "Commercial Khadi" as a "go-cart". He said, "We ourselves are responsible for the creation of this problem, we did not know the science of Khadi, we do not know it fully even now. Therefore, like children, we stumble again and again and thereby learn to work. In order that we may not fall so as never to rise again we made use of a go-cart and are still using it". In so far as the village industries are concerned Gandhi believed that the question of demand does not arise as the expansion of village industries is related to demand which did exist in the villages. He said, "Given the demand, there is no doubt that most of our wants can be supplied from our villages".

Gandhi insisted on "Primitive methods" of production in the village industry and explained that, "I suggest the return because there is no other way of giving employment to the millions of villagers who live in idleness". Mechanization he regarded as evil in view of more hands than required in work. However, in the later periods, Gandhi accepted the role of small equipments, machines, tools and technology, which should not replace labour but reduce the cost and drudgery of labour and increase efficiency of labour. Thus, Gandhian design of rural industrialization was developed in the passage of time.

7.9 Review of Ideology Based Approach Practised in India

There are three basic evidences of accepting Gandhian rural industrial approach in India. First, right from the industrial policy of 1948 till the New Small Enterprise Policy of 1991, we have placed Khadi and Village Industries as the prime instrument of promotion of rural employment and rural economy. There are specific studies which analyzed the role of village industries as expressed in all the industrial statements. These statements have become the guide lines of the plans relating to K.V.I. As early as 1953 we established an exclusive institution of Khadi and Village Industries Board and later established a Khadi and Village Industries Commission in 1957. It was asked to assume responsibility for initiating, assisting and financing Khadi programmes on a much wider basis, make it a part of the whole development programme of the country and an essential constituent of a planned economy in the making.

The first plan had adopted a complete ‘Gandhian’ perspective in development of KVIC as it was decided to be developed ‘with processing of local raw material for the local market with simple techniques (1951). As an appropriate method of protection a “Common Minimum Programme” was formulated, which was mainly related to reservation of production, restriction on capacity expansion and continuation of research. A multi-institutional approach was developed by establishing a separate institution like the KVIC Board, Hand-loom Board, Handicraft Board and Small Scale Industries Board for their development.

The Second Five Year Plan gave a very strategic place to village industries to generate marketable surplus as consumer goods to support heavy industry development without inflation and also gave a task to liquidate unemployment as quickly as possible. The basic approach for

the KVIC was worked out by the panel of economists appropriate to the development of these sectors. The Kurvey Committee of 1955 led to the establishment of KVIC and it also suggested distribution of 2-5 million ambar charkhas—technologically improved hand spinning equipment. The Zaman Committee advocated the decentralization of Khadi work, recognition of large certified institutions and formation of co-operatives 1959.¹⁷ The Gyanchand Committee appointed to evaluate Khadi, pointed out the vicious cycle of low output, low wages and even falling wages as the central problem. It advocated that the yarn production through the traditional charkha to provide relief to distressed persons should be separated from the economic problem for Khadi production as an employment generation activity. The Nathu Committee in 1962 recommended that the policy of production and sales should be reoriented to effect at least 40% of sales within the district and 80% within the state and export to other states should not exceed 20%. The Ashok Mehta Committee on KVIC in 1968 attempted to evolve a fresh approach to development based on the three basic components of producing salable articles, providing employment to people in backward areas, tribal and inaccessible areas, famine and drought stricken areas and also the backward and less privileged section of the population and to create self-reliance and community spirit among rural people.

Apart from suggesting specific target groups, it also recommended minimum wage for spinners at a level equal to off-season agricultural wages and a seven year programme for progressive improvement of techniques was recommended to achieve viability defined in terms of minimum earning of the artisan without any protection. It also recommended that the Khadi programme of the new model charkha should be developed on a commercial basis, keeping the element of

grants and subsidies to the minimum. However, without an ensured market, at a given level of output, it created a problem of unemployment for traditional spinners and weavers, though marginally subsidy element could be reduced.

However, our efforts to implement the recommended approach in various Plans, are the feeble exercises initiated in the Second and Third Plans to integrate Khadi and Village Industries with larger programmes of rural development, came to an abrupt end with an abandonment of the Community Development Programmes and the dismantling of block machinery in most of the states. Programmes like Crash Scheme of Rural Employment and Drought Prone Area Programme were introduced to battle the rising unemployment, they remained and continue to remain land based activities oriented to agriculture. KVIC with its character of skilled based activities and artisans was by and large not drawn in these special employment programmes.

In the policy packaged for KVIC in the Eighth Plan there was nothing notable except, (a) encouragement for modernization and technological up-gradation and (b) to set up a monitoring agency to ensure the genuine credit needs of this sector and also insurance to review all the statutes, regulations and procedures to ensure that their operation does not militate the interest of the small and village industries. It also stated that it is possible to dovetail the programmes of Khadi and Village Industries, Handlooms, Sericulture and Handicrafts to integrate local areas of development programmes for villages for poverty alleviation through increase in employment. However, no steps are suggested to implement this policy in practice.

We find that during the Second Plan period KVIC was given great significance which went on declining. Its approach changed and the

direction of the change was pointing towards sacrificing the ideological character of KVIC envisaged by Gandhiji in the name of a pragmatic approach.¹⁸ The diminished significance of KVIC is reflected in the allocation of the resources in various Plans.

7.10 Dominant Issues and Major Policy Suggestions

Our failure to achieve an impressive dent in our problem of poverty and unemployment alleviation through an ideology based on Gandhian rural industrialization approach we may address these problems and solutions as follows:

1. After almost five decades, we have not been able to resolve the age old problem of adequate earnings for those who choose to work on Khadi. Our attempts to introduce new technology in spinning failed to generate adequate and attractive earnings. A recent study conducted by the Centre for Women's Development Studies have shown that even in Gujarat the per capita income of a Khadi worker was not only inadequate to cross the poverty line but was consistently lower than any other sector in recent years.

2. The major problem faced by the KVIC is that of a market for their goods.

3. The marketable surplus with KVIC has failed to popularize the new technology of production. In fact, at a given level of output without an adequate market technology leads to unemployment of those who are already engaged in the Khadi industry.

4. All the evidence of performance like that of output, productivity, employment, technology transfer, investment allocation and utilization, preference for workers for alternate occupation, consumer's presence and even government etc. show the fact that Khadi is declining, while village industries have a better scope and potential.

5. Institutional development to promote marketing and production via 'Co-operatives' has failed. Co-operatives provided an opportunity to establish a non-exploitative, self-employed and self-reliant rural community. Hardly 5% of the production of Khadi was accounted for by the co-operatives. Most of the co-operatives in Khadi were found dormant and "displaying the characteristics of ignorance and non-participation".¹⁹

6. 70% of KVIC time and energy was being spent on routine administration, leaving little time for its main function. Their cost of operation has gone on increasing as indicated by declining earnings and increasing non-wage cost.

7. Finally, KVIC is expected to alleviate poverty in those areas that are really backward. It is expected to play a greater role in such areas. However, KVIC work is very poorly spread in those states where they are supposed to work most effectively.

There are a large number of Review Committee Reports and even some research studies to provide policy guidance. It is unfortunate that Plan documents have not taken note of such documents. Some broad policy suggestions are:

1. We must accept that village industries have a better scope for development. KVIC should concentrate only on the most potential industries as pointed out in the Eighth Plan. Though there are 96 industries presently within the preview of KVIC, it would be better to concentrate on those 15 industries for which there is enough infrastructure, powerful tools and technology and adequate provision for training as well as a potential market. These industries should be ensured of getting raw materials. The raw material function alone can enhance the artisans earnings from 5% to 35%.

2. The intervention of voluntary agencies with innovative approaches could certainly help in the promotion of village industries.

3. The marketing of the Khadi product is a crucial issue. If there is a strong intervention of devoted voluntary agencies Khadi production could be sold in the local market.

In Gujarat state, there are institutions which have sold 90% of Khadi amongst tribals who have themselves produced it. Apart from aggressive marketing, taking into account the consumer's preference, taste, price and other related factors including cost of production, we should try to educate the consumers and cast on them social responsibility. Consumers should be oriented to think of the origin of Khadi, production process, relevance of buying it, ecological significance, etc. The government itself could help in the promotion of Khadi by becoming a bigger buyer than the 5% it now buys mostly in the form of woolen blankets. There are a large number of products the government could buy from KVIC which would help more than blanket subsidies.

The performance of KVIC in the technology development sector is very poor. It is the key to the development of KVIC. The withdrawal of the Department of Science and Technology from KVIC is disappointing and they need to review their relationship. The KVIC should have very strong links with national laboratories, research organizations and manufacturing institutions for transference of technology.²⁰

Gandhiji's approach to rural industrialization was evolved over a period of time. Our success in its implementation was less than desirable. However, it should not lead us to believe that we must get rid of this as a burden of 'Gandhian Legacy'. We should keep in mind the following words of Pandit Nehru in his famous Gandhigram Speech, "I begin to

think more and more of Mahatma Gandhi's approach. It is odd that I am mentioning his name in this connection: that is to say, I am entirely an admirer of the modern machine and want the best machinery and the best technique. But taking things as they are in India, however rapidly we advance in the machine age—and we will do so—the fact remains that large numbers of our people are not touched and will not be touched by it for a considerable time. Some other methods will have to be evolved by us for a considerable time. Some of the methods have to be evolved so that they become partners in production even though the production apparatus of theirs may not be efficient as compared to modern techniques, but we must use that; otherwise, it is wasted". This statement is self-explanatory and in favour of more sincere and sustained efforts to develop rural industries on Gandhian lines.

7.11 The Environmental Crisis and Relevance of Gandhiji

The environmental deterioration that is happening, thanks to our life styles and worship of development and progress, is worsening day by day.

Gandhiji has not said anything specific on it as environmental degradation had not become a problem then. But we have it in his writings. Once, when asked for a message to humanity, Gandhiji said, "my life is my message". We can find everything we want, provided we go through his writings, his speeches and his life.

Man's progress and the road to development has led to the deterioration of nature. In his quest for fulfilling his needs, he has exploited nature to its maximum. This is development that is ecologically not sustainable. In the words of James Mc hall, the human being has become the most dangerous organism that the planet has ever hosted.

Awareness about the degradation of environment has been growing since the fifties. Steps were being taken to increase this awareness through books, conferences, etc.

The irony is that though every responsible person seems to be worried and anxious about environmental degradation, a meaningful solution is nowhere in sight. It is here that the Mahatma's teachings give us some hope.

In the western tradition man was an entity apart from the earth which he was encouraged to conquer, whereas in Indian tradition earth was his mother which he should hold in veneration. Gandhiji was very much influenced by our tradition and stressed on Truth and non-violence. In the words of Gandhiji "man has no power to create life, therefore, he has no right to destroy life."²¹ Man has been endowed with higher faculties so that he can be compassionate to lower beings.

If environment is to be saved from degradation we have to avoid or limit the use of machinery. That is where Gandhiji's promotion of Khadi and Village Industries have become more relevant today than during the freedom struggle. We should read Gandhiji's Constructive Programme. Harijans and women are not yet treated as equal members of our society. Health and hygiene are wanting in Rural India. Many other aspects of life are discussed in the constructive programme. Adopting some of his ideas will be the first step in saving the environment.

Even more important are the eleven Vows or Vratas of Gandhiji which are non-violence, Truth, Non-stealing, Brahmacharya, Non-avarice, Physical labour, Control of Palette, Religious harmony, Fearlessness, Swadeshi and Abolition of untouchability. In fact, the significance of each of the vratas could be elaborated in the context of preserving the environment.

Through the cardinal point Gandhiji has been expounded in this essay, I cannot help repeating Gandhiji's famous quotation. "The earth has enough resources for our need, but not for our greed." What greater message is there to save this earth from the environmental disaster?

7.12 **Khadi and Self Sufficiency**

Gandhiji thought unemployment to be a women's issue, and therefore symbolically as well as practically he introduced the 'charkha' (spinning wheel) as an instrument of the freedom movement. The propagation of khadi was to protect the employment of the poorest women. Spinning was an important home industry during the nineteenth century. It was source of livelihood for women of all castes, communities and even for the women of low income levels. Many widows supplemented their family income by spinning cotton yarn. Muslim women, who were not allowed to step out of their homes to earn livelihood, spent their time, spinning cotton thread. Thus spinning wheel brought economic independence, specially for women.²²

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, hand spinning dwindled rapidly because it could not with stand the competition of cheap foreign as well as Indian machine made yarn. It had almost vanished by time Gandhiji settled down in India in 1915.

The weaving of khadi is preceded by the spinning of the thread on the charkha after which it goes to the bobbin winder, warper, sizer and finally the weaver. While spinning is organized by the Khadi Board. Weaving is done by the weaver at his home in an individual capacity. Spinning is mostly done by the girls and women in the villages. For Gandhiji khadi was not a cloth but a thought, a philosophy that aimed at a self reliant economy, a link of concern between the haves and the have nots. Around that time Gandhi used khadi as the first Non-cooperation

movement and the Gandhi cap had strong symbolic overtones that of the Indo-British battle over the looms of Manchester and a bid for a modern Indian identity.

In 1915 Gandhiji introduced a few handlooms in the Ashram and learnt the art of weaving. However, the yarn used was produced from Mills. Gandhiji was eager to start hand spinning in Ashram and was in search of spinning, who teach him and the inmates of Ashram of spin. But he would neither get a spinning wheel nor a spinner. The art of hand spinning was almost lost. His visit to Champaran in 1916 made him more aware of the pathetic condition in the extent of poverty of the people. Women in Bhitwara were unable to change their clothes due to lack of availability of another pair.

At this critical juncture, Gandhiji met Smt. Gangaben Mujmuder, an enterprising middle age widow from Vijapur near Baroda ² in October 1917 to whom he entrusted the important task of finding a spinning wheel.

Though immortalized in Gandhiji's autobiography and in his speeches and writings, Smt. Gangaben could find carders and after finding them, she trained some youngsters to make slivers from the carded cotton. She hired a house at Vijapur and started staying with her daughter Saraswati, sisters Hiralaxmi and Keshawlabhai and together they started a spinning centre. She faced greater difficulty in getting spun yarn women because handloom weaves at the time only wove finer yarn for mills. She met a Muslim weaver, who helped her to train weavers to weave hand spun yarn. Thus started a production centre of Khadi Vijapur khadi gained a name for itself.

In 1919 about one hundred and fifty women spinners worked at the centre. Soon she started a weaving unit at the centre and thus her khadi

enterprise included Carding, Slivering, Spinning and Weaving. It was the first production centre for khadi manufacture. Gandhiji exhorted people and women in particular to follow her example and to start centres of khadi production in villages.

Soon Gangaben expanded her activities and her enterprise thrived and prospered under her able leadership. She showed immense organizing capacity and innovative skills. In 1921 she had 2000 spinning wheels at the centre. Thus she restored the lost craft to hand spinning and weaving. Khadi became a new word in the vocabulary of India. Thus, plain and uneducated Gangaben Mujumdar became a pioneer in a new era. Through her, the khadi industry was born. Gandhiji has decided to bring the work of Gangaben to public notice and he published 'Pateri issue of Sani Vartaman that'. In my humble opinion the work of Mrs. Gangaben is of the highest importance and nation³ ought to know about it.

With Gandhiji's inspiration and Gangaben's hard work, the khadi activity began. Gandhiji's inspiration awakened many women for this khadi activity across different parts of the country. Among these women were mainly Maniben Nanavati, Mithooben, Maniben Patel, Harshaben and Ushaben Mehta.

Maniben and three of her friends, Jayaben Desai, Shirin Havewala and Sunaben Rao started Khadi Mandir in 1934 at Vile Parle as an effort by women towards the liberation of the Nation. She had put a board "Khadi Mandir is run by women". Women were confident and well equipped to work bringing khadi selling it and maintaining accounts. All these women, were those who had not gone beyond 7th standard. Most of Khadi Bhavans are running from women's only.

Before 1947, the expansion of khadi was associated with mainly the goal of political and economic independence. After independence and

in the absence of Gandhiji there was almost a rapid change in the attitude of the leaders. Significance of khadi changed from 'Livery of freedom' to Saleable article.

But unfortunately in India today, this spirit of Swadeshi or Self reliance is not taken seriously and hence women's unemployment is not taken seriously.

Khadi over the decades has moved from a freedom fighter's identity fabric to a fashion garment. At one time it was secured as fabric for the farmer and rural wearer. Today there is such an increasing demand for khadi is that despite the million (women) workers all over the country involved in spinning it they are unable to meet the demands of the market.

In 1989 the first high fashion khadi show was presented in Mumbai by the khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC). Where nearly 85 dazzling garments were created by Devika Bhojwani. ⁶ There was an exciting array of eastern and western attire. Devika had launched the swadesi label in 1985 which distributed through nearly 5000 Khadi Gramodyog Bhandars and Emporia. In 1990 designer Ritu Kumar of Delhi 8 presented her first khadi collection at the crafts Museum. Her Tree of Life Show, an audio visual tableau spanning the history of textiles in India.

Ritu Kumar comments about the women pioneers, Actually they were the first generation growing up after Independence and so the need to underline their identity was immense. There was also the need to emerge with something totally different and in opposition from the dress code foreign rulers had imposed. Another person who has been working regularly with khadi is Kamal Wadkar, the well known promoter traditional crafts. Komal has been associated with the Gujarat Handicrafts

Board and the Mumbai Khadi Sangh. Her exhibitions in Mumbai for KVIC (Khadi Village Industries Commission) have netted nearly Rs. 12.5 million. Kamal has presented nearly 4500 garments in 150 styles in different colours weaves and embellishment with prices ranging from Rs. 460 – 750.

Today the younger generation may draw inspiration from the way film and MTV stars are dressing, but there was a time when fashion too was dictated by our political leaders more than the dresses it was what they signified and the fiery personalities behind them that caught the imagination of the masses and influenced them to unwaveringly follow the footsteps of their leaders, even in adapting the way they dressed, recalls Ritu Kumar.

Many women contributed in Gandhiji's khadi activities. Even today women are mostly involved in the production of khadi in one of the five year plan reports. There are interesting figures 2.75146 villagers including 19,645 Harjans and Muslim scattered in at least 13,451 villagers received as spinners, weavers etc. Rs. 34,85,609. The spinners were largely women.²² Now approximately 16 lakhs women are involved in different khadi related associations. If they spin the cotton for eight hours a day they get Rs. 60 to Rs. 80 today with the help of new techniques.⁷

The rediscovery of the charkha has brought in a new economic thinking for Indians. It has given new life to the individual made him more resourceful and self dependent.

Today khadi is synonymous with Indian freedom struggle and the empowerment of India's women. It is the contribution of women like Maniben Nanavati and other stalwarts that has made khadi the pride of India.

7.13 In Gandhi's words

“The spinning wheel represents to me the hope of the masses. The masses lost their freedom, such as it was, with the loss of the Charkha. The Charkha supplemented the agriculture of the villagers and gave it dignity. It was the friend and the solace of the widow. It kept the villagers from idleness. For the Charkha included all the anterior and posterior industries- ginning, carding, warping, sizing, dyeing and weaving. These in their turn kept the village carpenter and the blacksmith busy. The Charkha enabled the seven hundred thousand villages to become self contained. With the exit of Charkha went the other village industries, such as the oil press. Nothing took the place of these industries. Therefore the villagers were drained of their varied occupations and their creative talent and what little wealth these bought them”.²³

The industrialized countries of the West were exploiting other nations. India is herself an exploited country. Hence, if the villagers are to come into their own, the most natural thing that suggests itself is the revival of the Charkha and all it means.”

Mahatma Gandhi's ideas are still highly relevant in this day and age, particularly during debates on development issues. One recalls his advice to policy-makers and others that whenever you are in doubt “recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him? Will it restore him the control over his own life and destiny?” Translated into tangible terms, the needs of the poorest people should receive the topmost priority in development planning. The two most important challenges today are : protecting the environment; and meeting the basic needs of all. The Gandhian response to both challenges is simple and identical – release resources from the grip of the very rich

so that the needs of the poor can be met. The lifestyle of the richest is attractive, and so it soon becomes a model for others. Mahatma Gandhi had said clearly that this is a model not worth emulating because it is destructive to nature. Instead he tried throughout his life to experiment with low-cost food, farming, education and medicare which could meet the needs of all the most prominent of them being Khadi.

7.14The Environment

He challenged the well-entrenched concepts of what passes by the term “development”, a task which must have been even more difficult in his time when development had not been impeded by the most damaging aspects of the environment, as we know them now.

While considering an alternative path of development, Gandhi was very clear on the point that it must not be based on exploitation. He wrote in 1929, “Surely exploitation means usurpation. And usurpation can never be reconciled with spiritualism.” He was once asked whether he would like India to develop as much as Britain. He replied that Britain was such a small country but it required the plunder of half the planet to bring about such development. Therefore, if a large country like India is to develop in the same manner it will probably require the plunder of several planets. But he was certain that even if these planets were available, he would never want this country to follow this path. He wrote in 1940: “I have no idea of exploiting other countries for the benefit of India. We are suffering from the poisonous disease of exploitation ourselves, and I would not like my country to be guilty of any such thing.” He went a step further and asked the rich to introspect how their wealth has come directly or indirectly from the exploitation of the poor. One aspect of this exploitation, which particularly pained him, was the exploitation of villages by cities, of rural life by urban life. He wrote in

1927: “The half-a-dozen modern cities are an excrescence and serve, at the present moment, the evil purpose of draining the life-blood of the villages.”²⁴

In 1936 he wrote in more specific terms: “Little flour mills are ousting the chakki, oil mills the village ghani, rice mills the village dhenki, sugar mills the village gud-pans, etc. This displacement of village labour is impoverishing the villagers and enriching the rich. If the process continues sufficiently long, the villages will be destroyed without any further effort.” In this system of exploitation a particularly destructive role was played by labour displacing machinery. He wrote in 1936:

“A factory employs a few hundreds and renders thousands unemployed. I may produce tons of oil from an oil mill, but I also drive thousands of oilmen out of employment. I call this destructive energy, whereas production by the labour of millions of hands is constructive and conducive to the common good. Mass production through power-driven machinery, even when state-owned, will be of no avail.”

When asked what kind of machinery he approved of, Gandhi said in 1935: “Any machinery which does not deprive masses of men of the opportunity to labour, but which helps the individual and adds to his efficiency, and which a man can handle at will without being its slave.”

Mahatma Gandhi’s views on machinery were not confined to a theoretical level. Perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, these views found practical application. They became an integral part of India’s freedom movement.

In 1936, while evaluating the progress made by khadi, he wrote with some satisfaction: “The progress khadi has made in terms of the millions, though little in itself, is comparatively the largest of all the other single industries. It distributes yearly the largest amount as wages among

the largest number of wage-earners in the villages with the minimum of overhead charges, and every pice practically circulates among the people.”

Gandhi was very clear that the progress of Swadeshi and khadi should continue after the end of foreign rule, as these are equally relevant to post-independent India. He wrote in 1947: “We were trying through khadi to place man above the machine, rather than allow the machinery driven by electricity or steam, to be the master. We were endeavouring through khadi to establish equality between man and man in place of the enormous inequality now existing between the poor and the rich, between the high and the low, between the man and the woman. We also endeavoured to make the labourer independent of the capitalist instead of the capitalist exploiting labour and assuming undue prestige. If, therefore, what we did in India during the last 30 years was not wrong, we should now carry on the programme of the spinning wheel, with all its allied activities with more understanding of all the implications and with greater vigour.”

7.15 Benefits of Khadi

More recently, Nandini Joshi, who has a doctorate in Economics from Harvard, wrote a book in Gujarati (which has also been translated in Hindi) titled *Our Distress and Alternatives*. It argues that khadi and the spinning wheel are still practical and economically viable if only we give them a fair chance. An additional argument she advances is that khadi can help us to recover several hundred thousand hectares as urgently needed fertile land to grow food. The mills require long and medium staple cotton which need more fertile land, irrigation and chemicals.

On the other hand short-staple cotton needed for the charkha can be obtained on less fertile land some of which is not under cultivation at present and there is no need for agri-chemicals.

A country remains poor in wealth, both materially and intellectually, if it does not develop its handicrafts and its industries and lives a lazy parasitic life by importing all the manufactured articles from outside. There was a time when we manufactured almost all we wanted. The process is now reversed, and we are dependent upon the outside world for most manufactured goods. The past year brought forth a remarkable awakening of the Swadeshi spirit.²⁵ It has therefore become necessary to define Swadeshi goods. But in giving a definition care had to be taken not to make the definition so narrow as to make manufacture all but impossible or so wide as to become farcical and Swadeshi only in name. We do not want to follow the frog-in-the-well policy, nor in seeming to be international, lose our roots. We cannot be international, if we lose our individuality, i. e., nationality.

7.16 As Gandhiji believed

“I feel convinced that the revival of hand-spinning and hand weaving will make the largest contribution to the economic and the moral regeneration of India. The millions must have a simple industry to supplement agriculture. Spinning was the cottage industry years ago, and if the millions are to be saved from starvation, they must be enabled to reintroduce spinning in their homes and every village must repossess its own weaver.”

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