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Political Utopia in Gandhi's *Sarvodaya*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Anil Panta has completed his thesis entitled "Political Utopia in Gandhi's *Sarvodaya*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from May 2014 to March 2015 A.D. I, hereby, recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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The thesis entitled "Political Utopia in Gandhi's *Sarvodaya*" Submitted to the Central Department of English, T. U by Anil Panta has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research committee.

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Abstract

The present research aims to explore the issues of political utopia founded in the philosophy of Gandhi. *Sarvodaya* by Gandhi has been analyzed implementing the tool of political utopia, a state of affairs in which all people within a specific society or isolated group have the same status in certain respects. At the very least, social equality includes equal rights under the law, such as security, voting rights, freedom of speech and assembly, property rights, and equal access to social goods and services. A society should be such that people across the board are able to enjoy civil and political rights and also the benefits of progress without any discrimination. But if the society explicitly or implicitly discriminates against some section of its populance then the feeling of discontentment will creep in. While dealing with Ghandi's notion of Sarvodaya, the research analyzes the correspondence of Gandhian Sarvodaya with that of Tagore's utopia. Therefore, it is important for societies to ensure that no group feels relatively deprived vis-à-vis other groups. Different and unique Gandhi's notion has been proved fruitful for the creation of the just society.

Contents

I: Representing Ideal Society through Gandhi's *Sarvodaya*

The prime purpose of the research is to apply the tool of political utopia in Gandhi's *Sarvodaya* in relation to the establishment of the ideal society and the state for the betterment of the public. The present research analyses Gandhi's concepts as the core principles of the modern welfare state; the vision which is utopia politically, socially, economically and culturally.

The differences in opinion and attitude between Tagore and Gandhi are familiar to the students of modern Indian history. Tagore's famous letter to the Gandhi at the inception of the Non-cooperation Movement, condemning it as asceticism and 'orgy of frightfulness' which found 'a disinterested delight in any unmeaning devastation,' 'a struggle to alienate our heart and mind from those of the West', 'an attempt at spiritual suicide' has been quoted often enough as clinching evidence of their very basic disagreement regarding the road to a better future for India.

The poet was also sceptical concerning other features central to Gandhi's agenda, like the latter's prescription that everyone should spin as a part of their daily routine. Tagore failed to see what would be gained by people better suited for other work struggling to become clumsy spinners. Besides the two most eminent personalities of modern India projected two very different self-images. There was little obviously in common between the ascetic in loin cloth and the divinely handsome poet in his flowing robes. One's primary concern was the creation of a moral utopia while the other was a celebrant of life's many splendours.

Yet such genuine differences in opinion and world-view have deflected attention from the vast areas of agreement between the two. This is to be explained partly with reference to the fact that the poet, shrouded in an unfamiliar language and, until recently, very inadequate translations is virtually unknown to modern

scholarship outside Bengal. Recent comments in the British literary journals, remarkable for their ignorant arrogance, are a measure of that unfamiliarity. To those who do not read Bengali, Tagore is exclusively a literary person or a mystic of sorts. The fact that some two-thirds of his writings are serious essays, mostly on political and socio-economic problems of India and the crisis of civilization has been more or less ignored in Tagore scholarship. No wonder then that two very dramatic epistles cited above have received greater attention than a great deal of analytical writing which shows the continuity of thought and concern between two most striking individuals of recent times.

An obvious fact which one must emphasize in exploring these affinities is that their individuality notwithstanding, Tagore and Gandhi were both in many was typical products of nineteenth-century India. Central to the intellectual and moral concerns of that time was the attempt to grapple with the colonial experience. Self-conscious emotional and intellectual exercises to work out a *modus vivendi* in a situation perceived to be humiliating generated other related efforts: evaluating the west, introspection into the strength and weaknesses of the Indian tradition and its true character and agenda for reconstructing Indian society. The end results were of course not uniform, but there are identifiable regularities in the thought patterns of modern India's founding fathers. In the spectrum of ideas which constitute the Indian discourse in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, those traceable to Gandhi and Tagore are remarkably similar in many ways. Tagore's thinking on the themes mentioned above can be located squarely within the tradition of nineteenth-century Bengali thought from Rammohan to the poet's contemporary, Vivekananda. The modern Indian antecedents of Gandhi's ideas remain unexplored. His discipleship of Gokhale is known, but little has been written on his relationship to the debate between

the *sudharaks*, reformers and the traditionalists in western India. But even a superficial reading into the relevant literature would show that his concerns were not all that different from other social thinkers of his age. In short, the affinities between Tagore and Gandhi can be traced to a large extent to the shared concerns of the nineteenth-century Indian intelligentsia trying to work out world-views and agenda in the context of their colonial experience.

Gandhi's ideals of *Sarvodaya* have lasted well beyond the achievement of one of his chief projects, Indian independence. His followers in India continued working to promote the kind of society that he envisioned, and their efforts have come to be known as the Sarvodaya Movement. Anima Bose has referred to the movement's philosophy as "a fuller and richer concept of people's democracy than any we have yet known (4)." Sarvodaya workers associated with Vinoba, Dhirendra Mazumdaar, Shankarrao Deo, K. G. Mashruwala undertook various projects aimed at encouraging popular self-organisation during the 1950s and 1960s, including *Bhoodan* and *Gramdan* movements. Many groups descended from these networks continue to function locally in India today. Sarvodaya is a term meaning universal uplift or progress of all.

The term was first coined by Mahatma Gandhi as the title of his 1908 translation of John Ruskin's tract on political economy, *Unto This Last*, and Gandhi came to use the term nonviolence Vinoba Behave, embraced the term as a name for the social movement in post-independence India which strove to ensure that self-determination and equality reached all strata of Indian society. These elements of the ideal state are examined from the perspective of how Gandhi’s philosophy Sarvodaya promotes political utopia.

A utopia can be defined as an ideal or perfect place or state, or any visionary system of political or social perfection. In literature, it refers to a detailed description of a nation or commonwealth ordered according to a system which the author proposes as a better way of life than any known to exist, a system that could be instituted if the present one could be cancelled and people could start over.

In 1516 Sir Thomas More wrote the first Utopia. He coined the word utopia from the Greek *ou-topos* meaning no place or nowhere. But this was a pun - the almost identical Greek word *eu-topos* means a good place. This site will open up the dreams, ideas and energies behind a selection of historical utopias. In the present time utopia has been presented as the perfect state of anything where lacks the anxiety, domination and evils. This concept of utopia has been presented in Gandhi's *Sarvodaya* which is the finding of the research. According to Partha Chatharjee:

> Sarvodaya is a state of affairs in which all people within a specific society or isolated group have the same status in certain respects. At the very least, social equality includes equal rights under the law, such as security, voting rights, freedom of speech and assembly, property rights, and equal access to social goods and services. (54)

This idea of Charteeje is similar to the ideals of Gandhi in his *Sarvodaya* which has been used in the research to prove Gandhi's notion of political utopia. However, the research also includes Gandhi's concepts of health equity, economic equality and other social securities. Moreover, it also includes equal opportunities and obligations, and so involves the whole of society.

Sarvodaya requires the absence of legally enforced social class or caste boundaries and the absence of discrimination motivated by an inalienable part of a person's identity. For example, sex, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, origin,

caste or class, income or property, language, religion, convictions, opinions, health or disability must not result in unequal treatment under the law and should not reduce opportunities unjustifiably.

Sarvodaya refers to social, rather than economic, or income equality. Equal opportunities are interpreted as being judged by ability, which is compatible with a free-market economy. A problem is horizontal inequality, the inequality of two persons of *same* origin and ability. From Sanskrit, Gandhi had coined the term Sarvodaya, meaning the "uplift all." Ari brought it to Buddhist Sri Lanka and recast it in terms of awakening. That's what the Buddha did under the *Bodhi* tree. He woke up. And that is what we all can do--awaken to our innate wisdom and power to act. Ari added the word shramadana, "gift of labor," so the movement's full name means, in effect, "everyone wakes up by working together." I listened with growing excitement. Here was the "liberation Buddhism" that I had imagined might be realized some day, with luck and the blessings of all bodhisattvas.

In order to maintain the concepts of political utopia in *Sarvodaya*, Gandhi challenges the notion of social inequality. Social inequality occurs when resources in a given society are distributed unevenly, typically through norms of allocation that engender specific patterns along lines of socially-defined categories of persons. Economic inequality, usually described on the basis of the unequal distribution of income or wealth, is a frequently studied type of social inequality. Though the disciplines of economics and sociology generally use different theoretical approaches to examine and explain economic inequality, both fields are actively involved in researching this inequality. However, social and natural resources other than purely economic resources are also unevenly distributed in most societies and may contribute to social status. Norms of allocation can also affect the distribution

of rights and privileges, social power, access to public goods such as education or the judicial system, adequate housing, transportation, credit and financial services such as banking and other social goods and services.

From the concept of his political utopia Gandhi also becomes a nationalist figure. This concept of Gandhi is directed to the creation of the imagined community which is perfect. Gandhi's imagined community replete with the political utopia also becomes similar to the ideas of Benerdict Anderson, when he puts:

> It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion... 'Nationalism is not die awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist... (43)

There are a number of socially-defined characteristics of individuals that contribute to social status and, therefore, equality or inequality within a society. When researchers use quantitative variables such as income or wealth to measure inequality, on an examination of the data, patterns are found that indicate these other social variables contribute to income or wealth as intervening variables. Thus it is evident that Gandhi can be defined from multiple perspectives but the limitation of the research is that it only deals with the issues of how Gandhi *Sarvodaya* calls for the plea of utopian society.

Mahatma Gandhi was of the firm view that the earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not for every man's greed. In the *Sarvodaya* society of his dream, therefore, every member will be free from any greed for limitless acquisition of material wealth and more and more luxurious living and they will follow the motto of simple living and high thinking. Everyone will, thus, get ample

opportunity to produce and earn sufficiently through honest work for decent and dignified living. Consequently there will be no problem of unemployment. Of course, obviously, income of different people may be different, depending on their talent, ability and effort. But those who will earn more will use the bulk of their greater earnings for the good of the society as a whole.

In such a society, all wealth, including land, will be assumed as common property to be utilized for the welfare of all. If an individual has more than his proportionate portion, he becomes a trustee of the excess wealth for the benefit of the less fortunate members of the society. The concept of Indian Utopia also become similar to Ashis Nandi in regard to the notion of modernity as, “India is a country with enormous cultural creativity, with many innovations historically at the religious and philosophical level, to which was added, since its initial contact with modernity, the development of high quality human and social sciences” (1).

Sarvodaya is the philosophy of Ghandi to the formation of ideal society. His ways, indeed, were unique, so much so that even as early as 1894 i.e. when he was just 25 years old, he wanted to help his compatriots in South Africa by saving them from blatant and crushing racial discrimination. This shows Gandhi's consideration of his fellow men even at that young age. Gandhi never equated happiness with economic prosperity and physical pleasure alone. His concept of the welfare of society was totally opposed to the utilitarian concept, viz. the greatest good of the greatest number. This becomes clear from Gandhi’s statements:

> A votary of Ahimsa would strive for the greatest good of *all* and die in the attempt to realize this ideal. The greatest good of all, inevitably included the good of the greatest number, and, therefore, he and the utilitarian would converge on many points. Sarvodaya is the greatest

> good of all through truth and non-violence became the ultimate goal in social welfare. (32)

To Gandhi, the individual is as important, if not more, than the society, as he firmly believed that the happiness of the individual formed the constituent part of the happiness of the society. So, for him, social welfare means the conscious submission of the individual and a voluntary contribution of one's possession to the society, which consisted of all, not a majority and, in return, the social system, built upon the principles of non-violence and democracy, was to give a complete guarantee for the maximum development of the individual's personality. A critic of political utopia Richard Donne defines Gandhi's *Survodaya* as:

> Thus Gandhi's concept of social welfare was 'Sarvodaya' based on a healthy give and take between the individual and society; each contributing to the other's moral, spiritual, economic arid social progress, prosperity and happiness, based on the firm foundation of truth and non-violence. Examined from all angles, this concept enveloped the field of social welfare in its entirety, unlike the modem western concept. (23)

The Gandhian concept takes a total perspective and focuses on the development of the moral and spiritual aspects with truth and non-violence as its base; with all the other aspects, such as physical, mental and economic, to enhance the individual's social sense, thereby creating a society of healthy individuals. For Donne "One important aspect of Gandhi's social thought was his tendency not only to bridge the gap between individual and social ethics but also" to regard social reality as a counterpart of man's inner reality" (5). In the western concept of social welfare there lies a sense of giver and receiver even in today's institutional and citizen-right

concept. This may be due to the fact that the present concept has developed from the initial residual concept of charity.

Different thinkers and critics have analyzed Gandhi's notion of *Sarvodaya* from multiple perspectives. Vinobha Bhave rightly says:

> Of course the last one's uplift is included in the uplift of all, but in emphasizing the last, the object is that work should begin from that end. For Gandhiji, Sarvodaya is the true panacea for all types of social or political problems experienced by Indian society. After the death of Gandhiji, Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan have highlighted the essentials of Sarvodaya in their own light. (9)

Vinoba Bhave developed Gandhiji's concept of *Sarvodaya* keeping in view changing socio-economic circumstances. The movement of Bhoodan and Gramdan and his unique method of spreading his message of compassion through padayatra have attracted worldwide attention. J. P. Narayan holds the view that "Sarvodaya stands for the sublime goals of freedom, equality, brotherhood and peace. Realization of a rich, total and integrated life is the basic objective of Sarvodaya philosophy"(11). *Sarvodaya* envisages a new humanistic socialist society. Man will be the centre of such a society. Unless man cultivates values like love, sincerity, truth, an abiding sympathy etc., the emergence of a new society would only remain a pious dream. In this process of change the State has little role to play. The State, at best, can effect change at the level of the external behavior of man. It fails to influence the inner springs of life. This mental transformation is only possible through appeal and persuasion.

Similarly, according to Kumarapp "Sarvodaya represents the ideal social order according to Gandhiji" (4). Sarvodaya visualizes a simple, non-violent and

decentralized society. In capitalism and state socialism the individual becomes alone and isolated. *Sarvodaya* is opposed to both. In the scheme of *Sarvodaya* the people are endowed with real power. Democracy becomes meaningful and assumes significance only when its structure is reared on the foundation of village Panchayats. Its basis is all-embracing love. J. P. Chandra opines that "by bringing about a countrywide decentralization of both political and economic powers, *Sarvodaya* provides opportunity for the all-round development of the individual and the society" (1). The *Sarvodaya* philosophy stands opposed to parliamentary democracy and party system. It is because the party system divides the society into various groups. J. P. Narayan wanted to replace the existing parliamentary system through political and economic decentralization of powers and functions. *Sarvodaya* stands for establishment of an integrated cooperative society.

Sarvodaya seeks the happiness of each and all. Hence it is superior to the utilitarian concept of' greatest happiness of the greatest number.' Dada Dharmadhikari highlighted the distinction between *Sarvodaya* and western Isms which speaks of three stages in the evolution of humanist thought; first came Darwin with his advocation of the principle of the survival of the fittest; next came Huxley with the doctrine 'live and let live' and today, 'Sarvodaya' going one step further asserts 'Live in order to help others live.

The present research, however, does not go against these issues rather it uses these issues to prove Gandhi's notion of the political utopia. The research focuses on the political implication of sarvodaya. *Sarvodaya* attaches importance to 'lokniti'. The concept of *Lokniti* signifies self-restraint, self-abnegation, selfless service to the people, discipline, faith in God and performance of duties with benign motive. *Sarvodaya* condemns the majority rule, elections, political parties and centralization

of power. Gandhiji wanted a ‘Stateless democracy’ in which even weakest have the same opportunity as the strongest. The ideal democracy will be a federation of *Satyagrahi* village communities based on non-violence.

Political utopia is the tool in the research to make thesis prove the hypothesis. Utopia is a term that means an ideal place that does not exist. It has been used to describe an imaginary world where the social justice is achieved as well as the principles that could guarantee it. Utopia symbolizes people's hopes and dreams. Utopia turns to be synonymous with impossible, because an ideal life in an ideal society that it offers appears to be out of reach. The authors of utopias depict the societies similar to theirs but better organized. They also offer a detailed plan of how we can create such a society and how it might be run. The term was taken from Thomas More's novel *Utopia*, published in 1551, where he depicted an ideal society based on equalism, economic and political prosperity and where poverty and misery were eradicated. More's *Utopia* is inspired by Plato's *Republic*, which is considered the first utopian novel. Political utopia views the state as an instrument of coercion. But this is only half-truth. The state especially a democratic state can also serve as an instrument to promote material well-being of the people. In fine, Political utopian society ensures a society free from exploitation and offers the opportunity to each and everyone to prosper and work for the well being of all. It creates a condition not only for participatory democracy but also for establishing a new form of socialism. It envisages a new pattern of life based on decentralization of economic and political power ensuring the moral freedom of man. As Erich Fromm says:

> The aim of humanistic socialism can be attained only by the introduction of a maximum of decentralization compatible with a minimum of centralization necessary for the functioning of an

> industrial society. The function of a centralized state must be reduced to a minimum, while the voluntary activity of freely cooperating citizens constitutes the central mechanism of social life. (5)

It is because political utopia assumes the human being to be an epitome of virtues only. But in reality jealousy, selfishness, acquisitiveness etc. are ingrained in human nature. Hence establishing a *Sarvodaya* society based on mutual love, cooperation, selfless service etc. is, indeed, an impossible task.Most important utopian works include: Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888); H. G. Wells' *A modern utopia* (1905) and *The Shape to Things to Come* (1933); Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974), among others. There are optimistic and pessimistic visions, the narratives that reflect optimistic world-view could be called utopia and the narratives that reflect pessimistic world-view could be termed dystopia. Dystopias challenges utopia's assumption of human perfectibility and negate the possibility of perfect societies.

The tentative chapter division and the allocation of the timeline of the dissertation are as follows. The first chapter provides the basic introduction of the tool of political utopia, brief introduction of Gandhi and the basic ideas of the Indian society. The second chapter, in its detail, analyses the text *Sarvodaya* from the perspective of political utopia. The last chapter is the conclusion of the research with its findings and the ways for the ideal society.

II: Conceptualizing Utopia through Gandhi's *Survodaya*

Gandhian Utopia is an account of the origins, authorship and history of the complex of ideas associated with Mohandas Gandhi. The major theoretical issue tackled in *Gandhian Utopia* is the relationship between individuals and society in history, and the role of individuals in cultural change. Associated with this are contingencies of authorship and authority. In a brief account of the "great men vs cultural determinism" debate the latter is seen as dominant in the anthropological tradition. In contrast Gandhi assumed "neither an integral individual nor a determined culture", and argued that "individual and culture are constantly interlinked by confrontation and struggle" (67). The theory of culture change Fox finds closest to this is Bhaskar's transformational model, where "the intentions and actions of individuals, as they bounce off the existing culture and society, can either reproduce or transform that culture, in ways usually unintended by individuals." This is tied in with Gouldner's attacks on traditional ideas of authorship. The resulting conception of a "culture history" is "tested" by applying it to the history of scientific innovation. Although Gandhi rejected modernization and the West, Gandhian utopia, like the other strands of Indian nationalism, was a response to the impact of the world on India. Fox's sources and inspirations here include Wallerstein's "world system", William's "hegemony", Said's "Orientalism" and Terdiman's "conflicted intimacy". Gandhian utopia is seen as a form of affirmative Orientalism within the Orientalist hegemony of the world system, one in "conflicted intimacy" with the negative elements of that hegemony. Comparisons are made with other instances of cultural resistance to the world system.

Gandhian utopia did not appear out of a vacuum; there were others confronting that same Orientalist hegemony. Affirmative Orientalism involved

Westerners as well as Indians, and people such as Edward Carpenter, Thoreau, Tolstoy, Ruskin and Annie Besant had a significant influence on Gandhi. Among the most important forerunners of Gandhi were a group centred on Bengal that included Swami Vivekananda, Margaret Noble (sister Nivedita) and Sri Aurobindo. They shared with Gandhi a belief in the essential spiritual nature of India, opposition to modernisation and stress on an organic society. However they were also involved in revolutionary movements, and Aurobindo's "expedient passive resistance" lacked satyagraha's moral commitment. Another group of nationalists, centred on Bombay and London, was split between those favouring modernisation and Westernisation and revolutionary cultural nationalists like Bal Tilak and Shyamji Krishnavarma. Gandhian utopia was constructed as an alternative to these that rejected both Westernisation and violent revolution; its most important original component was *satyagraha*.

The present research aims to explore the issue of political utopia founded in the philosophy of Gandhi. By doing so the research proves how the philosophy Gandhi favors the ideal society. The main theme of *Sarvodaya* in the present will be same as extolled in the Sanskrit verse '*sarve bhavantu sukhinah, sarve santu niramaya, sarve bhadrani pashyantu, ma kaschit dukh bhag bhavet*' (may all be happy, all be free from illness, all see goodness, and none partake in any sorrow). *Sarvodaya* stresses on the duty of individuals to themselves and, beyond their immediate family, to the entire world.

The main threat which our society is facing today has come from various inequalities: that between the rich and the poor, between communities, and between regions. These inequalities were seen by Gandhi as a major hindrance in our country's quest for unity and growth and led him to coining the term "Sarvodaya", meaning

universal upliftment, or the simultaneous development of all people, and the equitable distribution of resources to everyone. Perhaps the tagline of our Eleventh plan, “Inclusive Development“, was foreseen by Gandhi as it means the same as “Sarvodaya”. The Gandhian concept of *Sarvodaya* is also extremely relevant in a plural society. *Sarvodaya* means ‘welfare of all’. It can literally translate into the welfare of the downtrodden and the oppressed. A society should be such that people across the board are able to enjoy civil and political rights and also the benefits of progress without any discrimination. But if the society explicitly or implicitly discriminates against some section of its populace then the feeling of discontentment will creep in. Therefore, it is important for societies to ensure that no group feels relatively deprived vis-à-vis other groups. But this is not usually the case. The feeling of economic and political exclusion is one of the biggest reasons for conflicts in a plural society. Another concept rooted in the philosophy of *Sarvodaya* is that of decentralization.

Gandhi strongly believed in the power of the people. He was the first national leader to mobilize the masses in such a great number. He considered it very important that all the stakeholders be a part of the decision-making process. Decisions made at the top for the masses hardly achieve success. In conflict resolution as well, it is important that the members of conflicting groups be made a part of the conflict resolution process. If a handful of people take a decision for the rest without caring to know of their views, the conflict resolution process will be a failure. For instance, until recently the stand of the Government of India on Kashmir issue was that of strict non-involvement of the separatist elements in the peace and dialogue process. This led to a stalemate as the separatists have a considerable following in the Valley. However, realizing the fruitlessness of this approach, the government has slowly

softened its stand on this issue. The interlocutors interacted with the separatists and there is a growing voice in the government quarters to include them within the fold of dialogue. This is totally in resonance with Gandhian philosophy.

Gandhi was a staunch critic of western civilization based on technology. He wanted to preserve his country from the curse of commercialization, the horror of machine exploitation and production, the slavery of the wage labour, the whole black systems of capitalist life. He favored small scale and cottage industries including *Khadi*. His intention was to provide employment to all and thereby solve the problem of poverty and unemployment. Nehru was enamoured of western science and technology. He supported heavy and large scale industrialization. In his autobiography, he wrote, "we cannot stop the river of change or cut ourselves adrift from it and psychologically we who have eaten the apple of Eden cannot forget the taste and go back to primitiveness" (55).

Violent conflict on a large scale erupts when most of the resources and benefits are appropriated by the dominant community. The equal distribution of resources and the equitable accommodation of all sections of society are vital for conflict resolution in such a condition. Toward this end, Gandhi set forth the ideals of *Sarvodaya*, decentralization of power and wealth, trusteeship, social harmony, communal unity, economic equality and the philosophy of s*arva dharma sambhava*. In direct contrast is Gandhiji's significant economic policy of 'Sarvodaya', meaning good for all. The idea of *Sarvodaya* is in turn directly related to the principles of truth and nonviolence and intimate cooperation among interested parties. It is also based on the moral and ethical values of *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi* production, which depend upon non-exploitation, non-possession, trusteeship, bread and labor, etc. This ideology, when put into practice, posits the creation of self-help groups whose ultimate interest

is the betterment of all the members. This, if followed, can lead to a paradigm shift in today's Western economic policies.

By trusteeship, Gandhi meant that the accumulation wealth is not a bad proposal, provided the accumulator keeps that wealth as a trustee to the society, meeting the society's necessities as and when time demands. That money is then in the safe hands of a good human being, thereby erasing any chance for conflict. Society thrives peacefully, with mutual trust and cooperation. Gandhi believed that "the earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every one's greed" (54). In this era of globalization, greed has overrun many ethical and moral values leading to an unfortunate, but not unexpected, crisis. The difference between the haves and the have-nots has become more stark and glaring; this could have been erased gradually but steadily if Gandhian principles had been applied.

The thrust of this thesis is to explain and assess Gandhi's *Sarvodaya* as a certain kind of utopian project to propose *Sarvodaya* as a realistic and realizable utopia in the India of today and in the world at large. In examining the concepts of *Sarvodaya* and utopia, and in establishing the links between the two, the study contributes to scholarship on the subject in several ways: by exploring the dialectic, dynamic, imaginative and creative content in *Sarvodaya*; by making explicit the eschatological dimension-hope, teleology and thre-orientedness-of *Sarvodaya* dynamics; by suggesting a new *Sarvodaya* economic vision that is in the process of being realized; by giving examples of realistic experimentation with ashram-village dialectic; e) by taking Sarvodaya as a model for theologizing in India; by indicating Sarvodaya's ecological implications as an ultimate response.

The intent of this thesis is to argue and substantiate that Sarvodaya of Gandhi-as ideal, vision and movement-is a realistic utopian ideal, i.e., a vision has

implications for effecting socio-economic change and may have farther theologico-ecologicd implications as well. Such implications, when made explicit, function as healthy dialectics of change.

Gandhi's first elaborate comment on the Indian problem, his *Hind Swaraj* identified one basic evil, modern civilization. It was a threat to all that was worthwhile in human values, not only in India but the world over. The British, as victims of this pandemic, were to be pitied, not hated. It was not any race or nation but modern civilization itself and the Indian infatuation with it that oppressed India. At the heart of that evil civilization was the perception of man as a creature of desires and capitalism had a vested interest in whetting these desires. Multiplication of wants hence become the *sine qua non* of the entire system which dehumanized man, legitimized violence against nature and deprived life fall meaning and purpose beyond the endless fulfilment of desires. The end results of such soul-destroying pursuits were loss of all autonomy, mutual suspicion and violence and the exploitation of man by man. Man, both as worker and consumer, had become slave to machines. Imperialism and racism were integral to such a civilization. Even its apparent benefits were of a highly dubious nature. Modern medicine produced patterns of dependence which were highly unnatural and modern transport, far from making life easier, actually helped spread disease. Wisdom had been reduced to knowledge in quest of power and morality, equated with enlightened self-interest, had become a form of prudence. The much-vaunted dynamism of the West was little more than mindless activism. Only on two points was Gandhi willing to concede some moral merit to modern civilization. He admired its spirit of scientific enquiry for he saw in it a genuine quest for truth. He also found much to learn in the organizational aspect of

western life: the civil virtues were informed by the moral qualities of discipline and co-operation.

Tagore, despite his great admiration for many features of western life, was quintessentially in agreement with Gandhi's judgement. He linked this apotheosis of money to another central feature of western civilization which he found even more disturbing. Gandhi had condemned its mindless activism. He saw in its excessive effort a sign of inherent weakness, an unnecessary over-expenditure of energy for which there was always a price to pay. In Europe there were already signs that nature was calling for repayment. The excess of effort in every sphere of life had created patterns of elaboration and ever increasing excitement which relegated human beings to a position of insignificance:

> The cruel pressure of competition reduces the workers to something worse than machinery. The grand show of civilization which we see from outside astounds us. The human sacrifice which goes on day and night under that facade remains hidden. But it is no secret of Providence: social earthquakes bear witness to the consequences from time to time. In Europe, powerful groups crush weak ones, big money starves out small money and at the end swallows it up like a pill. (65)

This excess of activism generates a poison of discontent. The monstrous factories engulfed in black smoke deprive men of their life-protecting cover of solitude—of space, time and opportunity for restful thought. People become unused to their own company. Hence at every opportunity they try desperately to escape from themselves through drink and reckless quest for pleasure. The affluent hedonists are not much better off. They are fagged out by the endless pursuit of fresh excitement:

> They whirl themselves around like dry leaves in a storm of parties, horse race, hunting and travel. In the midst of such whirlwind, they fail to see clearly either themselves or the world around them; everything appears obscure and indistinct. If the continuous cycle of pleasure stops for a moment, they find even that momentary encounter with self, the experience of unity with a wider world intolerable in the extreme. (78)

He was unequivocal in his rejection of this material civilization. He did not believe in it, he wrote to Gandhi, just as he did not believe 'in the physical body to be the highest truth in man'. In his statements on western civilization, Tagore frequently invoked the concept of relativist which was a commonplace in the cultural discourses of nineteenth-century Bengal. A common theme in this discussion is that one cannot judge one civilization from the point of view of another because each civilization had its characteristic proneness. Tagore, citing Guizot, noted the uniqueness of western civilization in its multiplicity of drives and the co-existence of often incompatible institutions and tendencies. Yet, in modern Europe, he identified one dominant concern which transcended all others—namely, an apotheosis of the nation state. Everything was permitted in its service and nothing was allowed to thwart its perceived interests. The end result of such obsessive preoccupation with national self-interest was conflict and eventually self-destruction. If Gandhi condemned the totality of modern civilization as evil, to Tagore its supreme evil consisted in nationalism, which separated man from man and led to destructive conflict. Gandhi, the leader of India's militant nationalism, provided in his writings indirect support for such views. He saw Europe's greed for territories as a function of her aggressive nationalism. The

nationalism he prescribed for India was one which would not ignore the interest of other nations, nor make even one's own community its primary concern.

The nineteenth-century Indian discourse on the West was rarely, if ever, informed only by intellectual curiosity. It was inspired mainly by an urge to assess the comparative merits of Indian civilization, its differences with the dominant culture of the time and its relative superiority or inferiority. A quest for cultural self-assurance was often the unconscious motive. A more conscious purpose was to assess the impact of the west, increasingly seen as a threat to the Indian way of life with unfortunate implications for the country. Closely linked to such a perception was a recognition that there were things to learn from the west, and at another, less clearly stated level of understanding, the awareness that the clock of western influence could not be turned back altogether. There were consequent attempts to work out strategies of cultural survival. The agenda for the future — the programmes for national regeneration focussed, *inter alia,* on the question as to what one could adopt from the West. But nearly all such exercises started with an enquiry into the nature of Indian civilization and implicit or explicit comparisons with the west.

Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj,* an uncompromising critique of modern western civilization, was based on an equally strong faith in what he believed to be the values of Indian culture. There is no hint here of any need for self-assurance to overcompensate for any perceived inferiority. Some of his data derive no doubt from the Orientalist paradigm of self-sufficient village communities, which he idealized, but in essence he projects an emotional and ideological preference rooted, arguably, in his life experience of a traditional Indian home. I state this as an *obiteror* a hypothesis the validity of which would not be very difficult to establish. One could show that he shared his preference for the emotional ambience of Indian life conceptualized as a

cultural value with much more westernized Indians, like R.C. Dutt for example. While the latter were more welcoming to Europe's influence, they too found western life lacking in terms of the quality of inter-human relationship. Underlying Gandhi's statements on the superior worth of India's civilization one can detect his attachment to a pattern of social interaction which did not privilege the individual or emphasize achievement over other objects of human aspiration.

The Indian civilization of his imagination was essentially rural in character in contrast to the city-based modern civilization of the West. Its survival over millenia despite numberless assaults was evidence of its viability and moral validity. It was spiritual because the essentially spiritual nature of man was its discovery. Gandhi re-cognized an age-old culture hidden under an entrustment of crudity' in rural India and that despite what he saw as the apparent brutishness of peasant life. The self-governing, self-sufficient and harmonious village communities of yore were the institutional bulwark of this ancient culture. He saw in the caste system a social order which recognized the basic differences in human temperament: untouchability was an aberration, a fall from grace. Indian society was essentially tolerant perceiving, from the days of the Upanishads onwards, the truth underlying apparently divergent beliefs. It was also a grand synthesis of different cultures, with an infinite capacity for assimilation. Thus in terms of human values it was superior in every way to the competitive, materialistic and violence-prone civilization of modern Europe driven by insatiable desire forever seeking satisfaction of new wants. The British, to bolster up their power, rubbished Indian culture and Indians, infatuated with the West, believed their propaganda. Curing Indians of their *moha* was one essential element of Gandhi's agenda for reconstruction.

Tagore's idealization of Indian society and his implied declaration of faith in its essential superiority was based on an imaginative interpretation of what he had seen and experienced. He too repeatedly emphasized its essentially rural character. And what Gandhi had described as the predominantly spiritual proneness of India's civilization, the poet pictured in terms of very concrete images. He contrasted Europe's endless and frantic pursuit of pleasure with the Indians' very different style of quest for happiness:

> India has diluted the density of her material pleasures by distributing it among friends, relations and neighbours; and she has simplified the complexity of action and distributed it among various groups. As a result, there is always the space to cultivate one's essential humanity in one's pleasures, one's activity and one's meditations. The trader—he too listens attentively to the bards retelling stories from the ancient scriptures and performs his rituals; the craftsman also reads the Ramayana tunefully. To a large extent this expansion of one's leisure helps preserve the purity of one's home, one's mind and the society at large and saves them from the dense vapours of vice. . . . The forest fires of evil instinct set alight by mutual competition and the crowding in on one another are kept in check in India. (78)

He saw an essential balance, an element of unity between the various aspects of their existence in the life of the peasants in rural Bengal:

> There is no grandeur, no complexity there. One does not need a great deal of philosophy, science or sociology to live one's life at this far end of the world and satisfy one's few modest wants. One requires only a few ancient rules which govern the family, the village and one's duties

> as a subject of the king. They blend very easily with people's lives to become a total vibrant reality. (55)

The poet found the illiterate villagers and the insignificant village beautiful because their steady allegiance to a set of feelings, beliefs and attitudes over many generations gave them a sense of dignity and imparted a quality of sweetness to their life. He saw in their faces an impression of compassionate patience, a simple-hearted trustfulness which moved him. He preferred it to the 'tremendous din of high civilization' which reached his ears from London and Paris. Even in the life of urban India of his times he found a quality of contentment and happiness undiminished by the paucity of material goods. He found it more satisfying and worthier in terms of human value than anything he had encountered in Europe. He cited one concrete example in support of his argument. The Indian villager never turned away a guest or supplicant from his door and did not consider any discomfort entailed by his act of hospitality as discomfort. A profound and age-old belief in the sacredness of this duty had become a part of his emotional make-up. Tagore was not unaware of the miseries of rural life and its pervasive sin of pettiness. Many of his short stories, based on his intimate knowledge of rural Bengal, are tales of man's inhumanity to man. But he still saw the quality of dignified integrity as the central feature of India's traditional civilization, a quality of wholesomeness he missed in Europe. In his words, the debilitating and denationalizing impact of the West had not yet banished from Indian life 'the hard strength of poverty, the stilled emotion of silence, the chilling peace of dedication and the grand dignity of renunciation. And if someday a storm raged one would see the blazing eyes of the ascetic burning bright undiminished by any external fury.

He also came very close to Gandhi's position in his perception of India's political traditions. While he did not emphasize the notion of self-sufficient village republics he questioned the value of state power and, in fact, of nationhood itself for the life of a people. He shared with other Bengali thinkers of the nineteenth century the notion that society rather than the state was the central focus of Indian life. Like Gandhi, he too was extremely suspicious of centralized state power. Only, he went further to reject the need for nationhood which raised barriers between man and man and led to vicious conflict. The fact that the idea was alien to India was for him a plus point. His agenda for national reconstruction, like Gandhi's, emphasized the rural unit rather than the grand edifice of the state.

Tagore discussed at great length and repeatedly the assimilative power of Indian civilization, the belief first projected by Orientalists that it represented a grand synthesis, a pattern of unity in diversity. It had not rejected any of the numerous cultures which had come to its shores. 'The Scythians, the Huns, the Pathans and the Mughals had all merged into one single body', he declared in one of his most famous poems.

The main features of Gandhi's agenda for national reconstruction are well-known. He saw the central problem of Indian life as not something of external origin, but a flaw in the Indian character—a pervasive lack of courage and a consequent tendency to blame others for one's misfortune. The degradation and humiliations India suffered ultimately derived from this flawed character, for one is inevitably trampled if one behaves like a worm. India's infatuation with western civilization was a by-product of the same weakness, a loss of confidence in one's traditions. Independence for him was a necessity primarily because it was a *sine qua non* for preserving the very worthwhile features of Indian civilization. The centralized state,

which was to him a dehumanizing machine destroying all sense of personal responsibility, he considered unsuitable for India's essentially rural civilization. Though he accepted it as necessary after 1930, the self-governing village communities were to be the base of India's future polity. And Indians would need to go through a process of self-purification, *atma-suddhi*, to escape from hybridization. They needed serious introspection to reinterpret the central principles of her civilization, and learn from others, as she had done in the past, in terms of her own self-perception, not those of western assumptions.

The agenda for reconstruction had to start from the bottom and be based, not on any sentimental attachment to an abstract *Bharat-mata,* but an active love of the people. The worker in the cause had to eschew ostentatious living and refuse comforts denied to others. The constructive programme emphasized village industries, health, education, use and development of indigenous languages, fight against untouchability and integration with India's tribal population. The instrument of self-purification would be the practice of *satyagraha.* India would not close her doors and windows to the world outside and allow 'noble winds from all over the world' to blow, but only on her own terms.

The similarity between Gandhi's programme and Tagore's ideas on the reconstruction of Indian society 1890s onwards is indeed striking. He too, as noted above, regarded the centralized state as an institution alien to India. The colonial state had caused the worst degeneration because Indians now looked for its approbation rather than that of their own society in undertaking any act of service. Petitions and complaints to the government, whining when the authorities failed to respond, had become the prime instruments for the solution of the country's problems. Howls of protest were heard when a respectable Indian was insulted, but no one paused to think

that such humiliation was rendered possible by the loss of national self-respect. He welcomed the spirit of *swadeshi,* not because it would harrass the English or stimulate Indian industry, hut because it might teach us to give up our comforts and make a modest act of self-denial the basis of national unity. And 'the exit from the dark cave of self-interest' for the wider good of the people would give Indians the courage and self-respect they lacked so badly.

The privileged and the educated, if they desired national regeneration, would have to start with a sense of unity with the masses and construct bonds of love with the impoverished villagers through selfless service. He decried the excesses of the boycott movement during the anti-partition agitation because it hurt the interests of the poor for whom the elite had done nothing expecting unconditional support when it suited the latter. Indians must learn to live by their own strength, *atma-shakti,* and the way to do it was constructive effort in rural India in education, health, handicrafts without any dependence on government. His emphasis was not on agitation but building self-confidence and ties of unity between the elite and the masses. He repeatedly uses an expression for which there is no exact equivalent in English, *kalyan,* moral and material well-being. It is an expression with resonances which encompass the body and the spirit, the individual and wider humanity. Tagore's conception of *kalyan* uniting the entire society bear close resemblance too Gandhi's idea of *sarvodaya.* The former's efforts were not limited to prescriptions. He did set up an organization to implement his programmes and his Sri-niketan was something more than a craft school. Its purpose was rural reconstruction through training in productive crafts suitable for rural society. And while Santiniketan embodied the ideal of universal man, with its emphasis on simple living,joyous education and unity with nature, its affinities with Gandhian ideals were not insignificant.

Sarvodaya, as understood in this thesis, cannot be seen in isolation from other views of Gandhi. Because it contains in seminal form the worldview of his life, it also sums up in some way his ideal and praxis of total liberation As an ideal it has great polemical for change in every human dimension and it offers challenges to the sutras quo. As a liberative movement, today takes every human milieus its locus of action, especially any oppressive situation *Sarvodaya* of Gandhi, treated as a comprehensive vision, we argue, should be understood as a realistic utopia, i-e., an ideal that while never becoming realized in MI, is close enough to reality and critical enough of reality to stimulate its partial realization in an ongoing dialectic of shattering and reforming.

Gandhi's ideal of *Ramrajya*, the society or nation governed by the principles of Lord Rama is the ideal of a lied society. In his own way, Gandhi envisioned such a society and experimented with various liberating action programmes, such as constructive programmes, rural oriented sew sufficiency programmes, khadi and other village industries. Thus action for justice and participation in national struggle for political, economic, cultural and religious freedom becomes a kind of Sacihana (spiritual discipline). For Gandhi, Life being a constant *Experimenting with Truth*, he suggested alternative means for establishing a totally liberated society (Sarvodaya society) and its continuity and progress. Such Gandhian alternatives, the research argues , cumulatively constitute realistic utopia, i.e., utopia in the process of being realized.

Sarvodaya as vision and movement is Gandhi's in its origin; dynamic in outlook, it is solidly based on a philosophy of praxis that demands the commitment of its follower to the care and the uplift of humanity, especially of the last and the least in any society. Gandhi's dream of sarvodaya society is an ideal or vision towards

which he worked and for which he expected a continuity of commitment till it is realized. Total openness to the reliability of the possibilities and ideals of his vision makes Gandhi a prophet of our time; Gandhi's readiness to experiment with "truth" (i-e., reality taken in a comprehensive sense: God, philosophy of life and worldview) 'makes him an experimental scientist of a special sort. For Satyajit Ray:

> a prisoner of hope as Gandhi envisions a future society. Though Gandhi's immediate concern, as he made his entry into the main mean of Indian public We, was the independence of India on foreign domination, his final goal was beyond the "Freedom at Midnight". His dream was Sarvodaya-the rising of all-welfare of each and every human being liberation and all that make one not silly human. Strictly speaking, Sarvodaya cannot be seen in isolation from other views of Gandhi; rather its significance becomes all the more clear when it is viewed in the whole spectrum of Gandhi's vision, his world-view. (43)

The dynamics of *Sarvodaya* are deeply rooted in the worldview of Gandhi, within which he thought and acted and from the perspective of which he viewed other realities, and which gave him the inner direction for his search for and experiments with truth. It has been suggested that Gandbi can be captured in three words: *satyagraha*, *sawodaya* and *amzdtz* (non-attachment).' His life and work reveal that he made Sarvodaya his life's god, satyagraha ameans, and madti a method of training in self-discipline to gain power. Behind Sarvodaya was his concern with justice and ethical behavior based on a theological assumption that all men and women are created equal. As he put it, he wanted to create equality among all people in order that they may be held together in the "silken net of love.'" Though he did not claim its

discovery, he sought ways to make it a living reality. He wanted to make sarvodayaa way of life for all humanity as it was for him.

Even in his lifetime the legend of Mahatma Gandhi had grown to such proportions that the man himself can be said to have disappeared as if into a dust storm. Joseph Lelyveld's new biography sets out to find him. His subtitle alerts us that this is not a conventional biography in that he does not repeat the well-documented story of Gandhi's struggle *for* India but rather his struggle *with* India, the country that exasperated, infuriated, and dismayed him, notwithstanding his love for it.

At the outset Lelyveld dispenses with the conventions of biography, leaving out Gandhi's childhood and student years, a decision he made because he believed that the twenty-three-year-old law clerk who arrived in South Africa in 1893 had little in him of the man he was to become. Besides, his birth in a small town in Gujarat on the west coast of India, and childhood spent in the bosom of a very traditional family of the Modh bania (merchant) caste of Jains, then the three years in London studying law are dealt with in fine detail and with a disarming freshness and directness in Gandhi's *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Lelyveld's argument is that it was South Africa that made him the visionary and leader of legend. He is not the first or only historian to have pointed out such a progression but he brings to it an intimate knowledge based on his years as a foreign correspondent for *The New York Times* in both South Africa and India and the exhaustive research he conducted with a rare and finely balanced sympathy.

Having accepted the brief of assisting as a translator in a civil suit between two Muslim merchants from India, Gandhi presented himself in a Durban magistrate's court on May 23, 1893, just the day after his arrival, dressed in a stylish frock coat, striped trousers, and black turban, and was promptly ordered to remove the turban. He

refused, left the courtroom, and fired off a letter to the press in protest. This was his first political act, predating the incident of being thrown off a train by an Englishman who objected to traveling with a "colored man" made famous by Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi* and Philip Glass's opera *Satyagraha*. Remarkably for an Indian, this seems to have been his first encounter with colonial arrogance and in his autobiography he said it made him resolve to stay and "root out the disease" of "color prejudice." It was the start of what Erik Erikson was to call his "eternal negative" but it is also a simplification, Lelyveld points out, of a much more convoluted attitude toward race, color, and caste that he brought with him from India.

It was a shock to Gandhi to find that in South Africa he was considered a "coolie"—in India the word is reserved for a manual laborer, specifically one who carries loads on his head or back. In South Africa the majority of Indians was composed of Tamil, Telugu, and Bihari laborers who had come to Natal on an agreement to serve for five years on the railways, plantations, and coal mines. They were known collectively as "coolies," and Gandhi was known as a "coolie barrister" (6).

Still, he had a touching faith in Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858 that formally extended British sovereignty over India and promised its inhabitants the same protections and privileges as all her subjects, voicing her wish that her Indian subjects "be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service." So when the Anglo-Boer War broke out in 1899 and later the Zulu rebellion of 1906, he led the Indian community—he had joined the Natal Indian Congress—in offering its service to the colonial power "as full citizens of the British Empire, ready to shoulder its obligations and deserving of whatever rights it had to bestow." He was proud of his command of the unit of Indian stretcher-bearers—not, one would think, a likely start

for one who came to be regarded as the man who inspired India's struggle, and struggles elsewhere in the world, for freedom.

It was when the so-called Black Act was passed in 1906, forcing Indians living in the Transvaal to register, that he held meetings and urged his fellow men to burn the permits they were required to carry and found himself being marched off, as he wrote, to:

> a prison intended for Kaffirs…. We could understand not being classified with the whites, but to be placed on the same level as the Natives seemed too much to put up with. It is indubitably right that the Indians should have separate cells. Kaffirs are as a rule uncivilized—the convicts even more so. They are troublesome, very dirty and live almost like animals. (54)

Africans could hardly ignore Gandhi's disparagement of them: Zulu newspapers took note that the Indians volunteered to work for the "English savages in Natal" and even an Indian publication in England called Gandhi's readiness to serve the whites "disgusting." It was only much later—and with the judicious addition of hindsight—that Gandhi claimed that "my heart was with the Zulus" and claimed that the cruelty he had witnessed against them was "the major turning point of his life spiritually," the one that made him turn to nonviolence as a strategy for resistance. This came to be known as *satyagraha*, which translates literally as "truth force" or firmness in truth.

This was the strategy he used in 1913 when he launched a campaign against the so-called "head tax," the payment required of every Indian who had completed the terms of his agreement and wished to remain in the Transvaal. It did not involve the native population at all but it ignited a rebellion by indentured labor, a turn unforeseen by Gandhi himself. Indians walked off plantations, railroads, mines, and whatever

services employed them in the cities, creating a strike on a scale that made it the first significant event in Gandhi's career. "I was not prepared for this marvelous awakening," he said. Becoming "a self-propelled whirlwind," Lelyveld writes, he traveled by rail from one rally to another, exhorting the strikers to allow themselves to fill the jails to overflowing. (Africans were to take note and use the same strategy of passive resistance in their own struggle to come.) General Jan Smuts called out the army to suppress the strike, which it did with ferocity.

When the strike was called off, Gandhi was hailed by crowds of thousands and now saw himself as the representative not only of Indian settlers of the merchant class but of the lowest of castes, the indentured laborers he had once ignored. He had found his vocation but the outcome—the Indian Relief Act of 1914—fell far short of what the agitation had called for. Lelyveld points out, as did critics at the time, that Indians still had no political rights in South Africa—and did not for another century. The system of indentured labor eventually ended, but that had not been one of Gandhi's demands.

While these huge public turmoil's were taking place, Gandhi was experimenting with personal and domestic changes as well: first by establishing a small, self-reliant, rural commune near Durban, Phoenix Farm, with his family and a few friends. Here they were expected to share equally in all duties—editing and printing his newspaper, *Indian Opinion*, as well as working on the land. He set forth his principles of the ideal life—vegetarianism, nature cures for all ills, home schooling for his children, extreme austerity in all spheres of life. "Meagerness" was the standard by which diet was to be measured, a full meal being "a crime against man and God." He decided that "no man living the physical or animal life can

possibly understand the spiritual or ethical" and took the vow of celibacy; his wife concurred.

Gandhi did not follow the traditional Indian formula: his ashram was based not on religion but on universal humanistic thought. How had this come about? Lelyveld believes that "if there is a single seminal experience in his intellectual development," it was reading Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is within You*. The Hindu revolutionary Sri Aurobindo went so far as to say, "Gandhi is a European—truly a Russian Christian in an Indian body" (6).

Lelyveld found that he now more or less abandoned his wife and children in Natal for months at a time, despite bitter complaints of neglect from his wife and eldest son Harilal. ("He feels that I have always kept all the four boys very much suppressed…always put them and Ba last," Gandhi wrote dispassionately.) When Gandhi's brother Laxmidas complained that he was failing to meet his family obligations, he replied serenely, "My family now comprises all living beings," and proceeded to assemble a surrogate family made up of mostly European Theosophists who shared his enthusiasm for Tolstoy and Ruskin. He lived for a while with the young copy editor Henry Polak and his wife Millie, then moved in with the East Prussian Jewish architect Hermann Kallenbach. Together they created another rural "utopia," Tolstoy Farm, southwest of Johannesburg, and Gandhi seems to have been happier there than he had been anywhere—enjoying bicycle rides and picnics and the friendship of Kallenbach.

This friendship was close—even romantic, Lelyveld suggests—and Kallenbach would have followed Gandhi when he left for India in 1914 if World War I had not broken out, barring him from entering British territory. All Gandhi's efforts

to obtain a visa for him failed, and the two were not to meet again for twenty-three years, by which time Kallenbach had become a Zionist and joined a kibbutz in Israel.

Gandhi had taken a vow to spend his first year back in India traveling throughout the country to acquaint himself with conditions there. He did so by rail, in a third-class compartment. This was to be his lifelong habit and it was required of all his entourage, which became enormous (the Indian poet Sarojini Naidu quipped, "You will never know how much it costs us to keep that saint, that wonderful old man, in poverty!"). His fame as leader of *satyagraha* on behalf of Indians in South Africa had preceded him and crowds of between 10,000 and 20,000 mobbed him wherever he went, bending to touch his feet to show respect in the Indian way, a habit that annoyed him intensely. "Oh God," he groaned, "save me from my friends, followers and flatterers!" (32).

What he saw on these journeys made him take up the cause of exploited peasants on the indigo plantations of Bihar and in drought-stricken Kheda where farmers were suffering from high taxation and land confiscation, and of the mill workers in Bombay and Ahmedabad. No longer the natty lawyer, he now dressed like a laborer himself. He had of course been acquainted with the caste system since childhood but the injustice of it that condemned the lower castes to live in poverty and degradation struck him most forcefully when he first attended an Indian National Congress meeting in Calcutta and saw how the Brahmin delegates from South India secluded themselves in enclosed kitchen and dining areas to avoid pollution by the lower castes, and how the public latrines could only be cleaned by scavengers, the "untouchables," or were left filthy.

The eradication of "untouchability" became a cardinal point of his campaign; the other three of the "four pillars" being the alliance of Hindus and Muslims,

promotion of handloom fabrics to promote a self-sustaining industry, and nonviolence in both tactics and discipline. This was to be his *dharma*, what the historian Judith Brown has called "morality in action."

In his usual way, he established an ashram, a commune, with family and friends, in Wardha, where he insisted on his rules being observed scrupulously, but there were many rebellions: his wife Kasturba found it hard to live with members of the "untouchable" caste and especially objected to cleaning their chamber pots, a defiance Gandhi found unforgivable. He also berated her severely for entering a temple that refused admission to "untouchables." He himself rarely visited a temple and never to pray. He led a march to the ancient temple of Vaikom in Travancore that not only forbade "untouchables" from entering but from walking on roads that led to it. Gandhi could not even get past the signs excluding them. He was granted an audience with the priests but it had to be held elsewhere and his demands were firmly set aside. He left defeated and it was more radical leaders like T.K. Madhavan and George Joseph who carried on the campaign.

Ironically, too, Gandhi failed to make a partner in the fight against "untouchability" of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, himself an "untouchable" but a highly educated one with degrees in law and economics who was, like Gandhi, invited to a Round Table Conference on India in London in 1931. Gandhi immediately alienated him by offering "to share the honor…of representing the interests of untouchables." Ambedkar responded icily, "I fully represent the claims of my community" (7). He believed that "untouchables were keepers of their own destiny and deserved their own movement." Gandhi could not approve of a separate electorate for them. He feared that "special representation for untouchables would work to perpetuate untouchability…. 'Will untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity?" (1). In

exasperation, Ambedkar finally advocated mass conversion from Hinduism to a religion with no caste system as a solution; this only baffled Gandhi.

As chief executive of the Indian National Congress, Gandhi saw that to create a national party with one national aspiration it was necessary to include the Muslim minority in pursuing the common ground of *swaraj*, or self-rule. In South Africa he had had good relations with Muslims, but in India he struggled. He had, Lelyveld writes, acquired early Muslim supporters in the Ali brothers, Muhammad and Shaukat, and sympathized with their cause, the return of the Ottoman Caliphate, although this was considered quixotic even by some Muslims and certainly displeased the British. They put the brothers in jail, and in Turkey Mustafa Kemal Atatürk dissolved the Caliphate and sent the last sultan into exile, spelling the end of the so-called Khilafat movement in India. As for Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, a partnership could have developed—both men were from Gujarat and had been trained as lawyers in England—but they had little else in common and Jinnah could not conceal his suspicion that the Congress Party was interested only in the establishment of the Hindu raj.

Then there was Gandhi's ardent espousal of the spinning wheel as an instrument of release from the enforced import of British-made cloth. It provided a popular symbol, but it also set off violent riots when mobs took to burning imported goods, and, as Lelyveld writes, no less a patriot than the poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore pronounced it a misguided and doomed campaign. It was Tagore who had given Gandhi the honorific of Mahatma—Great Soul—and Gandhi in return had named him the Great Sentinel, but for all their praise of each other, they had little in common—one an artist and aristocrat, the other an ascetic and a populist.

Tagore was appalled by Gandhi's illogical and unscientific claim that the earthquake that struck Bihar in 1934 was punishment for the sin of untouchability.

As leader of the Congress Party it was for Gandhi to reconcile all these factions and their jostling demands and conflicts. An occasion for unified action was provided in 1919 when British police fired on an unarmed gathering of protesters in Jallianwalla Bagh, an enclosed space in Amritsar, killing many hundreds. The reaction was widespread, and Gandhi launched his non-cooperation movement, asking judges and lawyers to boycott courts, students their schools, and soldiers their units while recipients of medals and honors were asked to return them—as Tagore did his knighthood forthwith. In their effort to halt the movement the British placed Gandhi in prison.

They continued to do so for his acts of defiance, but this in no way diminished his influence. He would start to fast in prison and the nation would hold its breath till he agreed to suspend it. As his body dwindled, Lelyveld observes, his political and spiritual power increased. The fast joined the spinning wheel as a distinctly Gandhian symbol of protest. In 1930 his genius for the inspired and inspiring gesture made him lead a march of two hundred miles from his ashram to Dandi on the Arabian Sea, crowds lining the road to cheer him. With "the beauty and simplicity of a fresh artistic vision," Lelyveld writes, he bent to pick a handful of salt on the beach in defiance of British taxation of even so lowly and indispensable a commodity. Sarojini Naidu cried, "Hail, Deliverer!" The police arrived with batons, heads were cracked, and Gandhi was sent back to prison in May 1930. Jawaharlal Nehru, the future leader of the Congress Party and India's first prime minister, commented, "What the future will bring I know not, but the past has made life worth living and our prosaic existence has developed something of epic greatness in it" (1).

Moments of triumph contain in them the seeds of disintegration. Gandhi, released from prison in January 1931, could not hold the movement together with such gestures, however powerful. A weary Gandhi sought a kind of self-imposed exile, retiring to a small village in the west of India in the summer of 1936, but an ashram (Sevagram, or "Village of Service") quickly sprung up around him. At the outbreak of World War II he proposed to support the British war effort, but this was rejected by the Congress Party, which offered no more than support conditional on Britain granting India independence. That was turned down by the Tory government, Churchill making his famous comment that he had not become prime minister to preside over the disintegration of the British Empire. Calls for the British to "Quit India!" then became the rallying cry for one last hard push to obtain freedom. Gandhi was once again placed in detention—in the Aga Khan's former palace near Poona; his poor wife, still loyally following, was to die there. Gandhi was released in 1944 and the British government, exhausted by the war and soon to be under a Labour cabinet, hoped for a compromise to which all factions in India would agree. Gandhi left immediately for Bombay to negotiate with Jinnah, who now saw a separate Muslim nation as the only solution. Crowds stoned the train carrying Gandhi, trying to prevent him from making concessions; but Jinnah remained adamant and the partition of India became inevitable. Riots and mob violence between Hindus and Muslims raged through the country. Instead of staying in the capital for the victory celebrations set to take place in August 1947, Gandhi left for Calcutta, leaving it to Nehru to unfurl the national flag at the Red Fort and give his famous speech about a "Tryst with Destiny," saying that the joyful cries of "*Jai Hind!*"—Glory to India!—"stink in my nostrils" (43).

One of the last and most moving sections of Lelyveld's book has Gandhi in early 1947 walking barefoot from village to village—forty-seven in all—in the Muslim-majority area of Noakhali with his followers, now a small band, singing the Tagore song "Ekla Chalo"—"If no one answers your call, walk alone, walk alone." The strangest act in this drama, as Lelyveld makes clear, is Gandhi's choice of such a time for one last "experiment with truth": he requested the presence of a nephew's seventeen-year-old daughter, Manu, to come to the stinking, blood-stained scene of carnage and minister to his physical needs—overseeing his diet, giving him his daily bath and oil massage, but also to sleep beside him on his cot, wearing as little clothing as possible, if any, to test his commitment to celibacy. He seems to have thought that if he could subdue the impulse to animal arousal in his body, then the country could subdue its lust for violence. Unable to follow the connection Gandhi had always made between sex and violence, abstinence and nonviolence, even his most devoted followers were shocked, and many left.

The end came in 1947 when Manu asked for permission to leave and Gandhi was persuaded to travel to Delhi, where the new constitution was being drawn up—under the guidance of no other than Dr. Ambedkar. Gandhi seemed to have no interest in making a contribution. Instead, he spent his time praying and fasting in the house of his old friend, the rich industrialist G.D. Birla—for security reasons, he could not stay as he usually did in the scavengers' colony—while outside Sikhs who had lost their lands to Pakistan were chanting "Death to Gandhi!" and "Blood for blood!" At the nightly prayer meetings that he held in the garden, the orthodox Hindu editor Nahuram Godse, who had been writing fiery articles denouncing what he saw as Gandhi's pandering to Muslims, brought with him a concealed weapon—Gandhi had refused to let the police search those who attended these meetings—and, pushing

aside Manu, who accompanied Gandhi, shot him point-blank. It is said that he fell with the name of God, “Rama, Rama,” on his lips as he had told Manu he hoped to; in fact, he had seemed to be courting death. If ever there was *A Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, it was his.

He was cremated amid scenes of unparalleled chaos, confusion, and grief, millions attending his funeral—the ultimate irony: it was a state funeral with full military honors—and his ashes were scattered across India and, in 2010, a small portion off the coast of Durban in South Africa. Nehru took over the leadership, making it clear that “Congress has now to govern, not to oppose government.” Central to his vision were a modern military and rapid industrialization. But even he could not have foreseen how thoroughly his vision would overtake Gandhi’s.

When Lelyveld went in search of what might remain of Gandhi, what he found, aside from many archives and letters, were a few pathetic objects in dusty museums—a creaky spinning wheel, garlanded photographs of “The Father of the Nation”—and a few loyal Gandhians still living lives of sacrifice and service against all odds. Yet much remains that Gandhi would recognize as the “eternal India” of poverty and tradition. In the district of Noakhali Lelyveld found the village of Srirampur, where Gandhi had taken refuge, becalmed as if time had come to a halt. Sunlight filters through the palms, rice paddies surround it, men lounge around the tea shop. At the mention of Gandhi’s name, someone steps forward to point out the sites associated with him—this was where his hut once stood, this the shrine under a banyan tree where he had lingered “Voices become hushed. His name evokes a formal reverence, even among those who have never known the details of his time here…and the killings are remembered as a long-ago typhoon, another kind of disaster (67)”.

Lelyveld has exploded so many myths and heaped up so many defeats that his life of Gandhi could easily be read as an ultimately critical one, however judiciously and carefully constructed. After all, in spite of his name being linked with the struggle for freedom in South Africa, Gandhi had practically no contact with Africa or its people. His campaign against “untouchability” in India had limited success even within his own family and circle. The new constitution did make “untouchability” illegal and did provide a system of “reserved” places for untouchables—in schools, colleges, and government jobs—but this has led periodically to heated debate and violent clashes with those who consider such advantages unfair. The traditional attitude has not vanished and the living conditions for the very poor and for many manual workers have not improved much since Gandhi’s lifetime.

Most grievously, Gandhi could not halt Hindu–Muslim antagonism; it morphed into India–Pakistan hostility, which has led to several wars and enduring suspicion between India and Pakistan. Lelyveld describes in detail Gandhi’s inability to build productive relationships with other leaders like Jinnah and Ambedkar, while little is said of the happy and successful collaboration with others, for example with Nehru.

One might think that Gandhi’s legacy on the whole has been depicted negatively and yet there is no denying Lelyveld’s deep sympathy with the man. The picture that emerges is of someone intensely human, with all the defects and weaknesses that suggests, but also a visionary with a profound social conscience and courage who gave the world a model for nonviolent revolution that is still inspiring. It was a model for revolution both on the vast political level and on the personal and domestic one: nothing was unimportant in Gandhi’s eyes, and nothing impossible. He set an almost impossibly high standard and struggled personally to meet it. So if it is

all seen as ending in tragedy, it was, Lelyveld writes “not because he was assassinated, nor because his noblest qualities inflamed the hatred in his killer’s heart. The tragic element is that he was ultimately forced, like Lear, to see the limits of his ambition to remake his world” (54).

One of the main definitions of “utopia” in *The Oxford English Dictionary* is “An impossibly ideal scheme, especially for social improvement.” The realms of the impossible, of course, are the realms of fantasy: “a supposition resting on no solid grounds; a whimsical or visionary notion or speculation. Now more emphatically contemptuous than fancy” (OED). As we hold fantasy in contempt, we hold utopia, and all “utopian schemes,” in contempt. The relentlessly level-headed, like Thomas Babington Macaulay, trivialize utopia, as in his essay “On Lord Bacon” (1837): “An acre in Middlesex is better than a principality in Utopia.” And yet, for most of us, at one time or another, utopia matters. As Maurice Sendak, the creator himself of such wondrous realms as *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), wrote of Juster’s work, “Another part of the marvel: even though *Tollbooth* is extraordinary fantasy, it is tightly hinged in the here and now, and conveys an urgent and vivid sense of reality” (Sendak 7). “Even though”? To be surprised by the connection between fantasies, including utopias, and reality reveals a slip into common—or woefully common-sensical—misunderstandings of both fantasy and utopia.

Sarvodaya occupies the central place in Gandhi's worldview or philosophy of life. The dynamics of Sarvodaya assumes a process that begins with the last and the least in the society and moves on toward the dawn of a Mokrha on earth or Ramrap. This dynamic nature of Sarvodaya essentially projects a vision for the film and opens up a vast spectrum of potentials. Gandhi initiated a momentum toward an idea is Sarvodaya society. It was humanly impossible for Gandhi to design the details of a

future *Sarvodaya* society; neither was he able to see the full flowering of sarvodaya society in his Whe. He has sown the seeds of a revolution that is on-going. Though the guidelines he suggestedand the means he proposed toward establishing ideal sarvodaya society have a checkered history, the sarvodaya ideal keeps its appeal fresh to many by its degree of red kabdity and its openness to future possibilities. Thus, viewed in the context of Gandhi's world-view, sarvodaya may be considered the goal he envisioned for humanity in general and for India in particular. Darko Suvin offers this definition:

> Utopia is the verbal construction of a particular quasi-human community where sociopolitical and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect principle than in the author's community, this construction being based on estrangement arising out of an alternative historical hypothesis. (49)

The centrality of hypothetical alternatives, of course, suggests that these "verbal constructions" are fantasies. Accepting such a conclusion as given, *The Oxford English Dictionary* had already defined utopia as "An impossibly ideal scheme…." Suvin, though, goes much further by specifying that "Strictly and precisely speaking, utopia is not a genre but the *sociopolitical subgenre of science fiction*" (61; Suvin's emphasis). Whether or not one accepts the notion that one can retrospectively identify Plato's *Republic* as part of a genre that was first named in the twentieth century, it does seem reasonable to understand the notion of science fiction broadly enough to include political science fiction and social science fiction just as we do physical science fiction and biological science fiction. By Rabkin's definition, "science fiction [is the variety of fantastic literature for which its difference from our own world] is apparent against the background of an organized body of knowledge"

(119). Such a notion of science fiction indeed makes a place within that genre for the rigorous thinking of utopians like Plato and the deterministic extrapolations of utopians like Aldous Huxley.

Through sarvodaya, Gandhi attempted to recapture the spiritual heritage of India, which had thrived in the villages, and use it to build the nation. He criticized Western civilization,not because it was totally compt, but because it was contrary to the needs of India In Western values he saw a craze for comfort, multiplication of wants, and self- indulgence, which could lead to greed, conflict, suppression of the weak by the strong, and social disparity Swaraj for him was not mere independence from Britain, but an independence from everything that is oppressive in the society. Gandhi was convinced that decentralization of power is the key to just and equitable society. He developed the concept of satyagraha, which involved a search for truth, nonviolence, and self-suffering-With his saqagraha, he not only challenged the conventional notion of power, but showed that the weaker section of society was as powerfid in crucial respects as the strong. Gandhi had a concrete agenda for implementing decentralization of power. On a political level, it meant taking power from the cenrre and bringing it to the village. On an economic level decentralization of power meant discouraging big industries and encouraging village conage industry. "Smallish beatify thus would become the economic slogan9Ona social led., the Harijans, tribals, and members of the lower castes would be given all the rights ofequality-Utopian works, as Freud suggested about fantasies, are date-marked. In broad terms, one can divide the history of utopianism in the West into four movements, each reflecting a different way of grappling with the fundamental economic necessity in utopia of providing sufficient material goods to sustain the population. In the Ancient world, utopias, like *The Republic*, rest comfortably on

slavery. In the Medieval and Renaissance periods, chastened by the initial growth of Christianity among slaves, material goods are made ample by the proper organization of labor.

Gandhi realized that the poor man's god is nothing but bread, and he gave much importance to creating newer work opportunities close to a person's residence. He knew that unemployment breeds not only physical starvation, but also mental and spiritual. He wanted to promote the universality of employment and chose khaki as a symbol since it characterized this universality. He also gave promoted animal husbandry and when he wanted to abolish cow slaughter, it was his economic common sense which prevailed rather than religious feelings.

He recommended a set wage and self-employment activities through voluntary efforts. He believed in and practiced the minimal use of material riches and considered being poor as a boon in itself, the so-called 'daridranarayan'. He wanted to put the poorest of the poor, the last man in the line, first on the development agenda, which forms the backbone of the idea of Antyodaya. Gandhiji's concept of panchayat raj system has five tiers including village panchayats, taluk panchayats, zilla panchayats, provincial panchayats and all-India panchayats. This administrative system was pyramidal, whose broad base was composed of the numerous villages in the country. Those at the higher echelons were entrusted with guiding, advising, and coordinating the lower panchayats' activities, and thereby ensuring that the system remained efficient. Even so, it would be the basic units that would dictate to the apex. The village becomes the actual functioning unit of administration.

The instance of higher participation of the citizens of Jammu & Kashmir during the panchayat elections held there, despite the repeated warnings issued by the terrorist organizations, shows that decentralization can be an effective solution. In

reality, women were more conspicuous in taking part in such grassroots level democracy and thereby exhibiting their true desire for peace and progress.

Gandhi was keen on the issue of women's empowerment. The active participation of such women as Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Asaf Ali, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, etc. in the various mass movements that were part of the freedom struggle shows that women were in no way behind men, in terms of principles and the practice thereof. Gandhi was efficient in deploying women against the British during, for example, the picketing of liquor shops and the boycott of foreign goods. He knew that women could play a special role by keeping society united using a string of love and affection. He also believed that women could challenge such social evils as dowry, untouchability and superstitions much more effectively than men.

Gandhi realized the significance of education in the overall development of human beings. He formulated a unique method of education known as the Wardha School. This mainly incorporated ideas of vocational training and value-based education. Every individual had to acquire a minimum level of education constructive, innovative and sufficient to help earn bread for them and their family. Children arerequired to study and understand cultural, moral and ethical values from the very beginning of their education so that these can be imbibed very early in life and make them ideal citizens.

Literacy plays an important role in molding the personality of a human being and thus acts as the basis of the welfare of the state itself. Literacy enables a man to understand his culture and to achieve intercultural resolution. The ability to discriminate between good and evil is achieved through the exposure one gets through education and thus its immense value for the peaceful existence of the state.The solution for this lies in the Gandhian principle of the empowerment of rural areas

through uplifting agriculture and strengthening cottage industries. Recognizing the problems of the youth and tribal affairs is the need of the time. Gandhi had dedicated much of his time even during the freedom struggle for Dalit and tribal emancipation knowing that their improvement is an integral part of true national freedom. He was influential in making it a part of the Constitution, as Article 46, which directs the states to promote the educational and economic interests of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. He started *Harijan*, an English language weekly, to empower the Dalits, whom he called as children of Hari, or god. Such ideal treatment of marginalized populations can come good even in today's trying times.

Terrorism can best be defined as the systematic use of terror in a variety of ways for personal and organizational gain. The root cause of terrorism is essentially power wielded over the weak injudiciously, to gain economic or political benefits. To restore peace in the world whenever law and order is the issue, Gandhian philosophy is the solution wherein all sections of the society are treated equally before the law. If all citizens are sincerely treated equally and are able to secure the redress of their grievances through constitutional methods, terrorism might be curbed.

For Gandhi, religions were not watertight compartments; rather, they were the sacred water contained in vessels, whatever the shape thereof. He believed in spiritual secularism whereby no religion was defined but the essence from every religion was accepted with true faith. Gandhi often praised Christ as the true prince of nonviolence. At the same time, he used to recite verses from the *Bhagavad Geeta* to explain the importance of Dharma and Karma. For him, the

Geeta was a spiritual reference in which he could get answers for any of his doubts. It was only natural for him to understand and appreciate the Koran and when the Khilafat movement gained momentum in India, he volunteered to support the

cause. The greatest virtue of Gandhi was in adopting Ahimsa, the basis of Buddhism, as his weapon for the fight against the British Empire.

In the perfect state of communal harmony, each religion should be freely practiced without any fear or hatred. Gandhian ideology advocated that humans lift themselves above hatred and fear, at the individual level in order to effect a society-wide change. This Gandhian concept was accepted by the Constitution's creators, with secularism forming one of the pillars of Indian polity.

What made Gandhi different from other men was the discovery of a truthful and peaceful method of protest and his sincere faith in his method whereby he never gave up his ideals. This led Louis Fischer to comment that he preached what he practiced. Wherever a struggle for equality and social justice arises, Gandhi's philosophy will always remain an inspiration in seeking solutions.

This is a time when the media and the public at large are trying to get in to the nitty-gritty of Gandhian ideals. Several stakeholders are trying to project the meaning of Gandhian principles. When problems abound, the time is ripe for introspection. Great care should go into telling apart wolf from the sheep. The thought of Gandhi's principles being hijacked by vested interests is no longer just an armchair proposition but a real possibility. This can lead to the portrayal of Gandhi as being against politics, against development and against progressive ideas. We should realize that Gandhi is manna for the world and it is society's responsibility to pursue his ideology, in its purest form. The realization of an ideal world order is not a myth. The obscured peace of our world can be restored by walking on the elite path of our Mahatma. The ideal of sarvodaya is implied in the word itself: *smvo* and *udzya*. *Ma* means "all" and *udaya* means "uplift". The key to this uplift, for Gandhi, is dedicated service to humanity. As he says, "I claim to be a humble savant of India and humanity and

would like to die in the discharge of such service. When Gandhi used the word sarvodaya, it was completely his own and he was clear in his mind about the meaning of the term and the ideal" (52). As T. S. Devadoss obwes the word *Sarvodaya* epitomizes his (Gandhi's) whole social philosophy, which aims at the attainroeat of mental prosperity *(Abhywbyz)* and spiritual realization (Nishreyara)" Gandhi indeed considered economic equality a "master-key" to nonviolent independence. In speaking of equality, if Gandhi gave prominence to economic equality, it is because he considered that “True economics . . . stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally, including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent Life” (53).

Still another aspect of equality is equal opportunity for all. For he says:

> My idea of society is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunity, we have not the same capacity? Nonetheless, he admits that some will have ability to earn more and others less because of the varieties of talents and capabilities that exist in the nature of things. (43)

Therefore, he proposed equal distribution. Even here, he realized the tremendous difficulties involved to have equal distribution of national wealth. Therefore, he wrote:

> My ideal is equal distribution, but so fire as I can see, it is not to be realid. I, therefore, work for equitable distribution" ." After having explained what independence means to him, namely, "In concrete terms, then, the independence should be political, economic and moral", he elaborated the notion of "economic independence. (48)

"Economic" means entire freedom British capitalist and capital, as also their counterpart. In other words, the humblest feel equal to the tallest. This can take place

only by capital or capitalists sharing their skill and capital with the lowliest and the least? One may be tempted to conclude at this point that for Gandhi equality meant only economic equality or equitable distribution of wealth. This is not true, though Gandhi considered economic equality the key to all other areas of equality. This seems to stay unchanged in any society because the power of wealth seems to compromise and overpower other differences of culture, colour and caste.

Sarvodaya being nonviolent social is "all members of society are equation low, none high.. .In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employee are all on the same level" (3). A nonviolent society of Gandhi's vision is non exploitative and egalitarian, not only equal in rights and opportunities but in the sense that no part shall exploit the other. No exchange relation should be much more beneficial to one part than to the other.

To Gandhi such a horizontal structure is a necessary condition for self realization in liberating both exploiter and exploited from the shackles of an exploitative Structure. It applies at all levels: between individuals, between villages, and between larger units. Gandhi, for instance, wanted to purify the caste system by abolishing the vertical component or the hierarchical structure out of it. He wanted to retain the division of labor implicit in the *vam,* but no caste, no occupation should rank above any other caste or occupation. Gandhi was not opposed to the caste system altogether, instead he maintained that the four divisions of caste as complementary to one another, and none inferior or superior to any other. The caste system should be horizontal, and Gandhi claimed that this was the original system, that what had developed later was an aberration. Gandhi accepted *Vmmac Duama* because it was based on the teaching of the *Gita.* Gandhi says:

> The law of Varna teaches us that we have each one of us to earn our bread by following the ancestral calling. It defines not our rights, but our duties. It necessarily has reference to callings that are conducive to the wefie of humanity and to no other. It also follows that there is no calling too low and none too high. *All* are good, law and absolutely equal in status. The callings of Brahrnana-the spiritual teacher-and a scavenger are equal, and their due performance carries equal merit before God and at one time seems to have carried identical reward before man. Both were entitled to their livelihood and no more. (55)

Gandhi's dispproval of the caste system was based on his awareness of division created in the society on a false basis of heredity and on his deep belief in the ideal of equality. Gandhi attacked untouchability vehemently on the ground that there was no sanction for it in the Hindu religion." But the fact of the matter is that Hindu *society* is legitimately regarded as one of the best examples of a hierarchical stratification of a social order intended to perpetuate inequalities. Gandhi realized the injustice perpetuated on account of the practice of caste and hence took up the question of Harijans (literally, God's people).One would, at this point, agree with Indira Rothermund that

> Gandhi, by using the term *Harijan*, emphasizes both equality of all Indians before law and before God.. . The use of the term *Hmjan* thus implies the acceptance of not only the assertive secular power to *Hmjm* but, more importantly their claim to human dignity. *All* persons are created equal by God. The ideal society is one in which all its citizens work toward perfection, knowing that they can always do better. (3)

In its process of growth, swaraj is a step to *Ramrajyaa*. The share of the youth in the societal pie is increasing every day and, for greater stability in society, it is important to understand the ideals that are inspiring youth. That the youth are apolitical is a major problem that we are facing. The degeneration of political standards and the innumerable alternate preoccupations tend to give the idea that politics is evil and politicians are devils. The youth of the country should look up to a man who was a politician with ideals and practical sense and get inspired to contribute towards nation building.

The practical of Gandhian ways is best illustrated by what Viceroy Louis Mountbatten said "In the Punjab, we have fifty five thousand soldiers and large scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal, our force consists of one man and there is no rioting"(44). As a military leader and an administrator, he humbly asked to be allowed to pay tribute to his one man boundary force. A perfect society, paradoxically, requires some imperfections. That, at least, is what Arthur C. Clarke suggests in *Childhood's End*:

> The end of strife and conflict of all kinds had also meant the virtual end of creative art. There were myriads of performers, amateur and professional, yet there had been no really outstanding new works of literature, music, painting, or sculpture for a generation. The world was still living on the glories of a past that could never return. (5)

No one worried except a few philosophers. The race was too intent upon savoring its new-found freedom to look beyond the pleasures of the present. Utopia was here at last: its novelty had not yet been assailed by the supreme enemy of all Utopias—boredom.

If utopias are date-marked, we ought to be able to track them not only in the broad terms suggested by studying the problem of production across centuries but in more detailed ways. *The Genre Evolution Project* a continuing research effort led by the authors, has developed a database that, as of this writing, contains about 2,000 coded science fiction stories published in American science fiction magazines (1926-1999) and, counting their reprints, about 4,000 story publications overall. One of the coding categories is "Genre Content," roughly those elements within a text that makes it feel like science fiction. These include the alien, the striving scientist, the extraordinary invention, and so on. Three of these contents are utopia, dystopia, and utopia, the last being used for cases in which the coding teams felt, as might be the case with More's *Utopia*, that the work as a whole intentionally had significant aspects that were both utopic and dystopic.

Utopian writings run the gamut from fictional narratives to theoretical treatises, from political manifestos to constitutions for a new society. Frank and Fritzie P. Manuel have structured five centuries of utopian invention by identifying successive constellations, groups of thinkers joined by common social and moral concerns. Within this framework they analyze individual writings, in the context of the author's life and of the socio-economic, religious, and political exigencies of his time. Concentrating on innovative works, they highlight disjunctures as well as continuities in utopian thought from the Renaissance through the twentieth century.

To those who doubt whether Gandhi is a relic from the past, here are words from one of the greatest visionaries that modern India has produced. On hearing about Gandhi's assassination, Nehru said "the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light." In a thousand years, he predicted, "That light still be seen... The world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts" (67). There is no doubting the

Pandit’s words. Ruskin did not believe in the possibility of equality between people; he hoped to overcome inequality by an appeal to the conscience of the upper classes. But Gandhi's idea of society was based on a theory of thorough equality. Gandhi derived his ethico-economic theory of trusteeship and inheritance from a deep feeling of spirituality and divinity of the human being expressed in the maxim *"jiw* is always *shiva":* a man is, by and large, divine? He considered economic equality the "master-key" to nonviolent independence. Gandhi did not share Ruskin's authoritarian and aristocratic views that refused to give any political control to the masses on grounds of incompetence.

III: Survodaya as the Manifesto fo Gahdhi's Idealism

Coming to the political thought of Gandhi, we have to remember certain dispositions of Gandhi. First of all, Gandhi was not a system builder in an academic sense. He was not a political philosopher. For all his sayings were pouring from his deep feelings and sincere realization of the truth. Without going into disputes, it can be agreed that he was not committed to any exclusive school of thought. His speech and pen had generally come from responses from particular situation. Gandhi even at the fag end of his life spoke of himself that he had never ceased to grow and therefore, he had been learning from "Experiment with Truth". as he named his autobiography. Thus Gandhi had revised his opinions from time to time though his conceptual framework remained the same. He had not altered from his basics.

Gandhi's political thought stems from different traditions, Eastern and Western. Though he had inherited many traditions he had not agreed in to with any one of them. He had picked up many traditional concepts from his immediate predecessors as well as from ancient texts. Gandhi did never claim to be an original thinker. But when we look into all his sayings we find a conceptual framework, common to a philosopher. Moreover, when we find that his theoretical formulations and practical pursuits are identical, we have every reason to accept him as a philosopher in the Indian sense. But unlike other philosophers and political scientists of both the East and the West, only he could emerge not only as the man of destiny of the nation but also as the man of the millennium.

Many political Scientists thought that Gandhi was a combinations of a prophet and a politician of the highest caliber. So he had combined within himself aspects of the Philosopher and politician. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, a great admirer and critic of Gandhi, once said that Gandhi had to play the roles of a world

teacher as well as the Supreme leader of the Indian National Liberation Movement. In a tone of criticism he further said, often his former role that is the role of a world teacher became so prominent that he had to compromise with his other role. One may or may not agree with Netaji Bose but it appears that in the context of national liberation movement there is truth in it. But when we go into the depth of Gandhi's Philosophy, we feel that there is no dichotomy in Gandhi's perception. It can be said that Gandhi considered politics as an instrument for the uplift of mankind in social, economic, moral and spiritual spheres. Gandhi himself admitted to his South African friend that his bent of mind was religious and not political. Romain Rolland in his biography of Gandhi written in 1924, had remarked that if Tilak would not have died Gandhi might have chosen a religious life rather than a political. TO Gandhi politics itself was his religion. He was opposed to politicizing religion. He was for spiritualizing religion but he was essentially a worldly man and never sought this own salvation secluded from the world. For him politics had encircled him like the coil of a snake. He must wrestle with the snake, there is no respite. He could have thought of avoiding politics, if without politics food and work could be provided to the hungry unemployed people of India. He strongly felt hat without involving himself in politics it is not possible to remove socio-economic exploitation and political subjugation and thereby moral degradation of the people of Indian unless he involved himself in politics.

In this perspective we have to understand Gandhi's confrontation with the coil of a snake. No matter how much tough, the task might be, we have to come out from it by wrestling with the snake. This can be successfully performed if we can alleviate the present state of politics to *Dharmic* politics. By *Dharmic*, Gandhi meant that it should be remove from corrupting influences and sectarianism. This politics

should be the privilege of all. Gandhi was not prepared to accept any fixed dogma or mechanical way for either of politics or religion.

Gandhi had a vision of transforming the socially and morally degenerated and separated individuals in a manner where individuals can enjoy their freedom in a spirit altruism. To understand Gandhi's politics it is also necessary to understand Gandhi's concern for the cleavage between state and civil society. The community life is fast diminishing and civil society could not formulate any mechanism to control it. Gandhi was concerned since his days of *Hind Swaraj* that the Western civilization had been hedonistic, in the sense of self-pleasure centred, pragmatic in the sense of immediate material benefit and individualistic in the sense of egocentric in the sense of sovereign individual oriented. He found British parliament had become a sterile woman, where naked display of self interest or party interest (or power only) had been manifested. He blamed disease lying with the western civilization itself. Gandhi found that the whole business of politics had been running to a wrong path on a hoax.

As we knew Gandhi was a God-oriented man. But to him Truth is God and as in other spheres of life, politics should also be a search after truth and this search must be understood by Gandhi, is for raising general conscience of the people. Every individual must be free from pangs of hunger must prevent exploitation and oppression. He would then be in a position to work for high sown development through the performances of duties. A universal morality would emerge which would create an atmosphere for healthy political life. We should accept self-transformation as a continuous process. Gandhi was emphatic in saying that politics bereft of religion is a death trap which kills the soul. By spiritualization of politics, Gandhi meant something larger than our day to day life but not excluding world of

day to day experiences. A community of persons on the process of self-realization be able to resist the corrupting influences of existing interests.

Tagore's political agenda included the concept of a leader whose authority one would accept despite his inevitable human failures. There is no doubt that he recognized Gandhi as that leader. His initial response to the Non-cooperation movement was very different from his subsequent feelings of revolution. According to Tagore it is in the fitness of things that Mahatma Gandhi frail in body and devoid of military resources, should call up the immense power of the meek; that has been lying waiting in the heart of the destitute and insulted humanity of India.

Gandhi saw the movement, not as one for national liberation, but as one for the emancipation of man from national egoism. I am not sure if this perception is very different from Gandhi's vision of satyagraha. A few days after he wrote the above passage, Tagore penned his better known denunciation. As in 1905 so in 1921, he was revolted by the destructive acts which inevitably go with all mass agitations. He rejected what he believed to be the negative implications of the movement in terms of his values. These were not very different from what Gandhi stood for. Only the latter did not see Non-cooperation as a threat to his universalist values. He too, like Tagore in his initial response, saw the movement as a step towards the moral liberation of all men.

According to Gandhi this is not just a philosophical dream far from realities of political life. Many great philosophers right from Plato could not reconcile the dichotomy between reality and ideal. From Gandhian point of view, we should into distrust the capability of commoner to rise above passion and self-interest and we can evolve a modus operandi by which a new kind of politics might emerge as Gandhi envisioned.

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