



# Gandhian Social Philosophy and Development Crisis

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## ABSTRACT

Social philosophy incorporates a clear philosophical stance that possesses a variety of meanings ranging from religious purity to political expediency. Politics was, to Gandhi, not a profession but a vocation. He sought to apply moral values to the difficult domain of politics. His moral and political thought is intrinsically linked with his religious and ethical beliefs. This leads to his social philosophy which takes into account humanity as a whole to make a just society, on the basis of love, dignity, personal responsibility and solidarity. The ultimate goal, thus, for Gandhi was the greatest good of all people. This work has been conceived as an effort to understand the prospects of applying Gandhian social philosophy in this era of development crisis. I shall analyze Gandhi's views on the basic issues of social change and development to outline the relevance of his social philosophy in the context of the emerging development crisis. This work contains an analysis of the development crisis with all its complexity that the present-day world is facing. The scope of applying the warning signs and waymarks in Gandhian social philosophy in the context of the globally emerging development crisis is the focal point of this work.

**Keywords:** Gandhi; Gandhian Social Philosophy; Development Crisis; Social Philosophy.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is an irony of history that when the rest of the world is seriously debating Gandhian concepts, Indians are engaged in the verbal exercise of distorting him when we are not worshipping him. So, the obvious difficulty facing a serious analyst of Gandhi is that almost every statement made about him is little more than a half-truth and the trouble with half-truths is the other half. There is another difficulty; every statement made by Gandhi himself is also a partial truth, made deliberately so as to take a new step towards some larger truth. The half-truths distort Gandhi and Gandhi's partial truths demand an intense intellectual effort to comprehend them.

Such a question was faced by the ardent follower of Mahatma and the leader of the civil rights movement in the United States, Martin Luther King, when he came to India in 1958. His

reply to a press person's question, 'Where is Gandhi today, we see him nowhere', was this, 'Gandhi is inevitable (Ansbro, 2000). If humanity want to progress, Gandhi is a must ... we may ignore Gandhi only at our own risk'. We know that the development process, after implementing economic reforms ideals, results from the sharp compartmentalization of economic inequalities among the people and the society. During the wide-spread recession, India could overcome it just because of the underlying Gandhian principle in our economic ideals even after drastic economic reforms. This clearly indicates and illuminates the words of Martin Luther King and the need of looking towards Gandhi.

In the new era, humans are able to make tremendous success in different fields like space research, nuclear energy, several branches of medical and biological sciences and others. But this prosperity has not been accompanied by

harmony or peace in human relations. The real threat we face in the midst of ongoing pace of development is the conflicts, hostility and violence in the name of security and peace.

Gandhi did not construct a theory of social change in the sense that most social analysts do. But scattered through the vast magnitude of his writings are many pointers and indicators through which one can elucidate his design for social restructuring. The Gandhian vision of the social change is solely based on the elimination of the intrusion of violence when the society grows or develops in an ideal way. He envisages in his views based on non-violence and truth, a world without greed, exploitation, war and violence and he dreamt a world, where everyone has the talent and space, where everyone is using wisdom to make harmony and relation, where everybody uses time for prospering each other. Truth and non-violence were the key tools that Gandhi had propounded to make this in reality. When we analyze the causes of contemporary conflagrations, it could easily be detected that the real problem is the lack of truthfulness and the widespread use of violence.

With this in mind, we can explore Gandhi's ideas on the efficacious modalities for the transformation of Indian society and highlight the significance he assigned in this regard to the role of the humans and institutions as well as to the emancipation of unprivileged sections of society such as untouchables and women. The core of the Gandhian economic thought is the protection of the dignity of humans and not mere material prosperity. His vision on the different components of development and change are discussed below.

## 2. ENVIRONMENT

Humans can have development only with the use of energy, especially from non-renewable sources. Our planet had an inexhaustible wealth of resources, mainly mineral treasure and oil and a vast variety of plant and animal species. It is the only planet which supports human life with air, water, land, flora and fauna. But what happened is that humans ferociously looted it, so

that some species of animals are already extinct and our heartless exploitation alarmingly reduces the resources that the mother earth has given us. 'With the process of development, human activities assumed such enormous dimensions that the life support system could no longer sustain these' (Rees, 2021).

Industrialization and pollution are interconnected. When industrialization increases, pollution inclines to rise. Mighty multipurpose projects, with unscientific and careless profit motive like big dams, giant industries and such other ventures directly pose a grave danger to the natural environment and further to human welfare and values. Nature is becoming the victim of human greed. So, environment is a global concern in the process of development and its protection is one of the most challenging tasks facing humankind today. Gandhi foresaw these issues and as a result the concept of environmental conservation and survival of human beings became inherent in the ideology of Gandhi.

In developing countries, both poverty and economic growth pose serious environmental challenges. Almost all consumer items that are being promoted in developing countries by the developed countries to sustain their economic growth have significant environmental impacts. The encouragement of consumerism is then, both in developing as well as underdeveloped countries, antithetical to the concept of sustainable development. So, Gandhi refused to accept affluence as a goal of development. He believed that the development in the West led to the systematic colonization and exploitation of the earth and natural environment. He rejected not only all supportive mechanisms of development such as bureaucracy, technology and elitist education, but also the whole idea of development as conceived by the architects of the industrial society.

The important elements of Gandhian environmentalism can be summed up as follows: (i) human beings should act as part of nature rather than apart from nature, (ii) materials available on earth should not be used with an

element of greed, (iii) human beings should practise non-violence not only towards fellow humans but also towards other living organisms and inanimate materials because overuse of such materials also amounts to violence, (iv) a conservationist and sustainable life-saving approach should prevail over a consumerist self-destructive approach, (v) human care for and sharing with the poor and destitute in society is a moral obligation towards them, (vi) humans rarely think about how much is enough for a simple, need-based, austere and comfortable life-style, (vii) development should lead, as much as possible, to local self-reliance and equity with social justice and (viii) ethics and self-discipline in resource use is the best means to development (Patel, 2017).

### 3. POLITICS

With the spread of education and of growing consciousness, by and large, people all over the world, now favor democracy. But in democratic countries, including India, the state is becoming all powerful, and there is a persistent attempt to the centralization of power. More than that, the decay of moral standards and norms in the democratic system has become a major problem throughout the world. In India, due to this moral degradation, the constitutional system is sometimes forced to 'doll-dance' in the hands of politicians.

The main reason behind that is the spread of corruption in political system. People have been hearing the stories of scandals after scandals and there is no exception of any administrative office on that, from top to bottom, from the parliament to a peon, in any department. Media report that they are all drowned in corruption. To soothe the public, we have several enquiry commissions, committees, judicial pronouncements and parliamentary probes. Since independence two or three ministers have gone to jail on charges of corruption. But people are still under the umbrella of political parties and leaders of corruption in one way or another.

The growth of intra-party, inter-caste,

inter-personal and inter-organizational conflicts is a common phenomenon in India. There is a corrupt-criminal-communal nexus which holds the party system with solid grip. Almost all existing political parties in India are working hard to get power, and so at any cost they are trying to win elections. To win this expensive game, politicians make unholy alliances with bureaucracy and corporates. There is a moral and intellectual decay in the character of legislatures and they create misgivings in the public mind. It is the standards of conduct and behavior of leaders in politics that have malignant influence in other walks of life in society. But alas, the ethical outlook of our present-day politicians is alarming. They are influencing the top functionaries of the government for not working according to prescribed norms.

Another virus that is creeping into the veins of our political system is the vote-bank politics. 'Vote banks are sought to be created through caste-alliances, communal appeal and interest articulation of the peasantry, slum dwellers or sub-nationalist groups' (Mishra, 2002). This valueless vote bank politics, in turn, spoils social harmony. Gandhi was a visionary in this regard and he sounded a warning bell against such dangers and against parliamentary democracy relying merely on the strength of numbers.

Gandhi had a special piece of advice for Congressmen when Congress ministries were formed in seven of the 11 provinces of India after the elections of 1937. He said that as they were the representatives of one of the poorest nations in the world, they should observe rigorous simplicity in their personal life and administration. Such economy would save thousands of rupees, which could benefit the poor and also set an example for the rest of the nation, where the gulf between the rich and the poor was startling. Politics and politicians in India have become a sharp contrast to this vision and ideal of Gandhi. By 1940, Gandhi had come to realize that the existing Congress organization was incapable of functioning as an agent of social change on account of the corruption and the lack

of strong determination.

Hence, Gandhi wished to disband the Indian National Congress and raise in its place a purely social service organization. But by then, the party had tasted power and his wish remained unfulfilled. He advised people to be disciplined and law-abiding naturally, but to disobey it and rise in revolt the moment one is convinced that rule is becoming repressive and unjust.

Only four days before his assassination, Mahatma Gandhi warned the country during his prayer meeting thus: The subject of corruption referred to by the correspondent is not new. Only it has become much worse than before. Restraint from without has practically gone. Corruption will go when the large number of persons given to the unworthy practice realizes that the nation does not exist for them but they do for the nation. It requires a high code of morals, extreme vigilance on the part of those who are free from the corrupt practice and who have influence over corrupt servants. Indifference in such matter is criminal. If our evening prayers are genuine, they must play no mean part in removing from our midst the demon of corruption.

But this warning is received by our politicians with deaf ear. The time has come for the country to change the very core of politics, and work for protecting the constitutional sanctity of our democratic politics in the Gandhian way. The Sarvodaya, Sathyagraha, Swadeshi and Swaraj advocated by Gandhi for the true development was because of his intuition that the moral decay and cultural degradation of politics is inevitable, if it is not borne out of truth and non-violence. So it is Gandhi's clear, firm and uncompromising stand that should be the guiding principle for us to save the sanctity of our democracy.

#### 4. DALIT AND ADIVASI

Development is a key word for social concepts. If the gap between the haves and have-nots is increasing every day, we can assume that the benefits of so called GDP growth have bypassed many poor people. Dalits and Adivasis are still in the lowest strata of our development

ladder. Attacks against Dalits are also on the rise. Dalits are at the bottom of the Hindu caste hierarchy, and despite several laws to protect them; they still face widespread discrimination in our country (Bob, 2007). Only a very few manage to break out of the cycle of poverty and the caste they are born into. Untouchability helps to lock Dalits, who traditionally do the dirtiest manual jobs. Even if a Dalit scavenger can afford to buy a cow and sell milk or open a shop, for example, upper caste customers are hesitant to buy any of the produce. The eradication of untouchability is still a very complex and intricate problem in our country. Such evils so far are disintegrating Hindu society rather than integrating it. The poorest plight of Adivasis is also a black image to our country. Radical changes in legislation and education with powerful campaign should be launched to solve these issues.

The reservation of seats in electoral bodies for Dalits was established under the Yervada pact, which was reached on 24 September 1932, after the heroic fast unto death Gandhi undertook against the implementation of communal award by British Government (Cháirez-Garza, 2018). Gandhi's contribution in ensuring justice and equality for Dalits in the Constitution of India cannot be undervalued. 'The constitution which I could influence', he said, 'would contain a provision making the observance of untouchability in any shape or form an offence. The so called untouchables would have seats reserved for them in all elected bodies according to their population within the electoral are concerned' ((Cháirez-Garza, 2018, p. 33).

Gandhi's attitude towards untouchability, class and caste had steadily changed through the different phases of his life. We cannot mark a particular stand from a specific point of time to evaluate his entire approach towards untouchables. He had been inconsistent for many years. That is why Dr. B.R. Ambedkar always criticized Gandhi on this issue. Gandhi's attitude towards untouchability appears to have been fairly consistent in that he rejected it throughout his life. He continued to play with an untouchable boy even though his mother had forbidden it.

Later in South Africa, he associated with untouchables and had friends and clients among them. On his return to India in 1915, he started *Satyagraha Ashram* and admitted untouchable inmates there. Gandhi even adopted the daughter of an untouchable family, Lakshmi, as his own. He also began cleaning toilets which was considered as the work of untouchables.

Gandhi's attitude to class and caste was more complex than his straightforward opposition to untouchability. In 1920, Gandhi said that he considered the four divisions of Hindu religion as fundamental, natural and essential. In 1927, his son Devadas fell in love with the daughter of a Brahmin and asked to marry her. At first, Gandhi objected to the inter-caste marriage, but eventually the two fathers agreed that if their two children still wished to marry after five years then they would allow them to marry. On November the 4<sup>th</sup> 1932, he declared that there is no restriction in Hinduism for inter-caste dining and inter-caste marriages. Finally, we see in 1946 that Gandhi took his rejection of the orthodox view of caste to its logical conclusion when we read Louis Fisher's report as Gandhi said that he was trying to create a classless and casteless India.

It is clear that over the period of 1921-46 Gandhi's public stance on caste and class was completely reversed. D.R. Nagaraj in his book 'The Flaming Feet and Other Essays- The Dalit Movement in India' said that the difference between Ambedkar and Gandhi on the issue of Dalits was because of their perception. Ambedkar defined the problem in terms of building an independent political identity for Dalits in the structures of social, economic, and political power, whereas for Gandhi it was purely a religious question, and that too an internal one for Hinduism. But, this is not fully correct when we study the steady change in the vision of Gandhi. Anyway, Nagaraj admits the fact that it was because of Gandhi, the issue of the plight of Dalits came in the central sphere of politics of freedom struggle.

Gandhi pointed out human dignity and equality as the guiding principles and objectives of social reconstruction. He believed that every

human being, by virtue of the element of divinity in him, must be recognised as having intrinsic worth and as deserving of the highest respect, and he should feel free to achieve his full potential. Denial of dignity or equality to an individual was hence unacceptable, not so much for being offensive to formal human rights, as for its effect of crushing his spirit and denying the Supreme Being itself.

Gandhi made removal of untouchability and the well-being of Adivasis one of the chief planks of his constructive programme for the resurgence of India. He attacked the injustice being done to a section of human beings at all levels- religious, social, political. He tried to give them dignity, education and political rights, and contributed effectively in the creation of a mass consciousness about such major problems. Gandhi's message in this regard is relevant for present-day India too.

## 5. ECONOMIC CONDITION

Socio-economic development refers to those parameters like income generation, distribution, quality of life and various other aspects of society, community and the environment. These aspects of so called development cannot be studied in isolation or in terms of some fixed criteria across the world. As per the capacity, experience, capability, natural resource endowment, practices and historical background of the society, the dimension would differ. The issues of centralised and centrally planned development policies and planning have been guiding the destiny of the world for quite a few decades. The emphasis on the big, the so called cost effective and the uniform, without considering the long term impact on natural resources has been proved disastrous to environment.

In the prevailing paradigm of economic development, progress is measured in terms of consumption of energy, urbanization and auto-mobility. Mere consideration of such components without taking people into account on policy matters will lead to mass agitation and state violence as we could see recently in

Thoothukkudi and earlier in Nandigram in West Bengal.

Gandhi pointed out the drawbacks of such a notion of development in his epoch -making work *Hind Swaraj* (Roy, 2017). Like any other critic of industrialization, he believed that social conflicts, the increased number of crimes and the spread of terrorism make it very clear that economic development stands not merely for the rising of GDP or material progress but for an optimum combination of economic welfare and moral progress. How development leads to inequality and unbalanced growth is proved by the fact that inequality prevails both at the national and the international levels. In India, more than 35 percent of the population lives below poverty line. At the international level, USA having 6 percent of the total population of the world consumes 30 percent of the world production. Poor countries go on sending money to rich countries and the big companies of the developed countries earn disproportionate profits, whereas a majority of people in the developing countries find it difficult to make both ends meet.

The remedy suggested by Gandhi to avoid such unequal distribution of wealth between different classes in a society, as also between different nations of the world, was not the boycott of all machines as is generally, but erroneously believed, but a judicious use of it. Gandhi did not resist the use of machines, but he altogether refuted the craze for using machines. Another remedy suggested by Gandhi for improving economic relations is the theory of trusteeship, which suggested that 'the rich man will use his wealth reasonably required for his personal need and act as the trustees of the remaining wealth to be used for society'.

In Gandhian economics, the social optimum lies in complete equality of all individuals. This would bring about the equilibrium conditions of society, both materially and morally. Redistribution of income and wealth, therefore, must be considered a major welfare criterion in Gandhian economics. This perhaps may not be accepted as a general

practice in this century, but in the 'hire and fire' development practice of world, Gandhi remains a solace for the deprived and sidelined communities and sections.

## 6. EDUCATION

When we discuss development, the term investment is a crucial one. In the Gandhian mode of development, education is the investment. It is meant for the integrated development of the individual and the society (Devadas & Rajam, 2005). By education, he meant an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and the adult. For him, education is a tool for character building by developing wisdom, or a sense of discrimination which will enable one to differentiate between the right and wrong. So, education in the Gandhian sense aims at the development of the whole society. This requires proper training for individual as part of education because individual development and social development are interdependent. Gandhi stood for the synthesis of the two, and wanted a society 'in which all individuals have to play their part for the good of the whole without losing their individual character'.

Gandhi was critical of the existing system of education as he believed it to be wasteful and positively harmful. He did not want schools to be the storehouse of dead, obsolete and bookish knowledge because he conceived them as a platform for work, experimentation and discovery. Schools would also help in cultivating the character required for becoming a socially useful citizen by providing him/her the opportunity for practising civic virtues, art of discipline and to develop a broader vision and the will to sacrifice. For him, character building is more important than literacy. According to him, 'Schools and colleges are factories for making character'.<sup>11</sup> Further, education, according to Gandhi, 'should aim at producing not only good individuals but socially useful citizens who understand their social responsibilities as an integral element of society' (Devadas & Rajam, 2005, p. 53).

Gandhi's educational philosophy is in

perfect accord with the idea of national integration. He firmly believed that multiplicity of religions do not stand in the way of national integration. So, he advocated education of harmony. But the present-day Indian educational system has still its roots in the colonial education system devised by the British in India. The point of colonial education system was to make 'hard-working' clerks and stern managers. Now, seventy years after independence, little has been changed in the way of education that is imparted to children. The sole reason behind the rising tension in different spheres of life is this. Gandhi foresaw this and he envisaged a system of education, which aimed at developing not merely the faculties of head but also trying to develop the qualities of heart and training the hands through crafts.

Today, many countries of the West, after achieving considerable material progress, realise that along with being science-based, education should also be value-oriented. They have begun emphasising the role of moral values at all stages of education. However, a more integrated and synthesized method of education is the need of the hour. Gandhian ideals and the usage of spectacular progress in the field of science and technology have to be synthesized for the adoption of an appropriate method of giving knowledge and skill.

The future changes will be more complex and the problems arising out of these may become far-reaching than it is today. If we follow a method of education with its roots in the colonial past, it will be inappropriate in such a situation. In view of the explosion in information technology which has affected human life in all its aspects, care will have to be taken to see that modern methods and techniques of education are adopted and used not merely for acquiring new knowledge but also for preserving all that is good and useful in the traditional value system.

## 7. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND TRADE

In a world where terrorist strikes come without warning and where poverty kills

thousands of people everyday only because of international systems mistakes, international relations and foreign policy are not just important, but essential for the material growth and development of nations.

We are all part of international relations, because of our identities, religion and cultural background, places where we live, and choices that we make. Even if we are not interested in international relations, we cannot evade them. Today's world is rapidly changing and when developed countries grow and consume in a larger way, developing countries also take advantage of it for growing. In such a circumstance, international relation and mutual trade becomes more and more relevant. Contemporary economic systems are based on such relations, and we cannot go further in the path of development without mutual aid and friendship. Whatever the national and ideological differences may be, it is important to hold hands for the well-being of the people and society. However, the growing militarisation in different countries and internal war between ethnic groups within a nation, the threat of terrorists and fanatics and the perpetual tension between some nations are all driving the world into severe conflicts and war.

The world is passing through one of the worst crises in history. Military expenditure has grown up to unprecedented heights in almost all countries. There is the possibility of a thermo-nuclear war which is bound to be an all-destructive war. As pointed out by Einstein and Russell in a joint statement, the nuclear bomb is 2500 times more powerful than the atom bombs dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and that a nuclear war may lead to a 'nuclear winter' resulting in the extinction of human race and hence of human civilization. Thus, the destruction brought by the nuclear bomb will lead to a mutually-assured destructive world. This is why Hydrogen bombs are called 'Doomsday machines' by Russell (Callaghan & Phythian, 2015).

According to the principle of comparative advantage, it is better for the nations of the world,

than engaging in war, to enter into free trade to maximise their economic gains. Gandhian holistic economics rejects the doctrine of the international trade on the basis of the principle of Swadeshi. The rejection follows ' from the Gandhian definition of human welfare in holistic terms in contrast to that by modern economics in terms of maximisation of consumption goods. The principle of Swadeshi, on spiritual basis, demands that there should be a natural preference for goods produced in our immediate surroundings. 'Just as we do not give up our country for one with a better climate but endeavour to improve our own, so also may we not discard Swadeshi for better or cheaper foreign things'.

Gandhian pragmatic approach, however, was not for a total rejection of foreign trade. The country must be self-reliant as far as food, clothing and other basic necessities are concerned. Village crafts and industries which can be revived with some effort for their intrinsic merit and their other useful aspects must be given protection. However, goods which are important from people's welfare point of view and which cannot be produced at home may be imported. As he says, 'I have never been an advocate of prohibition of all things foreign because they are foreign. My economic creed is a complete taboo in respect of all foreign commodities whose importation is likely to prove harmful to our indigenous interest. This means that we may not in any circumstance import a commodity that can be adequately supplied from our own country' (Koskenniemi, 2011, p. 45).

Thus, holistic welfare is the supreme consideration, and trade must be subservient to it. Thus, whether it is in the social field, or in economic development, in politics or international relations, it will just not be possible to ignore Gandhi and his emphasis on the universal values of Truth and Non- violence; if we do so, as said by Martin Luther King, it will be at our own risk. The choice before the world will not be between violence and non-violence but between non- existence and non-violence.

From this, we can clearly conclude that the

eradication of poverty and the implementation of development programmes can be achieved without sacrificing values and ethics that are cherished most in the Gandhian scheme. For this, Gandhi insisted on using good means to achieve good ends, on making the villages of India and the country as a whole self-reliant and on placing the individual at the centre of all developmental activities. It opposes the centralization of economic and political power in the hands of the state or the capitalists.

#### 8. GANDHIAN APPROACH IN A NUT-SHELL

One of the most astonishing developments in the present century is the manner in which science and technology have altered the rhythm of human life. Rapid and unimaginable change in life that is happening around is the impact of science and technology. Humans are more and more mechanized by riding into the waves of ease and comfort. The insatiable greed of human beings has taken them to a luxurious situation from which we find it extremely difficult to escape. The Octopus of capitalist economy is widening its tentacles and humans around the world are under the influence and intoxication of its seductive features, and this in turn results into the destruction of our life supporting environment. The entire humankind is under its tight fists.

As we move slowly towards the middle of 21<sup>st</sup> century, some unpleasant aspects of development remind us that the policy-makers and administrators are not wise, after all. The architects of technological wonders and mighty civilization and the performers of breathtaking feats in the fields of development are facing a helpless situation and desperately searching remedies for the ills produced by their own ventures. The capitalist development mode in the West created a lot of unpleasant side effects in life of the common folk there. Without judging the pros and cons of this kind of development, developing countries also adopted this model along with their traditional life style. This is the root cause of the spreading of this kind of helpless



situation world-wide. Some propagate the idea that modernisation and mechanisation are the proper tools to resolve most of the human problems. They are carelessly and ceaselessly working for their sophistication. Some consequences of this trend of thought are bound to prove counter-productive.

## 9. CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

A major challenge that the world is facing today is poverty. About two thirds of the human race is living on or below the poverty line and every attempt to raise their standards of living or to bridge the gap between them and the affluent rest have, by and large, failed. The statistics show that population doubles every thirty years and the environmental deterioration that goes with it doubles every fifteen years. This in effect, results in the perpetuation of poverty. Moreover, this would result into the exhausting of natural resources.

According to one estimate, all mineral resources will be exhausted in the next 200 years at the present rate of consumption, if the population increases like this. There can be no solution to this so long as the ruling elite of the poor countries resort to tyranny and corruption to achieve for them a standard living that is compatible with the ruling elite of the developed countries. So long as they are unable to create legitimacy for themselves and identify their own interests with those of the masses, their demand for reordering the world will have no credibility. They will have to avoid the temptation to imitate the affluent societies. The Gandhian first principles have to be applied to their order of priorities before they can credibly demand something of their counterpart in the developed world for the restructuring of the world order. The first priority is that the power elite of the developing countries must learn to accept the average living Standard of their own societies without exploitation of their masses. If they do so, they will not only widen the area of mutual co-operation among the developing countries but would be in a strong moral position to demand the restructuring of the world order. Today, most

of them are subject to ridicule and contempt from the developed world.

Another challenge is the alienation. It negates man's essential being and indeed the very foundation of human consciousness as a species. Alienation is the most serious and pervasive problem of modern societies, more particularly of the developed societies, both capitalist and communist. Alienation got its first coherent place in the Hegelian-Marxian philosophy. Marx talked of three kinds of alienation: 1. Alienation of the worker from product, 2. Self-alienation of the worker, i.e., the alienation of the worker in the process of production, and 3. the alienation of men from one another in social relations. Marx talked only about the alienation of man as a producer and consumer and not in respect of his other activities.

If we add to the Marxian list the three other types of alienation, we will get the complete definition of alienation. They are the alienation of man from nature, alienation from the inner self, and alienation of consumption from production. That means, the complete answer to alienation is comprehended only in the Gandhian way of social reconstruction. The Gandhian answers to alienation evolved from his system of values and beliefs as much as from reformulating the objectives of a society and the methods of achieving those objectives. So long as there is divorce of ethics from economics and politics, humans will remain alienated and will not be able to determine the path for the desired social development.

Gandhian developmental concept envisages an ideal society which is classless, casteless and stateless. At the centre of this lies the question of equality. Equality is an important concept of Gandhi, in order to remove alienation from the consciousness of an individual. Equality is, therefore, the structural component of Trusteeship, which we have discussed earlier. In Gandhian struggle for an ideal society, equality and trusteeship goes together. However, Gandhi's concept of equality was different from that of Marx and of the anarchists.

In Marx, almost by definition, if class

polarization based on property relations was abolished, equality would be automatically ushered in. Gandhi believed that the abolition of private property was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for equality (Carpenter, 2007). Besides economic power, there were other sources of power which created inequality. He also refuted the anarchist and other Utopian notions which proclaimed the right of the worker to the whole produce of his labour. It was a kind of mechanical egalitarianism which Gandhi had rejected.

Moreover, even if Gandhi and Karl Marx both believed in a classless and stateless society for emancipation of mankind, they interpreted the idea quite differently. For Karl Marx, society was divided into haves (property owners) and have-nots. He did not rule out idea of violent revolution to overthrow the authority of the haves to establish classless society. For Gandhi, class distinction arose because of the mental outlook of the people, who considered physical labour inferior to mental labour. Hence, he propagated the principle of dignity of labour to form a classless society. Marx suggested social ownership of the means of social production. Gandhi enunciated the principle of trusteeship which required a change of heart of the capitalist/feudal class to regard their property as trust of the people and not as their own private possessions. Marx saw government as an instrument of dominant class and its need would wither away in a classless society. Gandhi believed in decentralized polity and economy and hence considered centralized state as redundant.

Gandhi believed in village polity and economy. Marx believed in complete development of technology and forces of production (means and modes) so as to fulfill demands of classless society. On the contrary, Gandhi believed in production for masses rather than mass production. He believed that simple technology and dignity of labour would serve as self regulating force for individual behaviour and needs. Marx believed that violent revolution alone could establish classless and Utopian society. His support for violent

revolution was on empirical grounds. On the contrary, Gandhi was an ardent champion of the principles of non-violence, self-discipline, Satyagraha and mutual tolerance to bring about the necessary social change. His opposition to violent means was both on pragmatic and moral grounds to uphold individual morale and to prevent human alienation.

Next major challenge is our blind faith in the miracles of technology. We know that technology's positive role has been quite extraordinary, particularly in the last fifty years. It has given solid foundations to human rationality. It has widened the scope of choices and the preferred means for exercising the choice. Technology has liberated man from the fear of the devastating forces of nature. It has made it possible for man to satisfy all his needs and to remove the fear of poverty and deprivation. It lays solid material foundations for human freedom. From a purely technological point of view, man's economic problems need not exist. Technology is laying the foundation of a new civilization by bringing human beings closer to one another. With the help of science, technology is opening new vistas of knowledge and its applications.

In spite of this positive dimension, technology has now entered into an irrational phase of making society subject to all-pervading technological determinism. While widening choices, it is reducing human capacity to choose because of man-machine imbalance. By plundering and destroying nature beyond limits, technology is ironically bringing man into an unprecedented conflict with nature. While creating a strong possibility for a world view, it is distorting man's image itself. Technology in a few hands is becoming a barrier to the solutions of human problems. Having removed poverty in some areas, it has now pushed man into the ocean of greed, selfishness and imperialism. Technology is shrinking the world but widening the gap between human beings and communities.

Gandhi's attitude towards technology is very often misunderstood. Removal of poverty was, of course, his foremost consideration. He wrote: 'I would favour the use of the most

elaborate machines... if thereby India's pauperism and resulting idleness can be avoided' (Prasad, 2006, p. 56). Gandhi forcefully argued against technological determinism in which the world has landed itself. He emphatically insisted on certain norms to be followed with regard to the direction of research in science and technology and its application. A technology which created imbalance between men and nations, dehumanized humans or alienated them from their work or fellow workers or created unemployment was not acceptable to Gandhi. His obviously negative views on technology appear on issues such as a few nations controlling technology and using it as a base for perpetuating an iniquitous and exploitative international order through colonialism or other modes of invasion. He thoroughly opposed all those technologies which destroyed existing technological base of a poor country without creating an alternative endogenous base.

Mahatma's notions about the harm of western civilization and mechanization have attained a significant relevance in the context of several issues concerning the survival of the humanity and the evolution of a just and viable world order. Gandhi saw clearly the moral degradation and cultural decay long back. *The Hind Swaraj* of Mahatma Gandhi published in 1909, long before the negative consequences of industrial civilization were exposed to the common folk, must have appeared to the generation of his times as a book of reaction and retreat from modernity and civilization.

The fact is that long before the people in 21<sup>st</sup> century will be awakened to the perils and limits of unrestrained economic growth and technological innovations, Gandhi pointed out the pitfalls of industrialism, and the damage to nature and man. He strongly criticized the emerging trends of consumer culture in future in all spheres of life and emphasized austerity and the moral principle in development, which are essential for tomorrow's world. According to Gandhi, mechanisation and industrialisation deteriorate the moral values in a way; it has a natural tendency to centralise and concentrate

power, which would lead to unlimited selfishness and greed. Hence, a conscious effort has to be made for minimising technology wherever possible. Only that which cannot be produced in the decentralised system may be permitted in a centralised way.

It is obvious here that Gandhi had advocated harmony between small and large technology with man at the centre. He considered man as an integrated whole, therefore a fragmentary approach should be opposed. Hence, Gandhi advocated decentralisation as a matter of achieving the objective of the total development of man. Decentralisation- both political and economic- was central to his thinking right from the beginning. He pointed out that without economic decentralisation, political decentralisation would be futile. Such a practice is not alien to the Indian culture and civilisation. India was a land of village communities or *Gram Panchayats* from time immemorial. In *Mahabharata* and *Manu Smriti*, we can see the references of *gram-sanghas*. So a decentralised economic system of production and distribution would not be a novel idea to India, instead it would ensure a fuller and proper utilisation of human and material resources in our country, that we are not fully utilising at present.

According to Gandhi, agriculture, by its very nature would remain a decentralised activity and it is the source of income for a very large number of people here (Tanzi, 1995). Gandhi believed in co-operativisation of rural life that is possible through agriculture and Swadeshi enterprises. It is evident that decentralisation of economy is now possible because of the availability of power, communication facilities and widespread expansion of infrastructure.

Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya will be very useful for solving the social problems of today and of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The concept can be interpreted as the 'awakening of one and all'. In addition to the awakening of everyone, it refers to the awakening of the total human spirit and personality. Sarvodaya is also related to achieving the highest level of self-realization in which one sees one's self manifested in all others.

Sarvodaya concept stresses duty of individuals to themselves and beyond their immediate families to the entire world. By tapping their innermost conscience and values, one can awaken people to their inner force and social power in order that their *Dharma* can be realized. In fact, Sarvodaya aims at an ideal society free from the evils like 'politics without principles', 'wealth without work', 'knowledge without character', 'commerce without morals', 'science without mankind' and 'service without sacrifice'. The Sarvodaya ideal, apart from the welfare of all, implies the uplift of the last downtrodden in society (*Antyodaya*). It is the vision of universal welfare and integrated development of all.

The ideal of *Swadeshi* will be the most effective tool for solving the economic problems of the century. *Swadeshi* means self-reliance in every field. In other words, *Swadeshi* is service, and if we understand it, we shall simultaneously benefit ourselves, our families, our country and the world. Gandhi delineated the modus operandi of *Swadeshi* in terms of limited wants and the capacity of local surroundings and resources to provide for the needs of the people. A life of simplicity with self-respect is anytime better than a life of luxury for the few bought with loss of self-esteem and dependence on others. In fact, *Swadeshi* movement may become a part of renaissance in 21<sup>st</sup> century because it conveys the idea of returning to one's own country to its culture and heritage, its own genius and tradition and serve the needs of the next-door neighbour.

Satyagraha will also be an important means by which individuals and groups can have an immediate effect on government policy and programmes. It is not a passive resistance as some people believe. As mass action, it will take three forms: non-cooperation, civil disobedience and direct action, each having a larger scope in the order in which they have been mentioned. Non-cooperation is withdrawal of co-operation from a corrupt government, but civil disobedience is a kind of civil resistance which involves a continuous and prolonged struggle to achieve given objectives. Direct action is a total rebellion

against an oppressive government and the classes which support it. Direct action and civil disobedience are powerful weapons but can become dangerous, if not based on non-violence. Individuals and groups can organize people through Satyagraha to draw the attention of the government on issues of terrorism, exploitation, deteriorating law and order, pollution, poverty, malnutrition, etc. to save society. To work Satyagraha for a better future, it would be desirable to bring likeminded people under one umbrella to fight against injustice and wrong governmental policies that create social tensions.

Finally, it is non-violence, which is not only the central concept and value of Gandhian philosophy but also the essence of his theories. We know that, there is a close relation between violence and power. And it is justified by the authorities with several notions. Even violence in the form of individual and group terrorism has come to acquire some legitimacy. The present has been called the era of the balance of power. The nuclear powers hold populations of nations as mutual hostages. The doctrine of nuclear deterrence today as practised by the rulers of the nuclear weapon nations constitutes the ultimate extrapolation of terrorism. The link between the legitimization of nuclear war and the rise in international terrorism is obvious. Indeed, they are the two sides of the same coin.

Gandhi had always condemned terrorism and questioned the doctrine that it can lead to success. Terrorism is counter-productive and self-destructive. In the Gandhian framework, neither terrorism nor nuclear deterrence has any place. To Gandhi, even the exceptions to non-violence have to be non-violently arrived at. Volitional violence diminishes the human.

In a nutshell, the Gandhian approach to 21<sup>st</sup> century economic problems will be based on maximum labour-intensive, employment-oriented and minimum capital-intensive industry, thus avoiding the unnecessary and excessive use of machines and the ever-rising spiral of industrial and technological expansion. In social field, it will be based on politics with principles, wealth with work, knowledge with character,

commerce with morals, science with spirituality and service with sacrifice.

## 10. CONCLUSION

In the light of the aforementioned components of the Gandhian scheme of development, it becomes evident that no effort or programme to address and solve the problems today can ignore or evade this warnings and visions. Our approach to development and economic growth must be harmonized with human values. Our aim should be to have worthwhile of living place and worthwhile of life which can be achieved through change of our life style and by controlling our unlimited needs and greed. We require a proper synthesis of science and spirituality to usher in an era of welfarism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The task is difficult, as the analysis of economic, political and social situation would show, but the Indian tradition has a great resilience and Indian mind a great capacity to overcome hurdles. We have to start somewhere to come to the right path and Gandhi had already illuminated it.

Thus, whenever formulating the development strategies, it is good to remember the Gandhian *talisman*, which is one of the last notes left behind by Gandhi in 1948, expressing his deepest concern for the good of the people.

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