

GANDHI MARG

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Special Issue on
**Gandhi-Kumarappa Perspective on
Decentralisation and Development**

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JOHN S. MOOLAKKATTU

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Editorial

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE (CSA) is a problem largely ignored in India until recently both in public discussion and by the criminal justice system. It was not even acknowledged as a criminal offence except when it emerged in the form of rape. With no specific legislation to tackle offences such as sexual assault on children short of rape, harassment, and exploitation for pornography, they came to assume a certain degree of impunity. It was largely due to the efforts of activists, NGOs and the Ministry of Women and Child Development that ‘the conspiracy of silence’ has been broken. With the passing of a special law called ‘The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) 2012,’ sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography involving a child (under 18 years of age) are now criminal offences and special courts are to be set up to expedite trials of the offenders. According to the report on crimes in India, a child is abused every 15 minutes. According to the figures for 2016 released by Indian Home Minister, Rajnath Singh in Delhi, 106,958 cases of crimes against children were recorded in 2016 with as many as 36,022 cases under the POCSO Act. India is considered to have the largest number of sexually abused children in the world. Since there is a general reluctance to talk about the topic, the real number of cases could be much higher.

Added to that is the still dismissive approach to abuse of boys. Society also has to take this issue seriously because boys are no less psychologically and traumatically affected by such abuse. CSA is about power and control and it takes place not because the perpetrators are mentally sick people, which entitles them to a different status. They are like predators and society has to come to grips with this fact. Early sensitization about it as well as making school going children aware of potential abuse can be helpful. More sensitization of the public, police and the judges is necessary on this front. Death penalty to those convicted of sexually abusing children up to 12 years of age has been imposed following a recent spurt in very young child victims and the public outcry against it within the country and

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outside. The new ordinance however does not extend the same justice to the boys who have been subjected to CSA.

Punishments alone will not do. There is the fear that death penalty will make families to cover up sexual crimes, and that rapists might kill their victims to avoid detection. More than punishment, it is perhaps by naming and shaming such individuals that we will be able to build up social opinion against CSA. Naming them and monitoring their moves will also ensure that they do not victimize children any more. But the naming and shaming of pedophiles can expose the names of the victims also, a prospect that should be avoided.

There are a large number of women and men who have borne the trauma of being abused in their childhood silently and carried on with their lives. In the West, many such cases are reopened and perpetrators are brought to book. In India, re-opening such cases would create a Pandora's box as the offenders are often in most cases acquaintances and relatives.

This issue of *Gandhi Marg* is guest-edited by Professor Jos Chathukulam, Professor Jeevan Kumar and Dr. Gireesan, and the papers are revised versions of presentations made at the seminar on "Decentralization and Alternative Development: Exploring Ideas from Gandhi and Kumarappa" organised jointly by Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bangalore and the Karnataka Chapter of Indian Institute of Public Administration at Bengaluru on 29th & 30th November 2017. I am thankful to them for editing this issue of *Gandhi Marg*. I am sure the papers will throw more light on the ideas of Gandhi and Kumarappa as well as their contemporary relevance.

JOHN S MOOLAKKATTU
Editor





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Introduction

Exploring the Ideas of J. C. Kumarappa on Decentralization, Green Economy and Alternative Development in India

Jos Chathukulam

D. Jeevan Kumar

K. Gireesan

IT CANNOT BE denied that Joseph Cornelius Kumarappa (1892-1960) was a philosopher of striking originality. As the principal preceptor of 'Gandhian Economics,' his primary endeavour was the development of an economics that was rooted in 'satya' and 'ahimsa.' His philosophy contains a thought-provoking analysis of the human economic predicament as well as a consistent teleological framework on the fundamental questions of economic theory, ranging from the foundational issues in economic philosophy to the practical organization of village industries.

Kumarappa's 1936 publication, *Why the Village Movement? A Plea for a Village-Centred Economic Order* has been rightly described as "the first comprehensive statement of the normative foundations of Gandhian Economics and a manifesto of the Gandhian socio-economic project." His second book, *Economy of Permanence: A Quest for a Social Order based on*

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Non-Violence contains the essence of his economic philosophy, and is the precursor of what is labelled today as 'Green Thought' and 'Sustainable Development.'

The Kumarappa Project is a normative project, firmly rooted in Gandhian principles. At the heart of a non-violent economy, is the concept of 'Natural Order,' derived from a teleological understanding of human civilization. *"In studying human institutions,"* he stated: *"we should never lose sight of that great teacher, Mother Nature. Everything in Nature seems to follow a cyclic movement... Violence results if this cycle is broken, at any stage, at any time. A nation that forgets or ignores this fundamental process in forming its institutions will disintegrate."*

An economy that is consistent with this Natural Order will impose ethical obligations and duties and thus ensure sustainability. Human beings have a special moral obligation here. Since natural resources are an integral part of the Natural Order, human beings have an obligation while utilizing these resources. In distinguishing between the 'Reservoir Economy' and the 'Current Economy,' Kumarappa stresses that societies be built primarily on renewable resources and not on non-renewable ones.

Kumarappa's problem with mainstream economics is its use of a narrow utilitarian logic to resolve fundamental human dilemmas pertaining to distributive justice or ecological sustainability. For him, an economic exchange was not merely a material transaction but also a moral one. An economy that is primarily based on money exchange facilitates unfettered accumulation, which is antithetical to the ideal Natural Order.

The agrarian economy was at the heart of Kumarappa's vision for India. In opposing the modernization of Indian agriculture, he called for an appreciation of the difference between agriculture as an occupation and agriculture as an industry. The complex problems of ensuring local self-sufficiency in procuring inputs, maintaining soil fertility and regeneration, and ensuring a nutritive diet – led Kumarappa to devise a scheme and a plan for 'balanced cultivation.' He advocated a scheme of careful licensing where crops were not grown according to the whims of the farmer, but according to the dictates of the needs of the village.

Kumarappa recognized the impact of mainstream economics on the political structure in a country. *"Large-scale industries in economics is the anti-thesis of democracy in politics,"* he stated. Decentralization of production was important to prevent the accumulation of power; this is *"the only path to true democracy in political life and to peace among nations."*

The year 2017-2018 is the 125th birth anniversary of J. C.

Kumarappa. It is widely felt that the contributions of Kumarappa, mainly in the domain of decentralization and alternative development, and its relevance in the contemporary world need serious review. Kumarappa is acknowledged as the foremost interpreter of Gandhian economic ideas. Gandhi himself had said so on a number of occasions. Mainstream economics has largely ignored his ideas, ostensibly due to his refusal to see economics as an autonomous subject governed by its own rules. Kumarappa was thinking in terms of an economy of permanence for India drawing on the spirit of cooperation and service that prevails in the “natural economy.” He sought to link economy with sustainability, harmony and peace. He concluded that only decentralized productive activities will improve the situation of people on a permanent basis. Although Kumarappa was not against industrialization, he insisted that its pursuit should not lead to the creation of an economy of violence. The capital intensive economy of capitalism was highly wasteful of natural resources upon which large capital stocks were created through colonialism wiping out the indigenous people. India had to do justice to its huge pool of human resources. This called for prudent use of natural resources, best accomplished by empowering local communities to safeguard and nurture them, and creation of productive employment on a massive scale. He also believed in land reforms through decentralization. For Kumarappa, decentralization and decentralized planning are associated with non-violence. By infusing elements of non-violence, spirituality, ecology, sustainability and generational justice, both Gandhi and Kumarappa have created a new rationality for decentralization.

These ideas need critical analysis. It was in this context that Sri Ramakrishna Hegde Chair on Decentralization and Development, Institute of Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bengaluru, decided to revisit the ideas of Gandhi and Kumarappa with particular reference to their implications for decentralization, decentralized planning and alternative development by organising a seminar on *Decentralization and Alternative Development: Exploring Ideas from Gandhi and Kumarappa* on 29th & 30th November 2017 in collaboration with the Karnataka Regional Branch of Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA-KRB), Gandhi Peace Foundation, Bengaluru, Karnataka Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and Sri Gavisiddheshwar Vidhya Vardhaka Trust, Koppal. Incidentally, this exercise was also the first attempt of its kind by an ICSSR- recognised institute in India.

This issue carries seven articles in the main section and two short articles in the Notes and Comments section.

The first article by Mark Lindley has elaborated the economic

ideas of Kumarappa and brought out their relevance for contemporary society. He has explained in detail the extent of environmental degradation taking place and the damage being done to the Mother Earth. He points out that Earth's "buckets" of renewable natural resources would be emptied out in the near future. We cannot have a sustainable way of life until it is based on renewable resources. Climate change, environmentally induced displacement, soil, water and air pollution and the consequent extinction of biological species, emergence of super bacteria, dangerous viruses and human-made earthquakes are causing environmental degradation at an alarming pace. The need for ecological economics has therefore become urgent. A cultural change has to take place to preserve the Earth. For this, cooperation among people and nations is indispensable. Lindley emphasized the need to adopt ecological economics and cooperation of all stakeholders. The author also has highlighted certain personal traits of Kumarappa which have implications for the political economy of alternative development paradigm proposed by Kumarappa for India.

The second article by M. V. Nadkarni identifies the contemporary problems and issues from a Gandhi –Kumarappa perspective. He applies Gandhian political economy to understand contemporary capitalist way of economic development, its structure and centralized organization of polity. Nadkarni is very affirmative in arguing that Gandhi and Kumarappa have an alternative understanding of economy, society and polity, technology and civilization itself. Their civilizational alternative has a cultural dimension, which includes moderating our wants, avoiding waste, and making our lifestyle simple, eco-friendly and enjoyable. To illustrate his points, Nadkarni presents a number of interesting narratives. According to the author, Kumarappa is one who adhered to and further developed the Gandhian approach and is therefore worthy of being called Gandhi's economist.

In the paper titled *Exploring Gandhian Ideas on Political and Economic Decentralisation as Peace-Keeping Forces*, Pranjali Bandhu comments that centralized methods of production, with or without private profit, with their accompanying problems of raw materials and markets, lie at the root of all violence in the modern world. She advocates that the centralized, large-scale industries in key areas should be run by the state on a non-profit basis for serving the requirements of cottage and village industries. The author sees a need to realign the structure of society, withdraw from the imposed imperialist division of labour, and limit the primary consumption needs of food, clothing and shelter by encouraging decentralized production. By taking a relook at the

ideas of Gandhi, Kumarappa and others, and adapting them to the contemporary setting, can shelp in resolving several contemporary issues and problems faced by the humanity, according to her. She cites the case of Kashmir and Naga Hills to reinforce her thesis on the militarisation of society and its consequences. She is confident that “such a state of affairs is diametrically opposed to Kumarappa’s Gandhian concepts of economy of permanence, freedom, nurturing and sharing, egalitarianism, peace and so on, expatiated upon in various writings and talks.”

Nisha Velappan Nair and John S. Moolakkattu critically revisit the cotemporary politically loaded discourse on the Gadgil and Kasturirangan reports on conservation of the Western Ghats. The authors argue that M.K. Gandhi, J.C. Kumarappa and E.F. Schumacher subscribe to the dichotomy between ‘Economy of Permanence’ and ‘Economy of Violence.’ Having explored and synchronized the ideas of Gandhi, Kumarappa and Schumacher on sustainability and the environment, the authors have proceeded to discuss the two reports on the protection of Western Ghats in a comparative manner in order to discern whether they have any similarity with the views of Gandhi and Kumarappa on sustainable development. The authors have produced a comparative summary of the two reports in a tabular format, which is self-explanatory. The major concern of Gadgil was to apply the decentralized planning and decision making process envisaged by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. The authors could find a Gandhian flavour in the Gadgil Committee report. In contrast, the Kasturirangan committee tends to lend its support to continued development in the Western Ghats without adequate importance given to its ecological security. It is argued that the Kasturirangan Committee is largely supportive of the development trajectory that the Government of India has embarked upon and its suggestions are at best “reformist rather than ecologically laden”.

Solomon Victus explores the subjects of decentralization and inter-generational justice put forth by Kumarappa. He presents the theory and practice of decentralization and inter-generational justice, the key concepts in Kumarappa’s thinking, in a broader perspective sense. Victus has successfully connected the concepts, narratives and images brought out by Kumarappa to illustrate the ideas of economy of permanence, decentralization and inter-generational justice. The paper has a sub-section on decentralization and centralization as understood by Kumarappa, which clearly underscores Kumarappa’s deep theoretical understanding and practical orientation towards the political economy of decentralization. Kumarappa made a five-point argument for decentralization, which is simplified and narrated by

the author. Victus argues that Kumarappa understood and analyzed everything from the perspective of 'economy of permanence.' Kumarappa did not reject centralized production totally as revealed by Victus. He argues that Kumarappa understood and analyzed everything from the perspective of 'economy of permanence.' Being a genuine peace economist, Kumarappa has not made any compromise towards war-oriented industries including nuclear industries which thrive on non-renewable resources. The author carefully cautions the readers "we need not romanticize Kumarappa as an idealist, but as a grass root level practitioner he has something to say to our context." Solomon Victus argues that Kumarappa's concept of economy of permanence is about futuristic economics and his perception is about intergenerational justice.

K. Gireesan, in his paper *Contemporary Discourse on Sustainable Development - Revisiting the Perspectives of Kumarappa*, provides a portrayal of the perspectives of J.C. Kumarappa on sustainable development. The author highlight the significant contributions of the 'unsung hero of rural economics and village industries' in the context of climate change and global warming, aimed at generating a discourse among the academicians, practitioners and others. The author commented that if the vision, mission and objectives of 'swadeshi movement' as conceived and propagated by Gandhi, Kumarappa and others were taken seriously by the eminent members of the Constituency Assembly, the socio-economic-political atlas of India might have been very different today. The author commented that the dream of a 'just and egalitarian society' in India could be realised only on the edifice of 'decentralization and alternative development' - by assimilating green thought, green democracy and green economics in letter as well as spirit.

Siby K. Joseph looks at the process of evolution of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the major efforts of UN in this direction including the important conferences and summits which laid a solid foundation for sustainable development. According the author the International Day of Peace of the year 2016 was a souvenir to humanity about the significance of sustainable development in the discourse of peace and its role in achieving everlasting peace. For Siby K. Joseph, the 125th birth anniversary of Kumarappa is not a ritual one but it is a gentle reminder for all of us to reflect on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, because it is Kumarappa who placed before the country a vision of an economy of permanence and peace. Therefore, it is significant to understand the economy of permanence outlined by Kumarappa. The author's basic assertion is that Sustainable Development Goals are based on the hypothesis that

the existing pattern of development could be reoriented towards achieving the goal of sustainability, whereas Gandhi-Kumarappa model of development goes much beyond the so-called Sustainable Development Goals conceived by the UN.

T.G. Jacob in his Note 'J.C. Kumarappa in the context of contemporary agrarian crisis' vividly portrays the plight of Indian farmers in the post-green revolution phase. He attributed the ill-effects of green revolution to the rise in Naxalbari Movement, which resulted in peasant rebellion in different parts of the country. The author logically argues that the contemporary agrarian crisis has connections with the Nehruvian agrarian economic policy. The author categorically says: "Due to his amazing intellectual capability, he (Kumarappa) could clearly visualise the futuristic results of the policy. Agriculture as a viable economic activity is being forcefully questioned by these ever-increasing number of suicides due to the bankruptcy of the producers and this was exactly what Kumarappa foresaw half a century before." The author feels that green revolution has taken away the vital ingredient of ownership and control of seeds from the producers. The author also pointed out that there is a discrete understanding between the credit givers and the agro-chemical agencies, as the former acts as the agent of the latter on several counts that resulted in the loss of freedom to the farmers to decide on how to produce and what to produce. In many cases, 'the primary producers are being manipulated en masse to comply with the interests of economic fascism.' The author cited the 'octopus grip' of such external factors forcing the farmers to suicides with the help of empirical evidence from different parts of the country. The author suggests a review the economic policies of the country, towards addressing the ongoing agrarian crisis. This, he feels, could be done in line with the perspectives of Kumarappa.

A Note on 'Relevance of J. C. Kumarappa's Concept of Decentralization in Modern India' by M.P. Gurusamy is an account of an activist who was closely associated with Kumarappa. Kumarappa was able to get a first hand understanding of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of decentralization. Kumarappa rightly placed Gandhian principles of truth and non-violence into the domain of decentralization. He constructed a new rationality and idiom for decentralization on the foundation of Gandhian principles of non-violence, spirituality, ecology, sustainability and inter-generational justice. It is clear that Kumarappa's aim was to establish the 'Economy of Governance' based on spirituality and nature. He understood that decentralization of production and distribution is the only way to arrive at the 'Economy of Governance.'

As students of democracy and decentralization, we have identified some common threads in the perspectives of J C Kumarappa and Pundit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya. The 'Natural Order' idea advanced by Kumarappa and the 'Integral Humanism' idea advocated by Upadhyaya are, in some ways, aimed at bringing harmony at the level of individuals, groups, institutions, state, society, and nature. Kumarappa and Upadhyaya need to be critically analysed by the students of decentralization, transcending the political overtones it may have given the latter's association with the Jan Sangh. It would only be fair that academicians, researchers and activists analyse discourses in an objective and balanced manner so that all ideas that contribute to 'Gandhian school of alternative development' could be identified and brought together.

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An Essay on the Thoughts and Deeds of J. C. Kumarappa

Mark Lindley

ABSTRACT

J. C. Kumarappa, an economist who followed the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi, propagated ecological economics. His theory of 'economy of permanence' is mainly focused on ecological issues. He draws a clear distinction between renewable and non-renewable natural resources. According to him, our life pattern on the economy of performance paves the way for world peace, whereas the economy based on dwindling resources will lead to disharmony, unhealthy competitions, enmity and world wars. The paper strongly argues the need for ecological economics by placing Kumarappa as the champion of green economy, alternative development and decentralization of productive forces and polity. The article has also disclosed certain personal traits of Kumarappa.

Key words: Economy of Permanence, economic man, economics of social Darwinism, economics of solidarity, new economics

Introduction

OTHER GANDHIANS WRITING about economics focused on fair distribution of goods, but J.C. Kumarappa broadened Gandhian economic thought by paying a lot of attention also to ecological issues. His book titled, *Economy of Permanence*, implies an ecological outlook. He said: "Human life rarely reaches even a hundred years while ... to measure the life of Nature will run into astronomical figures.... It is in this relative sense that we speak of 'an economy of permanence.'"¹

He set out a clear distinction between renewable and non-renewable natural resources:

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The world possesses a certain stock or reservoir of such materials as coal, petroleum [and] ores or minerals like iron, copper, gold, etc. These, being available in fixed quantities, may be said to be 'transient,' while the current of flowing water in a river or the constantly growing timber of a forest may be considered 'permanent' as their stock is inexhaustible in the service of man if only the flow or increase is taken advantage of.... Basing our life pattern on the economy of permanence paves the way for world peace, while the other [kind of economy, based on dwindling sources of consumable energy and raw materials,] leads to disharmony, unhealthy competition, enmity and world wars.²

Material reckonings (not at all the same as monetary reckonings) are characteristics of ecological economics. Kumarappa reckoned that 77,700 acres of land (66,600 in crops, plus some for "seed and waste") could provide 100,000 people with a balanced vegetarian diet of some 2850 calories per day. Figure 1 shows a slightly simplified version of his table.

Kumarappa did not disparage money. He said: "For transferring purchasing-power money and credit are unsurpassed."³ But he added that an honest economic exchange should also include transfers of "human and moral values," and that these are not represented inherently in a monetary transaction. (When we pay money to a person we can get some human and moral value into the transaction by (a) courtesy and friendly remarks and by (b) favouring "fair trade" purchases whenever feasible).

Moral levels of Economic Activity

Kumarappa posited a theoretical ladder of five moral levels of economic activity.

1. Predatory (e.g. carnivores, and imperialists and, now, the "I'll-be-gone-by-then"-type CEOs of corporations)
2. Parasitic (e.g. fleas, and lazy or corrupt bureaucrats)
3. Enterprising (e.g. beavers, and good businessmen)
4. Community-oriented (e.g. ants, and good socialists)
5. Purely service-oriented (e.g. true Gandhians)

For example: "When a mother nurses her children, all the return she gets is the joy of seeing them well fed and happy; that is her 'wage.' From this [service-oriented economic activity] there is a fall to the 'economy of enterprise' when a wet-nurse feeds the baby.... When the extravagant claims [made on behalf of] of [synthetic] baby foods do not bear any close relation to [nutritional] facts, we go right down to the 'parasitic economy' where the profit made is the

Per Capita				
	Ounces Daily	Calories Daily	Pound Annually	Acres Cultivated
Cereals	16	1600	365	43,400
Beans & Peas	2	200	45 ½	5,400
Molasses	2	200	45 ½	1,200
Nuts	1	145	23	2,600
Edible oils	½	255	11½	3,000
Butter	½	-	11½	-
Milk	12	240	274	-
Vegetables	8	48	182 ½	1,600
Potatoes & Tubers	4	100	91	1,000
Fruits	4	52	91	900
Cotton			12 ½	7,500

Figure 1

overruling consideration irrespective of any harm that may befall the baby.”⁴

In his book *Gandhian Economic Thought* (1951)⁵ he distinguished between (a) “home industry” such as cooking or sewing for members of the same household, (b) “village industry” for distribution and consumption mainly within the same village, and (c) “cottage industry,” i.e. households producing commodities the consumption of which might take place anywhere. He saw that village industry is more efficient, transportation-wise and in terms of “transaction costs,” than are mass production factories. In the 1930s he had said:

While the plant that transforms raw materials into consumable articles is located in some one place, the ... raw materials are gathered from the places of their origin and brought together to feed the machinery ... at a speed demanded by the technical requirements ... for production at an ‘economic speed’... [And then] when the goods have been produced they have to be sold. Again the problems of routes, ports, steamships and political control of peoples have to be faced. Exchange, customs and other financial and political barriers have to be regulated to provide the necessary facilities. All this can be done only at the point of the bayonet.⁶

Need for Ecological Economics

Although Kumarappa was less savvy about the natural sciences than 21st century environmental experts have to be, he had far more regard for chemistry and biology than market economists do. He urged (for instance) that government send out “soil doctors” all over the country to analyse local soils and advise farmers as to how much of this and that to apply by way of artificial fertilizer.

Kumarappa could be tough. When Vinoba paid him a visit during the Bhoodan Campaign, his greeting was: “Here you are, the greatest thief in India.” Vinoba asked him to explain. He explained that (a) according to the Gita, if you have more than you need and do not share some, it amounts to theft, and that (b) Vinoba had secured donations of land but had not followed through to ensure that it was properly distributed. (Vinoba said: “Yes, now I understand.”) When Nehru visited him in hospital in Madras, Kumarappa handed him a sheet of paper with some policy recommendations, but then as Nehru was taking his leave he said to throw the sheet away. Nehru asked why; his reply was that since Nehru was going to do that anyway when he got back to New Delhi, he might as well do it now and save the trouble of reading it. I agree with T. J. Jacob’s recent assessment⁷ of Kumarappa as “one of the tallest and most original thinkers in the Indian independence struggle.” So, why didn’t Nehru pay more heed

to him in the 1950s? Two of the reasons were his sharp tongue and the fact that the All-India Village Industries Association was not brilliantly successful. (It was a pioneering effort, and Kumarappa wasn't a great manager.) But a bigger reason was that Nehru, whose studies at Cambridge University had been in Physics, Chemistry and Biology (some of each), believed – mistakenly – that the “neoclassical” economic theories guiding the Five-Year Plans were scientific and so the plans would succeed. But towards the end of his life, Nehru saw clearly that the Five-Year Plans had not represented a successful “tryst with destiny.” On several occasions in the early 1960s he said that Gandhian economics would have worked better. Recently, an 80-year-old social worker in Madurai, K.M. Natarajan, told me, for instance, that he personally heard Nehru declare, in a talk given in December 1963 in Tamil Nadu, that implementing the Plans had failed to abolish unemployment, poverty and hunger in India and that India could have done better by going “the Gandhian way” in economics (which in fact was Kumarappa's way).

A standard modern academic definition of economics (written in the 1920s by a professor at the London School of Economics) has been that it is the aspects of human behaviour that are “guided by objectives” (situated sometime in the future; you can't have an objective in the past) and “deal with scarce means which have alternative [possible] uses.” About 150 years before that definition of economics was devised, one of the USA's founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson (who wrote the *Declaration of Independence* in 1776), had said that “The God who gave us [humans] life gave us liberty at the same time.” (He declared that force could destroy them but could not “disjoin” them; they come and go together.) Let me now link up Jefferson's insight with the modern British definition (that I have cited) of economics by pointing out that human behaviour is guided to a certain extent by deliberation, and therein lies our natural liberty” (which Jefferson called a gift from God): We humans have not only will-power (as do a lot of other animals), but deliberative will-power. We talk with each other and deliberate as to how to try to attain certain objectives by using more-or-less scarce means – resources of one kind and another which have alternative possible uses. (And if we use up a certain set of resources to attain “Objective A,” we thereby sacrifice the opportunity to use them to attain “Objective B” instead. The economists' name for this kind of sacrifice is “opportunity cost”.)

Kumarappa observed: “The main trouble with Man arises out of the fact that he is endowed with a [so-called] ‘free will’ [i.e. deliberative will-power] and possesses a wide field for its play.”⁸

His point was that: “By exercising this gift in the proper way, he

[that's *us*] can consciously bring about a much greater cooperation and coordination of Nature's units than any other living being. Conversely, by using it wrongly, he can create quite a disturbance in the economy of Nature, and, in the end, destroy himself."⁹ Let me outline briefly the ways that humankind is nowadays causing a precipitously destructive degradation of its natural environment. It is happening in more ways than you may have imagined:

(1) Depleting earth's "non-renewable" stock of fossil fuels at the present rate is bound to cause them all to be exhausted in a matter of decades from now. (The earth will make more coal and oil and natural gas, but that will take many millions of years, and we don't have that kind of time at our disposal).

(2) Depleting the stock of ores, and thus dispersing the earth's economically valuable mineral resources (other than the fossil fuels) at such a rate that the cost, in terms of consumable energy, of re-concentrating and re-purifying them for repeated industrial use may well become prohibitive in a matter of decades.

In Figure 2. below the bottom-left part of each curve shows when humankind began to extract from the earth, large amounts of the stuff in question; the top indicates what will have been the historical year of the "peak" rate of production if the rate winds down symmetrically to the way it went up; and the bottom-right point indicates when, a few decades from now, the bucket will be empty. The basic point is that when it is half empty it is only half full.

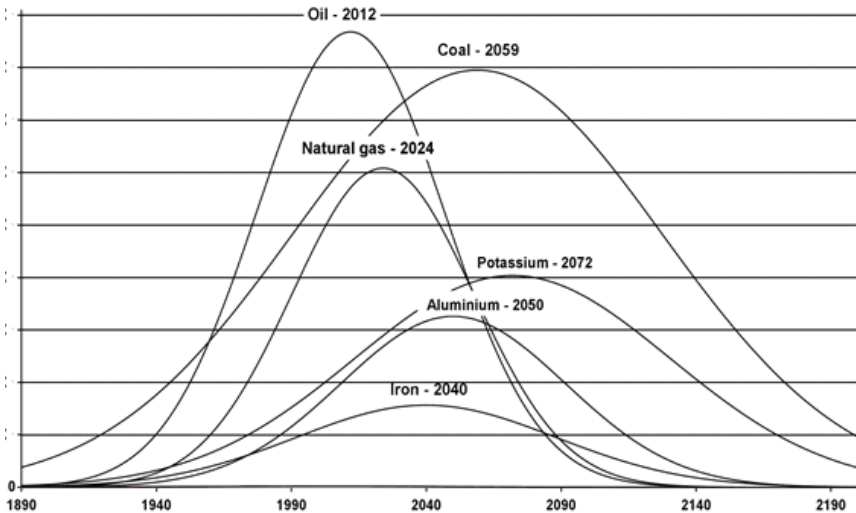


Figure 2. (Estimates based on proven reserves worldwide)

There is a serious risk of wars, during the downward slopes, for what's left in the bottom of the buckets. This is part of what Kumarappa meant by "unhealthy" competition. We had already such a war for control of the oil wells in Iraq.

John Stuart Mill, a top British economist, argued for a "stationary state" – that is, with a stable amount of population and, supposedly, of capital stock. He said this would be compatible with moral and social progress; the economy could become better without getting bigger. He did not grasp that humankind, even if stable in numbers and in the rate of per capita use of resources, would empty out earth's "buckets" of non-renewable natural resources such as coal. We cannot have a really sustainable way of life until it is all based on renewables.

(3) Environmentally damaging displacements of H₂O from glaciers to the ocean and of SiO₂ (i.e. sand) from (a) beneath the topsoil in river valleys to (b) our pavements, walls, etc. A valley blessed with a river is naturally green because some of the water flowing in the river down to the ocean is diffused sideways through sand that is there beneath the soil along the river banks. The more sand is removed from beneath the soil, the more of the water will go directly down the river to the ocean, and thus less to the fields in the valley.

(4) Using up the renewable natural resources faster than earth renews them. Some examples are the wood and greenery in many forests, the biotic micro-nutrient components of agricultural soils, rivers no longer flowing as far as the sea, and water-tables sinking deeper and deeper underground.

(5) Climate changes that are beginning to play havoc with agriculture and to bring us more and more destructive storms. This will get worse. How much worse will depend on what is done soon to mitigate the amounts of "greenhouse gasses" in the air.

(6) Polluting our soil, water and air: stocking them with excessive amounts of chemicals that are poisonous to eat, drink or breathe.

(7) Causing extinctions of biological species at a rate which could risk the survival of our own species (*Homo sapiens*) within a century or two. According to the Living Planet Index, global populations of fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles declined by 58 per cent between 1970 and 2012. According to a qualified ecologist, Peter Sale, by the end of *this century*:

...larger species (coyote size and up), other than those directly cultivated by humans, are likely to be extinct or to exist only as threatened populations.... Environmental goods and services [to humankind] will be much reduced simply because of the loss of diversity of organisms. With the increased homogeneity, there will be a much greater risk of

pandemics that severely impact particular species and create massive change in ecosystem composition as a result. The risk of a species extinction that has major ramifications through the ecosystem will become ever greater as diversity falls, and our own population will be precariously dependent on just a few species to sustain its vast size.¹⁰

(8) Creation, by careless medical activities, of super-bacteria and increasingly virulent viruses. With poor luck we could be facing soon the end of the wonderful age (initiated 150 years ago by Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch) of effective anti-bacterial medicines.

(9) And, geologists tell us that some of the recent earthquakes have been due to human agency! Nothing like this ever happened before.

No one can predict the conditions forthcoming in the 21st century that will have been due to the combined, interacting effects of these various kinds of current environmental degradation. However, Figure 3. outlines succinctly a way of looking at the overall economic situation.

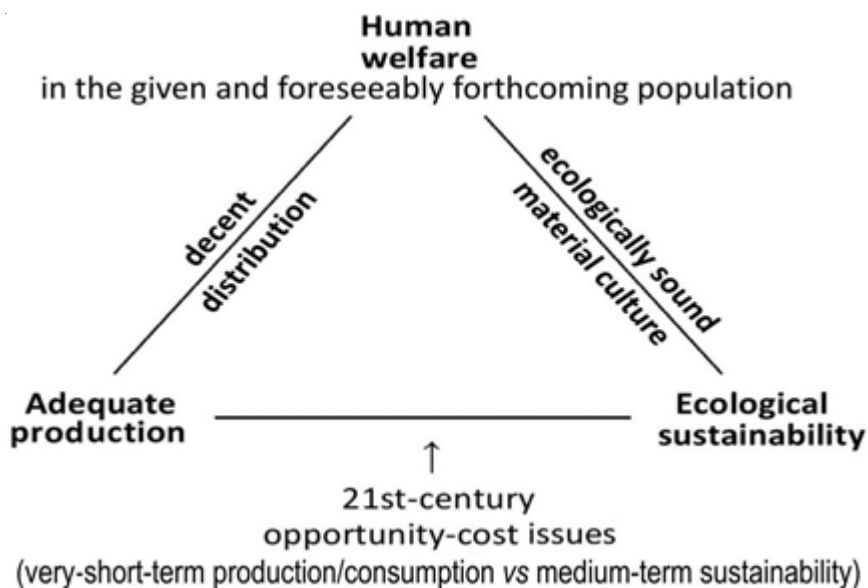


Figure 3.

The need for ecological economics was starting to become urgent already 50 years ago, and this was understood by the most powerful politician in the world at that time. In the annual "State of the Union" Address given in January of 1970, he said that "the great question of the 70s" would be "Shall we make our peace with Nature and begin

to make reparations for the damage we have done to our air, to our land, and to our water?" He established the US government's Environmental Protection Agency and "Earth Day" as an annual government-sponsored day of celebration on April 22nd. (It is celebrated nowadays in more than 190 countries). But then came a persistent, lavishly funded political reaction against environmentalism and ecological economics, with Ronald Reagan in 1980-81, as candidate for the US Presidency and then as President, declaring that trees cause more pollution than automobiles do and that "80 per cent of air-pollution comes not from chimneys and auto-exhaust pipes, but from plants and trees."

And meanwhile the Green Revolution was starting to make Indian agriculture depend in one way and another on fossil fuels – a precarious condition for a 21st century national economy. (India imports some 85 per cent of the petroleum that she consumes). And that use of Green Revolution techniques is now beginning to result in more fickle monsoons, dangerously depleted aquifers, and soils becoming depleted of biochemical micro-nutrients needed by the crops.

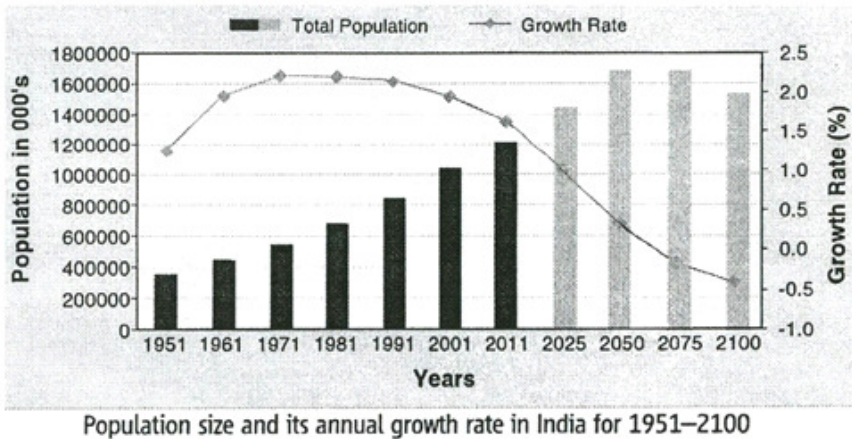


Figure 4.

And yet, food-price inflation will be a problem in India as the population increases some 40 per cent from now to 2060. Figure 4. includes an expert demographic estimate of what the forthcoming 21st century population is likely to be if there is no vastly fatal pestilence, war or famine here. (For a rough estimate of the increase from now to 2060, consider that $125:175 = 5:7 = 100:140$). But there won't be more farmland or more overall rain in India than there

is now. And, converting more and more amounts of coal into smoke and dirty ashes would aggravate the global warming that is beginning to play havoc with the monsoons. So it seems to me vital for India to develop agricultural techniques which (a) will be less dependent on burning fossil fuels and wasting fresh water, and (b) will restore biochemical nutrients to the soils and offer greater crop yields (especially of vitamin-rich foods) already in the next few years.

I hope that some of India's best agronomists will focus on this tough problem, and those other first-rate technicians, and political scientists too, will focus on getting nutritious food conveyed more efficiently – without gratuitous damage to the environment – from the field to the plate. It is a tall order. I hope that some economists will respond adequately to the challenge.

Economics of Social Darwinism or Economics of Solidarity

Meanwhile if businessmen and women of the 21st century come to believe that they are morally obliged to prevent their work from aggravating the various kinds of precipitous environmental degradation that I have described, and if all the big national governments agree with that kind of thinking and feeling, then one result – in addition to some mitigations sooner or later of the material problems – would be a great deal more emphasis, in “business as usual,” on cooperation between firms and between nations than was sanctioned by the “Economic Man” Doctrine of late 19th and 20th century Western theory of economics. According to that Doctrine, economic agents are “rational” in such a way that each one “maximizes” his or her individual well-being with no *priori* concern for the welfare of anyone else. (According to the Doctrine, a mother does not really care for its own sake about her baby whom she is nursing etc.; she is doing it only for the sake of some later advantage).

Some people doubt that a cultural change away from such venal selfishness can really take place. The “Economic Man” Doctrine rests on a persistent 19th century cultural notion: the “Social Darwinism” of Darwin's popularizer Herbert Spencer (*d.*1903). According to Spencer, competition without cooperation is what determines the “survival of the fittest.”

Biologists of the 20th century have shown, however, that cooperation permeates life on earth as much as competition does. For instance, the evolution, more than 1500 million years ago, from bacteria, i.e. single-cell organisms without nuclei, to single-cell organisms with nuclei was via “endo-symbiosis” (symbiosis within the body of an organism) between large bacteria and small ones which got inside the large ones but which the large ones could not digest.

And here are some relevant anthropological facts – facts about human culture: Nearly 95 per cent of the 200,000-year history of *homo sapiens* predated the rise of agriculture, and during those many tens of thousands of years, people got an indispensable part of their nutrition from hunting big game – for which cooperation among the men was absolutely indispensable.

Gandhiji would have been reluctant to accept the anthropological finding that it was carnivorous humans who rendered the species to cooperativeness (even though his own rejection of the Jain precept of absolute non-violence was due to his realization that agriculture entails certain kinds of *himsa*). But he would have been delighted in the anthropological finding that since human infants take so inconveniently long – compared to other animals' infants – to learn how to walk etc., the tribes in which the women cooperated in looking after their children were the biologically fittest ones that became our ancestors. Most other big animals are far less disposed to give-and-take cooperation in small groups than we humans are. And, the fact that the men's instincts to cooperate evolved originally in the context of violent activities does not mean that men can not cooperate in non-violent undertakings. There is a gender-neutral aspect to the socio-biologically inherited capacity.

I hope that just as people in, say, a nation, who mostly don't even know each other personally, tend to pull together and cooperate more with one another if the nation is attacked by another nation than they do during peacetime, so humankind may perhaps pull together and change "business as usual" as the fact that we are all under sharp "attack" from "angry Mother Nature" becomes more and more clear.

I am in my 80th year and so I will not live to see what the world is going to be like in the mid-21st century; but I know it will be very different from what it was like a few years ago. Your problems, and the possible solutions, will have to do not only with how humans relate to other humans, and with individuals' capacities, but also with how humankind relates to the rest of Nature on Earth.

Conclusion

Our natural environment is now degrading more dangerously than ever before in the history of humankind. Economics needs to evolve, more and more in this century, towards ecological economics. So, the would-be new economists better study chemistry, as well as political science and other branches of group psychology. Let me mention here that John Maynard Keynes (the best 20th-century British economist), even though he did not foresee environmental problems regarded economic theory as "a science of thinking in terms of models" joined

to the art of choosing models which are relevant to the contemporary world". He said: "It is compelled to do this because [,] unlike the typical natural science, the material to which it is applied is, in too many respects, not homogeneous through time." In other words, we always need new economics. A lot of cooperation will be called for. We have in us a lot of cooperative instincts. The question is how well they will function under these new circumstances.

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An Alternative Holistic Paradigm of Development on Gandhi-Kumarappa Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Gandhi was deeply unsatisfied with the contemporary capitalist way of economic development and centralised organization of polity. He sought an alternative way of civilization itself. The alternative has five dimensions, each of which is consistent and supportive to the others: political, social, economic, technological, and cultural. It was meant to secure justice, dignity and freedom for all, also achieve development for all in a sustainable, environment-friendly way. It aimed at ending unemployment, poverty and deprivation. His approach to the alternative was subscribed to and further developed by J. C. Kumarappa, known as Gandhi's economist. This article presents their alternative to the present crisis ridden world.

Key words: Economy of Permanence, Gandhian economy, hind swaraj, sarvodaya, panchayats, gram swaraj

The Present Problems and Gandhi-Kumarappa Perspective

ACUTE AND INCREASING inequality in income and wealth, growing environmental crisis resulting in climate change, and worsening loss of freedom of ordinary individuals who constitute the mass of people, are the major problems of the day, not only in India but also in the world at large. The philosophy of individual liberty and rights of the individual came to prominence along with modern economic growth under capitalism, obsessed with materialistic development and economic competition. However, it has also

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promoted and shaped democracy and its institutions, rightly hailed as welcome and beneficial for the welfare of humanity. The rise of democracy and its institutions are the best hope of the second set of people for better prospects. The problem, however, is that the very process of acknowledging the supremacy of the individual, also allows some individuals to ride roughshod over the interests of many others. A similar principle applied to individual nation-states in the form of accepting their sovereignty, allows some of them to appropriate for themselves the global commons with impunity, resulting in extreme disparity in the use of and access to global environment. The nation-states have been jealously safeguarding the self-interests of their own citizens first, before doing anything for the world as a whole. There is obviously a need to ensure that *all* individuals and *all* nation-states enjoy their rights equally, and in the process, to reconcile the interests of the individuals with those of the community as a whole. It also requires reconciling the interests of the present generations with those of the future generations.

Human civilization has advanced precisely trying to achieve this task of reconciling. Faced with the impending environmental crisis, there is now a crucial test for the capacity of our civilization to solve its problems and keep advancing in the interest of *all*. Mahatma Gandhi and Kumarappa saw the advance of civilization, neither in terms of its technological advance nor in terms of conveniences and comforts created, but in terms of moral development.¹ Both Gandhi and Kumarappa rejected a purely materialistic conception of development and class conflict, and the idea that justice and welfare could be attained through force or violence. They were equally vehement in rejecting competition as a way of development, and emphasized instead on mutual cooperation as a way of satisfying human needs of all, and ending unemployment, poverty and deprivation.

According to Kumarappa, the central tendency of development or civilizational progress is, or at least ought to be, towards more and more non-violence. He developed ethical criteria for demarcating different stages of economic development. The first is the Parasitic stage where one grows only at the expense of others, involving violence and ruthless exploitation. The second is a Predatory stage which involves cheating and stealing, depriving the surplus of one group or class by another even if under innocuous garb. The third is the Enterprise stage which marks the entry to a modern and more civilised economy, where growth of the national cake takes place through increase in enterprise and productive activity, and one can prosper without having to deprive others at least in absolute terms.

Kumarappa's fourth stage is a Gregarious Economy or Collective Economy like a honey bee colony, each working for the common good. The final stage is one of *Seva* Economy based on altruism and service to others. This is Kumarappa's final and most civilised and ethical stage.² Gandhi may not have conceptualised such stages, but the essence of moral development consists according to him in doing one's duty, which in his vision, lies in preventing injustice and deprivation not only in economic and social status but also in the matter of environment.

Gandhi and Kumarappa did not explicitly discuss environmental problems, but their thought or perspective is so relevant in resolving them as if they directly analysed these problems. Their social and political philosophy was that even while the individual is basic to the society and polity and has to be equipped with the necessary rights to protect his or her dignity and growth, he or she has to also accept duties arising out of recognising similar rights of all other individuals. Their approach was holistic, and solving environmental problems was an implicit part of it. One can think of solving them in two complementary ways, in both of which Gandhi and Kumarappa are relevant: One way is to change the nature of economic growth in such a way that dependence on fossil fuels, and even on machines, is kept down to the minimum. In the present parlance, it requires energy intensity of growth to be brought down to sustainable levels. The second is to moderate our lifestyles to reduce the consumption loads on the environment to sustainable levels. Gandhi famously said that the earth has enough to meet the needs of all, but not greed. The goal of development in his approach was *Sarvodaya*³ (the rise of all), that is, to meet the needs of *all*, and not the want satisfaction of only those who wield purse and power. It is in pursuing the satisfaction of the elite wants that most of our environmental problems are caused.

Although the Gandhian perspective includes changing the technology of growth as a means of bringing down its energy intensity, this would be through a socially relevant 'appropriate technology.' However, his strategy is not based on technology alone, but also on changing the very social and political organisation through which economic activities are carried out. The organisational aspects of Gandhian perspective are discussed first below since they provide the basic background for introducing his preferred technology.

In his *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi actually thought in terms of an alternative to the modern civilization itself. This is because, as he thought, the economic system of the prevailing civilization is based

on single-minded pursuit of profits and accumulation of personal wealth; and its political system also is based on politicians' pursuit of political power for one self either for its own sake or as a means of accumulation of personal wealth. The civilization has too much violence as a result of this intrinsic character of it. For this reason, he even doubted if it deserves to be called as a civilization. When someone asked him what he thought of the Western civilization, he quipped, 'It is a good idea!' By Western civilization, he meant the modern civilization. In opposing it, Gandhi was not proposing poverty for all. He made it clear in a lecture in 1916 at Ahmedabad, India: "No one has ever suggested that grinding pauperism can lead to anything else than moral degradation. Every human being has a right to live and find the wherewithal to feed himself and where necessary to clothe and house himself".⁴ The alternative he had in mind was precisely to ensure this human right for everyone, and facilitate *Sarvodaya*.

In Gandhi's philosophy, it is the people who are the source of all political power, and 'ultimately it is the individual who is the basic unit'.⁵ It is for the people to decide what powers they can delegate to the State and with what conditions, and in doing so they cannot certainly give away all their freedoms and scope for exercising their political will. Gandhi stressed: "No society can be based on a denial of individual freedom".⁶ In Gandhian thought, however, recognition of the primacy of the individual translates itself into both rights and duties of individuals, and not rights alone. He considered rights and duties as the two sides of the same coin. There is no conflict in his scheme of things between individual and community or collective interests, because it is the duty of individuals to safeguard collective interests, and it is the duty of the community to protect individuals' rights. He believed neither in liberty to the point of permitting full freedom to business enterprises, nor in state socialism or in communism which deprived individuals of their initiative and freedom. The advance of civilization consisted in reconciling the two interests by everyone following the path of one's duty so as to ensure *sarvodaya*. The society or the state has no right to sacrifice any or a few individuals for the sake of many, since every individual counts. Similarly, no individual or a set of few of them have the right to deprive others of their livelihood or welfare in the name of liberty. The relevance of this philosophy in the matter of environment is obvious, since environmental damage is essentially a social cost imposed by some on others.

Gandhi saw the modern economy from the point of view of a

poor country. He did not think that industrialisation of the Western kind was necessary for India to catch up with the West, as many of his Indian contemporaries thought. He offered an alternative which he thought was relevant basically for India, but not irrelevant even for the West. Moreover, it was a holistic alternative integrating different dimensions. He did it in his simple but logical way, avoiding technical language.

Gandhian Alternative: Political Dimension

Gandhian alternative has five dimensions, each of which is consistent with and supportive to the others: political, social, economic, technological, and cultural. Together, they were meant to secure justice, dignity and freedom for all, and ensure the development of all in a sustainable and environment-friendly way. In the political dimension, he wanted genuine decentralization of democracy as characterising the whole polity, so that people have equal opportunities to participate in decision making at all levels and safeguarding their individual as well as collective interests. In his view, democracy did not just mean voting once in five years to choose representatives to rule over people, but it involved participation in decision making and governance on a regular basis.⁷ The elected representatives have to be accessible and part of the communities from which they are elected. To be effective and functional, people are to be organised into communities forming local governments or *Panchayats*, which are independent and yet interconnected with each other. For Gandhi, *Swaraj* meant *self-rule* in a much deeper and wider sense than either independence from foreign rule or formal Parliamentary or Presidential democracy. At the individual level, self-rule meant self-control and moral responsibility to contribute to community welfare, and an awareness of one's own duties and rights as well as those of others. At the more aggregative levels, it meant *Gram Swaraj* or Self-Rule by villages or local communities including urban communities, and commitment to the welfare of all individuals comprising the community. Gandhi and Kumarappa gave more emphasis on villages not only because the bulk of India's population lived there, but also because villages are neglected in modern economic growth and even exploited. It is mainly in the revived strength of local communities, that a genuine democracy could be rooted as he perceived, and it is mainly rural communities that can show the way forward here. Only a deepened decentralized democracy could provide, in Gandhi's view, 'a government of the people, by the people, and for the people,' using Abraham Lincoln's definition

of democracy. A democratic government, strictly as per Lincoln's definition, could not be a singular entity even for a given country. It has to be a federation of village or local community governments, extending not only to the country but also to the world at large. Though Gandhi had mainly India in mind, his concept of a deeply federal polity has a universal appeal and relevance. Gandhi elaborated his concept in an article in *Harijan* dated July 28, 1946, excerpts from which are given below:

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or Panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. ... Ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. ... In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual.... Therefore, the outermost circumference will not yield power to crush the inner circle but give strength to all within and derive its own from the centre" (Gandhi 1959: 8-9).

Mere creation of local governments does not meet Gandhian expectations. Democratic decentralization means genuine redistribution of political powers and of governance authority, in such a way that the local governments have the required funds, functions and functionaries, and of course the constitutionally recognised authority needed to use them. Elections to the local bodies have to be held regularly, and the provision of funds has to be instituted constitutionally to avoid arbitrariness. India has taken significant steps in this direction, though the system is subject to further improvement and effective implementation.⁸ While India is constituted as a Union of States, it is far from being officially recognised as a Union of Panchayats or Local Governments. The local governments are still dominated by the State level bureaucracy and politicians. The Indian state is federal in character with three tiers, the Union government at the central or national level being the strongest, the state governments at the middle level being the next strong, and the Panchayats at the local level being the weakest. Gandhi would have perhaps liked the order to be reversed, with the local governments being the strongest. In Gandhi's vision, it is the local self-governments which would establish and empower the state and national governments in a

bottom-up manner, instead of being set-up by the state governments in a top-down way.

A decentralized democracy, even if it falls short of full expectations of Gandhi, is nevertheless promising on several counts. First, it places more power in the hands of ordinary people, and more scope for 'self-rule.' Gandhi observed: 'Swaraj government will be a sorry affair if people look up to it for the regulation of every detail of life'.⁹ Self-rule enables and also requires people to take better care of their needs and protect their natural resources and environment. They will not allow big business dominating the wider economy or even the national government to plunder local resources in the name of economic development of the country. Second, following from the preceding, a decentralised democracy can hold the central government or the State in check and prevent it from being arbitrary. Third, decentralization promotes political education, enhances consciousness of one's own as well as others' rights, and sharpens public awareness. This gives more self-confidence to common people, stimulating them to play an active role in public affairs. Fourth, decentralized democracy brings into open innate social evils in villages, like oppression of women and caste discrimination, paving the way to confronting and mitigating them. Fifth, it facilitates openness and transparency, which can reduce corruption. Sixth, local self-governments provide a more acceptable and also perhaps a better platform to reconcile individual with collective interests, than any other tier of the State. Seventh, decentralization reduces transaction costs, improves information base, making governance more efficient. Finally, benefits of government spending can be distributed much more widely and cost-effectively under a decentralised set-up. In sum, it is centralisation of power in the state which leads to several evils - more corruption, misrule, suppression of citizens' freedoms, militarisation, and abuse of environment. Decentralized democracy can check this.

But can democratic decentralization help in dealing with environmental problems? Mandur, a village near Bengaluru (Bangalore), provides an example. The city generates over 4000 tonnes of solid waste daily, and its municipal corporation chose an easy way-out by dumping the waste in landfills in nearby villages. Mandur had the dubious honour of receiving over half of this waste. Proximity to the city became its worst curse. Mountains of rotting waste accumulated and the stink reached up to even a kilometre away. Let alone the GHG emissions which the waste significantly generated and contributed to global climate change,¹⁰ it turned the village into

a horrible hell. Though this was going on for years, the village people began strongly protesting in 2013, and drew the attention of the State Pollution Control Board. The Board ordered the shut-down of the landfill and of the dumping of waste. But since the Corporation could not find alternative landfills (as other villages also protested), dumping at Mandur continued. The villagers threatened suicides. With the protests mounting, the Corporation finally agreed to stop dumping by December 1, 2014, which promise it has implemented. The Corporation also agreed to clear the accumulated mountains of waste in three years. Though late, it finally started setting up waste-processing units. If Mandur and other nearby villages had the power, they would have stopped the city corporation from dumping waste long back, and forced it to process the waste instead. But the strong protests from villages showed their potential to help reverse climate change and environmental damage in general.

Gandhian Alternative: Social Dimension

The second dimension of Gandhian alternative is social. Gandhi knew that for his political and economic alternative to succeed, the society too had to be democratic, egalitarian, and just. Gandhi was acutely aware of the many ills that affected the Indian society such as untouchability, caste hierarchy and oppression, disgusting disparities in lifestyles and wealth, unjust treatment of women, child marriages, illiteracy, and ill-health, each of which he fought resolutely. A society with all these evils present is ill-equipped to deal with any major issue, be it political, economic, or environmental. Gandhi felt that eradicating these evils could not be left to the state machinery alone, and wanted social and political workers to launch movements against them in each village and achieve social transformation. He built a cadre of workers who could take up this task.

One of the most conspicuous social evils in India, Gandhi could see was contempt for manual labour, particularly for what is regarded as 'unclean' labour. It was due to this that the whole problem of caste hierarchy, particularly untouchability, emerged, and became prominent in India. It was due to lack of respect for manual labour that working classes are assigned a lower status and paid lower. He could also see that behind the craze for machinery and mechanization in the world at large lies this dislike and disrespect for manual work. Gandhi tried to strike at the very root of this system by inculcating respect for manual labour, including the so-called unclean labour. In his *ashrams*, it was mandatory for everyone to clean latrines by turn. Gandhi himself participated in it and other such tasks like sweeping, without any exemption for himself. He insisted that everyone

including the rich and the elite should do manual work, or what he called 'bread labour.' He declared: "He has no right to eat who does not bend his body and work. ...One who eats but does not do any manual work in effect steals food".¹¹ But he did not glorify ceaseless toil for bread by the deprived. He welcomed machines which reduced drudgery and tedious toil, but not where they led to unemployment. Gandhi also induced women to come out of the confines of their homes and daily grind, and enter the mainstream of society and polity. He gave them an active role in the freedom struggle, and several national level leaders emerged from among women. He wanted every child to be educated, but advocated his own system of education where literary and numeracy skills were to be developed along with skills of manual work and crafts and a social, moral, and environmental consciousness. Gandhi may not have thought of environment in the present day sense, but he stressed cleanliness, producing things to last for longest possible time, and avoiding wastage and unnecessary craze for possession of goods. He wanted these values to be inculcated in the society and every child. For him, proneness to create dirtiness and wastage around was essentially a social rather than merely a technical problem.

A noteworthy thing about Gandhi was his tremendous faith in the capacity of people, and their ability to solve any problem, in spite of the fact that he was also well aware of problems and evils within the society. It is because of this faith that both in South Africa and India he involved people on a large scale in every political and social movement and struggle. In fact, he knew that no solution to any problem could be durable unless it evolved through people's participation and backing. He was sceptical of the state solving all the social and environmental problems, and wanted the public space dominated by voluntary organisations and democratic institutions for constructive social work for the same reason. The ability of traditional societies to manage common pool or common property resources (CPRs) has been more recently pointed out by social scientists like N. S. Jodha¹² and Elinor Ostrom (1990).¹³ Jodha showed that the CPRs declined mainly because of the modern market forces. Given the proper organisations, society and social institutions can play a more effective role in the global environmental problems now, because even these problems need local actions. Social movements and organisations can even bend governments to avoid environmentally harmful steps and take benign measures instead.

An important problem in getting the whole society together to solve environmental issues is the conspicuous inequality in it. This is so both within a country and also between countries. Climate change

problem is caused in the first instance by the rich countries taking the world at large, and also by the elite within developing countries. It is they who possess most of the cars, create most of the pollution, and consume most of the resources including water and energy. In spite of all the noise created about climate change and resource depletion, the elite feel smug and hardly see themselves so much on the edge as to compel them to take urgent steps to solve any of these problems. On the contrary, it is the poor who are the first and often the only victims of any environmental catastrophe or natural disaster. It is hardly appreciated that if the world is not yet on the brink of a disaster, it is because of the sacrifices suffered by the vast number of the poor. Once, however, the vast number of the poor also tries to catch up with the rich in the over-exploitation of environment, the world would surely be pushed to the brink. Gandhi had a premonition of this problem. He wrote long back:

God forbid that India should ever take to industrialisation after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom [England] is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million [the population of India then] took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.

— M K Gandhi¹⁴ (*Young India*, December 20, 1928)

It is for this reason that Gandhi recommended an alternative path to economic development. He did not want India to imitate the West in this regard. He thought; why not create our own path of eco-friendly sustainable development, instead of imitating the resource-and-energy intensive historical Western path? But how can you prevent only the poor countries, but allow only the rich in pursuing a path of economic development that is over-exploitative of environment? The Gandhian alternative to Western economic growth path should therefore be of interest to all other countries as well, and not to India alone.

Gandhian Alternative: Economic & Technological Dimensions

Since the economic and technological dimensions of Gandhian alternative are closely linked with each other, they are taken up together here. In Gandhi's vision, a genuine democratisation of the polity can be based only a democratisation of the economy. A concentration of economic power in the hands of a few leads to a concentration of political power also. The economically powerful inevitably dominate the state. The Gandhian key to decentralize and democratise the polity is to decentralize the economy too.

His philosophy of *sarvodaya* applied to the economy as much as to the polity. Gandhi's economic alternative does not need 'de-growth' or reversing growth; on the contrary, he recognised the need for economic development to lift the millions of the poor from their abysmally low levels of living. But he envisaged a development path which did not heap further misery on the poor in the name of development, and which was within ecological means, that is, sustainable in present parlance. Kumarappa, called it as an 'Economy of Permanence,' where things are made to last, and not used once and thrown away. It is an economy where there is no violence either to humans or to nature. He brought out two books on the theme, *Economy of Permanence* in 1945, bearing a Foreword by Gandhi, and *Gandhian Economic Thought* in 1951 after Gandhi's demise, both of which indicate the spirit of Gandhian economic alternative. At Gandhi's instance, Kumarappa had carried out several economic surveys in India's villages to know the problems of rural economy. He founded and developed an All-India Village Industries Association, trying to put into practice Gandhi's ideas on rural development, and creating employment for rural artisans, facilities for technical and marketing advice, and developing new skills. He tried to implement Gandhi's principle of putting people in the centre of economic development and their wellbeing as its basic goal, not maximising rate of growth of national income. Gandhian economy is both ecologically benign and humane, for it scrupulously intends to safeguard the livelihood and welfare rights of everyone.

But how would you include everyone in the process of economic development? He had a multi-dimensional solution to this problem. One dimension of this is to prefer a labour-intensive technology to a fuel-and-capital intensive technology wherever feasible. If such a technology is not available for a particular job presently, it has to be developed. Not that such a technology needs no tools or capital, but they should be accessible to common people. The scale of production, which is the second dimension of Gandhian economy, has therefore to be small in general, but need not be so in everything. As a general rule, Gandhi wanted production by the masses, and not mass production. While everyone has hands to work with, access to big capital is limited. As an eminent Gandhian social worker, Ela Bhatt¹⁵ put it: 'economic decentralization means that both the capital and tools are in the hands of actual producers'. It prevents alienation of the worker from capital. Gandhi wanted everyone to have a breathing space in his alternative economy to find one's own livelihood with dignity and freedom. In his vision, economy and technology have to

be subjugated or controlled by man, but man should not be subjugated by them. The third dimension of Gandhian economy, which follows from the first two, is that it is oriented preferentially – though not exclusively - to satisfying local needs, and also to using locally available labour and raw material. A locally oriented economy develops local skills and generates local employment everywhere. It prevents the creation of islands of prosperity amidst a sea of poverty and unemployment. He did not think that production should be oriented to world markets as a matter of first preference, making producers vulnerable to vagaries of these markets. There is some ecological sense in this, in so far as a local-need oriented economy can minimise packing, storage, and transport costs, thus saving enormous amounts of energy. It also avoids over-production and wastage. Gandhi, however, was not rigid in his expectations, and would allow exports and imports and even large-scale production, where beneficial more as a matter of meeting exigencies rather than as a basic principle. For example, railway network and production of railway coaches may necessarily have to be on a large-scale, but production of dresses and even of cloth need not be. Gandhi adopted the spinning wheel or *charkha* as a symbol of his economic philosophy. He had the *charkha* on the flag of the Congress party which he joined and led. Anyone anywhere could have the freedom to spin cotton in spare time and earn some extra money. The yarn can be turned into cloth in handlooms spread all over the country, creating decentralized employment and income for millions. Huge textile mills, concentrated in a few places, polluting air and water and saving on labour use, were unnecessary to meet the needs for cloth which comes from people dispersed all over the country.

These Gandhian ideas received a boost from Schumacher,¹⁶ who wrote, what is regarded in the West as a path-breaking book – *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People mattered*, in 1973. It is essentially Gandhian in ideology. Schumacher puts the blame for many environmental and socio-economic problems squarely at the door of ‘ideology of gigantism.’ Large-scale production indispensably needs distant markets and avoidable transport. Like Gandhi, Schumacher was an activist too, and founded an Intermediate Technology Development Group. ‘It pursued economic development within people’s cultural context, rather than looking at the non-industrialised world as “underdeveloped.” Technology was envisioned to be environment-friendly, non-polluting, and non-exploitative of people and nature. Therefore, it also becomes known as appropriate technology’. (Kumar 2006: 207-8).¹⁷

Amulya Reddy (1930-2006) who did a lot to develop appropriate

technology for rural India has described three essential components of it. It should satisfy basic needs (starting from the needs of the neediest), should be environmentally sound, and should be self-reliant and participatory being based on constant communication with people, learning from them, and involving.¹⁸ According to him, appropriate technology is neither going back to old traditional technologies which are generally inadequate (though we need to study and learn from them too), nor imitating modern Western technologies without seeing if they are beneficial and accessible to people. Appropriate technologies often need to be location specific, region specific and even culture specific (ibid: 20-21). They also involve science like modern technologies, and give as much challenge to the creativity of scientists and technologists. Such experts need only to be people-oriented, understanding their requirements, rather than purely market oriented. These are not just idle thoughts of Reddy, since they are based on decades of experience in working with village people. While at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, where he was based, he started a centre called ASTRA, in 1974, which is an acronym for Appropriate Science and Technology for Rural Areas. An example of his work may be mentioned. ASTRA supported a village near Bengaluru called Ungra, where Reddy and his colleagues developed an energy plan for the village based on biogas. First they tried to provide gas for cooking. For this, family based biogas plants were not preferred as they would have been confined only to the elite households. So they tried a community biogas plant to generate cooking gas for all. But it was soon found that cow dung availability was overestimated and the demand for gas was underestimated. The villagers suggested that the gas may instead be used to produce electricity needed to lift water which could be supplied to all households, and this was done. What is noteworthy here is that Reddy's concern was not technical feasibility alone, but accessibility to all households. Reddy is truly an example of a Gandhian scientist.

Lifestyle also Counts

Almost the whole burden of sustainable development and dealing with climate change is placed on technological change. Gandhi would say it is not enough. His civilizational alternative has a cultural dimension too, which consists in moderating our wants, avoiding waste, and making our lifestyle simple and eco-friendly, yet enjoyable. From his perspective, reducing the consumption load on the environment is absolutely necessary. To illustrate, take the case of a heart patient. What would his doctor recommend him? Indeed there are medicines (and technologies) to reduce bad cholesterol. If a blood

clot does occur, there are medicines to melt the clot, and if that fails, there is the technology of bypass surgery. Yet the doctor does advise the patient emphatically right from the beginning to change his or her lifestyle, eat moderately, avoid consumption of fatty foods and junk foods, do yoga and meditation, and walk or cycle. The doctor also asks the patient to relax the mind, and control anger, anxieties and stress. The heart specialist, who is also an expert in medical technology, and has faith in medical technology and own expertise in it, still advises that medicines are not all, surgery has limits, and a change in lifestyle is also needed. But when it comes to reckless economic growth and dealing with the crisis created by it, we forget the limitations of technology, and go about our business as usual, and feel content by tinkering with technology.

Though technological advance has helped us in the past to overcome the resource crunch and the development of green technologies is helping to reduce the carbon intensity of economic growth, we also know that such technological advance has not been fast enough to cope with the accumulating environmental problems. There are significant lags between emergence of environmental problems and development of technologies to alleviate them. There are further lags between development of technologies and their application on a wide enough scale. A serious problem is that while environmental problems are created outside the market framework, green technologies have to be economically viable! Even when environmental problems are reckoned in economic terms, they may be ignored so long as they are not felt in the market, that is, as long as they are not economically internalised. But a technological solution needs proper economic incentives and disincentives, high enough to induce adoption and prevent environmental damage. Thus, a solution may be either rejected or deferred indefinitely. In the meanwhile, problems accumulate, making it difficult to undo the damage done. It seems always so difficult to prevent, though curing the problem after it emerges has proved in practise to be even more difficult.

The cure offered by technology can also be worse than the disease sometimes. For example, as Magdoff ¹⁹ observes, 'producing corn to make ethanol or soybean or palm oil to make diesel fuel is in direct competition with the use of these crops for food.' In the process of developing a substitute for petroleum, we cannot create food insecurity for the poor. Similar is the story of growing pulpwood plantations in the name of carbon sequestration, if villagers are deprived of their grazing lands in the process. This means that social and distributional implications of technological solutions also need to be carefully studied, apart from their economic viability.

Technological solutions also have institutional dimensions, which can be challenging. For example, dealing with urban solid waste becomes easier only with the willing co-operation of citizens, particularly in separating wet compostable waste from other solid waste, and also separating hazardous wastes for special disposal. This is done very inadequately. It is much easier if we can prevent or at least minimise waste in the first instance.

What is argued here is that even with advanced technologies, we cannot save the earth from the brink of ecological collapse, if we rely only on them and pursue our profligate lifestyles and consumption and creating waste all around at the same time. We need to incorporate some Gandhian values of simpler living to support and strengthen the mitigation and adaptation strategies, and make them more meaningful. We need nothing short of a religion of environment, whereby we develop a reverential attitude to the Earth and her resources. This attitude has to be reflected in our day-to-day living and day-to-day working in homes and outside. Gandhi was not against enjoying our life on this beautiful planet. But it could as well be done with some consideration for others as well as to the Earth and the generations that will come after us. Even a small amount of care to switch off lights and fans when we don't need them, adjusting the flame to well within the size of the cooking pot, not allowing the flame to burn when the cooking pots or pans are not on the stove, and preventing other ways of wasteful consumption, avoiding unnecessary use of car when we could as well walk or cycle, preferring public transport to personal transport, and many other such ways can go a long way in taking care of our Mother Earth. As Amartya Sen proposed, we could focus more on developing our capabilities, rather than merely on enlarging the possession or consumption of commodities²⁰, which is what Gandhi and Kumarappa too had emphasised. Though some people tend to regard Gandhi and Kumarappa as outdated and even an obscurantist, the emergence of environmental problems of the world has made them no less relevant today than even in their own lifetime.

Notes and References

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3. *Sarvodaya* is a combination of two Sanskrit words – *Sarva* which means all, and *Udaya* which means the rise or emancipation. Happiness of all was also a Vedic ideal (*Sarve bhavantu sukhinah* – May all be happy!) Taking a cue from Gandhi himself, the ideal of *Sarvodaya* was modified later as *Antyodaya*(*Antya+ Udaya*), the rise of the lowest, by his close disciple Vinoba Bhave, to emphasize that the priority is to first meet the needs of the lowest or the poorest.
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Exploring Gandhian Ideas on Political and Economic Decentralization as Peace-Keeping Forces

Pranjali Bandhu

ABSTRACT

Gandhi's and Kumarappa's ideas on political and economic decentralization have been taken as the starting points for possible resolution and avoidance of current intra-national and international conflicts. In his writings Kumarappa has targeted the imperialistic world order and division of labour as being primarily responsible for the lack of world peace. The same unvanquished, barbaric forces are fomenting tensions in various parts of the globe as part of their resource grab and market expansion. Within India the forces of internal colonialism are at work. Finally, the paper shows how we could fruitfully apply Gandhi's and Kumarappa's principles on decentralized, self-determined, self-reliant development and, on an individual personal level, justice-oriented action keeping the needs of society at large in mind, for disengaging ourselves from militarist violence being unleashed against humankind and Nature nationally and internationally.

Keywords: imperialistic world order, division of labour, , militarisation, people's self-determination rights, plebiscite

Introduction

"I feel convinced, with the strife and tension the world is experiencing, that the Gandhian way is the way, if our planet is to survive." (A.K. Dasgupta)¹

BETWEEN NATIONS, WITHIN nations, among religions and ethnic

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groups and along class lines strife is on the ascendancy in the world today. The same barbaric, unvanquished forces that had unleashed two world wars are fomenting tensions in various parts of the globe as part of their resource grab and market expansion. Within India the forces of internal and attempted external colonialism are at work as part of the same scenario. Among the conflict zones in India, today we find secessionist movements in Kashmir and the North-East and resource grab by corporations in league with the state being implemented in the Adivasi inhabited zones of Central India. Internationally, North Korea, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria are some of the numerous zones of violent tensions involving several nations. The confrontation between the US and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea portends possible nuclear conflict, not to speak of that between India and neighbouring Pakistan.

In the following, on the basis of taking the issues of Kashmir and Nagaland within India and policies of US hegemonism on the international level, I propose to show that we would benefit from following the counsels of M.K. Gandhi and J.C. Kumarappa as apostles of peace. We could fruitfully apply Gandhian principles, also advocated by Kumarappa and others, on decentralized, self-determined, self-reliant and sustainably restrained production and consumption at the community level. On an individual personal level, justice-oriented action and limitation of wants, keeping in mind the needs of society at large, only will help to disengage ourselves from militarist violence being perpetrated against humankind and Nature.

Kumarappa had targeted the imperialistic world order and division of labour as being primarily responsible for the lack of world peace.

We usually understand by imperialism a state where one nation holds down another in bondage so as to obtain some benefit to itself at the cost of the subjugation of the other.... The essence of imperialism is often found in even a single individual or within national, geographical boundaries.... We have the elements of imperialism whenever there is a desire to gain something for oneself at the cost of another.

In terms of production relations, he says:

In centralized industries under private ownership we find this spirit in a virulent form. Therefore every country that takes to this form of economic organisation will in the end produce imperialism and not freedom....It flourishes only with outside compulsion and external discipline.

Naturally, to such an evil the antidote is one's own initiative and self-discipline. The promotion of decentralized industries helps us to

develop both. ("Freedom," *Gram Udyog Patrika*, February, 1940).

The Saga for Azadi in Kashmir and the Struggle for Nagalim

The present imbroglio in the valley of Kashmir took its beginnings post-Partition in 1947. M.K. Gandhi had accepted the need for Indian military intervention at the request of Maharaja Hari Singh after the invasion of the Valley by Pathan tribes, who were incited and supported by the Pakistan government and military. The Nehru-led Indian government had made accession to India the condition for military aid to prevent annexation by Pakistan of this Muslim majority territory, in which the population was ethnically related to the Pathans and other Central Asian peoples. Gandhi at no stage had been in favour of the Partition of India on religious grounds, which has only helped in distorting the national question in the subcontinent. In the case of the Kashmir too, the Mahatma did not favour its partitioning between India and Pakistan. He regretted the fact that at Lord Mountbatten's suggestion (who in fact carried out the vivisection of the country in great haste in imperialist interests) Nehru had submitted the dispute to the United Nations Security Council. In his view, rather than allowing international powers to intervene, it would be better that the conflict, rather war, between India and Pakistan be resolved through negotiations between the two parties concerned and the representation to the UNSC be withdrawn. He also envisaged the possibility of a plebiscite or referendum in order to ascertain the wishes of the people in that State, considering that an unpopular, unrepresentative head of State had acceded to India in return for military help. He was firmly of the view that popular rule had to be established and the people of varied ethnicity and religions in Jammu and Kashmir had to be left free to decide their own destiny without coercion from any side.² In the last analysis, it was and remains a question of people's self-determination rights, their sovereignty.

Strategically located, with rich mineral, hydro power and human resources, with three wars fought over it, Kashmir is today a divided territory occupied by three alien powers of India, Pakistan and China (which occupies Aksai Chin and 5180 sq km of POK, ceded by the Pakistan government in a 1963 boundary agreement). Gandhi's approach to the Kashmir issue was focussed on the political democratic rights of the people. J.C. Kumarappa, on the other hand, suggested peaceful and equitable economic development policies in a series of articles titled "Industries of Kashmir" (*Gram Udyog Patrika*, August, Sep. and Oct. 1945). Under the rapacious rule of Hari Singh—descendant of a Dogra Raja from Jammu, who had purchased the

territory from the British rulers by the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846—poverty was widespread in Kashmir. Internationally renowned for its fine handicrafts traditions, its highly skilled artisans were getting very low remuneration with middle persons gaining the bounty. Some ancient crafts were neglected and on the decline.

Kumarappa talks about various local crafts which could be developed further as cottage industries by using Kashmir's rich resources and natural advantages with government support, and through cooperatives, eliminating middle persons, for generating employment and better living and working conditions for the actual producers. Among those mentioned were sericulture, toy making, paper making, pottery, and wood work. In his view the plentiful availability of water enabled the installation of water mills for de-husking rice, flour grinding and crushing of mustard seeds. Improved practices of cattle and sheep breeding, bee-keeping, poultry farming, and pisciculture are also recommended by him in addition to the use of carcasses for the production of bone meal and meat meal manure after their fur is procured for wool production. During his visit to Jammu and Kashmir, Kumarappa noticed the tendency to cheat the tourists, common to all tourism destinations, and recommended a closer regulation of the tourism traffic by the authorities. Though the Kashmiri economy caters to a great extent also to external demand in terms of its crafts, horticulture and tourism industry, in line with his general approach to economic questions, he emphasized equitable, self-reliant, local resources-based and self-respecting production relations. Post-independence, in addition to revitalizing village industries, he took up the questions of agrarian reform and balanced cultivation too in a strong way.

In no way in Gandhi's and Kumarappa's perspective was Kashmir to become an arena for meddlesome interventions by external forces, foremost among them being the United States through the UNSC,³ but also including the newly independent powers of India and Pakistan, creating havoc for selfish ends, keeping the wounds festering and destabilising the economy, making it into a tragic vale of aggression and tears as it has become since then.

As in the case of Kashmir, Gandhi did not advocate forcible union of the Naga Hills into the Indian Union after independence.

On 19 July 1947, he is quoted as having said to a Naga delegation that visited him in the Bhangi Colony in Delhi:

Nagas have every right to be independent. We did not want to live under the domination of the British and they are now leaving us. I want you to feel that India is yours. I feel that the Naga Hills are mine, the matter

must stop there. I believe in the brotherhood of man, but I do not believe in force or forced union. If you do not wish to join the Union of India, nobody will force you to do that.⁴

Here Gandhi was articulating the publicly avowed policy of the Indian National Congress. But when three weeks later the delegation met Nehru with their demand of sovereignty, he was forthright in his refusal and was willing at the most to grant autonomy. His stand was due to the fact that if such demands were countenanced a Pandora's box would be opened up and Indian national integration would not come into being as desired by the Indian big bourgeoisie and related political class. Though the Naga National Council declared independence on 14 August 1947, and the same was endorsed by an overwhelming majority of the Naga peoples⁵ through a plebiscite conducted by it in 1951, the Nehru government was stubborn in its stance for forcibly retaining the entire North-East within the Indian Union. In the Constitution of 1950, the Naga Hills were included under the Sixth Schedule. The stage was set for collision, and bloody confrontation ensued, not only with the Nagas but eventually also with other hill tribes of the North-East. The aim of the Indian government has been not just to secure in this way the frontiers with bordering countries but also to exploit the resources, which include oil, natural gas, coal and other minerals, forest wealth and hydro power resources. Bypassing the traditional ethos and culture of the various ethnic groups, this is being done without due regard for the ecology of this geologically sensitive area. Control is retained by diabolically pitting them against one another and distorting their relationships among themselves and with the plains people.⁶

Colonialism is being practised by the central government, not just in relation to the tribal areas of the North-East but also in relation to those in Central India, an area which also abounds in natural resources. Gandhi is said to have been in favour of "local area autonomy" or self-government for areas where hill tribes lived, so that they could preserve their traditional ways.⁷ This was in line with his scheme of political decentralization in independent India, where political power would move upwards from the villages, to district, province and central levels on the basis of universal suffrage. Dispersion of power and decentralized local resources based economic development on a caste and classless basis would not have disturbed from outside the largely self-sufficient Naga village republics and other tribal areas. The internal colonialism subsequently carried out by the central Indian government is in the interest of resource extraction by profit-seeking domestic and foreign corporates. It is

also symptomatic of the dependency syndrome that has crept into India's relationship with more advanced capitalist-imperialist powers, particularly the USA. It is no less militarily dependent on US support. This was evident at the time of the 1962 border skirmish with China.

Militarisation of Society and its Consequences

As the corporate sector enriches itself at the cost of the common people, militarisation of the country is proceeding at a fast pace. The armed might of the Indian state is not only directed towards neighbouring 'enemy' forces, but to a greater extent it is used for crushing internal dissent by populations affected by its development policies. India is one of the biggest buyers of arms from the advanced capitalist countries and the fifth largest military spender. Its high expenditure on so-called defence is in line with global trends. The USA, of course, heads the list. On a world scale, nuclear armed nations spend close to US\$ 300 million (INR. 2000 crores) a day on their nuclear forces.⁸ Apart from the dangers associated with the use of nuclear weapons such skewed expenditure is obviously at the cost of the standard of living and well-being of the vast majority of humankind and its planetary home. In our country, the pattern of growth and development is high technology driven, now called 'disruptive technology.' It is highly urban centric with the rural agricultural and agro-industrial small-scale sectors being neglected and exploited ones.⁹ Ensuing unemployment and underemployment are utilized for sucking youth into the armed forces, police, paramilitary forces of the government, political parties, right and left wing organisations, oppositional militant groups, assorted mafia and criminal gangs. Society gets enmeshed in chains of pathological violence and counter violence. Atrocities and human rights violations abound from all sides. Such activities are expressions of the distortion of human personality, which can grow in a balanced way only through engaging in productive work by expressing itself and developing innate aptitudes. Such a state of affairs is diametrically opposed to Kumarappa's Gandhian concepts of economy of permanence, freedom, nurturing and sharing, egalitarianism, peace and so on, expatiated in various writings and talks.¹⁰ His concept of an economy of permanence emphasized the need for a natural economy in cooperation with Nature rather than the imperialistic Western mode of production which seeks mastery and control over Nature. Only such an economy that does not diminish natural non-renewable resources at too fast a pace and relies increasingly on locally available renewable resources and animal power rather than on fossil fuels can be a sustainable one.

When we talk about growing Indian economic, political and military dependency on diverse imperialist powers, foremost among them the US, it is clear that in its turn the US is bent upon trying to subordinate all others in the interest of its military-industrial complex and to retain its global supremacy. In the view of some analysts, World War Three began almost right after the end of World War Two and is directed against the possible independence of Third World countries. A series of over twenty-one such countries have been bombed by the US, innumerable dictatorships propped up and sanctions imposed since then under varied pretexts with the aim of control and pillage of the natural resources of the continents of Eurasia, Africa and Latin America. It must, however, be noted that since quite some time the parasitic US economy has been a declining one and its growth is being maintained only by a systematic and massive expansion of consumer and government borrowing. A large number of goods and services are imported and it has an extremely high current account deficit covered by borrowings making it into the world's largest debtor.¹¹ Increased militarisation and nationalism (of the Trump variety) are efforts to stave off a collapse of the US economy.

The current "axis of evil" is presented by the countries of Iran, North Korea and Venezuela, as they challenge US hegemonism in their respective regions. In 2002 the US adopted a "Nuclear Posture Review" directing its military to prepare for use of nuclear weapons against at least seven countries (China, Russia, pre-occupation Iraq, North Korea, Iran, Libya and Syria).¹² North Korea's defiant nuclear belligerence, possibly imagining this as the only way to retain its independence, is difficult for arrogant Washington to swallow. The nuclear weapon threat indeed looms large in many a conflict spot including India's borders. In view of this, the UN General Assembly passed the "Treaty Prohibiting Nuclear Weapons" on July 7, 2017. And the Nobel Peace Prize for 2017 was bestowed upon the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).¹³ Seemingly, good news. But, as a big power, the US is known for utilizing or ignoring the UN at will and violating international laws. And within the present world order it is unlikely that the world's nuclear stockpile including India's nuclear arsenal are going to be destroyed as a result of this treaty.

In this context, we have to remember Kumarappa's exhortations that no organisation such as the League of Nations, or disarmament proposals, non-proliferation treaties, UN resolutions, peace talks or ceasefire agreements are going to be able to hit at the roots of the present violence in the world. In his view, the only way to a peaceful

world is to weed out all parasitic growth from the daily life of every citizen. As he repeatedly pointed out, *centralized methods of production*, with or without private profit, with their accompanying problems of raw materials and markets, lie at the root of all violence in the modern world. It is not as if Kumarappa was totally against centralized, large-scale industries in key areas. Only these had to be run by the state on a non-profit basis for serving the requirements of cottage and village industries, which would form the pivot in the new economic order. And there had to be income parity in the two sectors so that the cottage industries do not become adjuncts to the large-scale industries.¹⁴ In the long-run international trade too should be made to function in such a way that it fosters rather than destroys or subordinates to itself local cottage and village industries.

In order to be true pacifists, we cannot use products which have taken part in international trade based on or enforced by violence. Each individual has to accept responsibility for all acts that precede the economic transaction into which s/he enters. To do this we have to realign the layout of society, withdraw from the imposed imperialist division of labour, simplify our lives and limit our primary consumption needs of food, clothing and shelter to such that have been produced under our ken, that is, as far as possible locally and in a decentralized way.

If we genuinely desire a peaceful world, the following words of J.C. Kumarappa need to be kept in mind:

The present economic organisation rests on violence for its foundation. If we seek peace we have to rebuild our social structure on conditions which will have no need for resorting to violence as a means of maintaining our social order....Are the pacifists prepared to make the necessary fundamental adjustments in their own life in the first instance and in the life of the nation eventually? ...

Let there be no soft pedalling on mass murders euphemistically called 'wars.' Let the youth know when he enlists in the 'Forces' that he is joining a gang of international murderers and brigands. We cannot call in the noble patriotism, enthusiasm and energy of youth into action for so vile a purpose. Let us raise the moral consciousness and lower money considerations and material values... In this way we shall usher in an age of peace in this war-torn world and rescue civilization from barbarism.¹⁵

Conclusion

Taking a relook at the wealth of ideas of these stalwarts of the independence movement and developing and adapting them within

the contemporary setting can surely help in resolving humungous problems staring humanity in the face.

Notes and References

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4. Cited in "The Naga Nation and its Struggle Against Genocide." IWGIA (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs) Document 56, Copenhagen, 1986, p. 3. In 1949, then Governor-General C.R. Rajagopalachari, is also believed to have reiterated the same.
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Revisiting the Discourse on Protection of Western Ghats from a Gandhi-Kumarappa Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the debate centred around the Gadgil and Kasturirangan reports on conservation of the Western Ghats. After looking at the ideas of Gandhi, Kumarappa and Schumacher, the paper makes a comparison between the two reports. It identifies the Gadgil report as having a Gandhian flavour about it given its soft anthropocentrism, emphasis on local level consultation, references to mutualism as opposed to an economy of predation and violence, focus on organic farming, food crops, and cottage industries. The Gadgil report tends to be sympathetic to the poor and socially backward with utmost importance given to the local democratic processes. It agrees with the Gandhian principle of sarvodaya and antyodaya with keen sensitivity to the needs of the marginal farmers even as it seeks to preserve the environment. The Kasturirangan report tends to lend its support to accelerated development including extractive industries for achieving it even as it puts certain restrictions on such development, adopting a reformist attitude.

Keywords: Gadgil Committee, Kasturirangan Committee, Economy of Violence, Ecologically Sensitive zones, Gram Sabha

Introduction

THE PROTECTION OF the Western Ghats has been a burning issue with increasing disappearance of the forests and the engagement of predatory activities on ecologically fragile areas in the region. The

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need for conservation in the Ghats came in the wake of the silent valley movement in the early eighties. There was the Save the Western Ghats March of 1987-88, a historical March that covered all the Ghat states in 100 days, which was the first such initiative to make people aware of the need to preserve the Ghats. This took place before India decided to liberalise the economy. Following globalisation, there has been a spurt in development and extractive activities and the Ghats were no less subject to these pressures with illegal quarrying, construction of resorts, mining and soon being engaged in a reckless way. Save the Western Ghats movement met at Kotagiri in 2010 and Jairam Ramesh, the then Union Minister for Environment, was the Chief Guest. He was asked persistently why no action was taken.¹ It was in this context that the Western Ghats Ecological Experts Panel (WGEEP) under Madhav Gadgil was set up to examine the state of the Ghats and measures to be adopted to protect it. The report was not accepted by the Centre following opposition from the state governments. The Centre then appointed the High Level Working Group (HLWG) under the Chairmanship of Dr. Kasturirangan, which came up with another report. These two reports have two perspectives on development. This paper makes a study of Gandhi's and Kumarappa's views on the environment and then attempts a comparison between the two reports on protection of the Western Ghats from a Gandhi-Kumarappa perspective. It will also draw on the ideas of Schumacher.

M K Gandhi, J. C. Kumarappa, and E. F. Schumacher

All three of them subscribe to the dichotomy between 'Economy of Permanence' and 'Economy of Violence.' Gandhi and Kumarappa tend to make a distinction between need and greed. While basic needs satisfaction is important, it is human greed driven by profit motive that tends to destroy nature and create an exploitative economy and society. They both subscribe to the ideas of achieving Sarvodaya within which they subsume the non-human world as well. For the human world, the principle of antyodaya is one method of achieving Sarvodaya, because it is by serving the poorest of the poor that a more inclusive form of welfare of all can be realised, for the relatively more endowed can fend for themselves. Such a society is built on Truth and non-violence, in that truth demands that society cares for its weakest and non-violence demands that the same may be realised through persuasion rather than coercion. It also recognises the principle of decentralization and the sovereignty of local communities. While they are not averse to industrialisation, they insist that it be of a small-scale and agro-based nature. They envisaged a society in which

everyone worked or engaged in production but did not lead to mass production or the flooding of the market with consumption goods. Work, for Gandhi and Kumarappa, had to be labour-intensive and machinery should aim at the reduction of the burden of work rather than the displacement of labour. They saw the capitalist and communist paths as one of a piece in that both are based on materialism, industrialisation, and centralisation although there are differences in the way the benefits from such modes of production are distributed among the people.

On the problem of 'scale,' Schumacher drew on Professor Leopold Kohr who said: "Small-scale operations no matter how numerous, are always less likely to be harmful to the natural environment than large-scale ones, simply because their individual force is small in relation to the recuperative forces of nature."² Kumarappa and Schumacher opined that small-scale operations are less likely to be harmful to the natural environment than large-scale ones, given the ability of nature to recuperate when the former are employed. The question of reversibility is hard or impossible when the operations are large. Thus, small groups are more environmentally friendly and nurturing than "anonymous companies or megalomaniac governments which pretend to themselves that the whole universe is their legitimate quarry."³

J.C. Kumarappa's *Economy of Permanence* is often cited as an example of 'green thought' within the Gandhian discourse. He was advocating an economy based on the natural order. He said: "[i]n studying human institutions we should never lose sight of that great teacher, Mother Nature. Anything that we may devise, if it is contrary to her ways, she will ruthlessly annihilate sooner or later... A nation that forgets or ignores this fundamental process in forming its institutions will disintegrate."⁴ In the book *Economy of Permanence*, Kumarappa elaborates types of economy with special reference to nature and as well as man. Kumarappa brought in the analogy of tiger, monkey, bird, and bee. The tiger represented a parasitic economy in which there is no production but mere consumption destroying the very source itself in the process. The monkey represented the predatory economy where also nothing is produced and everything is consumed with only one difference – the source of production is not destroyed. In that way, it is less violent compared to the parasitic economy. The above two categories postulate no rights, no obligations and no concern for the Natural Order.

In contrast, there is the bird which represents the enterprise economy. It produces and consumes what it produces. It is driven by self-interest. While some recognition of rights and duties exist in such

an economy, there is no space for altruism and hence is prone to violence. Kumarappa calls it an early stage of social evolution. Then there is the gregarious economy represented by the honey bee in which production is accompanied by limited consumption. In this economy also violence towards out-groups is common. Finally, there is the service or mother economy where a person acts wholly motivated by duty and a spirit of sacrifice without expecting anything in return as bird feeds its young.

In terms of types of economy, with reference to the human world, Kumarappa says that parasitic and predatory economy reflects the primitive or animal stage of civilization, which is transient and violent. While Economy of Enterprise and Gregation postulate modern or human stage, which is transient, with the possibility of violence towards out-groups at the same time having a desire for permanency and non-violence. In Economy of service peace, permanence and non-violence exist.⁵

Kumarappa also makes a distinction between 'the principles of agriculture as an industry and agriculture as an occupation.' He argued against the 'import [of] capitalistic principles where capital is scarce and labour is in abundance.' Kumarappa maintained that "the condition and environment for the full growth of the faculties of man that have to be ensured are the primary end of planning."⁶ While meeting food needs was the immediate objective, Kumarappa wanted plans to work 'towards the solution of our long term needs.' Maintaining soil fertility was a prime concern here. Kumarappa drew on his insights on the basis of an ideal Natural Order. In his scheme, the primary source of fertility was to come from farmyard manures and compost. In contrast, artificial fertilisers were expensive 'stimulants' that eventually 'exhausted soils' and violated the natural cycle by killing off earthworms that 'do a great deal of the agricultural work.' Kumarappa did recognise that certain soils were deficient, but argued for a scientific approach in their treatment rather than blindly giving fertilizers to the farmers.

Gandhi and Kumarappa widely recommended the usage of bio-fertilizers. Kumarappa was of the opinion that waste from households, bone and human excreta can be utilised for making compost manure. He was against the usage of chemical fertilizers. He says: "In the long run, such artificial fertilizers prove to be most injurious to the land. Behind the specious pleading for the chemical fertilizers lies the anxiety of the fertilizer factory owners to push the sale of their products irrespective of the harm or injury they do to agriculture."⁷

Kumarappa enunciates that nature has given human being resources of power and they are of two types "current resources"

and “reservoir” resources. The former type belongs to “vegetable and animal kingdom” and the latter belongs to “mineral kingdom” which is short in supply, for example, coal, iron, petrol etc. “It is when man depends more and more upon the latter type of resources that violence increases.” He adds “from cow to the coal was one step towards violence, coal to petrol was a leap further towards the abyss.”⁸ Kumarappa points out that Gandhian Economy “can be gauged according to the possibilities of violence or non-violence that may be introduced by resorting to reservoir or current economy in our activities.”⁹ According to him, “man has to pick his way through skilfully, so as to attain his greatest benefit to himself with least harm to others and minimum disturbance of the natural order.”¹⁰ He has been described as “one of the earliest voices against the indiscriminate use of non-renewable resources.”¹¹ In a seemingly critical vein Mark Lindley thinks that Kumarappa advocated “ecologically oriented populism but made no such reckonings. He saw economy as an open system, but did not think in terms of the law of conservation of energy.”¹²

Kumarappa was a great advocate of the decentralized method of production. According to him, “decentralized method of production has an educative value which no nation that wishes to progress and is willing to take advantage of every opportunity open to it for the purpose can afford to ignore with impunity.” Centralised methods “lack educational value to worker and on the contrary its strain and stress make the man deteriorate whatever material contributions it may make to his animal needs.”¹³ In India, centralised methods of production do not take into account capital available, labour to be employed and distribution of wealth. He added that “mechanisation is not called for and is at this stage impracticable” and decentralized methods are desirable instead.¹⁴

Although Gandhi was not exclusively anthropocentric in his approach, he was not prepared to allow the question of human survival to be sidelined in discussions on environment. He showed how a totally sustainable way of organising human affairs could be evolved that left a lighter human footprint on this earth, and also how a man could live in harmony with nature. Small wonder, his famous statement “the Earth has enough for everyone’s need, but not for anyone’s greed,” has become a slogan for contemporary environmental movements. From a Gandhian perspective, the present environmental mess, ranging from deforestation, soil and biodiversity loss, to pollution and climate change, is not a disease but only a symptom. A good doctor treats the disease and not the symptom. The disease is the very concept and patterns of growth and development that are

being followed everywhere. Gandhi knew that “nature’s creatures mind their own business, and that humans were to do the same, we would not be required to legislate the health of all species.”¹⁵

Gandhi’s ideas on the environment is in concordance with his ideas on alternative economy and polity. They “sought to extract from nature what is absolutely necessary for human sustenance.”¹⁶ He said at the inauguration of a tree-planting society in the Kutch region.

All religion is presumably in response to the human aspiration or need. Religion is some irresistible binding force. The cow was a peremptory need and we had cow-protection in India. Digging of wells where water is scarce is a religion. It would be ludicrous to dig wells where the water supply is inexhaustible. Similarly whilst tree plantation would be superfluous in, say, Travancore, in some parts of India it is a religious necessity. Such a place is undoubtedly Cutch. It has a beautiful climate but some parts threaten to be a desolate waste unless there is proper rainfall in them. Rainfall can be almost regulated by deforestation or afforestation. Cutch needs conservation of every tree and every shrub. The most pleasant function therefore that I was required to perform in Cutch was the planting of these trees and inauguration of a tree planting and protection society. I hope, therefore, that the society established in Mandvi will open branches all over Cutch and, by co-operation between the people and the State, it is possible to cover the land with thousands of trees within a short time.¹⁷

Gandhi believed that conservation of forests and planting trees will be effective through a common policy and it demands cooperation from the people and the state. He suggested that in places where environmental threats are high, students should learn practical botany at school level. To quote him:

What is true of Cutch is almost equally true of Kathiawar. The conservation of forests, systematic plantation of trees, irrigation and many other things cannot be properly done without a common policy. I reproduced some time ago the opinion of Mr. Elmshurst that, if the chiefs and the people of Kathiawar did not evolve and follow a common policy of tree plantation, Kathiawar was likely to suffer from a water famine of such magnitude as to make life impossible in that land of fine soldiers that once were. In Cutch, Kathiawar, Rajputana, Sind and such other places a study of practical botany should be compulsory in all schools. And the princes can do worse than encourage in every possible way the habit of planting and rearing trees.¹⁸

Gandhi praised the efforts of Shri Jaykrishna Indrajit in spreading

the message of tree-planting calling him ‘a gem of Gujarat’ and also cited the case of how the mining town of Johannesburg had addressed its water scarcity by planting trees. He wanted that the wealthy classes in the Kutch region should take an interest in tree-planting. He also suggested that no tree should be cut and concerted action by all the states in the region is necessary for afforestation:

Not a single tree should be cut down for use as fuel or for any other purpose. It is cheaper to import wood for fuel from other parts than to cut down trees in the vicinity for use as fuel. ... It takes ten years or more for a tree to grow big enough to provide wood.In Kathiawar the situation is almost the same as in Kutch, and the problem of tree-preservation is becoming increasingly important. ... Kathiawar, though a small and beautiful peninsula, is sub-divided into so many small States which are independent of one another so that unless there is consensus of opinion among them on such matters, the task of planting trees or protecting them cannot be carried on in a systematic manner.¹⁹ The Princes and the people have to combine to plant trees on an extensive scale. This cannot be done unless the States and the people regard the whole of Kathiawar as their joint and common land and have wisdom enough to desire to live on their land without the perpetual dread of having to die of thirst when the god of rain stops supplies.²⁰

Gandhi also introduced to his readers the emergence of a Green Cross Society in England and the advocacy role it was playing to protect the flora and fauna internationally through signature campaigns and suggested that those interested in joining the effort should contact Mrs. M. H. Morrison, the organisation’s honorary secretary, as she was eager to get signatures from Asia and Africa as well.²¹

Richard B Gregg in his book *Economics of Khaddar* portrays that “decentralised production would be a more effective and humane method of economic life.”²² He asserts that “Machinery and power must be subordinated to the true welfare of humanity. Such a concept would involve dropping the idea of man’s “conflict with Nature,” of his “conquest of Nature,” and developing instead an active belief in an actual unity and harmony with Nature and matter, and between men of all nations.”²³ Gregg quotes Mukherjee approvingly:

What is humanly speaking, profitable may involve a dead natural loss, and this loss, may inflict great injury to the community or race as whole in the long run. In the interests of solidarity of the race itself, man has his obligations to Nature as the matrix of the community, and such obligations involve the social use of the gifts of the earth (*munera terrae*) and socialized satisfactions, which alone can satisfy the lofty ideal of

communalism, the participation of every man in the common inheritance of the earth and fruits of the humanity.²⁴

Gandhi's ideas on sustainable development are built on notions of self-sufficiency, self-reliance, self-control, self-consistency, independence and sarvodaya. This postulates that development of human beings should take place in a balanced way among body, mind and soul. Another balance that sustainable human development postulates is the maintenance of a balance among dharma, artha, kama and moksha.²⁵ This is the harmony reflected in the purusharthas, which Anthony Parel considers to be at the centre of Gandhi's Thought.²⁶ Further, there is also the need for achieving an ecological balance, which has been upset by human greed. Vegetarianism is seen by Gandhi as a means to maintain the ecological balance.²⁷ Gandhi's "commitment to vegetarianism also represented an attitude to life that could be interpreted as nonviolent."²⁸

In his book *Small is Beautiful*, Schumacher says:

... we must thoroughly understand the problem and begin to see the possibility of evolving a new life-style, with new methods of production and new patterns of consumption: a life-style designed for permanence. ... We still have to learn how to live peacefully, not only with our fellow men but also with nature and, above all, with those Higher Powers which have made nature and have made us.. Nothing makes economic sense unless its continuance for a long time can be projected without running into absurdities. Permanence is incompatible with a predatory attitude which rejoices in the fact that 'what were luxuries for our fathers have become necessities for us.'²⁹

According to Kumarappa, "self-interest and self-preservation demand complete non-violence, co-operation and submission to the ways of nature if we are to maintain permanency by non-interference with and by not short-circuiting the cycle of life."³⁰

Having explored the ideas of Gandhi, Kumarappa and Schumacher on sustainability and the environment, let us now proceed to discuss the two reports on the protection of the Western Ghats in a comparative manner in order to discern whether they have any semblance with the views of Gandhi and Kumarappa on sustainable development.

Comparison of WGEEP and HLWG Reports

Originally, six items were listed in the terms of reference of the WGEEP. They included assessing the existing status of ecology of the Western Ghats region; demarcating the areas that need to be notified as ecologically sensitive; making recommendations for the conservation,

protection and rejuvenation of the region; suggesting measures for effective implementation of the notification declaring specific areas as eco-sensitive; recommending the modalities for establishment of Western Ghats Ecology Authority (WGEA); and taking up any other matter related to the Western Ghats referred to it by MoEF. The ministry had later added to the panel's mandate an examination of Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts, Gundia and Athirappilly hydroelectric projects, and a moratorium on new mining licenses in Goa.³¹ The Gadgil Panel depended on the Pronab Sen Committee³² report for setting the criteria for ESAs. The Sen Committee defines "ecological sensitivity as the imminent possibility of permanent and irreparable loss of extant life forms from the world; or significant damage to the natural processes of evolution and speciation."³³ The Gadgil committee gave a new meaning to ESAs: "ESAs are being proposed not merely as sensitive areas, but also as 'ecologically significant areas.' Their significance may lie in their biological value, ecological value, economic value, cultural and historical values. they need to be conserved taking the local context into account, on the basis of graduated or layered regulations as well as positive incentives depending upon their intrinsic value and extent of resilience."³⁴ Instead of a rigid management regime, the Committee was in favour of a flexible, adaptive co-management that took the local community into confidence.³⁵

For ESA classification equal weight was assigned to three aspects, namely biological, geo-climatic and public perception.

Ecologically Sensitive Zone 1 (ESZ1) had the highest sensitivity; ESZ2 had high sensitivity, and ESZ3 moderate sensitivity. In these zones, the Panel recommends that development activity needs to be decided through a participatory process involving the Gram Sabhas.³⁶ In contrast, HLGW does not "leave everything to local level decision-making bodies but outlines some positive steps towards incentivisation of environmentally sound growth and watershed-based development."³⁷ The WGEEP made the entire hill range an ecologically sensitive area (ESA) and its report classified 142 Taluks into Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ) 1, 2 & 3. Almost all development activities such as mining, thermal power plants, new dams of large storage etc., were restricted in ESZ1.

The High Level Working Group (HLWG) was headed by Dr. Kasturirangan, the former ISRO chairman. His mandate was to analyze the WGEEP report and give guidelines to the government to formulate an implementable action plan. The report divided the Western Ghats into two: Natural Landscape and Cultural Landscape. Natural Landscape included forests, protected areas and areas that need to

be protected as forests, while Cultural Landscape included human inhabited areas, agricultural lands and plantations. The Committee espoused that if a village has at least 20 percentage of ESA, then the whole village will be considered as an ESA viewing this approach as 'much more conservative and indeed meaningful than treating an entire Taluk as ESA.'³⁸

The WGEEP had proposed the modalities for the establishment of Western Ghats Ecology Authority (WGEA) under the Environment Protection Act 1986, which will be a professional body to manage the ecology of the region and to ensure its sustainable development along with state and district level committees.³⁹ The State governments rejected the creation of WGEA on the ground that it was against federalism.⁴⁰ The HLWG recommended strengthening existing regulatory institutions⁴¹ and setting up a Decision Support and Monitoring Centre for the Western Ghats.

WGEEP recommends that no new dams based on large scale storage be permitted in Ecologically Sensitive Zone 1 as defined by the Panel. Since both the Athirappilly and Gundia hydel project sites fall in Ecologically Sensitive Zone 1, these projects should not be accorded environmental clearance.⁴² HLWG recommends that, based on a revaluation and collection of data on ecological flow, the Government of Kerala, could take forward the proposal, if it so desires with the Ministry of Environment and Forests.⁴³

Gadgil says that we need to strengthen the Gram Sabha as a means to protect biodiversity. He says: "It is only when we successfully institute such a 'share and inform, promote and facilitate" approach in place of the current 'control and command" approach, that we would be able to do justice to India's rich heritage of biodiversity resources and associated knowledge.⁴⁴ There is a general belief that the Gram Sabha is more pro-environment. This is based on the Gadgil-Guha inverse law which says that the extent of environmental concern of an elected representative is inversely proportional to the size of her/his constituency. Accordingly, a Gram Panchayat member is expected to be more environment-friendly than an MLA or MP. This logic is behind the recommendation of the Gadgil Committee to bring in the Gram Sabha to the centre stage of his agenda for conservation in the Western Ghats.

Some criticisms of the Gadgil report suggest that it had not taken into account the revenue loss arising from the implementation of the report.⁴⁵ Critics also saw the restriction on the creation of dams as a blow to addressing power shortage experienced by a number of states, which is a major constraint on 'development' in all the six states coming under the Ghats region.

The Kasturirangan report took the position that only 37 per cent or 60000 square kilometers of the area should be brought under ESA and called for a complete ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining in ESA. No thermal power plants would be allowed and hydro-power projects could be started only after a detailed study. The report also ruled out red industries⁴⁶ in the natural landscape. The recommendations were intended to exclude all cultural landscape, which included human habitations, cultivated land and plantations. It identified 123 villages within the ESA in Kerala. The report has been criticized by Gadgil for its focus on the bureaucracy and forest officials and not on the Gram Sabha for environmental decision-making.⁴⁷ Environmentalists also criticize it for opening the way for predation by mining and quarry interests. The report, published in April 2013, had declared 4,156 villages as ESA villages. Of these, 2,159 were in Maharashtra, 1,576 in Karnataka, 135 in Tamil Nadu, 123 in Kerala, 99 in Goa and 64 in Gujarat. The States were asked to carry out “physical verification” of such villages and file their reports by April 30, 2015 before a final notification could be made by the centre.⁴⁸ The final notification for the ESA had to be issued within a period of 545 days of the last draft notification issued during the UPA government in March 2014.

Of the six states, only Kerala had serious issues with the reports right from the beginning.⁴⁹ Tamil Nadu was unconcerned about the report and no definitive response emerged from the state for long. Tamil Nadu feels that its own forest laws are sufficiently rigorous and no central initiatives are necessary.⁵⁰ Karnataka agreed to mining ban, but expressed its desire to continue stone and sand mining.⁵¹

Table 1: Differences between Reports of Gadgil and Kasturirangan Committees

Gadgil Committee	Kasturirangan Committee
GENERAL FEATURES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flora and fauna reckoned • Satellite data of 9 km resolution used • 1370000 sq. kms identified • Entire Ghat as ESZ based on the Pronab Sen Committee’s presence of endemic species as criterion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flora only reckoned • Satellite data, down to 24 m resolution. • Only 60000 sq. kms identified • Excluded Agriculture lands and plantations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 categories of protection regimes • Report and the borders of Western Ghats tentative - to be finalised after discussion in Gram Sabhas • Key role for public participation and Panchayats • Freshwater Biodiversity is a key focus • Conservation service charges and subsidies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two categories- natural landscape and Cultural • Borders final • No decisive role for Panchayats • Freshwater concerns not considered • Conservation grants
LAND USE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest land should remain untouched • Agricultural land not to be used for other purposes • Houses on agriculture land only when the farmers' family expands • Public land should not be privatised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest land can be used after getting environmental clearance
BUILDINGS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction for tourism purpose should be based on central government's tourism policy • A code for construction of buildings including eco-friendliness • Solar energy, rain water harvesting and waste disposal provisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 20,000 sq.m (215000 sq. feet) buildings are allowed in ESA. Non- ESA no restriction

AGRICULTURE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic farming compulsory (ESZ1-in 5 years, ESZ2- in 8 years , ESZ3- in 10 years) • No cultivation of annual crops in land with 30% slope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote organic farming, no deadline • No such restrictions
INDUSTRY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry belonging to red and orange category not allowed in ESZ1 and ESZ2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not allowed in ESA (37%). In the remaining 63% after environmental impact assessment.
MINING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new mining in ESZ1 and ESZ2 and existing ones should be shut down by 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not allowed in ESA (37% of WG). Existing ones should be closed down in 5 years.
QUARRYING AND SAND MINING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new license in ESZ1 • ESZ2 and ESZ3 allowed without violating tribal rights and under strict peoples observation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not allowed in ESA • No restriction in 67% of WG but under existing rules
TRANSPORTATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new railway or highway in ESZ1 and ESZ2, but if absolutely necessary, after a social audit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New roads only after environmental impact study. But railway line needs no such assessment.
GOVERNANCE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-level Governance- Western Ghats Ecology Authority (WGEA) with representatives of states included, and similar arrangement at State and district levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new institutions. Strengthen the existing regulatory institutions • But set up a sophisticated monitoring agency

ATHIRAPILLAY HYDEL PROJECT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should not be implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be implemented after revaluation and collection of data on ecological flow

Source: WGEEP Report 2011, HLWG Report 2013

Gadgil's Gandhian Flavour

How development can be based on decentralized planning and decision making in the Western Ghats as visualised in the 73rd amendment is the concern of Gadgil. In it there is space for joint discovery of truth, debate and open communication; but those opposed to the report did not allow that possibility. Gadgil report gives clear recommendations for land use, which serves the interest of the poor and protects the ecological integrity of the Western Ghats. By recommending solar power, water conservation, non-conversion of agricultural lands, adoption of organic farming, decommissioning of dams, ban on GM crops, waste treatment etc., Gadgil speaks of ecological development, which has a strong Gandhian orientation.

Gadgil described the large-scale quarrying in Chembanmudy (Kerala) as a case of economy of violence, borrowing a term from Kumarappa. He said: "This economy is promoting grabbing and spoiling of land, water, mineral and forest resources to benefit a few, at the cost of the larger society." Gadgil held that the model of conservation that his committee had suggested in the Western Ghats was one that made conservation and development compatible with each other, one that sought to "replace the prevailing "Develop recklessly – conserve thoughtlessly" pattern with one of "Develop sustainably – conserve thoughtfully."⁵² Ramachandra Guha, historian and Gadgil's collaborator for many years, said this about him: "to my knowledge no scientist worldwide has done as much as Gadgil to deepen and democratize the idea and ideal of biodiversity conservation."⁵³

Gadgil called for Cooperative mining as an alternative at the grass-roots level. He says it is high time to promote "village industries based on mineral resources like iron, manganese and bauxite ores, sand and stone, and revive village industries based on forest resources that had been destroyed by taking away resources like bamboo and handing them over to paper mills at throw-away prices."⁵⁴ It can be seen that Gadgil is not a purist 'crusading Gandhian' committed to villagism and totally unprepared for compromises with the existing

model of development. His position could be described as coming close to the 'appropriate technology' stream of thought, a category that he himself came up with to understand the environment movement in India.⁵⁵ He strikes a balance between the requirements of development and the conservation of environment from a pro-people and pro-community perspective.

When Gadgil's report is viewed through Kumarappa lens, the current status of the Western Ghats could be described as a classic example of a predatory economy and it needs to be transformed into a gregational economy, where people come together and work for the benefit of the group rather than being motivated by individual self-interest. It is a significant step towards the path of economy of permanence and away from the economy of violence.

The Kasturirangan report has largely tried to achieve a balance between environment protection and development from above. It does not talk about sustainability based on a shift from large scale economic activities to more small-scale ones nor does it suggest the possibility of roping in people and institutions at the grass root level as partners in conservation.

Conclusion

Protection of the livelihood of the people including the continuation of agricultural practices and allied village industries in the Ghat region comes under the Gandhian framework. Same could be said of the stoppage of all predatory economic activities such as quarrying and construction of commercial tourist resorts. The adoption of organic farming and focus on indigenous crops as suggested by the Gadgil report is in the Gandhian line. The idea of people-driven nature protection with the intermediation of the local bodies is also broadly Gandhian in orientation. The Gadgil report also tends to be sympathetic to the needs of the marginal farmers as opposed to the commercial farmers, quarry operators and resort owners who are driven by profit considerations without any regard for conservation. It agrees with the Gandhian principle of Sarvodaya. While it is not opposed to development, the type of development prescribed for the Ghats region is a labour-intensive one organised through cooperatives, one that acknowledges the resource sovereignty of the indigenous people.

In contrast, the Kasturirangan report tends to lend its support to continued development in the Western Ghats without adequate importance given to its ecological security. It is largely supportive of the development trajectory that the Government of India has embarked upon and its suggestions are at best reformist rather than ecologically

laden.

It would be quite appropriate to bring in E. F. Schumacher again here. He says that the environment can be viewed either as an income source or a capital source. As an income source, it is driven by short-term profit motive and is anti-environment. As a capital source, it has implications for long-term sustenance of life and intergenerational equity. Both Kumarappa and Gandhi considered equity crucial in any development effort and outcome and unless the last man benefited, it had no value. It is this question of equity, especially intergenerational equity that the Gadgil report seeks to address, at least partially.

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Decentralization and Inter- generational Justice in J.C. Kumarappa's Writings

Solomon Victus

ABSTRACT

This paper deals with J.C. Kumarappa's economic thinking, particularly questions of decentralization and intergenerational justice. As a genuine peace economist, he was opposed to war-oriented industries including nuclear which thrive on non-renewable resources. How to limit non-renewable resources and how to harness renewable resources was one of his major concerns. He explained such concepts with the images of "bucket water" and "river water." His arguments on the economy of permanence and sustainability show the way ahead towards inter-generational thinking works towards a new generation without disease and despair. We are all looking for growth and employment without the suffocation of pollution. Here, Kumarappa offers few concerns about today and tomorrow if we are ready for the changes in our attitude and life style.

Keywords: Decentralization, centralization, inter-generational justice, de—growth, economy of permanence'

Introduction

THE 125TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY of J.C.Kumarappa began its celebration in India starting from his mother's place Tanjore Tamil University campus in January 2017. What makes J.C. Kumarappa relevant today in the neo-liberal political economic context and the process of Corporatization/Cartelization in India? The cry of the small traders, cottage industries and artisans is heard everywhere in India due to loss of employment. The increasing presence of corporates in

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India makes small traders' situation unlivable. State owned heavy industries came to the fore in the Indian economy, while Nehru felt it was essential to have an "import substitute policy" until we attained economic stability, but today this policy is useless since the major portion of shareholdings in heavy industries have already become under private control. Belief and hope in mega schemes and centralized industries are increasing not only in state policy but also among business groups. Centralization and corporatization are understood as magic words for the business groups.

M.K. Gandhi and J.C. Kumarappa and a small team had dreams of developing an India different from European capitalistic and Soviet socialist models. It had not been experimented anywhere in the world, but they had already begun it with the All India Village Industries Association. Majority of the then Indian leaders misunderstood, as if they were taking the nation backwards to the bullock cart village situation. Gandhi had to defend his position with the explanation, "This cry of 'back to the villages,' some critics say, is putting back the hands of the clock of progress. But is it really so? Is it going back to the village, or rendering back to it what belongs to it? I am not asking the city-dwellers to go and live in the villages. But I am asking them to render unto the villages what is due to them."¹ Ramachandra Guha writes, "Indeed if the Gandhian model had been adopted as the basis for economic policy in 1947 this would have been an undemocratic imposition in the face of the strong, majority opinion to the contrary."² Such negative responses were witnessed by Kumarappa both in the National Planning Committee of the Congress and in the Planning Commission's advisory body and he left the committees.³

The present neo-liberal market economy model followed in India strongly believes in unbridled economic growth. The myth behind the logic is that if we continue to concentrate on growth, it is easy to eradicate poverty and prosper. India can never remove poverty if she thinks that modern industrial growth is the only issue to be tackled. It encourages any economic activities which encourage other network economic activity promoting current GNP/GDP growth; however, under the pretext of more and more production, we neither achieved poverty reduction nor tackled question of ethics and morality. One should not forget that for achieving the current economy, even brothel houses, body shops, wine shops, hospitals and road accidents are taken into account as which playing vital roles in promoting business in terms of GNP growth. Real, genuine growth lies in ongoing reduction in death rates, pollution levels, disease, unemployment, prisoners, accident levels, etc. For Kumarappa, economy without moral standards is unacceptable. For him, the quality of life is more important

than life with more consumer products. The vulgar consumerism of the capitalist system today intrudes into the mind of the people in the name of freedom, and the state is encouraging such capitalist structures, inviting corporates to take over everything. T.G. Jacob, one of the exponents of Kumarappa, feels, "... as is clearly shown by the ongoing global economic crisis the function of the state is only to facilitate what is known as 'bailing out' big businesses, especially in the financial capital sector. Needless to say, this is at the common man's expense... this anti-human 'development' model which caters solely to the profit-making machines called multinational corporations and their agents. This is where the relevance of someone like J.C. Kumarappa comes in."⁴ Here we need to listen to what he felt were the hurdles for the genuine development of Indian people.

Decentralization and Centralization as Understood by Kumarappa

J.C. Kumarappa understood and analyzed everything from the perspective of 'economy of permanence,' since his commitment to village and cottage industries were boundless. His ideas and philosophy were very much to make agriculture as his priority, with textiles as a subsidiary unit, and pushed other industries including cottage industries into a supplementary category in order to decrease the pressure on land.⁵ With this view, he took decentralization as the key for solving the problem of Indian villages. His concerns were full employment of human, animal and natural resources. This would help achieve maximum productive efficiency in order to reach the national minimum standard of living, ensuring a balanced diet, sufficient clothing and living accommodation for every family.⁶

Kumarappa made a five-point argument for decentralization:

- a) Where there is scarcity of capital, it is not possible nor is it necessary to have centralization. The only possibility is decentralization. An attempt is being made to meet this by the promotion of Limited Liability Companies to gather in scattered bits of capital, but this does not solve the problem of distribution of wealth. It presents other difficulties.
- b) Where there is plethora of labour, or in other words, unemployment or under-employment, we shall be increasing the malady by centralizing the production.
- c) Diversity and variety are the very essence of decentralization. Where there is no machine needed can compensate it with the hand-work, more especially where the hand-work has to be the expression of personality.
- d) If democracy is to be attained, decentralization lays the required foundation. As centralization kills all initiative in the masses, they

succumb readily to central dictatorship. Centralization is the grave of democracy.

- e) Where raw materials and markets are in the proximity of production centres, decentralization methods will serve well.⁷

In economic planning, Kumarappa warned that highly centralized production will lead us to war and violence. “Highly prosperous countries known for the adoption of a very superior technology have surplus of many articles, the disposal of which poses a problem. Hence they have to somehow dispose of the surplus to keep the production going ... The type we need is simple machinery which will be within the means of the average producer in rural India and will be such that minimize drudgery and increase the efficiency of the individual without providing room for exploitation.”⁸ Analysis of the 2015 data on weapons imports shows that along with Saudi Arabia, India is currently the world’s largest importer of weapons, showing how much we are plunged into the concept of centralization and militarization.⁹

Although Kumarappa spent most of his lifetime and energy on village and small-scale industries, he did not reject centralized production totally. On the contrary, he never blindly accepted the evils of large-scale industries taking place in capitalistic and socialist circles both in Europe and Soviet Russia, and opposed them strongly. “The capitalistic structures of centralized production rest on the tombstones of its customers. Therefore, judged from the point of view of its effects on human beings, centralized production may be appropriately described as an enslaving parasitic... cannibalistic system.”¹⁰

Knowing all the evil effects, Kumarappa finds some of these centralized large-scale industries to be unavoidable. Basically, his idea of centralized industries is radically different from what we understand today. He writes: “Large-scale industries may be used as a necessary evil, in the production of tools and machines needed for cottage and village industries and provision of basic raw materials such as sulphuric acid, steel etc. They can also provide natural monopolies such as communication, means of transport, public utilities like water (irrigation) and power.”¹¹ He also includes railways, coal, mines, forest management, post and telegraph services in the category of nationalized industries.¹² The basic terms and conditions prescribed by him were that there must not be any profit motive in such national industries, but that they should be run on the basis of national service. It is possible to eliminate profit motives only when enterprises are undertaken by the state, as adjuncts and subsidiaries to decentralized units (cottage industries), just as in the political sphere, a democracy

does not eschew government control and regulation when it is directed towards the better realization of individual development and expression.¹³ He was very clear that we cannot resort to centralized methods of production for the satisfaction of our daily needs.¹⁴ For him limited centralized industries should be allowed to run with all precaution and care.

Regarding the arguments of cheapness of large-scale production, Kumarappa made it clear that this is a myth and pseudo-reality, since he concretely knew how much they hid social and environmental costs in the process.¹⁵ Further, he adds that state researches are utilized without any payment, whereas people are taxed for the research, public transport and sea-route protection at naval bases. So out of public funds and subsidies, apparent cheapness is generated.¹⁶

Further, he tries to connect the feasibility of democracy with centralization. If centralization becomes the sole element in both public and private spheres, democracy will have no place in these contexts. For Kumarappa, in order to give prime importance to genuine democracy, it must be allowed to permeate every sphere, particularly through decentralization.¹⁷ He finds that all textile mills are anti-democratic because thousands of people working are under one employer, making this person an autocrat. Therefore, for him, the decentralization of industries means the democratization of industries.¹⁸ For him, we cannot simultaneously have dictatorship in economics and democracy in politics. Such claims of democracy are merely smoke-screens. Therefore, democracy in economics must be based on decentralized production.¹⁹

Venu Madhav Govindu and Deepak Malghan beautifully summarize his position:

Kumarappa's decentralization was not a rigid principle that brooked no exception. Since the methods of production 'are but instruments for social and economic ends' the nature and degree of decentralization in different areas of economic activity was to be determined by a careful consideration of social objectives. Thus, the quest for 'true democracy' meant that 'centralized production in consumption goods' needed to be abandoned in favour of decentralized village industries. Partly in concession to his critics, Kumarappa argued that the scrutiny of 'the method of mass production by centralization' was 'mainly in terms of producing consumer goods as distinct from public utilities or key industries.' Indeed, he agreed that 'there are various functions, which can be performed most economically and efficiently only by centralized methods... Kumarappa advocated such a qualified approach to the question of decentralization since certain public utilities like 'finance, transport, and supply of power are naturally centralized functions' and

needed large investments from the state. Thus, 'in the village movement there is a definite place for industrialized industries, not for their own sakes, but as adjuncts and subsidiaries to decentralized units.' In Kumarappa's conception, the argument for decentralized industries was not dictated by a fetish against industries per se. The existence of these large-scale industries in the decentralized economy was not an anomaly. Rather, his was an attempt to allocate a decisive role for decentralized means of production in the economy and thereby contain the monopolistic tendencies inherent to large-scale production by centralized industries. This, Kumarappa, argued, was not a contradiction since even in 'the political sphere a democracy does not eschew Government control and regulation when it is directed towards the better realization of individual development and expression.'²⁰

Amalan Datta was able to see, "Kumarappa's remark that 'every person becomes a "hand" 'meant that mass-production robs the worker of his personal identity. When production is undertaken ... under big-factory production, they are more often uprooted from their homes and burdened by the spectre of being thrown out of work and compelled to drift away becoming thereby a 'rootless proletariat' (E.F. Schumacher's phrase). This leads in turn to other unfortunate consequences of profound cultural and political importance...."²¹ Mark Lindley takes Kumarappa's decentralization in good spirit:

... one lesson to be learned from the economic mistakes of the Soviet Russia, of China under Mao Tse-Dung, of the World Bank under Robert Mc Namara, and indeed of any company that markets successfully a harmful product, is that in economic experimentation, big is dangerous because the mishaps will, however noble may be some of the motivation to which they are due, have big bad effects. And are not most big-scale economic programmes perforce experimental? Thus even if Kumarappa's attitude towards factories was reactionary, there is wisdom in the small-is-beautiful theory that he invented, in as much as small-scale ventures enable trial and error to proceed with less devastating overall effect...A positive aspect of the small-is-beautiful theory is its precept that an economy characterized by individually 'tailor-made' goods is more beneficial spiritually, to producers and consumers alike, than a mass-production economy... the experience of the AIVIA shows that at least in certain historical circumstances, decentralized production hardly ensures that goods will be of good quality... The economist should instead describe feasible forms of 'mixed' economy, and the argument that decentralization means 'turning back the forces of society' should yield accordingly to a detailed consideration of how best to combine centralization and decentralization.²²

Inter-generational Justice

Kumarappa was basically a 'futuristic economist', as termed by Devendra Gupta, for his ideas were concerned about renewable and non-renewable resources as well as justice questions. He understood that "Progress must bring progress to all people and not to a few chosen ones... So far as we have seen, science has been harnessed, not for production but for destruction."²³ Economy of Permanence, according to Kumarappa's understanding, means that:

Nature is limited by time and space. It came into existence once in the remote past and will cease to be sometime in the future... the life of man is said to be transient in comparison with that of nature which is permanent... There are certain things found in nature which apparently have no life and do not grow or increase. The world possesses a certain stock or reservoir of such materials as coal, petroleum, ores or minerals like iron, copper, gold, etc. These being available in fixed quantities, may be said to be transient... In animate life, the secret of nature's permanency lies in the cycle by which the various factors function in close cooperation to maintain the continuity of life.²⁴

Since the very concept of 'economy of permanence' is about futuristic economics, Madhav Gadgil finds that Kumarappa's influence in India has made a real influence: "India has been dramatically transformed since Kumarappa, the pioneer of ecology and equity, set down his ideas for creating an economy of permanence, forty-five years ago."²⁵ This perception could be rightly termed intergenerational justice. Scientific use of resources is the main concern of Kumarappa's economic view. For him, scientific use should benefit what we find around us. Mechanical devices are often irrational in the utilization of resources. It will be unscientific to use coal fuel where crude oil is available, and it is senseless to bring firewood from distant places for the purpose of fuel. In the same manner, he understood that human energy is neglected where it is cheaply available in abundance.²⁶ Local fuel and resources are more sustainable than imported ones. In this context it is noteworthy to remember that he rejected atomic research on weapons and energy outright by saying, it is "Rudra, God of Destruction," and "Atomic research has been an expensive luxury of the rich Western nations;" he rather encouraged renewable energy sources like wind and solar.²⁷

Kumarappa even avoided scientific surveys personally if they helpful for quick exploitation of resources. He omitted such information on mineral resources – manganese and coal – from his report to the government, in order not to exploit such rare resources

but to preserve them for the country. But as soon as the then government came to know about his planned omission, it appointed another committee to complete it.²⁸ Kumarappa never utilized his potentiality for resource exploitation for private self-interests but for community uses.²⁹ He used to propose having state boundaries based on natural river basins, based on the principles of eco-regionalism.³⁰

No waste economy in Kumarappa's thinking is another important aspect to be seen in the context of waste accumulations everywhere in India. While Kumarappa is dealing with "high" and "low" standards of living he blames the attitude of the people where waste-less habits are considered a "low" standard of living. For instance, he takes the traditional example of food served on banana leaves where human fingers are used and washed. And after the meal, the leaf does not need to be washed, but may be thrown away and readily disposed of by a goat which will turn it into milk for its owner.³¹ He also adds a few more qualities, "The Indian method of eating has advantages of cheapness combined with cleanliness and affords free scope for one's ideas of art in serving."³² Kumarappa fundamentally deals with recycling and no waste economy in several instances like paper recycling and this was evident from his own hut building in Wardha. He aimed at zero-waste lifestyle. E.F. Schumacher connects such "no waste economy" concepts of Kumarappa with Buddhist economy by writing, "The key note of Buddhist economics, therefore, is simplicity and non-violence."³³ Kumarappa's ecological concern could be compared with today's understanding of eco-justice rather than eco-romanticism because his eyes were able to distinguish women who were collecting forest wood for the fuel from timber traders. Thus, his very concept of ecological justice could be rightly termed as inter-generational justice.

How Much is the Concept of De-growth Connected with Kumarappa?

Kumarappa is understood today from another angle too, as the father of the de-growth economy. Serge Latouche, the author of the de-growth concept, argues that "We need to rethink from the very foundations the idea that our societies should be based on growth." Latouche offers a radical alternative – a society of "de-growth." "De-growth is not the same thing as negative growth. We should be talking about 'a-growth,' in the sense in which we speak of 'a-theism.' And we do indeed have to abandon a faith or religion – that of the economy, progress and development — and reject the irrational and quasi-idolatrous cult of growth for growth's sake."³⁴

Latouche clarifies the meaning of de-growth. Most people who

live in the North and West consume far too much – too much meat, too much fat, too much sugar, too much salt. They are more likely to put on too much weight than to go hungry. They live in a society that is heading for a crash. They are aware of what is happening and yet they refuse to take it fully into account. Above all they refuse to address the issue that lies at the heart of their problems – namely, the fact that their societies are based on an economy whose only goal is growth for growth's sake.³⁵ While many realize that that the never-ending pursuit of growth is incompatible with a finite planet, we have yet to come to terms with the implications of this – the need to produce less and consume less. But if we do not change course, we are heading for an ecological and human disaster. There is still time to imagine, quite calmly, a system based upon a different logic, and to plan for a “De-growth society”.

De-growth works against the principle of unlimited mass production and “limitless growth.” It assumes that the economy is expected to grow without realizing that resources are limited and basic needs are not yet met. How could it be possible to continue the growth targets while natural resources are dwindling? Unless and until a growth-promising project comes from the less advantaged sections of the people, growth is intangible, impossible. Therefore, any growth promised by anyone or any political party is a myth which ultimately ends up with higher economic gaps than before.

De-growth thinkers and practitioners could be very much inspired by Gandhian economic thought. The Economy of Permanence shares many features with De-growth, such as an attention to the vulnerability of natural resources; a focus on creativity and the revolutionary potential of the grassroots; the idea of an alternative path to economism; the importance of spiritual values as opposed to material contentment alone; organic agriculture; the value of labour; the care of others; mutual aid and the revival of interpersonal relationships; and permanence as a desirable alternative value opposed to conspicuous consumerism.³⁶

Kumarappa's economic philosophy promises peace, prosperity, health, and education and the means to attain them which are quite opposed to the present path of cut-throat competition. We are now already suffocating with increasingly polluted air, heart diseases and lifestyle diseases. GNP and GDP calculations include employment in terms of wine shops, accidents, hospitals, prisons, police stations, army and war. Our current model of growth and development is no way concerned with the reduction of accidents, hospitals, prisons, and police stations and courts. Kumarappa and Gandhi had answers to reduce them, but the choice is with us. Simply by following European

or American models of lifestyles and principles we cannot reduce those problems. The wheels of growth and development have to move in a reverse direction. This is what friends and economists and ecologists from Europe have been pushing with the idea of de-growth. Few of them even claim that Kumarappa is the father of the de-growth Economy.³⁷

The Relevance of J. C. Kumarappa Today

Kumarappa was not a fundamentalist or reductionist in economic thinking, but rather gave space to the different generations and mood of the consumers, and was willing to borrow merits from any system including capitalism. Therefore, I feel, we need not romanticize Kumarappa as an idealist, but as a grassroot level practitioner he has something to say to our context. As long as India wants to pursue the path of Super Power or the Western or North American model, Kumarappa's proposal may not be helpful. He questions fundamentally basic western understandings of development, progress and growth. His understanding of growth and development is completely different and is like what we call today alternatives. He rejects any economy based on war, violence and competition. His economy stems fundamentally from Economy of Peace and closely associated ideas such as today's Green Economy, Peace Economy, Low Carbon Economy, de-growth Economy and People's economy. It is closely connected with neo-socialist principles but without exploitation and violence.

While most economists are singing to the tunes of the ruling governments, Kumarappa was very critical of the dominant development model since the time of Pandit Nehru. He was very clear about the danger of such Western rapid growth based on non-renewable fossil fuels and other raw materials. Rather he motivated to create an alternative mode of production dependent upon renewable resources.³⁸ Only a handful of leading Indian economists took him seriously. Prof. R.V. Rao, one of the leading economists in post-Independence India, admitted how Kumarappa motivated him to study the problems of rural economy, and he made a greater impact on his economic thought than anyone in his student days.³⁹ Ramachandra Guha not only claims Kumarappa as "the first Gandhian environmentalist" in Indian history⁴⁰ but also depicts him as "a man who developed an environmental ethics towards social ecology and eco-socialism."⁴¹

According to Joan Martinez-Alier, Mark Lindley:

...rightly places him (Kumarappa) among the precursors of 'open system'

economics, contrasting this line of thought with orthodox economics and with Marxian economics. Ecological economists see the economy as an open system. They do not aspire (only) to internalize negative or positive externalities back into the price system. They also recognize the economy as a system open to the entry of energy and materials, and to the exit of waste. The external effects are so pervasive and important that the notion of internalization of externalities is insufficient to describe the relations between economy and environment.⁴²

While emphasizing the vitality of Kumarappa's argument, Amlan Datta writes: "Kumarappa's argument bears the marks of the Indian experience and is not equally well applicable to the other countries at all points. But the general thrust of the reasoning deserves consideration as much as today as it did when it was first presented in the second quarter of the 20th century. To ignore its worldwide significance would be an unfortunate error."⁴³

The balance between agriculture and industry suggested by Kumarappa was slowly eaten up by policies of later governments giving priority to only centralized industries catering to GNP/GDP calculations. Now we have come to the stage of less encouragement to agriculture and small industrial ventures. The net result in our life is unemployment, migration of labour, violence and so on. However, the state does not want to return to decentralized system but rather tries to protect and save and even bail out the corporate sector when it is in crisis.

How do Gandhi and Kumarappa differ – in socialist ideas and the implementation process? Kumarappa was more exposed to socialist countries than Gandhi. Gandhi totally rejected socialism, since he understood that it had a violent side to it. But Kumarappa was for a mixture of Sarvodaya and Socialism, which he called "Chinese Sarvodaya." Decentralization brings employment, self-responsibility, sharing of the benefits or profit, community control over resources, and encourages intermediate technology. Decentralization and community control alone could envision the goal of inter-generational justice.

His critical views on imperial governments and corporates are still valid in our context. Today there is considerable variety in the corporate sector. All transnational and multinational corporations believe only in centralized industries. Since they believe in limited employment with assembling work, subsidiary units in private hands, high salaries and global division of labour, it is much easier to accumulate wealth in a few hands. The hardest part of the transition could be from a consumer-centred production, social institutions and organizing principle to a need-based production, social institutions

and organizing principles. How do we motivate people, and who should be at the cutting edge of the real challenges?

Amlan Datta opines that there are rival hypotheses as to where the roots of evil in contemporary society lie. Marxists (and many other socialists) have maintained that private ownership of the means of production is the main culprit, whereas Gandhians put the blame on over-centralization of power and excessive mechanization of production, as well as failings of human nature such as greed, fear and hatred. The leaders of the Bolshevik revolution tested the Marxist hypothesis as best as they could – they abolished private ownership in the Soviet Union – but this did not bring about the eradication of injustice and the establishment of freedom. On the other hand, the Gandhian hypothesis has never really been tested; it still needs close examination.⁴⁴

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Contemporary Discourse on Sustainable Development: Revisiting the Perspectives of Kumarappa

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to revisit the perspectives of J.C. Kumarappa drawing on his speeches, writings and actions on sustainable development. He manifested his perspectives on sustainable development in a unique style, with an empathetic mind, visionary zeal, and dreamt of a 'just and egalitarian society' in India with its edifice built on 'decentralization and alternative development.' This paper tries to uncover the contributions of 'the unsung hero of rural economics and village industries' in the country and generate a discussion among the academic fraternity, professionals and practitioners on them.

Keywords: green democracy, green economy, eco-ethics, eco-feminism, eco-dharma

Introduction

JOSEPH CORNELIUS KUMARAPPA (1892-1960) has been regarded as a great philosopher, acclaimed architect and active practitioner of Gandhi's rural economics and constructive programme. During the freedom struggle and in the formative years of independent India, a group of philosophers and practitioners in the 'Gandhian school of thought' engaged themselves in socio-economic-political programmes with the task of charting out an 'alternate development agenda' for the country. Kumarappa was a flag bearer of the 'Gandhian mould of alternative development' who thought, preached and worked for realising that agenda. He firmly believed that Gandhi's socio-

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economic-political programmes would be the most ideal one to achieve growth and development in India, considering the uniqueness and diversity of the country.

This paper is an attempt to revisit the perspectives of Kumarappa in the contemporary discourse on 'alternative development', which has strong affinity with 'sustainable development.' Kumarappa made significant contributions to the field of alternative development in the country, through his speeches, writings and actions. But to a question 'whether he received due respect and consideration in the discourse on development and environment in the country,' it is very difficult for anyone to answer in the affirmative.

Green Economy and Green Democracy

Presently, the whole world is engaged in discussions on 'Green Democracy' and 'Green Economy' in which climate change, global warming, Green House Gas effects, etc. are the key topics. After the formal signing of Kyoto Protocol in the year 1997, which came into effect in 2005, the discussions on sustainable development (or alternative development as visualised by Gandhi, Kumarappa and others) have gained additional momentum. On the political front, concepts like 'green politics' and 'green parties' have emerged, though they were functioning from behind as non-government organisations, voluntary agencies and development organisations earlier. This situation was more evident in parts of Europe and other developed countries.

The concept of 'eco-feminism' also came to the discussion table even in countries which are traditionally regarded as 'conservative' in their nature and outlook, which itself is a manifestation of the sweeping changes happening in different parts of the world. The concept of 'eco-ethics' was already discussed by the practitioners and professionals during the last few decades. In addition, the idea of 'eco -dharma' also became an important point for discussion among the environmentalists, theologians, particularly in India.

As a direct descendant and practitioner of Gandhi's perspectives of 'rural economics' and pioneer of 'green thoughts'¹ in the country, it is pertinent to have a 'bird's eye view' on the life and work of Kumarappa for understanding the different aspects of sustainable development from that perspective. In addition, an attempt has been made to get a 'worm's eye view' also on different hues and shades of sustainable development, with its thrust on the applicability, functionality and viability at the operational level.

Development of Village Economy

In the writings of Kumarappa, we could feel the intense desire, commitment and passion towards the 'development of village economy' that was encapsulated with green thoughts and perfectly interlaced with values of 'creative freedom.'² Each one of these aspects has been manifested in multiple ways in his writings and actions in the field.

Despite his training as a Chartered Accountant and his long stay in Britain, America and other western countries, Kumarappa's interpretation of Economics was driven more towards understanding of the status and position of human beings in their natural settings. Under the able guidance of Edwin Seligman of Columbia, he brought out a scholarly manuscript titled 'Public Finance and India's Poverty' in 1929. Incidentally, Seligman was the research advisor to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who is described as the architect of the Indian Constitution. Kumarappa chose to give more attention to the financial policy of the British in the thesis as the reason for poverty in India. The document was key to his transition into the 'Gandhian mould of alternative development.'

Having exposed himself to the field realities of Indian villages on his return from Colombia, Kumarappa compared the lopsided pattern of expenditure between British India and the America. He remarked that 'the civil administration in British India was five times as expensive as in the United States.'³ It was noted that most of the expenses in British India were used for meeting administrative aspects, military expenses, debts, etc., virtually leaving nothing for public works and other development initiatives. All these were cited as the clear manifestations of 'plundering of Indian economy' during the colonial rule.

After returning to India, as per the advice of Gandhi, Kumarappa led a team to Matar Taluka in Kaira District (present Kheda District) of Gujarat and studied the real situation of the farmers from close quarters. It was during the time of the survey that the Dandi march, which was one of the most important civil disobedience movements led by Gandhi against the colonial rule, took place. This was a direct challenge to the unscientific, unrealistic and oppressive taxation policies. Significantly, the Dandi march resulted in ushering alternative development discourses and actions in the country also subsequently.

Kumarappa was the convenor of the 'Select Committee of Public Debts,' which was formed as an outcome of the Karachi Session of Indian National Congress in 1931. Significantly, Kumarappa always gave primacy to the concept of creative freedom in the life and living

of human beings. His thrust and faith in the rural economy in practice and desire for creative freedom in philosophy and ethics need a serious introspection by the scholars and researchers.

The All India Spinners Association (AISA) was formed in 1934 by Gandhiji to promote Khadi which helped to mobilise the spinners and allied workers in a big way. Subsequently, Kumarappa was entrusted with the monumental task of establishing All India Village Industries Association (AIVIA) with its head office at Wardha, which further became the central theme of his work and life. Kumarappa, through his words and deeds, made several attempts towards providing a native, intrinsic and context-specific way of developing the AIVIA. This was perfectly in line with the constructive programme conceived and propagated by Gandhi with its strong orientation towards 'sustainable development.' On a closer look, words like 'sustainable development' may not be found in the literature of Kumarappa. However, the spirit, values and principles of green thought were prominent in his approach and practices for realising development in the country. As one of the greatest proponents and practitioners of 'Gandhian Economics,' Kumarappa could work extensively for 'development of an economics that answered the dicta of *Satya* and *Ahimsa*.'⁴

In 1936, two years after the formation of AIVIA, Kumarappa made an important contribution to the perspective of sustainable development, which was titled as 'Why the Village Movement? : A Plea for a Village-centred Economic Order.' However, his book titled 'The Economy of Permanence: A Quest for a Social Order based on Non-violence' is being hailed as the master piece. This book has been rated by many as the 'Source Book on Green Thoughts' in the larger academic discourse on sustainable development. This book may be looked upon as an example of 'modern ecological discourse'⁵ rather than 'economic analysis.'

At times, Kumarappa expressed his radical views on India's economy as well. Once, he advised the community members 'not to part with their goods for paper currency, but to exchange it against goods only.'⁶ It highlights the need for revival of barter economy in the country to get out of the poor financial situation prevailing at that point of time.

Economics of Natural Order

Kumarappa could be regarded as a 'perfect student' in the Gandhian school of alternative development that was founded on the principles of *Satya* (Truth) and *Ahimsa* (Non-violence). He strongly believed that 'any economy that is associated with the name of Gandhiji should

highlight the twin principles of *Satya* and *Ahimsa*.⁷

Kumarappa is also known for his advocacy for realising an economy that is built upon non-violence with its thrust on 'natural order.' He remarked that 'The plant shoots out leaves which help to gather nourishment from the air and light, as the roots do from the soil. When some of these leaves 'die' they fall to the ground and are split up or decomposed into the various elements, which the parent plant had absorbed from the soil, air, and light. This is again used to nourish the next generation of plants. When ready, this seed falls to the ground and comes to life with the help of the soil that has already been enriched by fallen leaves of the previous generation of plants.'⁸ It is noted that decay and regeneration are part and parcel of the cyclic life of an individual and/or institution and we need to handle the situation carefully and tactfully. By highlighting an economy based on natural order, he reiterates the moral and ethical values and obligations one needs to have towards the society at large.

Perspectives on Decentralization

Kumarappa is very much forthright in his perspectives on decentralization in various walks of life. It was noted by him that 'the countries that have been using centralised methods of production ultimately leads to dictatorship. We cannot have dictatorship in economics and at the same time, democracy in politics. Such claims to democracy are merely smoke-screens. Democracy in economics must be based on decentralized production in villages on individual basis.'⁹ He was very much convinced that the village organisation could be undertaken in a specific manner. He remarked that there should be a 'village panchayat for village administration on the basis of Village Self-Government, Multipurpose Co-operative Society for the economic organization of the village and a Gram Seva Sangha to mobilise non-official support and initiative to back up the work of the whole scheme of rural development on the basis of voluntary effort.'¹⁰

About the uniqueness of village culture, Kumarappa remarked that 'India has evolved through the centuries a village culture which was fairly robust. It must be rediscovered, valued and developed. A village grandmother can put a university graduate to shame with her practical wisdom and understanding of life and its problems.'¹¹ Kumarappa highlighted that 'the reorganization of village culture should be creative and should aim at giving the village a high sense of the values that should govern his life as an individual and as the unit of a new society.'¹²

According to Kumarappa, a healthy and happy society represents people who take care of others and give priority to group or

community interests rather than their self-interests. He always gave priority to group interests over individual interests. He did not think it was difficult to motivate people to work for the benefit of the community rather than benefit for individuals alone. At the same time, he was very conscious about the role of individuals in the social evolution. He was very much convinced that 'the degree to which the rights and obligations are respected in an economy reflect the social and moral evolution.'¹³

Natural Order and Sustainable Development

Kumarappa highlighted the significance of renewable sources of energy over non-renewable sources several decades back. He was very critical about the indiscriminate use of non-renewable resources. Significantly, his voice could be considered as one of the earliest ones for 'natural order' and sustainable development.

Kumarappa was a visionary in his perspectives on 'sustainable development' despite non-use of these words in verbatim. His emphasis on rejuvenation of village industries, village-centred economic order, cyclical movement of eco system, economy based on natural order, prioritisation of group interests to individual interests, degree of respect for rights and obligations, criticism about the indiscriminate use of non-renewable resources, etc. have been examples of his commitment to green thought.

Kumarappa's perspectives on sustainable development becomes even more significant when the whole universe and especially the urban centres and rural areas of the country, are largely at the 'receiving end,' owing to the ever-increasing attempts for ushering in industrial growth and development 'at any cost,' even disregarding their implications for future generations. As a person with simple style and unique manner of combining theory and praxis, Kumarappa stands tall among the thinkers, philosophers and economists of the country. He manifested his perspectives on sustainable development in a unique style, with empathetic mind, visionary zeal, and dreamt of a 'just and egalitarian society' in India with its edifice built on 'decentralization and alternative development.' In the writings of Kumarappa, we could find traces of 'green thoughts,' 'green democracy,' 'green economy,' 'eco ethics' and 'eco dharma' with varying levels of intensity, pace and scale.

Conclusion

This paper is a modest effort to portray the contributions of 'the unsung hero of rural economics and village industries' in the country and

generate a discourse among the academic fraternity, professionals and practitioners. Had the vision, mission and objectives of 'swadeshi movement' as conceived and propagated by Gandhi, Kumarappa and others with similar thinking been taken seriously by the eminent members of the Constituency Assembly, the socio-economic-political atlas of India may have been very different than what it is seen now. If the approach of the then economists were aligned with the perspectives of Gandhi and Kumarappa and others who gave priority to 'rural economics,' the primary issues of our country like hunger, famine, unemployment, communal disharmony, etc. may have been settled issues of the past. However, it cannot be ignored that had we followed that path, we may not have achieved the present status as a 'global leader' in the international relations. But that depends upon the perspectives, priorities and preferences of the leadership from time to time.

This paper has attempted to revisit the perspectives of Kumarappa on sustainable development in order to generate awareness, sensitise and motivate people especially the youth of India, who are on the threshold of a 'demographic dividend.'¹⁴ This dividend is viewed as 'a window of opportunity in the development of nation that opens up as fertility rates decline when faster rates of human development and economic growth are possible.'¹⁵ However, it could be translated into a more positive direction particularly among adolescents and the youth by providing 'right education,'¹⁶ adequate health care, capacitating them with skills and competencies, and enabling them to secure suitable employment in line with their interests, aptitude and skills. There is no doubt that the perspectives of Kumarappa on sustainable development need a serious reading, review and analysis aiming at its application and practice at appropriate levels.

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16. Right Education refers to the kind of education that will be available to adolescents and youth of the country, considering their interests, aptitude and skills. It also denotes about the space, freedom and chance of taking an informed decision by the adolescents and youth while picking up the discipline/subject, etc. The decision should not be imposed on them by the parents, teachers and the society and they must be given the freedom and 'Right' to decide, through a scientific application of Interests, Aptitude and Skills scale. 'Right education' is significantly different from the 'Right to Education' refers to the Parliamentary legislation mandated by the Right to Education Act, 2009 by the Government of India

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United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Kumarappa's Economy of Permanence

Siby K. Joseph

ABSTRACT

The paper traces how the term sustainable development became the new agenda of the United Nations Organization. In this process, it examines the major efforts of UN in this direction, including the important conferences and summits which laid a solid foundation for sustainable development in the discourse of peace. The paper argues that J. C. Kumarappa placed before the country a vision of an economy which promotes sustainable development practices, whereas the 17 Sustainable Development Goals are based on the premise that the existing pattern of development could be reoriented towards achieving the goal of sustainability.

Key words: Sustainable development, Sustainable Development Goals, The 2030 Agenda, and Economy of Permanence.

Introduction

THE TERM SUSTAINABLE development became popular in the discourses of development with the publication of United Nations *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future* in 1987. It underlined the need for sustainable and enduring development. The Report *inter alia* said:

Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable *to ensure that*

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it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits — not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organization can be both managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth., but sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better life ... Sustainable global development requires that those who are more affluent adopt lifestyles within the planet's ecological means — in their use of energy, for example. Further, rapidly growing populations can increase the pressure on resources and slow any rise in living standards; thus sustainable development can only be pursued if population size and growth are in harmony with the changing productive potential of the ecosystem. ... sustainable development is not a fixed state of harmony, but rather a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs.”¹

Though the report seeks to reform the pattern of development, the changes it suggests are not fundamental in its very nature. Some scholars looked upon the report as a clever attempt to control the damages created by unbridled economic growth and to justify the continuance of the existing pattern of development with cosmetic changes. However, this report is a milestone in the development discourse because it raised doubts about the continuance of existing pattern of development and the need for economic and environmental reforms. The United Nations followed up its concern for sustainable development with a number of conferences and summits which laid a solid foundation for it. Thus, it became the new agenda of the organization. These included the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. It would be appropriate to briefly discuss the major efforts of United Nations in this direction.

Major Efforts of UN Towards Sustainable Development

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which took place in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, was a landmark event bringing together Heads of State and Chiefs of Government, officials of international organizations, and

representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and others. It is also known as Earth Summit. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development outlined the fundamental principles on which nations can base their future decisions and policies, considering the environmental implications of socio-economic development. Agenda 21 was an outcome of the Earth Summit. This historic document was a road map towards attaining sustainability by integrating local, national, and global action.²

In furtherance of the goal, the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002 with the goal of improving lives, as well as preserving earth's resources and to reaffirm the commitment towards sustainable development. It is also known as Rio +10. The challenge before the Summit was how to reconcile development and economic growth with environmental sustainability. The Summit aimed at "improving people's lives and conserving the natural resources in a world that is growing in population, with ever-increasing demands for food, water, shelter, sanitation, energy, health services and economic security"³ The Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo Egypt from 5th to 13th September 1994 changed the world's approach to population and development issues. It provided a new vision about the relationships between population, development and individual well-being.⁴

The Beijing Platform for Action was the result of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995. It placed the agenda for women's empowerment and emphasised the need for a transformed partnership based on equality between women and men as a pre-condition for people centered sustainable development.⁵ The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development popularly known as Rio+20 – was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 20-22 June 2012. It renewed the commitment of UN to ensure an "economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations." It decided to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals which will build upon the Millennium Development Goals and converge with the post 2015 development agenda. The Conference also adopted ground-breaking guidelines on green economic policies.⁶

Sustainable Development Goals: The 2030 Agenda

Finally, to chalk out Sustainable Development Goals, on the occasion of 70th anniversary of the United Nations, a summit of world leaders was held at New York in September 2015. It adopted the 17 Sustainable

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Development Goals (SDGs) endorsed by 193 Member States of the UN. The UN Secretary General's remarks at the Summit for the adoption of development agenda clearly indicated the new global goals of UN and the paradigm shift in the approach to peace and development. Ban Ki-moon said: "We have reached a defining moment in human history. The people of the world have asked us to shine a light on a future of promise and opportunity. Member States have responded with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. ... It is a universal, integrated and transformative vision for a better world. It is an agenda for people, to end poverty in all its forms. An agenda for the planet, our common home. An agenda for shared prosperity, peace and partnership. It conveys the urgency of climate action. It is rooted in gender equality and respect for the rights of all. Above all, it pledges to leave no one behind."⁷ The resolution named "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda" adopted on September 25, 2015 placed before all countries of the world to achieve these goals over a period of 15 years. It aims to end poverty and hunger, protect the ecosystem and peace and prosperity for the future generations. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals of United Nations are the following:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and

- reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Further, these sustainable development goals were the theme for The International Day of Peace 2016, i.e., “The Sustainable Development Goals: Building Blocks for Peace.”⁸ The International Day of Peace of the year 2016 was a reminder to humanity about the significance and role of sustainable development achieving everlasting peace.

J. C. Kumarappa’s Economy of Permanence or Economy of Peace

The 125th Birth anniversary of J. C. Kumarappa gives us an opportunity to reflect on the UN Sustainable Development goals because he placed before the country a vision of an economy of permanence or economy of peace which would promote sustainable development practices. It is to be noted that the economic order visualized by J. C. Kumarappa was farsighted and went beyond the goals of present UN Sustainable Development goals. Therefore, it is significant to understand the economy of permanence outlined by Kumarappa.

Classification of Economy

Kumarappa classified ‘types of economy in nature’ into five different categories viz. ‘parasitic economy’, ‘predatory economy’, ‘economy of enterprise’, ‘economy of gregation’, and ‘economy of service’ on the basis of increasing order of permanence and non-violence.⁹ The parasitic economy could be best explained with the example of parasitic plant, which draws its nutrition from another plant which may eventually die. It is basically violent. In the predatory economy, one is enjoying the fruits of labour of another unit without contributing to it. Here the guiding factor is self-interest. In comparison to parasitic economy it is less violent. In the case of economy of enterprise creatures take what they need and contribute to production. For example, honey bees fertilize the flowers from which they gather the nectar and pollen. In the economy of gregation, creatures do not work for their own gains but for the benefit of the whole community. Here there is a paradigm shift from self-interest to group-interest keeping in mind the future requirements. Economy of Service is the best form, which may be found in the relation between the young one and the parent. Without looking for any reward or personal benefit one behaves in

an altruistic manner. Here the concern is next generation or future generation. This kind of altruistic relationship exists in a non-violent economy or what may be described as an economy of permanence.¹⁰

Similarly, Kumarappa outlined the peculiar characteristics of the various economies which may apply to human beings. To explain the characteristics of *Parasitic Economy*, he cited the example of a robber who murders a child for its ornaments. Here the selfishness motivated by greed is the driving force, which ultimately results in the destruction of source of benefit. The second one, *Predatory Economy* was depicted through the example of pick pocketing where one robs his victim without making him aware of his loss. Here also the chief characteristic is selfishness motivated by desire with the intention of his own benefit without making any contribution. The third type, *Economy of Enterprise* was explained through the example of an agriculturist who ploughs the land, manures and irrigates it, sows selected seeds, watches over the crop and then reaps and enjoys his harvest. He is motivated by enlightened self-interest and ambition. Here the benefit and contribution are correlated, with a readiness to take risk. The fourth type, *Economy of Gregation* was described through an example of a member of joint family working for the good of the family as a whole or a village panchayat or a Co-operative Society. In this case, he is not motivated by individual self-interest but by the common interests of the group. Here the whole emphasis is on the benefit of the group rather than individual members. Finally, in the *Economy of Service*, the leading type is a relief worker who is motivated by the good of others even if the work is detrimental to self-interest. It is based on love and deep desire to serve without reward, which brings in principles of non-violence and peace and paves the way for an economy of permanence. The chief test in this type is contribution without regard to any benefit received by the worker.¹¹

According to Kumarappa, there are three stages of human development viz. the primitive or the animal stage, the modern or the human stage, and the advanced or spiritual stage. In his view, the first two types of economies, viz. the 'Parasitic' and the 'Predatory' characterize the primitive or animal stage of civilization. The next two categories viz. 'Enterprise' and 'Gregation' indicate the modern or human stage. The last one, i. e., 'Service economy' refers to the advanced or the spiritual stage which paves the way for peace, permanence and non-violence. Gandhi and Kumarappa through their life-styles and work placed before us an economy which would lead the humanity to the advanced or spiritual stage.

Salient Features of Economy of Peace

What was the economy which Gandhi and Kumarappa were talking about? Truth and Non-violence were the twin principles which served as beacon in their way of life and action. In the field of economics too these were the guiding principles. That is why Kumarappa said: "If there is anything that characterizes Gandhiji's life, it is his devotion to truth and non-violence. Any economy that is associated with his name should, therefore, answer to these fundamental principles. economy based on them which will be permanent and will lead to the peace and happiness of mankind."¹² In the place of artificial economy of the industrialized world, Kumarappa placed the concept of Natural Economy. He said: "The natural economy calls for the satisfaction of the demands made by the primary needs of our body and by the requirements to keep it in good working condition. As long as we satisfy our needs in this way without infringing on the rights of others, there is no occasion for violence."¹³

He was highly critical about artificial economy which believes in multiplicity of wants and gears its production system to profit making rather than to meet the basic needs of the people. Such an economy needs wide markets which could be attained through political domination making violence and forcible colonial occupation inevitable. Kumarappa pleaded for restrictions on free foreign trade. He wanted it to be confined to surplus products which countries could exchange mutually. Following in the footsteps of Gandhi in *Hind Swaraj*, Kumarappa's idea of development is premised on the fact that material prosperity alone does not bring joy and happiness in the lives of the people. Working for the ever rising standard of living turns out to be a mirage which brings dissatisfaction in its trail. Therefore, he strongly argues for simple life based on fulfillment of basic needs and necessities. He wrote: "The term "high standard of living" is often made use of to connote a life led with a desire to satisfy a multiplicity of wants, and it has no reference to the qualitative conditions of life. It refers to the quantitative aspect of one's existence. Therefore, the more accurate way of describing this position would be talk of a "complex life" and a "simple life" rather than a "high" and a "low" standard Hence, what we want to give our people is high standard of life which will be simple."¹⁴

Kumarappa strongly pleaded for maximum utilization of human resources as our country has too many hands to work and too many mouths to feed. That is why he with the active support and involvement of Gandhi tried to work out a congenial production system through All India Village Industries Association and All India

Spinners' Association, in which there would be maximum opportunities of employment to the growing masses without disturbing the eco-balance. Such an economic order would be based on principles of decentralization which Gandhi called production by masses instead of mass production. He was clearly of the opinion that the western model of development was based on production of weaponry system whereas the need is to develop one characterized by industries of a peaceful nature.

He was deadly against the use of highly centralized and mechanized system, which with its division of labour kills the creativity of the worker and leads to a kind of alienation from their products. Like Gandhi, Kumarappa was not against machinery *per se*. He favoured the kind of machines, which could relieve the worker from drudgery in their working places and provide enough leisure time to think about the higher values of life. Like Gandhi, he was very realistic in his approach; that is the reason he has not altogether rejected large-scale industries as such. He wrote:

There are certain things for which large-scale industries may be used. We do not advocate that these should be wiped out altogether. They will be used only as necessary evil. We may have industrialization; we should put industrial products in cupboards and label them as poison. Large-scale industries must be under State control and not under private ownership and run not for profit but only run on a service basis. We organize a system in which there will be room for large-scale industries also..... In the industrial sector of our economic order, we have to put large scale industry in juxtaposition, and centralized industries should be used only wherever necessary. They should be used for a certain restricted purpose and not for making money by individuals by flooding the country with unnecessary things.¹⁵

Similarly, Kumarappa was visualizing an economic order that combines the best elements of Capitalism and Communism. He wanted to make use of the talents and energies of individuals in the right direction by promoting freedom of thought and action in a decentralized set up aiming at the production of basic necessities of life. He wrote:

We ought to be prepared to salvage whatever is good in any system and reject what is bad. It is with this approach that we have to look at Capitalism and Communism. Both have evils and strong points. Under Capitalism, profit motive is given free play and individuals are allowed to exploit every situation to their gain, even at the cost of injuring the society. The advantage of this system is that every individual gets an opportunity to exercise his talents and energy as he likes. In trying o

check this, the Communists have gone to other extreme of doing away altogether with the profit motive. Under their system a small idealistic group plans the work for the nation, and individuals “are not reason why, theirs but to do and die.” We should avoid the two extremes. In the first the individualistic outlook appears in an exaggerated form. In the other, the personality of the individual is completely crushed. While the first is based on uncontrolled selfish greed, the other based on class hatred.

He followed a middle path in which he wanted to combine individual initiative with social common wealth by gradual curtailment of private ownership by limiting productive capacity under the State control.¹⁶

Conclusion

To sum up the discussion one finds that Gandhi-Kumarappa model of development goes much beyond the so-called sustainable development goals conceived by the UN. The basic flow in the perspective of sustainable development goals of United Nations is that it fails to sketch out a real road map for achieving such laudable goals. All said and done, it does not go beyond the tinkering with the existing economic system. It believes that the existing system is quite amenable to be reoriented towards its desired ends. It seeks to reduce the existing inequalities within and among the countries and not to eliminate it totally or create a system in which chances of future inequality could be ruled out. On the other hand, Gandhi and Kumarappa placed a sustainable economic model, which takes care of the environment and eco-system, provides scope for mass employment with optimal use of human resources, rules out any possibility of growing inequality, builds up a community life in which man could enjoy high comfort level, could pursue higher spiritual values and goals of life and march toward a high level of human development. The problem of poverty and hunger are the byproducts of the existing economic system; that is why they are important components of sustainable development goals. The kind of alternative economic system, which Gandhi and Kumarappa stand for, is ruled out in the UN scheme of things.

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Notes & Comments

J. C. Kumarappa in the Context of Contemporary Agrarian Crisis

T.G. Jacob

Introduction

THE AGRARIAN CRISIS that is currently raging in the country has a fairly long history. In fact, its history goes back to more than half a century, i.e., to the Nehruvian political economy with its Five-Year-Plans and foreign experts entering the country during the early 1960s. The formal beginning of this crisis can be located to the time when the Ford Foundation started its first full-scale overseas office in Delhi in 1960. From that point, there was no looking back for the advocates of transformation of Indian agriculture, which has the longest recorded history of its practice on the planet. The subcontinent, the cradle of agriculture of the whole world, became the victim of the global interests of the western chemical industry. Indian agriculture with all its antiquity and variety was opened up as their market. To make this a pan-Indian process, a number of research institutes, agricultural universities and ground level implementation units like Block Development Offices were put in place over a period of time. Agrochemical industry technology and machinery were purchased or multinational corporations were invited in all humility to establish their own production units in the country with incredible dream-like

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concessions. Union Carbide was one such giant corporation which established its own plant in the heart of the once beautiful city of lakes known as Bhopal. But let us keep this gruesome story out and go back to agriculture as such.

Kumarappa's Critique on Nehruvian Political Economy

When the Nehruvian government introduced what is commonly known as the 'green revolution,' followed by a white one under the guidance of experts from the United States, it is not that there was no dissent. Certainly, there was a well-articulated, scientifically argued model of village-based land reform and development propounded by Gandhian political economists, the chief among them being J.C. Kumarappa. Due to his amazing intellectual capability, he could clearly visualise the futuristic results of the Nehruvian agrarian economic macro policy when it was in the making during the 1950s. What Kumarappa visualised was much before American experts dancing around Nehru entered the centre stage of the economy and society by the mid 1960s and who since then have only grown in monstrosity. By the beginning of the second decade of this century, the suicides of primary producers are not reckoned in terms of hundreds of thousands but millions. Agriculture as a viable economic activity is being forcefully questioned by these ever-increasing number of suicides due to the bankruptcy of the producers and this was exactly what Kumarappa foresaw half a century before. This alone enthrones him on a unique pedestal in the history of Indian economic thought. In the midst of the American dance around him, Nehru labelled Kumarappa "a mad man," which was nothing but emphatic rejection of the Gandhian vision for India. It was a case of colossal ignorance about the country, which he was presiding over. Kumarappa and his like were eased out of any policy-making roles and large numbers of Gandhians were accommodated in institutions created for fossilising Gandhi. This was planned to kill any challenge from the Gandhian developmental model and it succeeded too.

Political Economy of 'Green Revolution'

The background to the unleashing of new productive forces in agriculture is historical in nature. The colonialists left Indian agriculture in utter misery when they packed their bags. The entire colonial period is known as the age of famines with the Bengal Famine (1943) claiming more than a million lives. All over the country, the rural scene was bleak to the extreme and this obvious reality was what prompted Gandhi and his close followers to focus on rural reconstruction as the primary agenda of politically independent India. Reclaiming the

hundreds of thousands of villages from the pit of poverty and destitution became for them a necessary precondition for any serious lifting up of the country as a whole. By the mid-1950s, food scarcity had become vicious forcing the Nehru government to appeal for charity from abroad. Food riots had become endemic threatening the very survival of the fledgling government. The United States while shipping fodder-grade food grains exerted great pressure to shift from traditional agricultural production processes to chemicals-based water-guzzling production processes. The thesis that only modernisation of agricultural production can keep the crisis at bay found acceptance in the ruling circles in the country, overruling and ousting preeminent agricultural scientists like Dr. Richaria and bringing in and enthroning American trained experts like M.S. Swaminathan. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research came under the tutelage of American research institutions like the International Rice Research Institute located in Manila, Philippines. 'Green revolution' which was initially implemented in select areas with ample water availability was now designed on a much larger scale. What subsequently came to be known as the "great gene robbery" was executed and the character of seeds changed. With that, everything else also changed. Production increased and the acute food scarcity could be mitigated, though starvation and starvation deaths did not vanish.

'Green Revolution' was a transformational economic programme designed and imposed from above by developing productive forces in agriculture without radically transforming the production relations, which were holding back the growth of productive forces up to that time. This contradiction was thrown into the limelight by the outbreak of Naxalbari and the spread of the peasant rebellion to different parts of the country establishing a dual system of political power in some pockets of the rebellion. For some time, Naxalbari and its aftermath assumed the status of the most serious challenge to the ruling classes of the country, and tremendous state violence had to be unleashed to contain and suppress it. The systemic weakness of attempted economic transformation was exposed through this rebellion in the sense that transformational programmes imposed from above without changes in relations of production was found to be politically costly. Along with outright repression what came through subsequently was an intensification and further escalation of the imposed economic dynamics of 'green revolution.' At the same time, the structural contradictions that gave rise to Naxalbari gave place to qualitatively and quantitatively new contradictions by the mid-1970s itself, just one-and-a-half decades after the launching of the 'green revolution.'

Post 'Green Revolution' Scenario

It was during the second half of the 1970s that the new contradictions first broke out in the showpiece areas of 'green revolution' – Punjab, Western U.P., Haryana, parts of Maharashtra and Gujarat, and the Cauvery delta – where the primary producers had already become integrated into the different markets. In these areas the producers were surplus producers and the surplus was being extracted through the power of market forces. That was why the slogan of remunerative prices gained widespread currency among these producers. The gap between costs and income was becoming notable despite the subsidies. In other words, the terms of trade between agriculture and non-agricultural sectors were becoming adverse to agriculture and it was a growing phenomenon. The credit, inputs and output markets were all becoming extractive channels to exploit the primary producers, and they rose up in protest against this structural straitjacket. A new genre of protests known as "farmers' movement" entered the political lexicon. This came up because of the oppressive character of the market forces, which the farmers saw as plundering them. The farmers' movement or agitations were unlike Naxalbari and its offshoots, but they were not unconditionally non-violent. At times they were violent but it was not violence with the declared aim of capturing political power. They are economic struggles in which violence is not anathema. In fact, one sees both Gandhian and violent methods, when forced upon the agitators, conjoined in these struggles. But such struggles are devoid of any ambitious political programmes unlike the Gandhiled and Naxalite movements. The Naxalites or Maoists are ideologically motivated to overthrow the existing state power; the farmers' movements could be contented with a fair share in the wealth which they themselves mainly produce.

But the catch lies herein: the logic of capital accumulation in the system as a whole works according to the class interests of the dominant wielders of economic power, which is the corporate bourgeoisie, state power is geared to protect and further their interests of which the extraction of surplus from the agriculture sector is a prime component. This extraction of surplus is facilitated through control of the market forces and challenge to the dominant forces; controlling the markets is in essence asking for redistribution of wealth created, or, radical restructuring of the structure of the market mechanism, which will have serious repercussions on the character of state itself. This is against the logic of the politico-economic system, which is one of channelizing the entire socially available surplus into the coffers of a few. This is the rationale of the country being marked

by the highest inequality index in the whole world with the fastest growth of billionaires. The farming sector as a whole is a milch cow for the corporates with the crores of disparate farmers in an apparently powerless position to block the siphoning of the fruits of their labour and resources. This was not an unanticipated situation, at least as far as Kumarappa was concerned, when macro policies under the guidance of US experts was implemented by the Nehru government in Delhi.

Take the case of chemical inputs in agriculture. Since the 'green revolution' was launched in select pockets in the early 1960s, it has spread to larger and larger areas under governmental sponsorship. The spurt in output can be termed spectacular and this was a great incentive for farmers to adopt the chemicals based production process on an ever increasing scale. At the same time, the per acre requirement of pesticides, herbicides, chemical fertilizers, energy and water also spectacularly shot up. Studies on Punjab show that since 1970, the average prices of agro chemicals are now more than 300 per cent higher. The ever increasing extraction of ground water has contaminated the water sources as well as drastically pushed down the water table level, thereby escalating the cost of extracting it. Now it has come to the point that credit extending agencies like banks insist on the debtors spending the major share of the credit money on chemicals and oversee the obedience of the debtors to their dictates. This means that the credit givers have turned agents of the chemical producers and the farmers have lost the freedom to decide on how to produce and what to produce. In other words, the primary producers are being manipulated *en masse* to comply with the interests of economic fascism. The situation is not confined to factory made inputs; the same applies to the output market and the credit market. The grip is octopus-like leading to bankruptcy and related consequences. In India one of the consequences is that of self-destruction. That is why the number of suicides has reached millions.

'Green revolution' means production for the market. A very interesting illustration is provided by the initiation and demise of cocoa cultivation in Kerala. During the 1980s, cocoa cultivation which was unknown in India up to that time, was propagated by government agencies like Block Development Offices, and banks offered attractive credit. At that time the buyer of raw cocoa was a monopoly multinational company called Cadburys. When the farmers, under the incentive of high prices, took to cocoa in a big way in the foothills of the Ghats especially, output reached the required optimum. It was then that the buyer imported shiploads from Africa and the price of raw cocoa came tumbling down, with the result that overnight the

crop became totally uneconomic. The farmers had no way but to destroy the fully grown plants. The same is the story of vanilla in the same region. Every cash crop cultivator is on and off subjected to the same ruthless plunder. This applies to coffee, tea, pepper, coconut and every other similar crop. This is a merry game for the corporates, who are the principal gainers from this grossly unequal and distorted market structure.

Producing for the market and having absolutely no real influence on the market conditions is the predicament of the vast number of primary producers. This situation makes them helpless and easy prey to superior capital interests, who are able to distort the market conditions to suit their accumulation drive. This is the fundamental contradiction engulfing the agricultural sector in the country after the undermining process of traditional agricultural production processes was launched under imperialist guidance. Though there was a Gandhian alternative economic and political model very much in discussion after 1947, this was unceremoniously brushed aside as “utopian” and the American model of “modernisation,” wholeheartedly supported by the apologists of the Soviet model of reckless industrialisation at the expense of primary sector, was imposed on the country. At that time this went under the ridiculous label of ‘Nehruvian socialism’ which certainly did not have anything to do with socialism but was only state capitalist intervention to facilitate global and national corporatism. The subsequent trajectory, as anticipated by thinkers like Kumarappa, amply proved this course of the economy. The present all-round crisis of agriculture is the mature fruit of this course.

On the one hand, we have increasing production and increasing costs of production and on the other hand there are the gross inequalities and distortions in the market structure. Farmers dumping vast quantities of perishable agricultural products like tomatoes are common news. However, the prices of value added agro-based factory products never come down but only steadily increase. It is not that this value adding is very complicated or forbiddingly expensive. It is not so. The technology for value adding to agricultural products is relatively simple and inexpensive. But it is ironical that such processes are confined to corporate agro corporates. A ready illustration comes to mind. It requires only two and a half kg dried coffee beans to produce one kg of instant coffee. The price of one kg of instant coffee in the market amounts to more than INR 4000, while the price of one kg of dried coffee beans is less than INR 100. During the early 1980s there was a move to organise an instant coffee plant in Wayanad, Kerala, with coffee growers as shareholders. The move gathered

momentum and the collection of seed capital went ahead. At that time the sole producer of instant coffee was Nestle, a Swiss multinational. All the political parties jumped on to the bandwagon because they all wanted a share in the pie. Nestle became hyper active and easily purchased every political leader involved including the socialists and communists. The whole project died without even a whimper and the political class became rich overnight. They also propagated that the technology of making instant coffee is too expensive and unreachable by ordinary mortals. While being a vulgar illustration of anti-people agenda of power wielding and power aspiring political parties, it also pointed at the need for radically different organisational methods and approaches to empower the farmers.

‘Green revolution’ has taken away the vital ingredient of ownership and control of seeds from the producers. Now biotechnology through propagating genetically modified seeds, a further extension of ‘green revolution’ or what is called the second stage of the same, is attempting to completely destroy any semblance of seed autonomy. Changes in seed technology not only make the dependency for seeds ever more abject but also make the dependency of the entire production process follow the pattern faithfully. All this is happening without any corresponding improvement of the situation of the producers in the overall market conditions engulfing them. In fact, with every additional dose of intervention by external forces, the primary producers’ insignificance in the overall market structure worsens. Sustainability and self-reliance becomes ever more unattainable for the producers. Or, to put it in the parlance of market analysts, agriculture becomes a gamble. It has already become so in the case of market dependent crops all over the country. It is bound to become more so in the coming years, if no structural overhauling takes place. Unfortunately, any such radical overhauling seems very distant under the given conditions. The policy-makers are ever more determined to push for agriculture to become even more of a gamble. The increasing uneconomic character of agriculture is sought to be made into a permanent character of the sector. This can very well be a push for corporatisation of agricultural production and land ownership. In any case, land grabbing by corporates as an important component of the accumulation drive is gaining strength with every passing day.

Suicides are not the only means of unnatural deaths in the villages. Diseases are another means. The irrational use of chemicals affects not only the quality of the soil but also poisons the air and water. The train from Jalandhar to Jaipur is popularly called Cancer Express. The

number of cancer patients in numerous villages in Wayanad is 1.5 in an average family size of 5. Other deadly diseases like sickle cell anaemia, birth of deformed children, mental retardation etc. has become common in agricultural show piece areas. The devastation brought about by the use of endosulphan in Kasaragod district of Kerala is too well known to be narrated in detail here. The entire Vidarbha region is not only notorious for the continuing spate of suicides but also for large-scale deaths through diseases. Any number of such region specific case studies can be cited. What adds to the cruelty is that to date no serious attempts have been made to decipher the more than possible linkage between the use of deadly chemicals in the fields and these killer diseases. Of course, such spreading of killer diseases acts as a boost to the health industry's super profits and thus promotes the growth rate. National 'growth' data has become so convoluted and perverted that even income generation from mass misery and desertification of Mother Earth is eulogised as growth.

'Development' Induced Forced Migration

"Urbanisation," taken as the percentage of people living in towns and cities, is often accepted in neo-classical economics as an index of development and growth, and industrial production. After 1947, going according to this statistical index, India has registered impressive growth. The planners gloat over this. But the reality is that displacement from the rural areas is either forced or distress migration to avoid stark starvation. Displacement due to mega projects like dams, mines and large industries is in terms of crores. Apart from these 'development' induced forced migrations droughts and floods also contribute their share to this urbanisation. Indian cities and towns, like all Third World urban centres, are monstrosities lacking every civic amenity for the poor. The proportion of people living/dying in phenomenally filthy rat holes called slums without even the most basic amenities in cities like Mumbai or Delhi is phenomenal. This is as true of smaller cities as metropolitan cities. They are breeding grounds for all sorts of diseases with crime as one of the diseases. Agrarian crisis certainly fuels the growth of this urbanisation tremendously. Pushing people from the healthy natural living conditions to footpaths and rat holes is a regressive process that is currently gaining tremendous momentum. It is only out of total helplessness that the vast majority of migrants are uprooted. This sort of growth of urbanisation can by no stretch of imagination be characterised as progress or development. It is the exact reverse of progress. It is the perpetuation and worsening of standards of misery. Of course, it is quite logical to assume that the influx of large number

of people into towns and cities will encourage the casualisation of employment conditions in urban areas, which means perpetually depressed wages not only of casual labour – the predominant segment of urban working class – but also organised labour. This is always welcome to corporate capital. Kumarappa could foresee all these developments in outline even when the macro plans were being mooted.

Kumarappa and Gandhian Economic Thought

It is worthwhile noting again that Kumarappa was a professional economist specialising in public finance when he was drawn into the Gandhian political stream of struggle for freedom from imperialism. He is sometimes called Gandhi's economist. No doubt he was Gandhi's political disciple and *Hind Swaraj* became a reference book for him. At the same time, we have to record that the association was based on mutual attraction and respect. Gandhi was very much in need for an economist of Kumarappa's integrity and capability and Kumarappa was looking for a political philosophy as guidance. Gandhi invited Kumarappa to work with him, and the latter in turn adopted the former as his political guru. It was a daunting task for him, because it was not just a question of following Gandhi, but developing Gandhian economic thought as a specific economic philosophy rooted in ground level socio-economic realities. This was exactly what Kumarappa did both in theory and practice. In the course of his tough studies he developed an economic model with non-violence as the corner stone and the maximum welfare of maximum people as the goal. He soon became the most trusted and able theoretician of Gandhi's political ideas too, as is shown by him taking over the editorship of his main publications whenever Gandhi was in jail or elsewhere, which was quite frequent. The economy of permanence necessarily had to be against violent, rapacious capitalism and imperialism and it was on this premise that he opposed the economic policies of the Nehru government and American experts.

Kumarappa never accepted any given formulations, whether socialist or capitalist. He was well aware of both the Soviet and Chinese models of economic transformations. He studied both first hand but held that both were based on aggression which also meant exploitation of the vast majority for the gains of a few, and ecological disasters. He had his sympathies for both in their intentions and commitments but that did not prevent him from critiquing them. The underlying conviction was that India has to evolve its own economic model based on concrete study of concrete reality. On this point he was at home with Lenin and Mao but this was only a general truism.

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The main thing is what the concrete reality is and how to concretely study it. On both these counts Kumarappa became a path breaker and he followed his well argued out studies with illustrations to establish their validity. It was his firm belief that success of concrete implemented models is bound to create widespread acceptance of the people. But the post-1947 rulers were not inclined towards any such models based on humanist, ecologically friendly ideals; they were for handed down models of the capitalist imperialist variety. In this conflict of ideas on reconstruction and development political power decided the outcome, which was that Gandhi and Kumarappa and others of the same orientation were cast aside, and borrowed experts, who did not know anything worthwhile about Indian society and economy, were put in the commanding heights. The ongoing agrarian crisis is the wages of this misplaced policy which Kumarappa foresaw.

Conclusion

Kumarappa was never against industrialisation but he was not for a top down, heavy industry, big dams, ecology damning, and reckless exhaustion of reserve resources approach. For him resources are not only for the present but for the future too. He was for judicious exploitation of non-renewable resources, especially non-renewable sources of energy. International trade should not be at the cost of the people and ecology; industries should not displace and impoverish people. Village economy should empower villagers through promoting balanced cultivation for self-sufficiency, sustainable growth especially of small-scale industries using locally available resources, which alone can promote self-reliance, self-respect and empowerment of the vast masses too. This vision for an India devastated by centuries of colonial plunder was dismissed as unrealistic and absurd by the post-1947 policy-makers, who can rightly be called the engineers of the present all-round agrarian crisis, which is killing hundreds of thousands of primary producers and is responsible for monstrous urban chaos and deprivation.

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Relevance of J.C. Kumarappa's Concept of Decentralization in Modern India

M. P. Gurusamy

Introduction

J. C. KUMARAPPA, the world renowned Gandhian thinker and economist, is remembered now on the eve of his 125th year of birth. C. N. Vakil, School of Economics and Sociology, University of Bombay has rightly observed, "Shri. J. C. Kumarappa is well known as one of the trusted disciples of Gandhiji who was asked to carry out his economic ideas into practice and in doing so got ample opportunities of understanding first hand Gandhiji's point of view."¹

While understanding, appreciating and applying Kumarappa's ideas, we have to keep the following points in mind:

1. All his ideas are based on the two fundamental principles of Mahatma Gandhi i.e Truth and Non-Violence.
2. He has had a holistic view of life. Economics formed part of it.
3. His views on economics have the eternal values of spirituality. So it is ethical economics.
4. He stood for Rural India. He believed in what Gandhi said, 'India lives in her villages'.
5. His aim was to establish the 'Economy of Permanence'- based on the principles of nature.
6. On the whole, his ideas of economics have been man centered and not material wealth centered. In fact, he had the portrait of a poor farmer in his room, with the inscription, 'He is my master's master,' his master being Mahatma Gandhi.

Even though Kumarappa conceived his ideas some sixty years back, they are relevant to Modern India.

Present Indian Situation

Since independence in 1947, we are progressing due to our constant efforts such as Five Year Plans. Since India is a democratic country, the rulers may be changing occasionally. But we follow a polity of

development and growth to become a developed nation. We are following the path of developed nations. The transport, large-scale industries, science and technology etc. are developing. The educational institutions have multiplied. We have commercialized every field of our life. Money has become the dominating and deciding factor. The results are urbanization, mechanization, industrialization, consumerism and centralization. We have accepted the policies of globalization, liberalization and privatization. We are able to compete with many countries in the field of science and technology. Our technological human resources are excellent when compared with many developing nations.

There is another side of the development. That may be called the dark side of modern economic development. We have many growing problems such as ever increasing unemployment, deep rooted poverty, powerful and potential black money and corrupt political system. Our villages are slowly but steadily exploited and destroyed.

Out of the total population, majority are living in rural areas. In spite of all our efforts, most of our villages are not having basic amenities, medical facilities, education, electricity, drinking water, communication and transport facilities. It is against this background that we look upon Kumarappa for guidance to overcome the problems.

Evolution of Decentralization

In the ancient times we had a system of social and economic life based upon the principles of decentralization. It evolved naturally according to the circumstances prevailing during the period. Kumarappa said:

In the case of an agricultural civilization, the system ordained by nature is not interfered with to any great extent. If there is a variation at all, it follows a natural mutation. The agriculturist only aids nature or intensifies in a short time what takes place in nature over a long period. He has improved the wild varieties found in nature. He has converted grass seeds into wheat and rice by accelerating natural conditions. Similarly, in economic organization, agricultural civilization has largely followed nature in the methods adopted for producing commercial products. Commodities are brought into existence either to order or to meet the usual and easily determinable market demand. A social regulation machine aids distribution, but production followed by individual.²

The village industries such as spinning, weaving, carpentry, blacksmithy, pottery etc. flourished according to the needs of the people. Barter system was in vogue. Money was used only whenever and wherever necessary. In those days village economy was self-

sufficient, self-reliant and decentralized in production and distribution.

During the British rule, our rural economy was totally changed. The rulers wanted to get raw materials for their large-scale textile industry and create market for their products. They consciously changed our rural economy to be dependent on British economy. They introduced monetary system and created cash economy. They established an excellent and powerful commercial system.

In the agricultural sector, the self-sufficient situation gradually gave way to dependent economy. Our farmers were persuaded to produce commercial crops such as cotton, sugarcane, tobacco, groundnut and chilly. Money was introduced replacing barter system.

Simultaneously, the government encouraged the development of large-scale industries, transport facilities, hospitals and educational institutions and urbanization. The net result was the decay of rural economy, which was the foundation of Indian economy.

The Negative Impact of Centralization

As a result of the foreign rule, centralization prevailed in the place of decentralization of production, consumption and distribution. Kumarappa analyzed the root cause of centralization and its impact on our economy. We have enough experience of centralization and industrialization. Kumarappa observed, "It is not generally understood that imperialism is a child of centralized industries, and now in its dotage centralized economy cannot exist without the support of imperialism."³ The experiences of England, Germany and America would reveal the problems of industrialization and centralization. The result of competition among the industrialized countries to mobilize raw materials and capture markets for their products was the cause of the two World Wars witnessed by the world. Kumarappa points out: "To run any centralized industry great many facilities have to be guaranteed as the industry was to be sure of its raw materials, transport, labour and markets. Each one of these needs a powerful organization at prohibitive expense."⁴ He also pointed out: "No centralized industry can thrive without the patronage of the government and the tax payer's money. Therefore, their low costs depend largely on the unseen subsidies they get from the state in the form of various services."⁵ The main problems of centralization are unemployment, concentration of money power in the hands of few and increasing poverty in the country.

Need for Decentralization

Kumarappa discussed the merits and demerits of the systems of centralization and decentralization in an elaborate and intensive

manner in his book *Why the Village Movement*. He pointed out the circumstances under which decentralization could be used with advantage.

1. Where there is a scarcity of capital it is not possible nor is it necessary to have centralization. The only possibility is decentralization.
2. Where there is plethora of labour, or in other words, unemployment and under-employment, we shall be increasing the malady by centralizing production.
3. Diversity and variation is the very essence of decentralization. The handwork will reveal the personality of the worker.
4. If democracy is to be attained, decentralization lays the required foundation. As centralization kills all initiatives in the masses, they lead readily to central dictatorship.
5. Where raw materials and markets are in the proximity of the producing centres, decentralized methods will move well.

The following are the advantages of decentralization:

1. Decentralization makes for more even distribution of wealth and makes people tolerant.
2. The process of production includes distribution of wealth also, as a large part of the cost goes to pay for the labour. Better distribution of purchasing power leads to effective demand and production is directed into supply of needs, as the supply here will follow the demand.
3. As each producer becomes an entrepreneur, he gets plenty of scope to exercise his initiative.
4. The market being close to the centre of production, there is not much difficulty in selling the goods.
5. Without centralization of either wealth or power, there can be no disturbance of peace on a national scale.

Kumarappa also observed: "Of course, as regards key industries and public utilities, there is no alternative to centralization, but this can be done either co-operatively or by socializing such industries."⁶ He added: "It must be clearly remembered that when we advocate decentralization, it does not mean that we eschew all machinery. Where machines work as tools or slaves of man, we need them and have to improve the existing ones. It is only when machines are used to transfer the benefit of man's labour to another that we have to cry a halt. Human concern is paramount."⁷ The great economist Schumacher, in his world famous book *Small is Beautiful* quotes elaborately the ideas of Kumarappa to establish his theory of small-scale production

Suitable System of Production

Now we have to decide which type of production and distribution would be suitable for our nation. Ours is still a rural India. We cannot build a strong national economy without caring for the welfare of the majority of our people who live in villages. When people are migrating from villages to cities, most of our municipalities, corporations and growing big cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru are not able to accommodate migrants and face grave problems of scarcity of health and sanitation amenities and dwelling facilities. We know very well how the cities are not able to meet the problems at the time of natural calamities such as heavy rain. The reason is clear; we have developed cities ignoring the law of nature. We have destroyed places of living. In these circumstances it may not be advisable to allow our Rural India to perish. 'Save India means 'save our villages.' In 1950s itself Kumarappa pointed out the unlimited growth of centralization and urbanization.

In spite of various attacks on the living methods and production functions of our villages, our villages are struggling and living. During the struggle for independence, Mahatma Gandhi was fighting for the revival of our villages. He talked about five lakh villages. His great and unique constructive programme was evolved to protect our villages. During the British rule, they had destroyed the basic structure of Rural India by introducing market and money economy. They destroyed our village industries consciously to find market for their products. They encouraged large-scale production by introducing machinery.

But after independence our leaders could have taken steps to reconstruct our villages. Due to the compelling situations, our leaders adopted policies which were detrimental to our villages. They encouraged large-scale industries, centralization and urbanization. Our Five Year Plans were consciously drawn, for the growth of the country on foreign lines of development. Our macro level plans encouraged large-scale industries, service sectors and infrastructure facilities. Our objectives were to increase the exports and attain growth of national income and per capita income. We were not bothered about the concentration of wealth in the hands of few. It is the reason for the growth of black money, poverty and unemployment.

At present our villages are struggling for existence and survival. The reasons are very clear. All the educated and skilled labourers have left the villages. Only the people who are not able to earn their livelihood in the nearby cities are living in the villages. A large number of people who have left agriculture are staying in the villages. They

go daily to nearby cities in search of casual labour.

The people who are cultivating the land may be classified into two categories. One section of the people who own sizable cultivable land are able to cultivate the land in spite of various practical problems and difficulties. Another section of the people who have uneconomic holdings are not able to cultivate the land. The farmers have problems of lack of working capital, scarcity of labour and inadequate market for their products. Even now a larger number of farmers “are born in debt, living with debt and dying in debt.”

A new problem of recent years is the ownership of rural land which has been transferred from farmers to the city dwellers. The rich people and higher income groups are investing their surplus money on land. In a way, sizeable black money is hoarded in the form of rural land.

Most of the allied village industries which were providing employment for a sizeable number of people had decayed in the British period itself. Even though the policy of the Government is to revive village industries, we have not succeeded. Unless we take effective steps, it is very difficult to have a sustainable rural economy.

Steps to be Taken to Develop Rural Economy

Kumarappa had said even before independence:

Ours is an agricultural civilization. Agriculture is the main occupation in this land, around which we should develop our economy so that it is rooted in the soil, and large part of India's humanity who is engaged in this occupation will build up a suitable economy and restore the age old agricultural civilization. Agriculture will be so planned as to conserve the soil and provide enough work and wherewithal for the farmers' families all round the year.⁸

Many steps have to be taken to strengthen agriculture. Science and research have to be employed in this direction. Intermediate technology has to employ to increase productivity. We have to protect our cattle and improve their productivity. Horticulture should be the integral part of agriculture. Multipurpose co-operative societies have to be established in the villages to look after all the economic activities of the village. They have to provide all the credit facilities, provide inputs at reasonable price and market the village products. There should be no place for middle men and money lenders. They should have proper warehouses to stock their surplus products. Animal husbandry and dairy farming can be developed in rural areas. The farmers should be encouraged to have cattle.

Based on the availability of raw materials and local market, rural industries have to be developed. We still have a few industries such as weaving, carpentry, black smithy, pottery making vessels manufacturing and palm-gur. Kumarappa conducted research on palm-gur industry and pointed out the various economic advantages of this industry. We have palm trees throughout India. They grow in any land. If we properly protect and use them, the palm-gur industry will provide nutritive neera and palm-gur in addition to providing employment for large number of rural artisans. More than that, it will save the land which is put for sugarcane cultivation. Land may be used to cultivate crops necessary for the people. If the rural economy has to be protected, the migration of able bodied workers and skilled artisans from villages to cities has to be prevented. It is possible only when we provide opportunities for living in rural areas. Employment opportunity has to be created in plenty.

It is high time to think about the ownership of the land in the villages. There should be no absentee landlords. The land should be either owned by the actual tillers or the village community. Revolutionary steps have to be taken in this direction. Our aim should be, as Gandhi said: 'production by masses and not mass production.' If decentralized production and distribution have to be successful, the administration also needs to be decentralized. The village Panchayat has to look after the planning for the village. Democratic decentralization will strengthen the democracy of our nation.

To Think and Act

Kumarappa has been a Gandhian visionary and he has always been thinking for the establishment of Indian society which will be sustainable in the future. Decentralization of production and distribution is the only means to have 'Economy of Permanence.' The order suggested by him has the following elements.⁹

- 1) It should create wealth as efficiently as possible.
- 2) It should distribute wealth widely and evenly.
- 3) It should supply the needs of the people before comforts and luxuries are catered for.
- 4) It should be a means for eliciting all the faculties of the worker and developing his personality.
- 5) It should be conducive to peace and harmony in the society.

Now it is our responsibility to think about the dynamic ideas of J. C. Kumarappa and try to implement them.

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Book Reviews

Decentralized Democracy: Gandhi's Vision and Indian Reality by M. V. Nadkarni, N Sivanna and Lavanya Suresh, Hardcover, 438 pages Taylor & Francis (2017) ISBN-10: 1138103659, Rs. 1295

This book, with a foreword by P. R. Panchamukhi, has an introduction, chapters on Gandhi's attitude towards the state, decentralization as a means of democratisation, evolution of panchayats in the pre-independence period, record of decentralization after independence and two critical reviews of the present Panchayati Raj with a focus on deepening democracy and development outcomes, and inclusiveness and environmental orientation. Chapter eight dwells on evolution and performance of panchayati raj in Karnataka . It is in many ways related to chapter nine, which is on local democracy and gram panchayats in Karnataka.

The authors have made this claim: "Other studies may have only given a few quotations on Gandhi, but offered no in-depth discussion of the vision as a whole and its implications to PRIs as this book has done." Further, "it would be rare to find a single book which discusses all these issues in a connected way." The book claims to be interdisciplinary.

The authors engage in a discussion of subsidiarity and see it as irrelevant since it is driven by efficiency argument. However, the efficiency argument is a more recent addition. The subsidiarity principle was often used for centralization of power. In normative terms, it insists that lower level groups such as families and local communities are not tools in the hands of the higher ups, but have an existence of their own which needs to be respected and nurtured. In Gandhian thinking, subsidiarity operates in a reverse way, in an oceanic circle format. The process of granting powers to the larger spatial levels is undertaken by the smallest level and not the other way and the book has come to grips with that to a great extent.

Chapter ten entitled decentralized democracy in an urban setting

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sits uneasily with the rest of the book. Gandhi did not in fact speak of urban governance. It was not part of his agenda. In the final chapter on deepening democracy, the authors call for greater representativeness to the local bodies since their voice is not counted in the parliament and in the legislative assemblies. They also make a number of general statements many of which cannot be corroborated by data drawn from across the states. In the final chapter, the authors say this about Gandhi: "He wanted a system where the common people ruled themselves, not just through their representatives whom they would elect once in five years, but through active involvement and participation in governance." This is not Gandhian. It is an addition brought in by Gandhian activists like Jayaprakash Narain. Gandhi did not think that the Gram Sabha could function as a decision making body. For him, decision-making cannot be carried out by the mob, but only by a handful of people. Hence, in the Gandhian scheme of things, the Gram Sabha has power to recall the panchas, if they fail to perform after being in office for six months, but leaves no space for people to exercise powers directly.

Based on field insights from Karnataka, the authors claim that voters are afraid to take part in the proceedings of the Gram Sabha because of dire consequences that would follow. There is also reference to elite capture and absence of any system for organising the Gram Sabha. Yet, if 25 to 30 per cent of the electorate participated in places like Karnataka, there is no need for despondency, although the authors think otherwise.

On the whole, the book is a welcome addition to the literature on two counts. It provides a broad overview of the Gandhian understanding of panchayati raj. Second, it provides clues about the actual working of such bodies in India with particular reference to the experience of Karnataka.

There is some degree of confusion in the notion of anarchism as understood by the authors. They say: "Gandhi was not an anarchist, but wanted to keep the power of the state to the minimum necessary extent by fully decentralising it." They seem to take it literally (meaning disorder) and fail to recognize the fact that modern Indian political thought is largely known for its anarchism and Gandhi also belongs to that genre. Secondly, there is no recognition of the fact that Gandhian panchayati raj is embedded in an alternative paradigm of development based on basic needs satisfaction, self-reliance, rural living and self-sufficiency whereas modern panchayati raj is grafted on to the existing neoliberal model. Thirdly, Gandhi had no concern for urban local government, making the chapter on urban government in the book an aberration. He was opposed to urbanization and migration of rural

youth to urban areas.

While Gandhi talked about the possibility of constitution of village panchayats by the people of a village all on their own, he was cautious enough in granting judicial powers to it. He said that the sanction of the Pradesh Congress Committee would be required in such cases to prevent miscarriage of justice. He also did not speak about reservation of seats for women although there was no bar for women to become panchas.

It is not an easy task to assess the existing panchayati raj institutions from a Gandhian perspective since the two have different origins and trajectory. The authors, therefore, deserve appreciation for undertaking this rather difficult exercise. That the empirical part largely reflects the experience of Karnataka alone is certainly a limitation. More input from states that at least sought to incorporate some Gandhian elements into the existing systems such as Madhya Pradesh would have added to the richness of the book. The omission of some key works by scholars like Henry Maddick is quite glaring. Though his book *Panchayat Raj: A Study of Rural Local Government in India* was written in 1970, during the period of decline of the panchayats, it is quite an indispensable book, considering the range of subjects treated in it.

Gandhi saw the panchayat as serving certain other functions such as improving food and milk production and contributing to local economic development. This aspect has not received attention in the book. Further, Gandhi was concerned with the Gram Panchayats alone and not panchayats at the larger spatial levels like Block and District, which would have been of some interest to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, whose reservations were confined only to Gram Panchayats.

Despite these flaws, the book advances knowledge in the field of decentralization. The authors have provided very useful and relevant tables and a few appendices at the end. I would like to congratulate the authors for the painstaking effort made to prepare them and bring out the book in its present form.

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