

Continuing Relevance of Swadeshi



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PREFACE

Gandhi's philosophy of life was a holistic one. He looks upon life as a supreme value and an indivisible whole. The whole gamut of life cannot be segregated into economics, politics and so on. Issues in life have to be looked upon from an integral approach. It will be a reductionist approach, if we approach life from an economic angle alone. Gandhi integrated the different facets of life and believed in the inner unity of life and oneness of all creations. It was his firm conviction that law governing the conduct and life of human species and of the universe is the law of truth and the path leading to it is the principle of non-violence or love. The only way to realise the grand and noble aim of life is to organise all activities of life on the basis of twin principles of truth and non-violence.

It will be difficult to take all aspects of life in one go for a systematic analysis. It is quite natural that we take up anyone aspect of life for deliberation and study. But it is always necessary to be aware that we are concentrating on a piece of the whole, one at a time, and it is the whole we are aiming at. At present we are contemplating on one aspect of Gandhian philosophy, that is, *swadeshi*. *Swadeshi* is an integral part of Gandhian economics. Gandhian economics is nothing but an economics of love or non-violence. Our main concern should be how to organise our lives according to the law of human species. *Swadeshi*, trusteeship, decentralised mode of production etc. are parts of the magnificent and grand life which Gandhi wanted to achieve for all members of the society including the downtrodden.

With the advancement of science and technology, changes are taking place at a fast rate in every aspect of human life. Drastic changes have taken place in the field of economics

too. Globalisation is today's buzzword in economics. Globalisation along with economic liberalisation and privatisation has attracted the attention of the people all over the globe and it was assuming the form of a ruling ideology of the world till the advent of global financial meltdown in 2008. In fact globalisation and liberalisation policies were looked upon as a means to make the economies more dynamic, strong and progressive. However, the experiences from the field show that instead of strengthening their economies, globalisation process has weakened the position of third world and developing countries. As a result, their economies have become more vulnerable and the poor people were exposed to harmful effects of cut throat competition which led to gross inequality and created social unrest, economic and cultural insecurity among poor and marginalised sections of the society. It led to the emergence of a new world order symbolising economic and political domination and cultural hegemony of the west on the third world countries.

The financial melt down has posed serious questions about the survival of this world order especially the economic order. This scenario has set in motion to seek viable alternatives to overcome the present riddle. At present all sensitive and thinking mind are focusing on Gandhian perspectives and prescriptions as means to overcome the problems confronted by the humanity. Now there has been a growing realisation that an effective antidote to the menace of globalisation and the present economic crisis is to revive Gandhi's economic ideas especially concepts like *swadeshi*. Moreover it has been admitted that his concept of *swadeshi* coupled with *swaraj* is a universal principle though the context was mainly India when Gandhi propounded his vision. In view of the above, the Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha, organised a seminar on Gandhi's concept of *swadeshi* in the

context of global economic crisis from 23 -25 January 2011. The seminar was attended by likeminded concerned scholars, activists and constructive workers from India and abroad and they reflected on the concept of Gandhi's *swadeshi* not only with a view to find a way out for the economic impasse but also as a universal principle for the well-being of humanity and its praxis in various facets of human life. This volume is a collection of selected paper at the Seminar.

The first article written by C.S. Dharmadhikari examines the relevance of Gandhian economic ideas especially the concept of *swadeshi* in the context of present economic crisis. He condemns the present globalisation process and states that it is nothing but an economic ideology based on exploitation and profiteering. It caters the interests of multinational companies and global financial institutions of developed countries and not of the common man of third world or developing countries. In order to overcome the present economic crisis and menace of globalisation there is an urgent need to revisit, review and revive Gandhi's economic ideas especially concepts like *swadeshi* as a universal principle of human emancipation. *Swadeshi* is a dynamic concept. *Swadeshi* is not merely an economic concept; it is basically an attitude towards life. The spirit of *swadeshi* should be reflected in our thinking and practice. According to Gandhi *swadeshi* means neighbourliness. There is no neighbourliness in a society where relationships are frozen. *Swadeshi* calls for freedom from all forms of exploitation.

Banwari Lal Sharma defines *swadeshi* as that activity of the country in which people's whole being is involved. He argues that to save our society, economy and ecology we have to discard the present model of development and revert to

swadeshi. He also explains some Movements already in progress in the direction of *swadeshi*.

Radha Bhatt looks upon *swadeshi* as the greatest vow of the present age. In her view, the world economic crisis is unnecessarily being overemphasised. The real crisis consists of the dying of rivers, depletion of ground water, disappearance of glaciers, flow of effluent into the seas, depletion of the ozone layer and so on. In this context, it is relevant to meditate on Gandhi's *mahamantra* of *swadeshi* which alone can lead the way to human salvation. *Swadeshi* has to be imbibed not only in the field of economy but also in science and other aspects of the social order. She also expresses her keen desire that some initiatives should emerge from this seminar.

Bharat Mahodaya's paper places a perspective on *swadeshi* basically from a Gandhian perspective. He argues that *swadeshi* is intimately connected to truth and non-violence. Tilak was unrestrained in his opposition to British rule while emphasizing his idea of *Vande Mataram*. For Gandhi *swadeshi* was not a cult of hatred. It is a philosophy of love through the service of immediate neighbours. *Swadeshi* is perhaps the only answer to the evils of mass production and technology propagated by the capitalist economy. It aims at fulfilling the natural basic needs of people. *Swadeshi*, when practised by all, will transform the psychology of all and will lead to the attainment of a new society on *sarvodaya* lines.

Suresh Pandharipande argues that *swadeshi*, cannot be properly understood if studied in isolation without reckoning with its essential linkages with the overall project of creating a counter culture that Gandhi envisaged through his postulation of the eleven vows and the Constructive Programme. It will be a reductionist approach if we confine *swadeshi* to economic

matters only. By linking *swadeshi* with *swaraj*, Gandhi has succeeded in combining modern man's urge for freedom and belonging, that is to say, a life of rootedness and interrelatedness.

In his paper, "Understanding Gandhi's Vision of *Swadeshi*", Siby K. Joseph summarises Gandhi's vision of *swadeshi* and points out how this concept covers almost every aspect of life viz., the economic, political, social, religious, educational and health. The ideas and concepts developed by Gandhi in the course of his relentless experiments with truth was an attempt to integrate the various aspects of life. The concept of *swadeshi* was not an exception. *Swadeshi* is the key for basic understanding of the edifice of Gandhi's philosophy of life.

In his analysis, Ram Chandra Pradhan, elaborates Gandhi's vision of *swadeshi* polity. According to him, Gandhi was for working out a political system which could ensure the real *swaraj*, both in its inner and outer connotations. In plain language, his 'inner *swaraj*' meant that man must be liberated in his inner being from his devilish tendencies like greed, anger and delusion, and replace them with pious tendencies like compassion, love and empathy. But he was also aware that the 'outer *swaraj*' – removal of the external tendencies to inner *swaraj*, was equally important, as that alone could create a congenial atmosphere for enjoying the former. Hence his insistence on Indian independence and gradual transfer of power and activities from the centralised State to the voluntarily raised decentralised institutions. Gandhi, at the same time, did not favour a rigidly defined and fully worked out systemic design. He favoured an open-ended system, with broad outlines, based on his basic ideas. Primarily, he desired a

small but well-organised village community, at the base of a non-hierarchical polity.

Louis Campana examines the significance of *swadeshi* in the context of the current economic crisis. Today, the economic, political and social power is seized and confiscated by the elite. Can the people reclaim it and dignify it with a spiritual dimension? Is it possible to imagine that the world could become a community of village republics and rid itself of institutionalised economic violence? Yes. It is possible, according to Louis Campana. For this, the people must be awake and aware. That is what is meant by *swadeshi*, and it is neither naivety nor utopia, since it is functioning fully in certain places.

Jeevan Kumar, in his paper “From Modernism to Post-Modernism in Agriculture: The Quest for ‘*Swadeshi*’ and Sustainability.” reviews the most recent revolutions in agriculture, namely the Green and Gene Revolutions. While the former brought in a technological package with hybrid seeds, chemical fertilisers, pesticides and mechanisation, it forced the farmer to give up self-provisioning and become a market operator. The Gene Revolution has brought in biotechnology into agriculture, with the entry of genetically modified seed and food. According to him, this is questionable technology with a host of intended and unintended consequences which include loss of food security and food sovereignty, since the technology is in the hands of big agribusinesses. Against the background of the modernisation project in agriculture, the Gandhian concept of *swadeshi* needs to be located in the discourse on Sustainable Agriculture, because of its emphasis on self-reliance, equity, justice and sustainability.

K.R. Kranthi in his paper on “*Swadeshi Cotton*” argues that cotton is an immensely important crop for the sustainable economic development of India and of the Indian farming community. India accounts for 30% of the global cotton area and contributes to about 20% of the global cotton produce, currently ranking second after China. It needs to be noted that India was the cradle of the finest cotton fabrics civilisation had ever seen. However, American cotton was introduced into India to suit the British mills. Since then, there has been a steady neglect of indigenous varieties. Against this background, there is an imminent need to exploit the genetic diversity in the *Desi* species for the development of improved varieties. Development of high-yielding *desi* varieties can be ideally suited for low input sustainable cotton farming in India so as to enable India to re-emerge as the undisputed world leader in cotton. *Desi* cotton species are ideally suited for organic cotton cultivation. Spinning machinery should be developed to suit *desi* cotton fibre traits.

Amiya Kumar Sahu’s article examines *swadeshi* technology in solid waste management in India. He argues that Indian climatic conditions, lifestyle and economy being different from those of the Western world, it does not make sense to adopt those technologies which are not suitable for our environment. It therefore becomes imperative for us to consider *swadeshi* or traditional and indigenous solid waste management technologies for India. He suggests the implementation of the 4R Concept, namely, Reduce, Re-use, Recycle and Recover. He also outlines the features of Bio-Bin Composting, Vermi-Composting, Anaerobic Digestion/Biogasification and *Gobar Gas*, as eco-friendly technologies. He finally suggests the adoption of the 3-E Principle incorporating Ethics, Environment and the Economy.

G. S. Murty, in his paper, pleads for a cow-based economy and explains various facets of benefits like generation of power, manure and milk. Similarly, the cow-based agriculture gives benefits like improvement of underground water, free of chemicals, improving the soil fertility and finally, reducing global warming. In this connection, he cites the results of the American Association for Advancement of Science regarding the organic farming and the benefits derived from it. He also points out the grim situation of the non-availability of oil in the near future. Cow-based energy can be used to overcome the crisis in the energy sector. He also describes the efforts going on in America, Europe and China in harnessing the energy from bio-gas produced from *gobar*. It is time for India to take up this endeavour to hand over to the next generation the sustainable energy and agriculture.

Joseph Chittoor's paper narrates the significance of *swadeshi* ideals in the new world order. In consonance with Gandhi's idea of *swadeshi*, each one of us must try to produce our own 'raw materials'; our own traditional food and practice our traditional food system. We should nourish and develop our traditional health care for community health needs and employ our own traditional technologies and develop the same with scientific innovations; and conserve the nature and eco-systems for the welfare of humanity.

The relationship between *swadeshi* and religion is examined in Swamy Tanmaya's paper. According to his analysis *Swadeshi* has three dimensions - compassion, *swadharma* and wisdom. When we try to live in the spirit of *swadeshi*, the entire creation should be there in our mind. Regional empowerment of the nation needs religious support. Harmful practices like animal sacrifice in the village temples is to be stopped. Negation of life is against the religious

teachings. All world religions uphold love, compassion or kindness as a central doctrine. *Swadeshi* is ‘*swadharma* applied to one’s immediate environment’. In spiritual sense, *swadeshi* stood for the ‘final emancipation of soul from her earthly bondage and realising her oneness with all life’.

Shankar Tiwari’s paper “Nepal’s Polity and Political Economy – A Swadeshi Perspective” examines *swadeshi* in the context of Nepal, how the global trend and India’s role have been shaping Nepali political economy and polity itself. Till 1960, Nepal could export agricultural products, but today 42 out of 75 districts are facing acute food crisis. It was mainly due to neglect of agriculture by the state and clear preference for professional and other fields which sowed the seeds for the present crisis in Nepal. Earlier, Nepal recruited soldiers for the British Indian Army. Now, Nepal is sending unskilled work force to make modern structures in Arabian Peninsula, Malaysia and Europe. The recent economic crisis hit the Nepali economy badly. About 50,000 workers lost their jobs and had to come back home, in the midst of their contract. In every regime change in Nepal, India played a dubious role by supporting one party or the other. The real *swadeshi* or *swaraj* would come if the domestic political players play their role without falling under any political pressure from the North, South or far away.

A revised and edited version of a letter written by Chandrasekhar Dharmadhikari to the Member (Education) Planning Commission and Chairman of the Consultative Group on School Education and Literacy, Government of India, New Delhi is also appended in the volume as it gives a fairly good idea of *swadeshi* educational system.

This volume succinctly manifolds the various dimensions of Gandhi's concept of *swadeshi*. The articles contained in volume show the in-depth and comprehensive nature of *swadeshi* and its praxis in various facets of human life. Gandhi's vision, especially his revolutionary concept of *swadeshi*, is definitely an antidote to present crisis in the global economy. The articles place the continuing significance of *swadeshi* in the modern world. We are sure that this volume will kindle the interest of scholars to further study and research in this area. We hope that this volume will be of great interest for students and scholars of Gandhian thought, activists and constructive workers and general readers interested in creating a world order based on twin principles of truth and non-violence.

We are grateful to Justice Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari, Chairman, Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha for the initiative and constant encouragement in the production of this volume. It was kind on the part of Ram Chandra Pradhan, Faculty of the Institute to carefully go through the papers and offer valuable suggestions towards its improvement. Our special thanks are also due to John S. Moolakkattu of Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam for his guidance and encouragement in the editing of the volume. Thanks are also due to Arunima Maitra for the support and assistance in the editing of the volume. We are grateful to Shrikant Kulkarni and Manohar Mahajan and other staffs of the Institute for their kind help and support which has been a source of inspiration in our work.

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Economic Crisis, Swadeshi and Gandhian Economics

C. S. Dharmadhikari

The global economic crisis which we are facing today is so profound and the people all over the globe are looking plausible ways to overcome it. This ever-intensifying crisis has given us an opportunity to review the whole process of globalisation, which was assuming the form of a ruling ideology of the world. The global economic meltdown which began in September 2008 shattered the myths about the globalisation. In the name of globalisation, policies of liberalisation and privatisation were dominating the economies of developing countries including India. Under reign of globalisation, the role of government was reduced to the minimum and the concept of welfare state was altogether ignored. By taking a cursory look at the economies of third world and developing countries, even a layman can understand that the process of globalisation instead of making economies vibrant and progressive weakened the economies and made them highly dependent on the mercy of the global financial institutions like World Bank and IMF and multinational companies. The poor people were exposed to harmful effects of cut throat competition which led to the widening gap between the rich and the poor. It created social unrest, economic and cultural insecurity among poor and marginalised sections of the society. Thus the present crisis is not merely an economic one. In fact it is multifaceted problem leading to an emerging world

(dis)order. Therefore, it is appropriate to take an overview of the process of globalisation and its impact on poor and the marginalised sections of the society.

Globalisation is nothing but an economic ideology based on exploitation and profiteering. It caters the interests of multinational companies and global financial institutions of developed countries and not of the common man of third world or developing countries. We have opened our markets for multinational companies in the name of globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation. Multinational companies are penetrating even into minutest aspects of our life. Multinational companies took over the control of many local industries by merger and acquisition and all prominent Indian brands have a multinational tag. Our villages are flooded with the products of multinational companies. Multinational companies are neither working for any particular nation nor for the benefit of the nations in which they are expanding their business activities. Capturing the market by any means is the main aim of multinational companies. Exploitation and selfishness are the driving forces behind their activities. It is an irony that the packets of potato chips of multinational companies are sold even in areas which were known for production of potatoes. The potato chips production was basically a cottage industry run by the women to meet their day to day expenses of the family. Now the whole scenario has changed. The multinational companies purchase potatoes in bulk at a rate of two to four rupees per kg. and they sell 50 gm air puffed packet of chips at the rate of Rs.10 or so. This is basically a technique of marketing of multinationals using attractive packets and advertisements. By destroying the home industry of potato chips the multinationals are making huge profit in this retail business. It will not be surprising if cottage industries like *Lijjat pappad* is captured by the multinationals. What will

happen to those women who are engaged in such cottage industries if it is run by the multinationals? As a result of globalisation, the rich people are becoming richer and the gulf between rich and poor is widening. The welfare of poor and marginalised sections of the society is altogether ignored. They continue to remain poor. The number of the people below the poverty line is increasing even after modifying the criterion of poverty line, though the Government does not agree with it.

We are led to believe that fulfilling material needs is the ultimate objective of our life and economic endeavour. This led to the consumerist tendencies of modern times. Consumerism is catch word of globalised economy. Human beings are highly dependent on innumerable consumer items. Even we can not think of living without washing machine, cleaning machine, refrigerator and similar other products. All these wants were unknown to us a decade or two ago. In fact these wants were created artificially by multinational companies to market their products. As per one report of the Brain Trust of Japan, even they are thinking of producing artificial wisdom. The unbridled production and consumption of goods led to excessive exploitation of nature and its resources. It is unfortunate that we are not taking into consideration social cost included in the production process. Similarly we are not concerned about the resource requirements of future generations. Human beings' craze for pleasure and enjoyment by any means, utter negligence towards the environment and increasing corrupt practices and criminalisation have created an imbalance in society and social relationship. Just copying the model of development followed in western countries will not solve our problems. Long back, Gunnar Myrdal author of *Asian drama: An inquiry into the poverty of nations*, questioned the relevance of Western economic models in Asian conditions including India. Consumerism can not be considered as measure of

human development. Standard of spending is not an index of standard of living. Now money is not merely a medium of exchange. Value of anything is measured on the basis of money or purchasing power. You can purchase even individuals and nations like a saleable commodity. Grief or misery of a section of society is considered as an opportunity to make money. Even medicines are available only to those who can afford to buy it. People are stockpiling medicines in their fridges to safeguard themselves from the infectious diseases which seldom affect them. It is insignificant whether they need the medicines at the moment or not. On the other hand the poor patients are dying without medicines because they do not have the purchasing power. In this era of globalisation, black market has been accepted and even got a legal sanctity in the name of competition. The cheaper products we consume in the market are the result of exploitation of women and child workers. Exploitation is always cheap. This is nothing but *anartha sasthanra*. The basic problem before us is whether we want to continue the unsustainable economic system based on exploitation and injustice. The myths about globalisation are completely shattered now. There is a growing realisation among sensitive minds all over the world that we can no longer go ahead with this economic system and they are looking for alternatives which are viable and sustainable.

The search for alternatives to overcome the present malaise leads one naturally to the doorstep of Gandhi. He placed before humanity a compassionate economy based on service and love, and a sustainable model of development based on people's initiative and providing scope for optimum utilisation of local resources both material and human. In order to overcome the present economic crisis and menace of globalisation there is an urgent need to revisit, review and revive Gandhi's economic ideas especially concepts like *swadeshi* as a universal principle of human emancipation. Now it has been admitted that Gandhi's concept of *swadeshi* coupled with *swaraj* is a universal principle though the context was mainly India when Gandhi propounded his vision. It was in this context, the Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha, decided to organise this seminar on Gandhi's concept of *Swadeshi* and the Present Economic Crisis.

I want to remind this august audience that *swadeshi* is not a geographical concept; it is a universal principle. It is a dynamic concept. Its meaning is not exactly the same in all contexts. *Swadeshi* is not merely an economic concept; it is basically an attitude towards life. The spirit of *swadeshi* should be reflected in our thinking and practice. According to Gandhi *Swadeshi* means neighbourliness. There is no neighbourliness in a society where relationships are frozen. *Swadeshi* calls for freedom from all forms of exploitation. In capitalism production is for sale and profit. Actually production should be for fulfilling the needs of neighbourhood. Gandhi advocated production for home consumption or for immediate neighbour and not for sale in the far-away market or for export. Business should be for the extended family. The companies which are coming as a result of globalisation should behave like guests assisting our economy and not aim at destroying it. Exploitation should not be the goal of business; on the contrary

business should be guided by values of service and assistance. Gandhi quoted seven social sins in *Young India* in one of his articles. They are “politics without principles, wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, and worship without sacrifice.” (*Young India*, October 22, 1925) Globalisation without *swadeshi* can be added as one of deadly sins. Our economy is largely dependent on import and export of goods and services. Even from the point of view of business we should reduce our dependence on imports and promote the marketing of local products. We have to strengthen our economy by promoting *swadeshi* products and ensure that the capital remains in our country. In the context of growing unemployment and poverty, the concept of *swadeshi* is more relevant than the times of Gandhi and Tilak. Creation of an economy on Gandhian lines calls for the application of principle of neighbourliness and a sense of family relationship.

Gandhi wanted a change in basic mechanism of ownership, production and distribution. He wanted freedom from the rule of merchandise and rationality in production. The distribution system should be based on human relationship. Fundamental principles of his economics were simplicity, non-violence and sanctity of human labour. What is needed today is an economy which will ensure full employment to the increasing population. Here comes the importance of *khadi* and village industries. For Gandhi, *khadi* and village Industries meant decentralisation of production and distribution of the necessities of life. He believed that the salvation of India lies in the revival of *khadi* and village industries. Even now it remains true. If India really wants to progress it has to revive the *khadi* and village industries. *Khadi* is not a piece of cloth. It is a symbol of revolution. It not only covers our body but

also clothes a naked country like ours which is suffering from poverty and unemployment. Nearly 60 lakhs people are working in the sector of *khadi* and village industries. None of a single multinational company has the capacity to provide employment on a large scale like *khadi* and village industries. If each and every citizen of India purchase at least one *khadi* dress in a year it can provide employment to one crore population of this country. It is a misconception that, using *khadi* is very expensive. The *khadi* sector fixes the prices of its products by ensuring fair wages to those who produce them. Looking from this perspective *khadi* and village industries products can not be said to be expensive at all.

If we want to free the villages from the clutches of poverty, unemployment and exploitation, we have to develop a system in which there is a fine balance between village and cottage industries on the one hand and large scale *swadeshi* industries on the other hand. The well known philosopher Bertrand Russell in his book *Authority and the Individual* talked about the importance of sinking Scottish handicraft industry. He said "First, there is the loss, added to those we have already suffered in the blind and greedy heyday of the Industrial Revolution, of one more local and traditional skill, which has brought to those who exercised it the joy of craftsmanship and a way of life which, though hard, gave pride and self-respect and the joy of achievement, through ingenuity and effort, in circumstances of difficulty and risk. Secondly, there is the diminution in the intrinsic excellence of the product, both aesthetic and utilitarian. Thirdly, this murder of a local industry aggravates the tendency to uncontrollable growth of cities, which we are attempting to avoid. The independent weavers become units in a vast hideous and unhealthy human ant-hill. Their economic security is no longer dependent on their own skill and upon the forces of

nature it is lost in a few large organisations, in which if one fails all fail, and the causes of failure can not be understood.” In this book he further talked about India and the importance of preserving the village communities and traditional way of life. “India, for example, is traditionally a land of village communities. It would be a tragedy if this traditional way of life with all its evils were to be suddenly and violently exchanged for the greater evils of urban industrialism...” Gandhi was aware of the evil effects of large-scale industrialisation and mass production. He said “God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. If an entire nation of 300 millions took to similar economic exploitation it would strip the world bare like locusts” Nature is not an enemy that we must conquer or exploit. Natural resources are not meant for exploitation. It should be used for fulfilling the basic needs of human beings and not the greed. Gandhi said “the earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need but not for every man’s greed.” In his ideal economy, nature and animal had an honourable place. We must co-operate with nature and animal kingdom to enrich our life, to make life richer, better and more beautiful.

The centre of Gandhi’s economics was man. For him man was the measure of everything. He was interested in ‘Man Power’ and not ‘Horse Power’. For him foundation of economy should be man. Gandhi believed in humanism even in the economic field. System of production and the system of distribution should be coupled with the cultural development of human being. The human personality should be capable of being developed through this process, which means that system of production and distribution should be conducive to the growth of all human faculties. Gandhi realised the fact that unemployed hands were bound to cause destruction and violence. They would destroy the very fabric of our nation. He

was against craze for machines and its indiscriminate multiplication to replace men. He was not against inventing labour saving devices but wanted to provide employment to forced idleness. His plan was for peace, security and progress rather than war, or exploitation. He wanted growth in national wealth for men and not at the cost of men. A country which is rich in human resources should not depend on large scale machines for the production of basic necessities of life. Taking into consideration the growing unemployment in the country our aim should be to use maximum manpower. It is a misconception that Gandhi was against the use of machines. Even spinning wheel is a machine. The simple tools and machines should assist the human beings and not replace the human labour. What will happen if machine takes the place of human being in a country which is abundant in human resources? Mechanisation is undesirable if it displaces human labour and leads to penury. The purpose of mechanisation is not to replace human labour but to assist and augment it. If glasses replace eyes, the very eyesight is lost. The man machine relationship should not mis-match. Creativity of human being should be developed by engaging him in production process. Productive labour should be the basis of development of human qualities. Martin Luther King Jr. has rightly pointed out that "There is nothing in our glittering technology which can raise a man to new heights because material growth in itself has been made an end. In the absence of moral purpose, man himself becomes smaller as the work of man becomes bigger."

I am not elaborating on various aspects of Gandhian economics. It will be in order if we consider here Gandhi's concept of trusteeship which is a unique technique of socio-economic change. He called trusteeship as the technique of change of heart. According to Gandhi a capitalist is only a

trustee of his wealth and not the owner of it. Similarly, labourer is a trustee of his labour and should utilise his services for the benefit of society. The concept of trusteeship applies to Government also. The Government should act as a trustee of the people and should not behave like a despot or king. The Government is vested with the power over land and property of people to manage or use it for the welfare of people in general. The concept of trusteeship will apply to everybody in all the spheres of life. The application of this technique will bring a silent revolution in the society.

The Preamble to the Constitution of India reads as follows: "We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic..." Initially when the Constitution was enacted the words 'Socialist and Secular' were not there. These words were added to the Preamble by the 42nd Amendment Act of 1976. While defining the meaning of the word 'Socialist Republic' the bill proposed that it means 'a republic in which there is freedom from all forms of exploitation: social, political and economic'. But the said definition clause was rejected by *Rajyasabha*, though it was passed by *Loksabha*. It is inexplicable why it was rejected. According to Gandhi, freedom from all forms of exploitation means non-violence. Gandhian economy based on the philosophy of nonviolence calls removal of exploitation of all forms. Gandhi wanted to establish a *sarvodaya* society through the application of non-violence in all fields of life. He believed that the *sarvodaya* is possible only through *sntyodaya* or welfare of the last or the poorest. The welfare of the poorest was the main theme of his talisman. Gandhi said "I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he

gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *swaraj* for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and your self melt away." I think the well known talisman given by Gandhi should guide the spirit of our discussions. This *mantra* given by Gandhi should guide our planners involved in the process of planning and development of the country. Similarly, I will cite another interesting conversation between S.K. Dey, the then Minister of State for Community Development and renowned Gandhian economist J.C.Kumarappa at Kallupatti in early 1956. The Minister told Kumarappa about the great success of Community Development Programme by citing the figures of achievement in various programmes. Kumarappa reacted to it sharply by stating that "Mr. Dey before I cover a particular area with the Community Development Programme I would count the ribs on a few persons and if after three years of work there is some flesh to cover those ribs, I will call it a success". He added further "you are attempting to throw a silk shirt on a hungry person; you will never succeed" But it is unfortunate that these principles were all together ignored in the independent India especially in the current process of globalisation. We have to apply these tests to the present economic policies. Human being should be the centre of all development planning. In the name of globalisation there should not be any sort of injustice, inequality, exploitation to anybody. We have to combat the forces of globalisation through *swadeshi*. The vow of *swadeshi* is master key for attaining the Gandhian ideal of economic *swaraj*. Our guiding principle should be "think globally and act locally". We have to move from *gram swaraj* to the idea of *vasudhaiv kutumbakam*. This will lead us to an ideal global economic order based on ethics and morality. Only through such a radical restructuring of present economic order we can overcome the crisis which is plaguing the economies all over

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the world.

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Swadeshi: The Greatest Vow of this Age

Radha Bhatt

Gandhi called *swadeshi* as *swadeshi dharma*. It was an integral part of his eleven vows. He described it as the greatest vow of the age. Therefore, to look at this revolutionary human value merely as an instrument to overcome the present state of economic crisis is not only unfair but also to lose its real strength.

In fact, economy is not so an important aspect of human existence as it is being made out today. Material achievement is nothing more than a means in the context of wholesome life of man. It can never become an end or the purpose of human existence. Therefore, any economic system which takes the creation of wealth as an end in itself could never achieve a solid foundation. We have to understand the intricacies of present worldwide economic crisis. We can easily see that the greatest weakness of the present thinking is that we have made consumerism as the primary aim of our life. A country like ours with its ancient culture had had an entirely different view of material wealth. For us the real wealth comprised of air, water, nature, land, ether etc. It meant that all those resources which were needed for the sustenance of human life actually constituted the real wealth. Unfortunately, today wealth is measured in terms of money which is printed on paper and used

2 Continuing Relevance of *Swadeshi*

in exchange. It is eating into the vitals of rich heritage and prosperity of the world. Thus, the world economic crisis is unnecessarily being overemphasised. The real crisis consists of dying of the rivers, depletion of ground water, disappearance of glaciers, flow of the waste material into the seas, hole in ozone layer, emission of excess CO₂, methane and other acids in the air which are destroying the very foundation of earth. Not only that, the top layer of the soil is also being destroyed. These are real crises which are not being given due consideration in the discourse on economic crisis. In this context, it is relevant to meditate on Gandhi's *mahamantra* of *swadeshi* which alone can lead the way to human salvation. *Swadeshi*, i.e., neighbourhood or localism has to be imbibed not only in the field of economy but also in science and other aspects of social order. It is our misfortune that today we are looking down upon our own old life style or old local knowledge. *Swadeshi*, in fact, has been destroyed in the process of pseudo scientific intervention in life and blind faith in science and technology which had become instruments of profiteering. Consequently every aspect of human life viz. food, cloth, sport, education, culture etc. has become the real victims of centralisation. Let us talk about the system of our food. The grains are taken from the village to the godowns of Food Corporation of India (FCI). Subsequently it is again sent back to the village retail shops through trucks and trains. In the process, a lot of fuel is wasted which is so scarce and precious. Besides, a lot of resources are wasted in construction of mega roads. Moreover, a lot of land is also wasted in these schemes of things. All this unnecessary expenditure is added to the price-structure of grains, fruits and vegetables thus they go beyond the reach of common man. This kind of market system is creating lot of problems both for the consumer as well as producers. The problem of disposal of

solid waste, pollution, criminalisation, ever increasing tentacles of immoral living, destruction of neighbourly feelings and above all the naked indulgence in corruption are some of its manifestation.

Swadeshi could be really a link between rural and urban centres. We could develop a system for food exchange comprising an area of ten villages. Thus a village market could become a real centre for sale and purchase of village goods. If this is done there will be neither misuse of fuel nor the ill effects of climate change. What is more, grains will not rot in government godowns; nor it will be eaten up by the rats. Not only that there will be no black marketing, no starvation, nor immorality or cruelty in the society. In such a situation a self reliant but interdependent society would emerge giving a deep sense of self respect to the people. This is so because as per *swadeshi* mantra one would buy and sell goods only in the neighborhood and would not import the goods we could produce in our locality or country. The only way to build up a self reliant and strong nation is to adopt *swadeshi* from local level to the national level. This will also lead to emergence of a new international order free from exploitation. Hence the real need is to adopt a national policy in favour of the interest of producers, farmers, workers, weavers and artisans. For their dignity and interests, all policies governing market, finance, education, health, environment etc. should be formulated. On this score we are even lagging behind the neighbouring countries. Steep inequalities coupled with violent expression of peoples' anger are virtually eating into the vitals for our country. It is very strange that a country like ours wherein nature has been so bountiful, but due to our mismanagement it

is becoming a victim of mass poverty, unemployment and food scarcity. All these are the result of wrong priorities of our national planning.

I am firmly of the opinion that giving a kilo of rice for Rs.2 and daily wage of Rs.100 to the farmers and workers is nothing but an insult to their dignity. I further think that it would be much better to give them responsibility of managing local resources like water, forest, land as well as the right to fix the price of their produce. In the lexicon of Gandhi, this will be the true national policy. Even today agriculture is the mainstay of people giving employment to almost 55% of our population. Besides, there are millions of weavers who have become unemployed because of centralised industrial textile policy. It is unfortunate that these sections of our people are forced to work as *riksha* pullers, restaurant workers, coolie and small vegetable vendors and engaged in other menial works. What is more they are forced to spend their life on the urban roads having no roof over their heads. If right kind of policies in respect of forest, agriculture, textile etc. is formulated, the peasants, workers and weavers would on their own come out of the grip of poverty. Besides, the country could easily become self-reliant in respect of food, clothing and other things of day to day use. It is well-known fact that a country can not retain its freedom if it goes with a begging bowl to other countries. All these things happen because industry becomes the first priority of the government and in the process, interest of rural population is ignored. It is very unfortunate that instead of looking for the potentialities of our own people, our planners have been modeling our development policies earlier on the western pattern now on the Chinese. In fact the entire global system is based on extreme exploitation of natural as well as human resources. The primary

objective of such a policy is profiteering. Hence, instead of distributive justice they are pursuing a policy of loot. As a result wealth is getting concentrated in fewer and fewer hands and the entire government policies are geared to their interests. And this is being called growth which fails to look after the interests of approximately 67% percent of our population who eke out their living on the daily earning of 12 to 20 rupees. Only the policy of *swadeshi* could bring such large population into the main stream of our national life. It gives the highest priority to every citizen of our country without any discrimination in respect of their basic needs. *Swadeshi* seeks to build up a society based on non-violence, equality and justice. Further it seeks to restore peoples' power. Thus the wealth created out of labour and co-operation would belong to the entire society. Moreover, it will also obliterate the distinction between the mental and manual work. Thus productive labour will find pride of place in the society prompting every member to do his or her bit to our national life. *Swadeshi* gives a new social philosophy. Both Marxist and Gandhians stand for an egalitarian society. But the problem is that in Marxian scheme, violence had been given the place of pride. On the other hand Gandhi underscores the centrality of non-violence. With the collapse of Soviet Union, Capitalism has got a new lease of life. Capitalism is not only destroying the natural resources of the world but also posing a direct affront to human dignity. As a result violence is becoming the order of the day in every walk of human life. One is reminded of the prediction made by Gandhi that the modern western civilization will perish, is coming true. Hence it is time to take to the way of *swadeshi* which could work as an effective alternative leading to a new social order free from exploitation,

inequality and domination. Such policy of *swadeshi* needs to be pursued from village to international level.

Let us note that *swadeshi* also involves decentralisation of power and leadership. There is an urgent need for collective and decentralised leadership at every level of our national life. In old parlance it is called *gansevaktva* – servant of the collective. It is high time that Gandhians take to such new pattern of collective and decentralised leadership. We must face this challenge. I would like to congratulate the organisers of this Seminar for providing me an opportunity to do fresh rethinking on *swadeshi* in the context of the problems faced by our people. I am sure that the deliberations of this seminar will yield some concrete results prompting us to take the message to the wider society. We should not stop at mere intellectual deliberations; it is the time to take the *Mahamantra* and *mahavrat* of *swadeshi* to the universal level. There is no need to imitate the American or the Chinese way. India has *swadeshi mahavrat*; which alone can point a way out of the present impasse not only for India but for the entire humanity.

What does Swadeshi mean today?

Banwari Lal Sharma

What is Swadeshi?

The prefix **LO** (*Swa*) in Sanskrit has a very special significance. It is difficult to translate in English, 'self' may be the nearest word. But its sense can be appreciated from the words, in which it has been frequently used as prefix;

LOkHkko] Lok/khu] Lo/keZ LodeZ] Lojkt]

LokoyEcu and Lons"khA In the attributes of all these words Lo connotes the involvement of the whole being of the person.

Swadeshi may be understood as that activity of the country in which people's whole being is involved. Any action, any product or service produced in the country qualifies to be called *swadeshi*, if in its production people and their communities are directly involved. For example, a soap manufactured in a TATA factory may be made entirely by Indian people working in the factory. But it can not be called *swadeshi* soap simply because it is not produced at the initiative of people, they are not directly involved in its production though they have produced it. They produce it for TATA, not for themselves. They just work there to earn money. They never feel that TATA soap is their OWN soap. Tata soap may be called *deshi* (made in India) but it is not *swadeshi*.

Adam Smith's Concept of Swadeshi

Even before Gandhi, there were Indian thinkers, freedom fighters and poets who talked of *Swadeshi*. The names of Bharatendu Harishchand, Yogi Arvind and others may be mentioned in this connection. The ideas of the grand patron saint of modern economists- Adam Smith-were very close to *Swadeshi*. In his epic work, *The Wealth of Nation*, he condemned the monopolies by both business and the state. His ideal was a market in which products by small producers are sold and bought by small buyers.

During the freedom struggle, Gandhi developed seriously the concept of *swadeshi* and put it into action. He worked hard for reviving cottage and small scale industries so that common people and their communities participate directly in the production and use directly their produce. The distance between producers and consumers should be as minimum as possible. This is the spirit of *swadeshi*. For this to happen, Gandhi launched the programme of boycott of foreign goods. Burning of British cloths was a historic sight of the freedom movement. After achieving independence, Birla asked Gandhi in the Birla Mandir, Delhi, “Bapu, you have been a fighter all your life. Britishers have gone. Against whom would you fight now ?” Gandhi smilingly replied, “against you”. Gandhi’s fight for *swadeshi* was not only against foreign goods but also against the mass production by the capitalist industrialists. In his vision, *swadeshi* meant production by masses and not mass production. According to him, *swadeshi* was the only way to take out Indian masses from poverty, hunger and unemployment.

Assault on Swadeshi

It is well known fact that on *swadeshi* Nehru had divergent views from Gandhi. It is a fact that none of the Governments which ruled the country after independence sincerely adopted the policy of *swadeshi*. However, some *swadeshi* spirit remained underlined and organizations like Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) and some Gandhian organisations continued some activities on *swadeshi* lines.

But the outright attack on *swadeshi* started in 1991 when the Government of India adopted New Economic Policy (NEP) under the pressure of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the giant Multi National Corporations (MNCs) of United States, European Union and Japan. Indian economy was opened to the MNCs (domestic and foreign) which during the last 20 years have grabbed resources and production system exploiting common poor people and villagers. The whole economy is now corporatised and all Government policies are being framed in favour of corporations. Agriculture has also come under their attack with seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, diesel, implements and now land going in the hands of MNCs. The latest attack is on retail market in which the central government is bent upon inviting giant retail corporates like Wal-Mart, Tesco, Carrefour and Metro AG.

In the terminology of World Trade Organisation (WTO), *swadeshi* is termed as protectionism. WTO declares that it is now the age of free market. But in reality free market means open plunder by MNCs. Ha- Joo Chan in his well known work, *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective* (which won the European Association for Evolutionary Political Economy's 2003 Gunnar Myrdal Prize) says that the so-called developed countries, which have

now become pioneers of free market, adopted protectionism in the course of their development and now they are not allowing the poor countries to adopt the same path.

The result of the killing of *swadeshi* and following the policies of corporate led globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation etc. can be now seen by the naked eyes. According to the Government's own committee's report 77% Indians earn Rs. 20 or less per day and they include mostly *dalits*, *adivasi* and poor villagers. More than 2.5 lakh farmers have committed suicide during the last 15 years. Every second child is undernourished and the Prime Minister calls it a national shame! The army of unemployed youth is ever growing. There is a stark inequality prevailing in the society. On the one hand, there are 55 billionaires in the country. On the other hand, there are hungry and malnourished people somehow surviving. Corruption, violence and insecurity of women from a tender age to the old age are rampant. Environmental disaster has reached its climax and is threatening the very existence of some great rivers and forests.

Urgency to revert to Swadeshi

If we want to save our society, economy and ecology there is no other way but to discard the present corporate model of development and resort to *swadeshi*. We should not expect this from any government, only a mass movement like the one to oust the Britishers is the way. A movement to assert people's communities right of ownership on the resources and right of decision making to use them is to be launched countrywide. Simultaneously, the boycott programme of MNCs goods and services and to block the functioning of their establishments have to be initiated. All these movements will have to be non-violent and people centred. If it becomes violent, they will have to face the police force and corporate *goondas*. Non-violence is

the only powerful weapon in the hands of people to face the brute force of the state and MNCs.

Some Movements already in progress in the direction of Swadeshi

At several places, different organisations have started *Swadeshi* movements in their localities. It may be worth mentioning some activities initiated by *Azadi Bachao Andolan*. In Hazaribagh district of Jharkhand State where farmers of 205 villages have not allowed for the last 7 years 35 companies (domestic and foreign) to do coal mining and establish thermal power plants. They have declared, 'coal is ours and so is the electricity'. We will do mining by ourselves and establish thermal power plant under our ownership if need be. They have found a way via media by forming their own producers companies. Similar experiment is being undertaken in Uttarakhand where people are fighting against big dams and hydel projects. They have formed their producers company in Almora district to produce electricity by building a small hydel power plant.

The third interesting experiment is on the way in the Greater NOIDA near Delhi. Noida authorities acquired land from about 70 villages for industrial purpose at a cheap price from farmers, and sold it to builders for constructing residential colonies. Farmers went to the High Court and then to the Supreme Court and some villages got back their land. But the Noida authorities and builders put pressure on the villagers to take more compensation and give back their land. They succeeded partially in one village. *Azadi Bachao Andolan's* activists intervened and got the farmers changed their idea of giving back their land on higher compensation. They put before them this idea, "Normally you should go back to farming by restoring your land. But if you really want it for colonies, why can't you build your own colonies, keeping ownership in your hand? The idea is very well taken. Process has already started

to build a new type of village colony in which villagers will live, some people from outside will also live in the colony. Only organic food produced by the farmers in their fields will be used in this colony. Energy and electricity will be generated by biomass and solar energy, no plastic will be allowed in their market, a new system of water supply and sanitation will be developed. Many good organisations like National School of Urban Planning, Delhi are enthusiastically participating in this new venture. This message is spreading in other villages and now the farmers are making up their mind not to part away with their land, whatever prices are offered to them. The need of the hour is to spread the message of *swadeshi* all over the country and it should become a real mass movement.

Swadeshi : A Counter Cultural Concept

Suresh Pandharipande

The concept of *Swadeshi* is a part of Gandhi's 'eleven vows' which, in turn, is his prescription for a counter culture, or, so to say, his prolegomena of a cultural revolution. *Swadeshi*, therefore, cannot be properly apprehended if studied in isolation without reckoning with its essential linkages with the overall project of creating a counter culture that Gandhi envisaged through his postulation of the eleven vows and the Constructive Programme. It, therefore, follows that a purely economic interpretation of the concept is not only incorrect and illegitimate but also leads to grave distortion of the meaning of the 'spirit of *swadeshi*' which Gandhi untiringly invokes in contexts other than the economic. In fact, there are instances when Gandhi justified, his participation in the freedom struggle in terms of the spirit of *swadeshi*. Again, his adherence to Hinduism, and, what is more, his strong claim to be a religious reformer was also legitimised by Gandhi on the same basis. Outlining the idea of *Swadeshi* in broad parameters, significantly as a psychological attitude or a sentiment, Gandhi observes, "*Swadeshi* is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion. That is the use of my immediate religious surrounding. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects..... In the domain of politics, I should make use of

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

These remarks should leave no room for doubt in our minds that Gandhi envisaged, in respect of *swadeshi*, a multi-dimensional applicability that left no aspect of human life, personal, social or psychological untouched and uncovered. It should also become clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that Gandhi would not endorse the reductionist approach that seeks to confine *swadeshi* to economic matters only. Indeed, such a partial and lopsided interpretation of *swadeshi* which, alas, seems to have found favour, of late, in certain quarters of our socio-political and pseudo-religious life, is fraught with the wholly unanticipated and unjustified possibility of the empowerment of the national bourgeoisie. Gandhi would not only never endorse or support such a view of *swadeshi* but would fight it with all his might. *Swadeshi*, therefore, needs to be studied from a proper perspective.

As one seeks an adequate framework to conceptualise the ‘spirit’ of *swadeshi*, one realises its close kinship with the concept of ‘*swaraj*’ which again was invested by Gandhi with a unique and distinctive connotation and content all his own. Indeed, like *satya* (truth) and *ahimsa* (non-violence), *swaraj* (self rule) and *swadeshi* too are like two sides of the same coin. The one would be unthinkable without the other. *Swaraj* without *swadeshi* would be empty and vacuous and *swadeshi* without *swaraj*, unsustainable, thwarted and incomplete. Thus by linking *swadeshi* with *swaraj*, Gandhi has succeeded in combining modern man’s urge for freedom and belonging, that

is to say, a life of rootedness and relatedness. Viewed in this perspective the concept of *swadeshi* seems to unfold its fundamentally radical implications. Gandhi refused to subscribe to the modern, western idea of individual freedom. For him freedom and individual development were mediated through love and service of one's neighbour. Thus, the freedom and development of all was a pre-condition of the freedom and development of each. This could be achieved, as he believed, through the spirit of *Swadeshi* that enjoins upon us to serve with love our immediate surroundings.

For the concept of *swadeshi* to take a concrete form, it obviously requires a political economy that would be radically different, both in structure and content. The soul of *swaraj* for Gandhi was a truly authentic being inspiring and experiencing love unmediated through self, power and possessions. Gandhi would have readily agreed with Marx when the latter remarked so insightfully that 'the truly rich man is not he who has much, but who is much!' And the heart of *swadeshi* was neighbourliness that included not just one's fellow human beings but animals and the various objects in nature such as the trees, the meadows and the lakes and the rivers. Thus, neighbourliness is a profound ecological awareness that seeks togetherness, harmony and a non-dualistic relationship. The social, political and economic structure expressing these values in the quotidian aspects of life must be radically at variance with the one usually come across all over the world irrespective of whether the structure is managed by an all powerful State or monitored by equally powerful corporations.

Swadeshi produces for the neighbour and also, from the resources available in the neighbourhood. Thus, it intends and seeks initially to reduce and ultimately to eliminate the role of the institution of market as we understand it today. The

impersonal (read inhuman) laws of the market cannot be allowed to subvert, override and dominate the laws of love and harmony that stand for equity and solidarity in a *swadeshi* structure. Such a structure is naturally eco-friendly and essentially sensitive to the fundamental significance of scales and limits in a society that seeks freedom without alienation and equity free from competition. The concept of scale and limits has a wide ranging applicability that includes the forces of production, the mode of production, the aims of production and also the quantum of production. These considerations must lead us to a review and reappraisal of the nature and role of modern technology and industrial production. The technology, as we have it today in the developed and also in the developing (though in a marginally smaller proportion) societies are geared to mass production of things for the world market. This technology has been admittedly found to be ecologically disastrous, socially alienating, economically tilted in the favour of those who already have enough and politically reducing the individual to an anonymous number! Obviously, such a technology would not get with the spirit of *swadeshi*. Therefore, *swadeshi* looks forward to the invention of a new, alternative technology that would enlarge the range of each person's competence, control and initiative limited only by the other individual's claim to an equal range of power and freedom. This can be both possible and feasible provided we recognise natural scales and limits. It must be recognised, for instance, that beyond a certain limit machines enslave man and technology generates a new form of serfdom. Gandhi had realised this with prophetic insight as early as 1909 when he published his *Hind Swaraj*. Expressing his views regarding machinery, he says with usual clarity, "What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work and thrown on the open

streets to die of starvation..... I can have no consideration for machinery which is meant either to enrich the few at the expense of the many, or, without cause to displace the labour of the many..... I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all.”

Gandhi's insistence on natural scales and limits must be interpreted, inter-alia as logical corollary of his perspective in respect of machinery. Providing healthy employment to all and eliminating root and branch all relics of exploitation from society were the primary concerns of *swadeshi*. These could never be achieved if modern machineries were allowed to produce things on mass scale. In the process it would lead to mass unemployment, pauperization and untold misery. Gandhi saw that there could be only two forms in which such an economic system could survive and function. Either the means of production must be owned individually whose number must go on decreasing; or the same could be owned, controlled and managed by the State which must fatten by the day with the absolute power at its disposal. Under both dispensations, Gandhi believed that unemployment, absence of freedom and exploitation would exist and thrive. *Swadeshi* stands as a third alternative. It rejects mass producing machinery, not machinery *per se*. It expounds the motto, “production for the neighbour”. It seeks to involve the masses in the process of production. It refuses to equate growth with development and more with better. It lays premium on scale and limit since it is under such a scheme alone that the aim of production for the neighbour could be successfully pursued and achieved. It reckons that unlimited growth in a finite environment is a chimerical pursuit fraught with suicidal consequences and ecological collapse. Hence, it seeks to cultivate an attitude of reverence for the whole living and non-living in the Universe. Discarding anthropocentrism, it adumbrates an ecological perspective.

Thus, the sentiments of love and harmony which inform *swadeshi* life in all its aspects do not emanate from any kind of false consciousness à la Marx or Sartre. On the other hand, it is a part of the structured expression of the spirit of *swadeshi* both at the level of feeling and form. This is what Gandhi implies when he says that, “a true votary of *swadeshi* will never harbour ill-will towards the foreigner; he will not be actuated by antagonism towards anybody on earth. *Swadeshism* is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service that has its roots in the purest ‘*ahimsa*’, i.e. love.”

It has been pointed out at the outset that, *swadeshi* must be viewed not in isolation but in its integral relationship with the other vows of which it is a part. Gandhi’s postulation of the concept of the eleven vows was rooted in a realisation and a perspective. Gandhi saw and knew that a new society required a new man with a changed consciousness and character if it has to sustain and persist. Someone has defined a revolution, and rightly so, as a transformation of utopia into history. Alas, history stands testimony to the sad state of affairs that a shadow had always fallen between the dream and the reality. How often, indeed, we have watched, rather helplessly, a revolution being hijacked by the forces of the counter revolution. Perhaps, the most significant cause of this miscarriage has been what Marcuse describes as, “the repressive continuum’ which is a legacy of the previous order. No revolution can succeed unless this fatal continuum is broken on the one hand and an ambiance radically different from the past is simultaneously created on the other. Then only, as Marcuse further remarks, “individuals would be able to create a technical and natural environment which would no longer perpetuate violence, ugliness, ignorance and brutality.”

Gandhi too had realised in his own way that the lack of correspondence between institutional change and individual transformation was bound to vitiate the prospects of a post-revolutionary society. He knew that, a change of circumstances or context unless accompanied with a commensurate change in the content or the inner make-up of man would neither be sustainable nor durable. In fact, it is the lag or hiatus between the two that seems to have compelled all revolutions to eat their own children. Thus, it was supremely imperative that the structural change must occur in tandem with a transformation of consciousness, of attitudes and preferences. It was Gandhi's wont to speak in a religious idiom even as, invariably, he refused to subscribe to a denominational, sectarian and parochial interpretation of religion. When, therefore, he recommends a 'religious backing' and proposes the scheme of the eleven vows to be followed by everyone 'come what may' Gandhi is actually seeking to combine a radical structural change with a revolutionary inner transformation, a change of consciousness! This is what he implies when, in the context of the vows, he insists on a 'heart-grasp' and not merely a 'brain-grasp' of the need of the vows or the *vratas*. Thus, the proposition of the concept of the vows was indeed, an endeavour to create a counter-culture, a new cultural consciousness, in short, a new man for a new society which he described as *swaraj*. As noted earlier *swadeshi* is an integral part of his scheme of the vows.

The concept of *swadeshi* has, thus, a close kinship with (i) non-possession (*aparigraha*) i.e. elimination of private property (ii) non-stealing (*asteya*) i.e. absence of vested interests (iii) non-consumerism (*aswad*) and (iv) 'sacredness of touch' (*sparsh bhawana*) through which artistic creativity is installed into the process of social production that meets the needs of the neighbour. It should be clear from the above that,

Gandhi envisaged a society that was radically new and different; he envisaged a new man too! His concept of vows of which *swadeshi* formed a part, was thus an endeavour to create a counter culture which alone could sustain and strengthen the new society!

Swadeshi: A Perspective

Bharat Mahodaya

The ultimate aim of Gandhi's life was self realisation or to see God face to face. All his activities in life were directed towards this goal. For Gandhi, Truth was God and his life was basically a search for truth. He wrote "I am but a seeker after Truth. I claim to have found a way to it. I claim to be making a ceaseless effort to find it. But I admit that I have not yet found it. To find Truth completely is to realise oneself and one's destiny, i.e., to become perfect." This way or path is of great importance to those who want to give meaning to their lives or very existence. The way to achieve truth/God was *ahimsa* or non-violence. Gandhi's life was exemplar to his firm resolution to tread this path or way of *ahimsa* to achieve the primary and ultimate goal of life.

Truth and non-violence were fundamental to his philosophy of life. Among the eleven vows, the later nine vows are derived from the first two, i.e., truth and non-violence. It is true that as all the vows are organically and logically interlinked, one can not attach lower or higher value to any of them without disturbing the whole chain. However, in order to properly understand the significance of the vows and also whole of Gandhi's philosophy of life, one must constantly be aware of the supremacy of the first two vows viz. truth and non-violence. This will help one to properly understand and evaluate Gandhi's actions, decisions and evolution of his philosophy. In fact the vows constitute the foundation of edifice of Gandhian philosophy. To Gandhi a life without vows

was like a house without a foundation. *Swadeshi* was one of the eleven vows of Gandhi. In the present context, the vow of *swadeshi* assumes greater significance and needs careful examination.

Every one knows that it was Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak who strongly advocated the programme of boycott, *swadeshi* and national education in the first decade of 20th century. *Swadeshi* emerged as an economic counterpart of political boycott. It meant self-help, mainly to rely upon goods made in India. *Swadeshi* movement taught us the significance of the spirit of self-respect and self reliance. While emphasising *swadeshi* Tilak was teaching a new spirit to the Nationalists. He explained:

“The object ... is to bring about the spread of *swadeshi* (i.e., country – made) things, visible and invisible, to bring about the gradual disappearance of visible foreign things, and to bring about the gradual **disappearance of foreign ideas** also”. And he added, “Like the bodies our minds also should become *Swadeshi*... *Swadeshi* thoughts should always reign in our hearts.” (*emphasis added*)

The views expressed by Gandhi in his seminal work *Hind Swaraj* were basically from a *swadeshi* outlook. He was very unhappy with the modern industrial civilization and its progeny. Gandhi presented a viable alternative to this ‘satanic civilization’ in *Hind Swaraj*. Throughout his life Gandhi strived to put these ideas into practice taking into consideration the ground realities.

While Tilak was unrestrained in his opposition to British rule while emphasizing his idea of *Vande Mataram*, for Gandhi *swadeshi* was not a cult of hatred. According to Gandhi a true votary of *swadeshi* will never harbor any ill will

towards the foreigner. It is a philosophy of love through the service of immediate neighbours. He believed that a man could serve his neighbours and humanity at the same time. The condition is that the service of the neighbours in no way involves selfish motives or exclusive to somebody. In other words, it did not involve any kind of exploitation of fellow human beings. Exploitation is a form of violence and one can judge whether something fulfills the criterion of *swadeshi* or not by taking into consideration whether its basis is non-violence or violence.

All economic thinking and theories were basically meant for man. His well-being was the ultimate goal. The goal of production, distribution and consumption of goods was to meet the needs of man. Since olden days there were evidences of trade between India and other countries. For example, Lothal in Gujarat had a big port from where ships used to go towards Western countries and Gulf countries by maritime trade routes. The garments manufactured in India were sent to different parts of the world and its demand always exceeded its short supply. China also had trade links with many countries. Glass beads imported from South India with *Brahmi* inscriptions were found in Java and Bali, which testify the fact that the trade links were very wide. The question arises as to what made the theory or concept of *swadeshi* to come to the forefront during the beginning of 20th century in India? And also why the Multinational Corporations and globalisation are being looked down upon as almost a curse for many nations of modern world especially for the undeveloped and underdeveloped countries?

The roots may probably be traced down to the advent of mass production by machines i.e. nothing but industrialisation. There was a shift from feudal system to capitalistic system in which any one had an opportunity to amass wealth with the

help of machine. Capitalism, as is well known, is an economic system in which the principal means of production, distribution and exchange are in private hands, whether individual or corporate. They are primarily operated for profiteering. In case of India, the mass production of cloth in Lancashire and Manchester and its forced entry in Indian market completely destroyed the age old handicraft industries of India. The capital and money flowed towards England. Dada Bhai Naoroji recognised this fact and put it before the nation. Lokmanya Tilak tried to end this exploitation through economic boycott and *swadeshi* movement. Gandhi went a step further by rejuvenating *charkha* and *khadi* as an alternative to stop this exploitation. Gandhi's approach was a new way of warfare or a non-violent response to the capitalistic challenge. History testifies that attempts to sell goods manufactured by large industries by any means led to many wars. The markets were captured by highly industrialised nations by hook and crook. There was no willful transaction of raw materials or goods amongst the trading partners. This was one of main differences between the character of trade before industrialisation and the trade in post-industrialised era. This market economy sucked the blood of third world countries.

Swadeshi is perhaps the only answer to the evils of mass production and technology propagated by the capitalist economy. It aims at fulfilling the natural basic needs of people. It does not encourage the creation of artificial needs. A votary of *swadeshi* should lead a life of simplicity. Only that much and only those goods should be produced with the help of simple tools which cater to the needs of a small harmonious community. Village is an example of such community. Even if a village is capable of producing simple products with small size machines, it should put control over it. The surplus may be exchanged with nearby villages for other goods of necessity.

The concept of 'oceanic circle' works here also. An example from *Pavnar Ashram*, where Vinoba lived for many years, explains the spirit behind possible use of machines. He allowed use of electricity to run *charkha* which produced *khadi* cloth for the *ashram*. But the inmates of *ashram* were not allowed to produce more than what was needed.

The big industries sell their goods by creating artificial needs, advertisements, and by doing so many unethical things. One should resist such efforts. No producer can prosper if his products do not find a readymade market at a price which is profitable to him. As a purchaser one must think for a while on the following issues which were pointed out by J. C. Kumarappa.

1. One should know where the article comes from ?
2. Who makes the article ?
3. From what material ?
4. Under what conditions do the workers live and work ?
5. What proportion of the final price do they get as wages ?
6. How is the rest of the money distributed ?
7. How is the article produced ?
8. How does the industry fit into the national economy ?
9. What relation has it to other nations ?

Swadeshi is almost inevitable to solve the problem of unemployment. The sole aim of a capitalist is to earn more and more profit by using less and less labour. This brings automation which in turn results in widespread unemployment.

The capitalist may earn more profit and may even distribute a very small portion of his profit to his employees over and above their wages. On the face, his industries may appear very successful but when you add the cost of unemployed force to its products, then the picture is entirely different. In the context of India, the slogan should be “Be Indian, buy Indian.” It will ultimately solve the problem of unemployment if the mode of production is wedded to cottage or small scale industries. We should ensure that the goods which we need and are not manufactured in India today should be manufactured in near future in our country.

While considering the economics of *swadeshi*, one must also think over the role of government. It is the height of folly to expect that a government dancing to the tunes of big industrialists or multinational corporations, who are only interested in finding markets for their products, will do anything to relieve our unemployment. Relief can be had only by creating public pressure on the Government to encourage *swadeshi* products on the one hand and also by producing the articles we need ourselves. Besides, we also need to restrict our needs. In the case of India, any plan which does not take into account its vast man-power is absolutely worthless. We need production by masses rather than mass production. And if utilisation of man-power occupies the theme of production, then nature of that production has to be completely decentralised. Thus *swadeshi* is directly linked with concept of decentralisation and it is source of strength to stand in moments of trial. In a highly centralised system of production, where centralised production takes place, disturbance in a particular place can paralyse the whole nation. But it doesn't happen in a decentralised system. Further, if we follow this line then we can establish human equality guaranteed by our Constitution. It also

does justice to the labourer because they get living wages and employment.

The Government's policy and planning should revolve around the axis of *swadeshi*. Such policy can only reconstruct our economy. Government may have to undo many things which it is doing today. For example, it may have to give priority and protection to goods of small scale industries. Taking note of public sector undertakings and welfare schemes, Government acts as a big purchaser. As a policy it must purchase the *swadeshi* goods on priority. It should rectify the present process of tendering according to which the bid of lowest supplier is taken into consideration. Instead the Government should develop a policy in favour of small scale industries without compromising the quality. It can easily be seen that this will result in solving the food security and hunger problem which in turn will reduce violence and establish peace in society.

The Government should support research centres throughout the country with a spirit of *swadeshi*. Such training centres and technology transfer units on *swadeshi* lines must be planned and financially supported by the Government. It is a pity that today's Government policies support the western models of institutions. For example in the case of medical profession, the Government is pumping lot of financial support to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and similar institutions which advocate the modern medical practice. At the same time the allocations for "Ayurveda" departments of whole of the country are meager, which promote the indigenous methods of medical treatment. As a result medical treatment is going out of the reach of common man and it becomes a privilege for the rich and elite.

The Government is a kind of trustee of the power given to them by people. People are the masters and Government should understand its position and should not betray the country. It should recast the whole planning process. In economic sector it is expected to control capital, transport and labour for the benefit of people. Attention must be paid to the welfare of unorganised labour. Policies in sectors of politics (such as fair elections) and sociological sectors should be properly drawn out.

In reality *swadeshi* means self-help because it is very much in tune with one's own interest. It is a philosophy and a new pattern of thinking for the fuller and perfect development of man and society. It releases the dormant powers within individual and the society. Here it is worth mentioning the case of cryogenic engine. Initially the Government of India had plan to purchase it from abroad but the deal was not materialised due to many reasons. As a result Indian scientists took it as a challenge and they were successful in manufacturing a cryogenic engine for the nation. If we resolve to live in spirit of *swadeshi* many such latent powers come to fore and enhance our capacities, self respect and quality of life.

Swadeshi is closely linked to concept of *ahimsa*, which helps to control or eliminate intoxicating drug and liquor business which serves as the basis of many crimes. It remains as a fact that only those individuals or families or tribes or societies emerged stronger who refused to stand with the help of crutch or support. Instead they were firmly determined to stand on their own legs. That makes one's "legs" stronger. Self Help Groups (SHGs) are examples of it. Gandhi's constructive work was nothing but a programme to become self reliant in all departments of life. It helps us to achieve the goal of self

reliance and freedom from dependence. When we stand on our own feet, it hardly matters who rules in New Delhi.

Swadeshi is also a binding force for the society and nation. A sense of solidarity emerges among its votaries. It also triggers other such good efforts which strengthen our lives and concern for each other. Seen from this angle, *swadeshi* presents itself as a powerful instrument to uplift, unify and display the soul of the people living in that society. A good example of it can be seen from the outlook of the people of Japan. It is a well known fact that large population of Japan is busy in manufacturing goods for export to different parts of the world. But it is said that for their own consumption they ensure that the particular product bears the mark of “made in Japan”. This attitude will emerge only if we start seeing value and beauty in *swadeshi* goods. The craze for foreign made things and our attitude to consider our products as less in value, utility, etc., are mainly due to our inferiority complex and lack of self respect. When this mindset changes, we go on using our products and engage ourselves in Research and Development to make it better and better.

Swadeshi, when practised by all, will transform the psychology of all and a new society, probably nearer to *sarvodaya* concept, will be established where liberty, true democracy, equality, peace and justice will prevail. The needs of people both material and spiritual will be fulfilled. Let us come together and strive for creating conditions conducive to such *swadeshi* way of life.

6

Understanding Gandhi's Vision of Swadeshi

Siby K. Joseph

Introduction

Satyagraha and *swadeshi* are fundamental in Gandhi's philosophy of life. According to Gandhi, the whole gamut of man's activities constitutes an indivisible whole. Life cannot be segregated into watertight compartments like social, economic, political, religious and so on. So the ideas and concepts he developed in the course of his relentless experiments with truth was an attempt to integrate the various aspects of life. The concept of *swadeshi* was not an exception. It was not merely an economic doctrine. In fact the concept of *swadeshi* covered all aspects of the human life. Gandhi's vision of *swadeshi* is a universal concept even though he propounded it in the context of India's struggle for freedom. He used *swadeshi* as a means to achieve India's *swaraj*. India's struggle for freedom was a source of inspiration for many non-violent struggles in different parts of the globe. *Swaraj* through *swadeshi* is a principle of universal application and it can be emulated by people in their struggle for freedom. It was one of the eleven vows Gandhi prescribed for a *satyagraha* way of life. In this paper an attempt has been made to understand Gandhi's concept of *swadeshi* and its manifestation in important facets of human life. *Swadeshi* as a generic concept covers almost every aspect of human life, all his ideas, concepts, methods and programmes. However, the scope of the present paper has been limited to areas such as

economic, political, social, religious, and educational and health. Firstly, we will analyse Gandhi's vision of *swadeshi*.

Gandhi's Vision of Swadeshi

Gandhi described *swadeshi* as 'law of laws'¹ ingrained in the basic nature of human being. It is a universal law. Like nature's law it needs no enacting. It is self-acting one. When one neglects or disobeys it due to ignorance or other reasons, the law takes its own course to restore to the original position like the laws of nature. The necessity for the inclusion of *swadeshi* as a vow is due to the fact that the people have forgotten this law; to use Gandhi's own words, the law is sunk into oblivion. A person by temperament following this law need not follow it as a vow, that is, a rare thing. According to Gandhi *swadeshi* in its ultimate and spiritual sense stands for the final emancipation of the soul from her earthly bondage. Therefore, a votary of *swadeshi* has to identify oneself with the entire creation in the ultimate quest to emancipate the soul from the physical body, as it stands in the way of realising oneness with all life. This identification is possible only by performing the primary duty, that is, the service of one's immediate neighbour. In outward appearance, it may look as exclusion or disservice to others, i.e., the rest of humanity. Pure service can never result in disservice to the far away person. In *swadeshi* there is no distinction between one's own and other people. With the temptation of serving the whole world, if one fails to perform the duty towards the immediate neighbours, it is a clear violation of the very principle of *swadeshi*. The very first step of serving the world starts with the immediate neighbour. Service to the nearest individual is service to the Universe. According to Gandhi, *swadharma* in *Gita* interpreted in terms of one's physical environment gives us the Law of *Swadeshi*. Gandhi quotes *Gita* "It is best to die performing one's own duty or *Swadharma*. *Paradharma*, or another's duty, is fraught with danger."² Further Gandhi explains: "What the *Gita* says

with regard to *swadharma* equally applies to *swadeshi* also, for *swadeshi* is *swadharma* applied to one's immediate environment.”³ The law of *swadeshi* demands that one should not take more than required to discharge the legitimate obligations towards the family. In *swadeshi* there is no space for selfishness and hatred. It is the highest form of altruism and acme of universal service in the Gandhian scheme. In the light of the above understanding and after much thinking and reflection, Gandhi defined *swadeshi* as the “spirit in us which restricts us to the use and services of our immediate, to the exclusion of the more remote.”⁴ This definition is perhaps the best explanation of his concept.

Economic Dimension of Swadeshi

Let us first look at the implications of *swadeshi* in the field of economics. Gandhi was convinced that the deep poverty prevailing among masses was mainly due to the ruinous departure from the path of *swadeshi* in the economic and industrial life. Gandhi advocated that one who follows the spirit of *swadeshi* should use only things that are produced by our immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient, and strengthen them in areas where they are found deficient. During the time of India's struggle for independence Gandhi realised that the economic salvation of India consists in encouraging and reviving indigenous industries. Gandhi found *khadi* as the necessary and most important corollary of the principle of *swadeshi* in its practical application to society. *Khadi* fulfils the kind of service envisaged in *swadeshi*. Gandhi himself asked the question: “What is the kind of service the teeming millions of India most need at the present time, that can be easily understood and appreciated by all, that is easy to perform and will at the same time enable the crores of our semi-starved countrymen to live?”⁵ He found the answer, that it was universalising *khadi* or

spinning wheel which fulfill these conditions. For him, *khadi* is the Sun of the village solar system. The various industries are the planets which can support *khadi*. *Khadi* mentality means decentralisation of production and distribution of the necessities of life. Gandhi advocated the concept of *swadeshi* in the spirit of universal love and service. A votary of *swadeshi* will give preference to local products even if they are of inferior grade or dearer in price than things manufactured elsewhere and try to remedy the defects of local manufacturers. Gandhi warned the votary of *swadeshi* against making it a fetish. "To reject foreign manufactures merely because they are foreign, and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion in one's country of manufactures for which it is not suited, would be criminal folly, and a negation of the *swadeshi* spirit. A true votary of *swadeshi* will never harbour ill-will towards the foreigner: he will not be actuated by antagonism towards anybody on earth. *Swadeshism* is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service that has its roots in the purest *ahimsa*, i.e. Love"⁶. In the *swadeshi* economic order there will be healthy exchange of products and not cut-throat competition through the play of market forces. Gandhi explains this ideal situation in the following words: "If we follow the *swadeshi* doctrine, it would be your duty and mine to find out neighbours who can supply our wants and to teach them to supply them where they do not know how to proceed, assuming that there are neighbours who are in want of healthy occupation. Then every village of India will almost be a self-supporting and self-contained unit, exchanging only such necessary commodities with other villages where they are not locally producible."⁷ In such an economic system there will be an organic relationship between production, distribution and consumption.

Political Dimension of Swadeshi

The application of *swadeshi* in politics calls for the revival of the indigenous institutions and strengthening them to overcome some of its defects. Gandhi pleaded the need for internal governance (*swaraj*) as early as 1909 in his noted booklet *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*. He wanted to empower the people through political self governance. His vision of decentralized political system was *Panchayati Raj* by which the innumerable villages of India were governed. He succinctly describes it as follows: "The government of the village will be conducted by the *Panchayat* of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. Since there will be no system of punishment in the accepted sense, this *Panchayat* will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world."⁸ Gandhi further outlined his vision of village *swaraj* by introducing the concept of oceanic circle in opposition to pyramidal structure of society, placing individual at the centre of the society. "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 always ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units."⁹

Social Dimension of Swadeshi

Applying the spirit of *swadeshi* in the context of Indian social structure, Gandhi initially accepted the institution of *Varna* associated with it. He welcomed the four-fold division

of the society purely based on duties performed by different sections of people. Gandhi considered all professions as equally important. He made an earnest attempt to overcome the defects of the caste system by discarding certain obnoxious practices which he considered as historical accretion, which was not the integral part of original system. He vehemently opposed the prevailing caste system based on birth and the social status attached to it. That was the reason why he launched one of the most relentless battles against the curse of untouchability which was a part and parcel of the caste system in India. Gandhi looked at the scourge of untouchability as a blot on Hinduism. He was so much convinced that he did not even hesitate to take up cudgels on the behalf of untouchables against the upper caste Hindu orthodoxy. In the process so much animosity was created among orthodox upper caste and several attempts were made to eliminate him. Unmindful of the risks involved, he stuck to the position till the end of his life. He totally identified with the untouchables and their uplift became his primary concern. Similarly he was deeply concerned about the problems and plight of the vulnerable sections of the society viz., Dalits, women, tribals, lepers and so on. He believed that true *swaraj* can be attained only by uplifting these deprived sections of the society. Gandhi included the uplift of these sections in his 18-point Constructive Programme. It was primarily drawn taking into account the social realities of our country. Gandhi's Constructive Programme aimed at reconstruction of society through voluntary and participatory social action. In a sense the constructive work plays the role of civil society/NGOs. Gandhi looked upon Constructive Programme as a 'truthful and nonviolent way of winning *Poorna Swaraj*'¹⁰

Swadeshi in Religion

To follow the spirit of Gandhi's *swadeshi* in the field of religion one has to restrict to the ancestral religion. It calls for

the use of one's immediate religious surroundings. It is the duty of a person to serve one's own religion by purging its defects, if necessary, in order to purify and keep it pure. There is no need to renounce one's religion because of imperfections in it and embrace another. On the contrary one should try to enrich one's own religion by drawing the best from other religions. However Gandhi was not against true conversion and he differentiated it from proselytization. According to Gandhi conversion in the sense of self purification, self realisation is the crying need of the hour. His attitude was not of patronising toleration but developing the spirit of fellowship. His veneration for other faiths was the same as that of his own faith. He believed in the fundamental equality of all religions, what he called *Sarvadharmā Samābhava*. Gandhi's *swadeshi* approach to religion has great significance in the context of growing communal divide and religious fundamentalism in India and other parts of the globe. This approach is essential to promote harmony among the followers of various faiths and preserving the composite culture of a country like India.

Swadeshi in Education

One of the major areas in which Gandhi applied his *swadeshi* ideal was the field of education. For him education was meant for all-round development of personality and not purely as a means for earning one's livelihood. In *Hind Swaraj* he rejected the British educational system prevailing in India. His primary objection against British educational system was that it was primarily meant for 'enslaving' the people of India. It was his firm conviction that the prevailing system of education does not serve the requirements of the country in any form or shape. He believed that education has to be rooted in the culture and traditions of the country. Education through a medium of foreign language put undue stress upon the nerves of the children and they become foreigners in their own

country. They are completely cut off from the realities of life. He placed before the nation an alternative system of education called *Nai Talim* or Basic education. He defined education as follows: "By Education, I mean, an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would therefore begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training."¹¹ In his scheme the craft was the pivot and centre of all educational activities. Through the medium of craft he correlated all other subjects to the central craft. It was a self sufficient and self supporting system of education meant for children above the age of seven which was meant to be free and compulsory. He placed before the nation alternative institutions like Gujarat Vidyapith, Kashi Vidyapith and others during the struggle for independence. Later he broadened his concept of basic education and looked upon education as a lifelong process starting from cradle to grave.

Swadeshi in Health Care

Gandhi's prescription for health was an application of principle of *swadeshi* .i.e. to live according to the laws of nature. He strongly opposed the modern medical system in his seminal work *Hind swaraj*. He went even to the extent of describing hospitals as "institutions for propagating sin."¹² He rejected the modern medical system primarily on the ground that it is purely curative and not preventive. He advocated a new system of medical care wherein one follows the laws of nature with regard to diet, physical exercise, hygiene and sanitation and a new life style based on self restraint. He advocated the system of nature cure to prevent the diseases rather than finding a purely drug based cure for them. In this he

underlined the centrality of proper use of earth, water, air sunlight and ether. He primarily emphasised a holistic approach to health care where it will primarily be governed by disciplined way of life. It is also notable that health care was one of his passions since his South African days. He experimented with different kinds of nature cure including the inexpensive and nutritious food which people could easily avail. Not only that, he was instrumental in establishing a nature cure centre at Urulikanchan near Pune and even started practicing nature cure. In fact during the last years of life a new dimension to nature cure practice was added in the form of *Ram nam*. It must be made clear that for him *Ram nam* was not like an ordinary *mantra* to be chanted. It was a part of his spiritual *sadhana* based on his firm belief that a man with total internal purity would not fall sick or even he would require no medicine other than *Ram nam*. Here *Ram* stands for one of the names of God and one can freely choose any other name of God which appeals to him. That was the reason he refused to take medicine in the fag end of his life including the Noakhali mission. *Ram nam* was nothing but a spiritual means for self purification thereby eliminating all possibilities of illness by keeping the body pure.

Conclusion

It is obvious from the above analysis that *swadeshi* is key for basic understanding of the edifice of Gandhi's philosophy of life. He successfully demonstrated that the *swadeshi* spirit could be integrated in every walk of our national life. What is more, he did not stop only at conceptual level of *swadeshi*. He suggested concrete institutional set up in most of the areas of his concern. As stated earlier for Gandhi life was holistic and indivisible and hence he presented an integrated plan covering virtually all aspects of human life. And that is the most distinctive nature of his thought which could

really become a guiding principle for human resurgence. In fact he went beyond it and underlines the oneness of entire creations including the sentient and non-sentient beings. It is real pity that independent India failed to grasp the revolutionary nature of his thought and discarded them in the very initial years of freedom. Now it is more than clear that sooner or later, India, even the world, would have to take to Gandhian path to meet the challenges effectively. If not, it will be totally going against the law of universe which aeons ago ours ancestors called *rita*.

Notes and References

- ¹ . M. K. Gandhi, *From Yervada Mandir* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 2007) p.35
- ² . *Ibid.*p.36
- ³ . *Ibid.*
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- ⁵ . M. K. Gandhi, *From Yervada Mandir*, op. cit.,p.37.
- ⁶ . *Ibid.*p.38.
- ⁷ . R. K. Prabhu and U. R. Rao (ed.), op.cit.,p.411.
- ⁸ . M. K. Gandhi, *Panchayat Raj* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan ,1996) pp.11-12.
- ⁹ . *Ibid.* p.9
- ¹⁰ . See the foreword written by Gandhi on November13,1945. M. K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 2005), p.3.
- ¹¹ . *Harijan*, July 31, 1937.
- ¹² . M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 2004),p.51

Gandhi's Vision of a Swadeshi Polity: An Analysis

Ram Chandra Pradhan

One of the major areas of political theory wherein Gandhi made a seminal contribution was his vision of an alternative polity. Differing strongly from the anarchists, the Marxists and the Liberals, he not only pointed out their major failings, but also presented his views on the issues involved in a clear and coherent way. In the process he avoided two extremes of the utopian thinking as well as a short term concrete political project. His was a call for action with a long term perspective. This paper seeks to review and reappraise Gandhi's views on a *swadeshi* polity. It is divided in three parts. In part I, I would underline the salience of his differences with the above groups. In part II, I would be reviewing the basic contours of Gandhi's alternative polity. And in part III, I would give a critical analysis of Gandhi's major formulations on alternative polity.

I

The State in Modern Times

It is relevant to recall that it was in the process of transition of Europe from medievalism to modernity that the institution of State assumed a new role. The primary imputes for such a change was secularisation of the society which led to the separation of the church and the State – both playing their own distinctive role in human affairs. In the process, the State not only replaced the church's centrality in the life of the people but it gradually took over things even from the realm of

the civil society. As a result, both the church and the civil society were dwarfed in the colossal presence of the State. Thus, in the beginning, the State appeared as the *vaman* (small), but subsequently, it assumed the form of *virat* (giant). What gave an added momentum to the expanding role of the State was the gradual introduction of liberal democratic theory and the concept of radical social justice. Subsequently they became the ruling ideologies of our times.

It is relevant to note here that in the initial stages of their separation, the church and the State had their own areas of operation: the State was to look after the secular aspect of the civil society and the church was to take care of the 'sacred'. However, religion was gradually pushed to the private domain of the home and the hearth and State was primarily looking after the affairs of the public domain. Initially, under the impact of individualism the State was assigned a very limited role and, hence, the concept of minimum State became the guiding norm. But as the juggernaut of industrialisation and its concomitant urbanisation rolled on, the iniquities and injustices generated in the process came to the fore, demanding their own solutions. As such, primarily under the impact of the labour movement and the Marxist insistence on social justice and egalitarianism the State assumed a much bigger role. Thus, the liberal political theory had to grapple with these new challenges. Hence, the concept of the 'minimal State' came to be gradually replaced by that of the welfare State. In the process, there was manifold increase in the role of the State which came to dwarf the citizens and their liberties, so much so that it led to some kind of dependence syndrome among the public.

In the name of extreme social justice the Marxian State emerged in the form of Hobbesian Leviathan particularly after October Revolution of 1917. The Marxist State assumed a gigantic and totalitarian form, virtually holding the citizens and

their liberties to ransom. Subsequently, the other dimension to the devilish nature of the State was added with the emergence of Fascism and Nazism. They not only insisted upon its totalitarian nature but added new dimensions on account of their belief in ethnic and racial supremacy. Thus, the body of the State was expanding rapidly from all sides – the right, the left and even in the middle. All this made the plight of individuals and their liberal aspirations quite pronounced.

All these developments virtually coincided with the lifespan of Gandhi and they were bound to affect his thinking. What was more, from the actual experiences of his own life as a victim both in South Africa and India he had come face to face with a repressive nature of the colonial State. Thus, he was fully aware of the fact that the colonial State coming up in the wake of the European imperialism was striding like a colossus, particularly in its colonial domain. All these experiences greatly affected his thinking making him skeptical about the institution of State and its role in human affairs.

Perhaps, there was another reason for Gandhi being non-enthusiastic about the expanding role of the State in human affairs. As we know in the Indian tradition the institution of State was never assigned a big role as social and religious institutions nurtured by the civil society looked after the major aspects of human life. Gandhi, being deeply rooted in the Indian tradition was bound to be greatly influenced by it, particularly on his thinking about the State. As a result, he underlined, 'inner *swaraj*' much more than the 'outer *swaraj*' the former being the kernel and the latter as the husk. For him, the real challenge for an individual was to experience 'inner *swaraj*' in one's inner being. Once it was achieved, man becomes so free that he could not be enslaved by any external agency. Not that the 'outer *swaraj*' viz. national freedom was

totally unimportant, as it could stand in one's way of experiencing the inner *swaraj*.

Apart from these empirical situations, however, there were also much deeper theoretical considerations including his own experiences in areas which influenced and shaped his thinking on the institution of the State. For instance, as a man, totally committed to the creed of non-violence, it was not surprising that he was quite wary of big brotherly and bullying role of the State, which was primarily rooted in violence and coercion. Similarly, his economic ideas underlying the limited human needs and self-sufficiency of the village life also precluded the much adumbrated role of the State. Not only that, his concept of man carrying a speck of divinity in his being with his primary quest for inner *swaraj* could not have but prompted him to assign very limited role to the institution of the State. Besides, as a votary of civil society ever engaged in strengthening its every sinew and with deep faith in the integrity and autonomy of individuals, it was quite natural for him to remain unenthusiastic about the State and its big role in human affairs. In a word, apart from his empirical confrontation with State in different garbs, his entire thought process was not in consonance with a big role for the institution of State. Gandhi was aware that there were other views about the State and its role in including those of the liberals, the anarchists and the Marxists. Hence it is quite germane to our study to examine how he looked upon these three dominant views of the State.

Gandhi and Anarchists

As we know the prominent anarchists like Prince Kropotkin, Proudhon and others, were highly critical of the institution of State. They even stood for its overnight abolition for strengthening the freedom of individuals and the sinews of

the civil society. Many scholars find a close resemblance of affinity between the anarchist and Gandhi on the basis of the latter's plea and preference for an ultimate State of an 'enlightened anarchy'. But a close perusal of their respective perspectives and their preferred social orders would reveal a fundamental difference between the two. In brief, unlike the anarchists, Gandhi was fully aware that the State could not be washed away overnight. Hence, along with a 'State of enlightened anarchy' as a distant dream, he also underlined the significance of 'the minimal State' as the immediate goal. In other words, for him the long and arduous journey towards the ultimate State of 'enlightened anarchy' would start with gradual dismantling of the oversized body politic of the State. On the other hand, for the anarchist, there was no intermediate stage between all powerful State and Stateless civil society on its own, looking after its affairs through mutual cooperation based on non-coercive civil organizations. Hence, for them the State must go lock, stock and barrel and that too overnight. But Gandhi as a practical visionary accepted the inevitability of the State but with its clipped wings. And this process of gradual shading of power would ultimately lead to the State of enlightened anarchy.

Gandhi and Marxists

Similarly, Gandhi also radically differed from the Marxists on the role of the State in human affairs. It is a well known fact that the Marxist's preferred 'classless' and 'stateless' social order. But unlike the anarchists, they do not want to do away with the institution of the State overnight. Their preference is for 'withering away' of the State in a gradual manner. But in the intermediate stage, their State assumes an authoritarian and totalitarian form, what they call the dictatorship of the proletariat. It totally negates the autonomy, integrity and liberty of individual in the name of

community welfare. What is more, the Marxist State assumes much bigger form and authority and the liberal State appears as a dwarf before such a colossal State. And the process of the 'withering away' of the State is nowhere visible. In fact, like *Surasa*, a demon of the Ramayana, it goes on assuming bigger and bigger form. Gandhi's perspective on the State is entirely of a different nature. Unlike the Marxists, he refuses to take the State only as a class institution. For him dismantling of the State structure must start from the day one, and the process remains on till the state of 'enlightened anarchy' is ultimately achieved. And what is more, it is through a series of constructive programme and non-violent *satyagrahas* that the sinews of the civil society and autonomy of individual is achieved. Thus, Gandhian and Marxist thinking on the State is entirely of different genre despite some apparent semblance of resemblance.

Gandhi and the Liberals

But Gandhi was equally disillusioned with the liberal democratic State as developed in the western world. He has several fundamental differences with the protagonists of the liberal democratic theory. In the first place he rejects the liberal view of the man wherein, what Ramashray Roy calls, the 'empirical self' is very pronounced. But in such a perspective, man at the best is moved by his 'enlightened self interest' and society is nothing but a conglomeration of 'self-seeking' individuals with emphasis on their personal freedom. Since the clash of 'self-interested' individuals is inherent in such a perspective, the State is assigned the role of the 'reconciler' and ultimately that of a final arbiter. It is presumed that with the State at the helm of affairs, conflicting interests of individuals or groups would get adjudicated if not totally reconciled. Since such a desired State was difficult to achieve, a number of political theorists have tried to conceptualise the notion of

human liberty in such a way that the tension between liberty and authority, freedom and order, is at least minimised if not totally reconciled. Besides, an attempt has also been made to redefine the idea of 'self and positive liberty' and hark back to the community and integrate all this as a major intellectual effort to reconcile the above mentioned conflict. But despite their best efforts, the liberal theorists have failed to move radically away, from the basic framework of the 'right' approach with the result that they have failed to yield the right results. The real challenge is how to transcend the arena of the 'rights' and move to those of the duty-*dharmā*. In fact, the 'human right' approach not only breeds violence and conflict in society but also fails to radically change the power-arrangement in a given society. The only way it could be achieved is to move away from the concept of 'self seeking' individuals and replace it with that of a transcendental man – a man endowed with *atman* and ever conscious of his inter-dependent nature in the entire cosmic structure. That is the only right way to resolve the tension between freedom and order, and between man and nature. In the absence of such perspective all efforts of the liberal theorist to achieve much sought-after harmony is bound to come to a naught.

Gandhi, being rooted in the Indian spiritual tradition did not find it difficult to pursue such an intellectual course. He did not find it an uphill task to base his political thinking on such a concept of man and his basic nature. Bhikhu Parekh sums up the entire Gandhian perspective on this score in the following three essentials submissions. They are:

1. That the man is an integral part of the cosmos – one among the other species.
2. That there is inter-dependence both inter and intra species at the cosmic level. As such, they would develop or fall together. And any attempt on the part

of any one of the species including homo-sapiens is bound to disturb the cosmic equilibrium and might even boomerang on it.

3. That man is a four dimensional being, comprising the body, the *manasa*, the *atman* and *svabhava*. It is inter-play of all these four which decide the human behaviour.

This is what Parekh calls a cosmocentric view of the Homo-sapiens. In other words, human beings are not the overloads of the cosmos rather they are an integral part of the cosmos as a whole. Gandhi strongly believed in the 'God-centric' view of the cosmos, i.e. the entire cosmos is pervaded by the cosmic spirit (God) who in turn is not outside of it either. The practical implication of cosmic-spirit view of man and God-centric view of the universe is that the cosmos was not created only for the comfort and security of homo-sapiens alone, as each part is not only pervaded by the cosmic spirit but also stands in the relationship of close inter-dependence. This is nothing but rejection of the humanist philosophy as propounded and projected in the post renaissance era—which not only underlined the centrality of man on the cosmic structure but also looked at everything else, as being subservient to man. In positive forms, this was a reiteration of the *advaitic* vision of the cosmos of which Gandhi claims to be a votary.

This is a basic formulation on the part of Gandhi which sets him apart from the entire liberal perspective. In the process, he rejected the main idea behind the Enlightenment making instrumental rationality as the *raison d'être* of human life which ultimately led to the unbridled conquest of nature which is posing a serious threat to all forms of life including human life. Gandhi had anticipated such an ecological

imbalance. And which is why, he had pleaded for the minimisation of human needs and taking a reverential view of the nature as the manifestation of the cosmic spirit. He had also underlined the inter-dependence of all human beings as each one of us owes a lot to others. Hence, there is an overwhelming urge to pay it back. And that is through such reasoning that Gandhi transcended 'human right approach' and lays stress on the performance of duties rather than insistence on one's rights. And that is why he insisted on the service to the cosmos and its inhabitants. It is in this context that he interpreted the concept of *yajna* a major concept of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Basing his understanding on the indivisibility of humanity and need for the service to all the inhabitants of the universe, Gandhi asserted that any individual or group who indulges in exploitation and domination would do as much damage to themselves as to others as they are equally dehumanised and brutalised in the process.

It is in the perspective that his emphasis on individual freedom is to be understood. He insisted that no society could be built up on the basis of the denial of individual freedom as it is contrary to the very nature of man. In fact, he was so much concerned about the freedom of the individual that he went to the extent of saying that 'we must have liberty to do evil before we learn to do good'. He argued that any action could not be considered moral if it is taken under external coercion. 'A moral act must be our own act' he asserted. Thus, for Gandhi, the only way to ensure freedom and autonomy to the individual was to wed morality with freedom. In other words, freedom is the basis of autonomy and morality. But he goes further. For freedom from external agency is the outer aspect of freedom, the outer *swaraj*. The real freedom consists in being free from one's baser passions, free from his lower, empirical

self. Anyone who remains in the grip of his lower self, his animal instincts, could not be taken to be free, as he could hardly enjoy his inner *swaraj*. In other words, only a self-liberated man is truly a free and autonomous man. Thus, the Gandhian concept of freedom is more symbolic of liberation rather than liberty. It is a rare combination of 'inner and outer *swaraj*'.

Another problem of the liberal concept of freedom is that it hardly pays sufficient attention to the unequal and asymmetric distribution of power, privileges and natural resources. True, there has been some serious attempt to tackle the problem of inequality in the western intellectual tradition. And justice was also the main focus of the Marxism. Rawl's theory of justice was another serious attempt in a liberal tradition to find a way out. But all these attempts have failed to tackle the problem of iniquity in any effective way. The Marxists took the institution of private property as the only culprit. In the process, they ignored its myriad facets and sources including unequal distribution of political power and privileges. Similarly, all liberal thinking on iniquity had hardly been able to touch its veneer. This is primarily because in the entire liberal tradition man is so atomized and abstracted that there is hardly any space for the other in his scheme of things, except to take the latter as rival and a competitor.

Gandhi took the fight for equality to the enemy's camp that is to the human heart and the community life. He took care of the problem of justice and equality by locating the individual in a morally vibrant local community. It is the community which offers the right locale, congenial environment for his self-choice as well as its works as a witness to his moral action. This is so because as against the individual in the liberal perspective, Gandhi inalienably linked up the individual to the

unified chain. In such a symbiotic relationship, everybody is accountable to everyone else. And this accountability is not in the sense of assertion of his right but in the performance of his duties.

It is to be noted that Gandhi derived this paradigm shift from the 'right' to 'duty' by giving a new interpretation of the concept of *yajna* from the *Bhagvad Gita*. *Gita* had accepted the old concept that it is only the *purushartha karma* (the work performed in one's own self-interest) that has binding force and that *yajnartha karma* (the work done for the sake of society) had no binding force, i.e. it does not put man in the cycle of rebirth. Following in the footsteps of the *Gita*, Gandhi expanded the concept of *yajnartha karma* so as to cover the entire gamut of daily work of the common man the only condition being that it is performed for the sake of the *lokasangraha* (welfare of the world) and without any kind of self attachment. Gandhi also asserted that anyone who acts only in his own interest not only lives a vegetative life but he is no better than a thief. Thus, it is incumbent on every individual, to love and serve all beings, both animate and inanimate by performing his culturally defined and socially defined role.

Gandhi extended the cyclic order and chain of *yajna* to stress the indivisibility of entire humanity. Thus, what one does to others in terms of good or bad deeds, ultimately comes back to him personally. Thus, by doing well to others, you are also doing well to yourself. Similarly, by harming others, you are also harming yourself. That is the real meaning of the interdependence of the entire cosmic structure.

Gandhi did not ignore the real problems involved in making a moral choice both at individual and societal level. He gave enough space to the preaching and teachings of saints,

sages and scriptures working as guides in the process of making a moral choice. But he was also aware that unless they are tested on the basis of human reason, it might be mere verbal acceptance and even hypocrisy. Hence, he assigned equally pivotal role to human rationality in making a moral choice. And that is why he asserts that any moral choice when it is made, must be tested on the anvil of human's rationality. But he was aware that an unbridled reason had become a tool in the hands of the vested interest to pursue their selfish end. Hence, he does not reject the idea of revelation *per se*. In fact, without totally rejecting the reason as an epistemological tool, he assigned equal role to the inner voice, faith, intuition and spiritual *sadhana* in the process of making a moral choice. But he did not stop at that. Once the moral choice was made he gave every individual the right to pursue his own relative truth. He also gives an instrument of empowerment in the hands of every individual, i.e. *satyagraha* to back up his moral choice, with his soul force. Karl Marx had a point when he said that philosophers were so far good at interpreting the world, but the real challenge was to change it. But Marx failed to provide any effective weapon in the hand of the hapless individuals to back up their moral choice in any effective manner, unless the entire community of the proletariat is organized for a common goal. Gandhi, through *satyagraha*, did it both at individual and societal level.

One of strengths of the Gandhian thinking on equality and justice is that it transcends the liberal vision of the same. In fact, his vision is really located in the spiritual equality of man, and not equality just on secular level. He made three major observations on this score: (a) that every man carries a speck of divinity in his persona (b) that no man is beyond redemption and (c) that every man is competent to pursue his own relative truth. Such a spiritual basis of equality puts the entire liberal

discourse on liberty, equality, citizenship and justice on an entirely different footing. What is more, Gandhi's individual is autonomous but not atomised, fired with individuality but not with individualism and inter-dependent but not entirely dependent. This inter-dependence is not only inter-species but also intra-species. Thus, the basic need from individual to the cosmic level will have to be taken care of. But he is aware that it is not the need but the human greed that is the real culprit. Hence, he talks of putting a limit to the need of the man, so that it is not turned into his greed. But he is equally clear that the basic needs must be taken care of, so as to enable every man to enjoy the freedom of thought and action. Not only that, he is so emphatic on the equality between man and man that he is ever willing to do away with all the ascribed distinctions of caste, creed, gender, class, education, etc. as each one of them becomes the breeding ground for inequality and injustice. He was equally willing to do away with the laws of inheritance, so that no one could have an unearned income purely on the basis of inheritance.

Similarly, he makes a seminal contribution to the discourse on human rights vis-à-vis duties when he gives primacy to the latter over the former. Consequently, unlike the liberals he does not take duties as playing a complementary role to the rights. He argues that in the absence of performance of duties, rights could not be ensured. He goes to the extent of asserting that it is not the duties which are derivative from the right but the truth of the matter is just the opposite: right would have to be derived from the duties.

Not only that, he dug deeper for the philosophical basis of duties – *dharma*. In this respect, his concept of *dharma* primarily derived from his study of the *Bhagavad Gita*, is a much wider and deeper concept as compared to the concept of

duty in the western lexicon. The nature of *swadharma* is not only based on one's inner proclivities (*swabhava*) but it has got to be performed with detachment, i.e. without much concern for the fruits of one's action. Thus, *swadharma* is both vocation as well as avocation of every individual. And which is why the puruist of *swadharma* is key to the success of the social system as well as his well being and spiritual liberation. As he puts it 'Let each do his duty. If I do my duty, I shall be able to serve others'.

How does one locate his *swadharma*? Gandhi was aware that every human being is endowed with an *atman* which is by nature pure and unstained. In the course of one's worldly pursuit, it comes under the veil of *avidya* (ignorance) and as such even goes into slumber. But it is never lost forever, as it is both eternal and pure. Hence, it could be awakened by pursuing one's own individual project of inner purification. In a word, Gandhi's enunciation of the concept of *swadharma* takes the human rights discourse on a much higher level. It also gives a new meaning to the concept of duties as ordinarily understood in the western lexicon.

Gandhi and the Liberal view of the State

Gandhi had strong reservations about the philosophy behind the liberal State as well as its actual working. Though unlike the Marxist, he never treated the State as a class institution, but he was fully aware that in actual practice it is turned into an instrument of domination in the hands of the vested interests. In fact, he was always skeptical of the concentration of power at any point. He took the concentration of power and violence as the Siamese twins almost impossible to be separated. Thus, the State, including the liberal State, has become a symbol of violence, exploitation and domination. This was his perception of the State when he wrote, 'The State

represents violence in a concentrated and organised form. The individual has a soul but the State is a soulless machine. It can never be weaned away from violence to which it owes its existence'.

As we have seen earlier that Gandhi was not happy with the liberal concepts of freedom, rights, justice, etc., and he provided his own meaning and dimension to these concepts. Besides, he was aware that even the modern politics dominated by the liberal perspective has led to the emergence of an elite class which flourishes and prospers at the cost of the common man. Hence, for him the real challenge was to free the common man from the clutches of the dominant classes. Besides, he was also aware that the State has assumed its new form in the context of modern industrial civilization in which the man could never be at peace with himself or with his fellow beings.

Apart from these theoretical considerations, he has also problems with the principles of majority rule which has become the hallmark of the modern liberal State. He had a number of objections to it. In the first place, it often results in the suppression of the minority as a result of the concentration of power in the hands of the few elite, who virtually rule the roost in the name of the majority. Secondly, the so-called representatives in Gandhi's view hardly represent the true will of the people. The entire system of representation has developed in such a way that instead of the representatives looking up to the people for understanding their will and aspirations, it is the people who had to look up to their representatives. This reversal of roles makes a mockery of the representative governments. Thus, there is a real shift of power centre from the people to their representatives. Thirdly, the only test of the popular will gets located in the periodic elections. But there are two major problems in case of these

elections. One, that all kinds of issues both of national and international nature are raised during their elections, which make it difficult for the common man to understand their intricacies and complexities. As such, it becomes a much easier task for the candidates to take the common man for a ride. In fact, at the time of elections, so many smokescreens are created and so many subterfuges are used that for the man in the street it becomes impossible to separate the grain from the husk of the issues involved. Two, this kind of electoral politics also promotes identity politics which, in turn, torn apart the social fabric in its trail. He was equally concerned with the divisive nature of the identity politics. If it remains unbridled, it might pose a serious threat to the national unity. But at the same time he was equally aware of the havoc, which over-centralised power structure, may play with the people's life and liberty. Hence, for him the real challenge was to reconcile the need of participatory democracy at the local level with that of the national authority. To that end, he favoured 'self-government' more particularly at the grass-root level, and a people's oriented, hierarchical authority structure at higher levels. But he was quite firm that such authority structure must be more of voluntary rather than coercive nature. Besides, such a power structure would have to be marked by the principle of interdependence which in turn would be informed by voluntarism. Thus, all co-operating and co-federating units should enjoy autonomy and freedom and yet be voluntarily an integral part of a hierarchical authority structure. In fact, the primary focus of his alternative polity was to free the individual from thralldom of centralised authority – be it social, economic or political. And that is why he asserted that all institutions wielding centralized and concentrated power must be replaced by voluntary and decentralised ones. In his view, only in such an institutional set-up, the autonomy, freedom and integrity and spiritual growth of individuals could be ensured. For him, the

possibility of the limitless spiritual growth of an individual was the *sine qua non* of any humane system.

II

Gandhi's Proposal for an Alternative Polity

As noted earlier, Gandhi was for working out a political system which could ensure the real *swaraj* both in its inner and outer connotations. In plain language his 'inner *swaraj*' meant that man must be liberated in his inner being from his devilish tendencies like greed, anger and delusion replacing them with pious tendencies like compassion, love, empathy etc. But he was also aware that the 'outer *swaraj*' – removal of the external obstacles to inner *swaraj*, was equally important, as that alone could create a congenial atmosphere for enjoying the former. Hence, his insistence on Indian independence and gradual transfer of power and activities from the centralised State to the voluntarily raised decentralised institutions. He himself visualized the social order of his dream in his own style. In 1931 he wrote:

'Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representation. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated no representation is necessary. Then there is a State of enlightened anarchy. In such a State everyone is his own ruler.... In ideal State there is no political power because there is no State. But this ideal is never fully realised in life.' Hence, the classical statement of Thoreau that 'that government is the best which governs the least.'

He was also aware that it was the absence of a strong central authority due to which India failed to meet the challenge of foreign aggression. Hence, he was conscious of the need for a central authority consistent with his preferred decentralised power structure.

It was this practical vision which had prompted him as early as 1921 to come to the conclusion that his desired state of the enlightened anarchy would remain a distant dream for a long time to come. And that is why in his foreword to the new edition of *Hind Swaraj* (1921), he had admitted that though he at his own level was working for his inner *swaraj*, but the Indian condition is not yet ripe for such a conception of *swaraj*. Hence, he was working for the attainment of 'parliamentary democracy'. Under such circumstances, he was not working for the destruction of external institutions like law courts, railways, hospitals, mills and even machineries. He knew very well that that kind of demolition of such institutions and organisations would require a 'higher' level of simplicity and renunciation, which the Indian people were not prepared at that time. He decided to concentrate on achieving the 'rule of the people' and the rule of justice. And that is why he not only supported the goal of *poorna Swaraj* at the Lahore Congress (1929) but also played a crucial role in drafting a Karachi Congress resolution on the fundamental rights and duties of the Indian people. Subsequently he defined *poorna Swaraj* in the following way:

'It is complete freedom from the alien yoke in every sense of the term and this is for the dumb millions. Every interest, therefore, that is hostile to their interest must be revised or must subside, if it is not capable of revision'. (*Young India*, 17-9-1931)

Gandhian Design for a Swadeshi Polity

It is in the above perspective that the Gandhian design for the alternative polity could be analysed and properly understood. He did not favour a rigidly defined and fully worked out systemic design. He always favoured an open-ended system, with broad outlines based on his basic ideas.

Primarily, he favoured a small but well-organised village community at the base of a non-hierarchical polity. Thus, every village should work as a basic unit of the alternative polity. The affairs of such a village would be managed by a group of five *panchas* elected by every literate adult person of the village between the age of eighteen and fifty years. The choice of such age group forming the electorate is that it is they who are most interested and involved in realistic worldly affairs. And the idea behind the literacy qualification is that such people would be able to comprehend the intricacies of the modern governance. It is to be noted that the compulsory nature of literacy qualification would create pressure on the community as well as on the government to work out a concrete plan for the spread of literacy among the people. Moreover, he further argued that it is not too much to expect from citizens to acquire some literacy, so that they could perform their duties effectively and efficiently. Further, such an elected body of a village *panchayat* would, wield all legislative, executive and judicial power. But it would primarily rely on the moral power of the community to ensure peace, harmony and order therein. Thus, constituted and inspired by the common well-being such *panchayats* would work as basic units of the polity. Besides, it would work to promote all the civil virtues like cleanliness, social responsibility, justice and fairness. Above these basic units of the *panchayats* there would be similar organizations at *taluka*, district, province and finally at the national level. The electorate collegiums of these higher organizations would be composed of the elected members of the units just below of each level. To be more specific, the members of the *taluka* committee would be elected by all the elected members of the *panchayats* falling under its purview. The same principle would govern all the organisations at the provincial and national levels. It is obvious that such a political structure would promote the idea of the multi-layer governance. However, each unit would

enjoy an appropriate measure of autonomy and freedom. However, at the level of provinces, if desired, each province could have its own constitution. The only consideration governing the nature and structure of such provincial constitution would be that it must be in consonance with the powers and functions of the national authority. Gandhi was fully convinced that in such a political structure the 'apex' would not be sustained by the bottom rather the former would derive its strength from the latter. As he put it,; "In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there would be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with apex sustained by the bottom. It would be an oceanic circle whose centre would be individuals. Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but would give strength to all within and also derive its own strength from it." He advanced a number of arguments in support of his ideal political structure. First, such a political system being decentralised and people oriented would not require a vast bureaucratic structure – a bane and nightmare of the modern system of governance. Such a system could manage its affairs, with minimum police force – an expensive and vast unproductive force. In fact, it is easy to meet the basic needs of the people backed by a vibrant community life. It would also minimise the incidence of criminality in the society. What is more, the local community bestowed with both executive and judicial power could easily take care of small crimes both in terms of policing and delivery of justice. It goes without saying that on account of the vibrant nature of the community life, the system of justice would not remain procedural. Rather it would be both just and substantive. Gandhi was also hopeful that at the advanced stage of such a social system, even the services of the army could become dispensable. It could very well be replaced by a non-violent trained soldiery which could very well take care of the

problems of internal disorder and external aggression. Even if the police and the army are retained for a while, their strength would be reduced to the bare minimum.

Gandhi listed a number of arguments in favour of the alternative polity which were derived from the major weaknesses afflicting the prevailing liberal democratic system. It can be summarised as follows:

- (a) In actual working of the prevailing political system, the power shifted away from the people and had come to stay with the government. Hence, ordinarily it is almost an impossible task for the people to bend the government to their will. In fact, the so called representative government hardly represents the will of the people. In actual practice, an organised system of corruption and intimidation based on money power and muscle power pollutes the entire system including the electoral processes.
- (b) The emergence of a strong party system has resulted in the concentration of real power in the hands of the party-bosses. Thus, people's representatives themselves feel weak and helpless.
- (c) Another bane of the present system is that once power goes from the people to the State, it is returned to them only in the form of citizenship. What is more, whatever little power comes back to the people, it comes only as a gift from the State as the State remains its sole guarantor. Thus whatever power the people wield, they do it only as citizens and not as fully free moral beings. In the process, they develop a dependence syndrome in the respect of the State. Thus, it can be concluded that

true democracy based on the people's power is ruled out in the present system. On all these counts the prevailing liberal democratic system has failed.

Any keen and perceptive observer working on the democratic system in India or elsewhere could easily appreciate the foresight and foresightedness of Gandhi in pointing out the real weaknesses of prevailing democratic system.

It is only in the above perspective that Gandhi's alternative system of polity could be fully appreciated. He made a modest attempt to free the present system of its basic malaise and to really empower the people. And that is why he called his system as *swaraj* or *ramrajya*. *Swaraj* is nothing but the true democracy as the bulk of the affairs would be managed by the people at the grass roots level. And only minimum authority would be transferred to higher bodies. Thus, the people become the real source of power as whatever power they transfer they do it on the basis of the their own will and accord. Besides, the residue of power also remains with them. Hence, it is not devolution of power as it is commonly understood as it does not go from the top to the bottom. It originates at the bottom, remains at the bottom, and only that part is transferred to the higher bodies which is absolutely required for the better management of the people's life. In other words, it is the delegation of power from the basic unit of the village *panchayat* to the higher bodies and the residue of power still remains with the people.

The real strength of Gandhi's thinking is that it does not end with mere enunciation of a principle. Gandhi was always keen to give a practical shape to every principle he enunciated. He was aware that in the absence of the practical schemata, his plan for people's empowerment would remain a chimera, a

mirage. It was not his wont to build up a castle in the air. Hence, he always backed up his desired destination by pointing out a concrete path leading to it. He was firmly of the opinion that the present State structure and the process of the empowerment of the people must start right now and could not wait for the day of independence. He suggested three instruments of change which would take the people to the new system of the empowerment and gradual pruning of the State structure. They were: constructive programme, *swadeshi* and *satyagraha*. The constructive programme was meant not only to create mass base for the Indian freedom struggle but also to lay a sound foundation for this alternative polity. It is through the constructive programme that various powers and functions of the State, which it has earlier usurped from the civil society, could be restored to the latter. Besides, it would work as a training ground for the constructive workers who would work as the role models for the people. Finally, it would also release real people's power as they would get trained to solve their own problems without depending on an external agency, like the State. The second instrument, viz., *swadeshi* spirit is to be developed to inculcate a sense of self-respect and self-reliance among the people which would ultimately help them in building a vibrant community. This would also lead to a new lifestyle based on the local resources and their optimal utilisation. But the real instruments of people's empowerment would be the non-violent non-cooperation, i.e. *satyagraha*. It would not only help people to resist all kinds of injustices, whether coming from the State or the civil society. In the process it would also help the people to wrest their original power which has been usurped by the State. In a word, constructive programme, *swadeshi* and *satyagraha* would go a long way to restore the real power to the people.

III

Gandhi's Vision of Swadeshi Polity: An Appreciation

Two major points have been raised on Gandhi's alternative vision of polity and society. One was raised by none other than Jawaharlal Nehru, his close follower and the first Prime Minister of India. Though they worked in close collaboration on many issues, they fundamentally differed on the future vision of Indian society. Gandhi stuck to his vision first enunciated in *Hind Swaraj* and Nehru to his Fabian vision marked by the people's liberation through rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. On many occasions they had discussed and debated the issues involved, but both of them had stuck to their own distinct positions. The final round of the dialogue took place in October-November, 1945 when both wrote to each other and also met and discussed on one to one basis. But the matter ultimately remained unresolved. Gandhi reiterated that he still stood by the system of government envisaged in *Hind Swaraj*. Clarifying his preferred system of self-sufficient village republic Gandhi wrote: "I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then ... the people will have to live in villages not in towns, in huts, not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live at peace with each other in towns and palaces. They will have no resources but they will resort to both, violence and untruth". He did not favour the village life in its present form. It is evident from the statements he made in that very letter. "My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. Men and women will be free and able to hold their own against anyone in the world. There will neither be plague, nor cholera, nor smallpox, no one will be idle, no one will wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labour".

In reply to Gandhi's above letter, Nehru out rightly rejected the vision projected in the *Hind Swaraj* which he found 'completely unreal'. Nehru advanced three arguments in favour of his basic submission. One, that India could not remain independent in the absence of technical advancement. The *Hind Swaraj* vision would keep India isolated and, as such, might prompt others to ogle on India leading to a conflict situation. Two, such a vision might create confusion in the various sections of the Indian people creating problems for the representatives of free India who, in any case, would take the final decision. Three, a village according to Nehru was intellectually and culturally backward and such narrow-minded people were more likely to be 'untruthful and violent'. This was nothing but a trenchant critique of the Gandhi's assessment of modernity in general and of the modern State in particular. It is also to be noted that the Constituent Assembly opted for a State structure which has hardly any resemblance with the Gandhian thinking on this score. It was the Nehruian vision of modern State which prevailed and was adopted by the Constituent Assembly.

Of late, however, there is realisation among many sensitive intellectuals all over the world that after all the Gandhian vision is neither regressive nor off the mark. He anticipated most of the problems which a modern, progressive and welfare State is likely to face. Even the welfare State has hardly touched the veneer of persistent poverty and steep inequality. Besides, it has only succeeded in raising the Himalaya of bureaucratic and political elite steeped in corruption, domination and exploitation. The elite have become the biggest beneficiary of all the poverty ameliorating measures taken in the name of the poor and the dispossessed. Besides, it has played a divisive role in breaking the civil society to pieces

which has its own debilitating effect on the lives of the people. The case of the Indian State and its working in the environment of identity politics is an illustrative case. It goes to the credit of Gandhi that he anticipated some of these problems. Another way to look at the Gandhian vision is to analyse his critique of modernity as Hardiman has done in his book *Gandhi: In his Times and Ours*. Hardiman argues that instead of looking at Gandhi's critique of modernity as its total rejection, it would be more appropriate to look at it as a theory of 'alternative modernity'. He further argues that Gandhi endorsed many prominent elements of modernity, viz., doctrine of human rights, fundamental unity of all human beings, time management, punctuality, and persuasion instead of coercion. Besides, he also imbibed in his own persona and even integrated some of them in his plan of political and social action. In short, his was a nuanced critique of modernity. It is to be noted that the basic Gandhian perspective has been endorsed by sensitive writers like E.F. Schumacher (1911-77), Ivan Illich and even by welfare organisations like Oxfam, Green Party and other environmental groups. Thus, it is not for nothing that Gandhi has become an icon, a source of inspiration for all the people involved in the movement for alternative development and deep ecology.

Another support to the Gandhian perspective comes from the development that has engulfed the institution of the State in the last decades of the twentieth century. The collapse of both the Marxian and welfare states reaffirms the problems Gandhi anticipated long ago. The breakdown of the State system followed by liberalisation and globalisation and the problems created by all these developments only revalidates the basic tenor of the Gandhian vision. Liberalisation and globalisation have created their own problems, viz., recent world wide economic melt-down, emergence of uni-polar

world, wars in many parts of the world, endemic violence overtaking every aspect of human life, the growing inequality and incidence of poverty are some of its manifestation. All these development only point out to the basic strength of the Gandhian perspective on the State system.

A second point of criticism on the Gandhian system of the State has come from Bhikhu Parekh who has done considerable work on Gandhi and his thought. Parekh's criticism relates to Gandhi's thinking on the State and his praxis on the same score. Parekh finds a contradiction between his theoretical position of the minimal State and his subsequent practical support to the State system to be used for the solution of the glaring problems of the people. Thus, though Gandhi stuck to his theoretical position on the concept of the minimal State as it is evident from his dialogue with Nehru, he came to support the view that voluntarism alone could not be able to solve the problems of the 'dumb millions'. Hence, State intervention would be required for the alleviation of their problems. Despite his deep commitment to non-violence he came to support the view that police and armed forces could be used for extinguishing the fire of communalism. He even supported the despatch of the Indian army to Kashmir in the face of covert Pakistani aggression in 1947-48. Besides, he was persuaded to believe that nationalisation of industries might be necessary step to solve the problems of the working class. And he was not at all opposed to State intervention on an issue like land reforms. On this basis of all these instances, Parekh comments:

'Like his theories of *ahimsa* and *Satyagraha*, his theory of State lagged behind his practice'. (Bikhu Parekh, *Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*)

In my view, there is no fundamental contradiction between Gandhi's theoretical position in respect of the State

and his praxis. In the first place, he never favoured abolition of the State in one go. All that he was pleading was that the power and structure of the State must be reduced to the minimum. There is no *lakshman rekha* for the minimal State. It might vary from situation to situation. Hence, one can hardly go along with Parekh that there was a fundamental contradiction between Gandhi's theory and practice in respect of the State. He never deviated from his basic position that the real empowerment of the people would take place through voluntarism including constructive programme, *swadeshi* and *stayagraha*. But that does not mean that he should not have favoured the use of the State machinery for the solution of the people's problems. In fact, there was enough scope for both *lok satta* (people's power) and *rajya satta* (State power) in his scheme of things. His last testament written a day before his assassination is also symbolic of his dual approach and strategy. He pleaded for the Congress to be turned into Lok Sevak Sangh. Lok Sevak Sangh would tackle the problem of illiteracy, unemployment, untouchability and communal intolerance. This was nothing but a new organisational structure for his constructive programme. But he did not negate the role of the State working for the solution of the people's problems.

In a word, his theoretical position was that the State depended on the voluntary co-operation of the people. Therefore, if the people are alert, vigilant and morally upright, the State could be always put on the right track. This is nothing but giving the levers of power in the hands of the people and within that parameter the State has its own distinct role to play.

8

Swadeshi in the Context of the Current Economic Crisis

Louis Campana

The fact that the economic and financial crisis came as a surprise is quite noteworthy. In general, the reaction seems to be “What is s going on here? Why and how did we get to this point and what missing cogs caused the breakdown in the smooth running of our business?” Analysing this modern crisis is like looking into Pandora’s Box... All the good and bad are visible, but the disaster is imminent... And it is going to hurt.

No crystal ball is required for a careful look. It takes us to see that everything is in place for a world-wide economic breakdown, which is soon to happen.

It happened yesterday!

There is a small book entitled *Leur civilisation et notre délivrance*, published by Denoël (in the collection Pensée Gandhienne), which is in fact a French translation of Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj*. In his preface to this book, Lanza del Vasto quotes Gandhi’s remark that British civilisation would destroy itself after sometime.

Lanza del Vasto further says:

“For the young Mohandas, the child, the schoolboy, then the student, England with her Modern Civilisation was

synonymous with Power and Freedom. She represented liberality, tolerance, innovative intelligence, daring to invent, to discover, to undertake. She stood for reason, for justice in her actions and science in her thought. She was an object of admiration and envy. She was the dominating power, hated and admired at once, a model imitated although denied. From this viewpoint, an Indian could be ashamed to see himself as poor, passive and degenerate in the midst of a servile people, whose every action was held back by routine observances and superstitious restrictions, enclosed in a belief system based on incantations.”

Nothing could have prepared Gandhi for the kind of England he discovered on arrival in London. He tried to conform to the English way of life so that he could pierce the mystery of this civilisation. But he found only emptiness and error, a web of deceit from which it was crucial to escape. That gave Gandhi an understanding to develop the formidably effective and gentle non-violence which ultimately deprived England half of its empire?

First discovery was the value of the civilised individual will less in a civilisation based on materialism.

Among the smoking towers, overcrowded cities, arduous and wearisome transport systems, the individual runs around exhausting himself, by not finding enough time, remaining in a state of perpetual upset. The entire world's wealth is concentrated in cities like London, Manchester and Liverpool, capitals of business, domination and grandeur, of ruin and war, spoiling entire lands all across the globe. Not only does this civilisation stifle its own people, reducing them to drudges in the service of a privileged few, but it also swallows up the fabulous riches of the subjugated peoples of India, Australia or America.

Second discovery was the English fascination for India.

Gandhi during his stay in England listened and tried to understand and often surprised by the many expressions of interest about his country, the requests for information and the questions raised by many. He even received English translations of the *Gita* and the books on *Upanishads* from his English friends.

In the light of his own experience of the civilisation in which he was living, reading these works anew he became more aware of their main teachings and also had a deeper understanding of his own tradition and that of his Christian hosts. Let me quote again from Lanza del Vasto's preface:

“There is only one truth, to know oneself: the one who knows himself knows others, knows the world and knows God. The one who does not know himself knows nothing. There is only one power, only one freedom, only one justice: to be master of oneself. The one who masters himself has conquered the world. There is only one good: to love others as oneself, in other words, to love them because they are oneself. All the rest is shadows, illusions, vanity.”

Third discovery: The English did not conquer India unaided; Indians themselves, the rich and the privileged, stood back as the country was overrun, and they were rewarded with hard cash or important positions in the administration. That is why Gandhi worked unceasingly to teach his people and shake them out of their passivity by the hard lessons of civil disobedience.

And today?

In today's world of crisis, can we take these teachings as a path of wisdom?

What of today's woman or man, characterised by fear of seclusion, fear of others, fear of hush, fear of crave, looking desperately everywhere for money, incapable of pulling anything out of her or his own heart, with the exception of anguish for tomorrow, longing for security and comfort even at the expense of close neighbours? What is missing in her or his life is certain interiority, a conception of the human person, his values and achievements, which is not tied up with the acquisition of material products or the possession of goods.

It is not by chance that we organised a convention on the theme: *Towards a Non-violent Economy* in Bhopal. Our last film dealt with the same subject symbol of the irresponsibility of certain industrial groups. It was made in Sri Lanka with Gandhi's disciple A.T. Ariyaratne. Seven million people were invited to rouse themselves and claim a form of happiness which was within their reach, the happiness that comes from sharing. This reminds me of two of Baba Amte's slogans: Power is in your hands" and "Happiness dies if it is not shared". He used to say these to the lepers, who with his help had set up and were running over sixty agricultural, commercial and artistic ventures in *Anandwan*!

We need to ask ourselves what a political vision, what social measures, what economic advances could lead to - if all these are not founded on self awareness, acceptance of personal responsibility and the duty to share?

Well, the outcome is our so-called civilised, globalised world, caught up in the economic conflict between states and multinationals. They behave like dictatorships and are supported by investment banks who have forgotten their primary role. Above and beyond that, there is the widespread misery of millions of human beings, expropriated, stripped off

their dignity, living as refugees without homes, lands or jobs and across all continents.

Everything is decided at the top of pyramids of state power. Power is concentrated, tense and joyless in a handful of world capitals. Whereas every village should be the place where its inhabitants debate and exchange, where decisions are taken on vital questions such as food, medical care, children's education, investment for the good of the villagers, creation of cultural ties, sharing of knowledge-where life moves quite simply. This is what was done in previous generations and it endorsed a real social cohesion. People were poorer perhaps, but they had dignity and could rely on the solidarity of their neighbours. Modern techniques should not belong only to the rich and powerful, but to all. It could provide the means of making life easier for farmers and craftsmen and raising their standard of living by improving their efficiency.

Gandhi dreamed of an India of 500 000 independent, autonomous villages, places where human beings can lead a fulfilled life united around one flag.

The economic, political and social power is seized and confiscated by the elite. Can the people reclaim it and dignify it with a spiritual dimension, a search for meaning? Is it possible to imagine like A.T. Ariyaratne that the world could become a community of village republics and rid itself of institutionalised economic violence? Yes, it is possible. But the people must be awake and aware, they must have achieved their own transformation and that is what I hope and wish for. That is what is meant by *swadeshi*, and it is neither naivety nor utopia, since it is functioning fully in certain places. What is more, the FAO publication of July 2008 stated that in the long term industrial agriculture (macro-economic structures in general) is

bound to fail and proposed a salutary return to local agriculture (local economies), with organic means of soil improvement, for the greater good of both rural and urban communities.

Otherwise, we must reach the bitter conclusion that humankind is incapable of finding ways where life of multiple locals are dignified, honest and respectful of others. Or we are totally disinclined to do so. In that case we can only hope for salvation from the High as the Christian tradition teaches. This is expected to be freely given but preceded by an Apocalypse. In other words a revelation foreshadowed by a series of terrible events.

Is this not the point in history we have reached today?

From Modernism to Post-Modernism in Agriculture: The Quest for 'Swadeshi' and Sustainability

D. Jeevan Kumar

Agriculture has undergone many 'revolutions' throughout history, since its advent some 8 to 10,000 years ago. But it is during the last century that agriculture has perhaps seen the most radical changes, due to the rapid spread of new technologies and the far-reaching nature of their impact upon social, economic and ecological systems.

Two guiding themes may be said to have dominated this period of agricultural and rural development.¹ One has been the need for increased food production to meet the needs of growing populations. Governments have intervened to modernise traditional agricultural systems, by encouraging the adoption of modern varieties of crops and modern breeds of livestock, together with associated packages of external inputs (like chemical fertiliser, pesticides, antibiotics, credit and machinery). In addition, they have supported new infrastructure, such as irrigation schemes, roads and markets, guaranteed prices and markets for agricultural produce, as well as a range of related policies.

The other theme has been the desire to prevent the degradation of natural resources. To conserve natural resources, governments have adopted policies, set up

institutions and structures, and generally encouraged the adoption of conservation measures. They have established grazing management schemes to control degradation of the soil. They have excluded people from forests and bio-diversity rich areas to protect flora and fauna.

Going by the record of these two themes, it would appear that agricultural and rural development has been remarkably 'successful'. Although often seen as mutually exclusive, both have been approached by the same process of modernisation. The approach is firmly rooted in and driven by the enlightenment tradition of positivist science.² Scientists and planners first name the problem that needs solving. Rational solutions are proposed and technologies developed. Technologies that have been tried in controlled environments are then let loose on society.

The Modernisation of Agriculture The Story of the Green Revolution

The Green Revolution drove widespread shifts in the agricultural sector from subsistence and low external-input agriculture to mono-cropping with high-yielding varieties (HYVs). This agricultural paradigm required the adoption of a 'package' of inputs, including irrigation, chemical pesticides and fertiliser, and hybrid seeds bred for disease resistance and high yield. Participating farmers often had access to credit and agro-processing facilities, transport and roads, machinery, marketing infrastructure and government price supports.

By the 1970s, Green Revolution farming had replaced the traditional farming practice of millions of developing country farmers. By the 1990s, almost 75% of Asian rice areas were sown with these new varieties. Overall, it is estimated that 40% of all farmers in developing countries were using Green

Revolution seeds by this time, with the greatest use found in Asia, followed by Latin America.³

The rapid spread of Green Revolution agriculture throughout most countries of the South was accompanied by a rapid rise in pesticide use. This was because the HYVs were more susceptible to pest outbreaks. Promising increases of yield were thus offset by rising costs associated with increased use of chemical inputs. According to one study, in the Central Plains of Thailand, yields went up only 6.5%, while fertilizer use rose 24% and pesticides jumped up 53%. In west Java, profits associated with a 23% yield increase were virtually cancelled by 65% and 69% increases in fertilizers and pesticides respectively.⁴

Synthetic fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides are made from non-renewable raw materials such as mineral oil and natural gas, or from minerals that are depleting, such as phosphate and potassium. As the price of petroleum increases, so does the cost of external inputs and machinery, forcing small farmers who are dependent on these inputs, into debt. The production of agro-chemicals is also an important source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Industrial, chemical-intensive agriculture has also degraded soils and destroyed resources that are critical to storing carbon, such as forests and other vegetation.

The rise in use of chemical inputs has also had adverse environmental and health impacts on farm workers and consumers. A substantial portion of pesticide residues ends up in the environment, causing pollution and bio-diversity decline. The extensive use of pesticides has also resulted in pesticide resistance in pests, and adverse effects on beneficial natural predators and parasites.⁵

The Green Revolution also brought about a shift from diversity to monocultures.⁶ When farmers opted to plant the HYV hybrid seeds, many traditional local varieties were abandoned and became extinct.

Other costs of the Green Revolution, often underestimated, included the financial costs of building huge dams for irrigation, the financial costs of the energy required in the construction and operation of such projects, the health costs of a steadily affected population due to chemical contamination of food, the costs involved in soil losses from increasingly degraded soils, genetic erosion and the drainage of groundwater aquifers.⁷ Green Revolution farming systems also required substantial irrigation, putting further strain on the world's limited water resources.

Traditionally, local farming communities were close-knit as seed exchange and farming knowledge were shared freely. The Green Revolution seeds however were hybrids, for which seed saving is undesirable, as the seed from the first generation of hybrid plants does not reliably produce true copies. Therefore, new seed must be purchased for each planting season, and this meant that farmers were no longer preserving and storing seeds for the next season. This trend not only incurs extra costs for the farmers, but has an impact on social cohesiveness too.

The Gene Revolution and the Erosion of Farmers' Seed Sovereignty

Until the 1930s, farmers worldwide enjoyed nearly complete sovereignty over their seeds, that is, they decided what seeds to plant, what seeds to save and who else might receive or be allocated their seed as either food or planting

material. Such decisions were made within the overarching norms established by the cultures and communities of which they were members. While these customary arrangements often recognised some degrees of exclusivity in access to genetic resources, they were largely open systems that operated on the bases of reciprocity and gift exchange, rather than the market. Indeed, these customary arrangements usually functioned to stimulate and facilitate – rather than restrict – the wide dissemination of seed.⁸ The sharing of seed resulted in the continuous recombination of genetic material, which in turn produced the agronomic resilience that is characteristic of peasant and farmer-developed crop varieties and landraces.⁹

Since the 1930s, farmers' sovereignty over seeds has been continuously and progressively eroded, while the sovereignty of what is now a "life sciences industry" has been correspondingly enlarged. The development of inbreeding/hybridisation in the 1930s first separated the farmer from the effective reproduction of planting material and created the opening needed for private capital to profit in the seed sector. Seed companies then used their increasing influence to obtain "plant breeding rights": legislation that conferred exclusive control to them over varieties in crops in which hybridisation was not possible.¹⁰

Subsequently, the seed industry has pursued both of these routes – technical and social – to further restrict farmers' access to seed to the confines of an increasingly narrow set of market mechanisms. The structures of science have been used to develop "Terminator" and "Trans-container" technologies, which genetically sterilize seed in order to prevent plant-back by farmers. Both national and international structures of governance – that is, institutions such as the World Trade Organization and the Convention on Biodiversity, as well as national legislatures – have been used for the global elaboration

of a set of Intellectual Property Rights based on the principle of *exclusion*. By making saving of patented seed illegal, these arrangements are effectively an enclosure of farmers' practices as well as their seed.¹¹

These technical and social processes of commodification are enabled in important ways by two key features of the organisation of knowledge production and accumulation in the plant sciences:¹² First, the development of agronomically useful and novel (and therefore patentable) plant varieties has been predicated on access by breeders to the enormous pool of biodiversity that has been produced and reproduced by farmers and indigenous peoples. Systematic appropriation of landraces from farming communities by University and government scientists, their storage in gene banks controlled by governments, corporations and non-governmental organisations and their subsequent use in breeding programmes, is a long standing practice. This bio-prospecting has increasingly been understood as "bio-piracy", insofar as no or insufficient benefits flow reciprocally to the communities and peoples who freely shared the collected materials as the "common heritage of humankind".¹³

Second, the supplanting of classical crop breeding by transgenic methods, the progressive weakening of public research institutions such as Universities, government and international facilities, and the subordination of their work to corporate objectives – has resulted in an overwhelming focus on the development of genetically modified varieties.¹⁴ After 20 years and billions of dollars of expenditures, GMO cultivars incorporate only two traits (selective pest and herbicide resistance) in only four crops (maize, soy, cotton and canola). The subsequent failure of public science to provide an alternative to this narrow range of patented, corporate seeds has

permitted the global dissemination of crop varieties that do not meet the needs of most farmers, that often cannot be legally saved, that reinforce the expansion of unsustainable monocultures and that contaminate other varieties with proprietary transgenes.¹⁵

Seed sovereignty has been gradually transferred from farmers and their communities to the boardrooms of the five transnational firms known as the “Gene Giants” for their domination of the US \$20 billion annual market for seeds. Once freely exchanged according to an ethic of sharing, access to seeds is now ruled by a set of legal mandates based on the principle of exclusion. Once bred by farmers to meet local needs, seeds are now genetically engineered by corporate scientists to the specifications of a globally distributed industrial agriculture, geared not to feeding people but to feeding the corporate bottom line.¹⁶

More Capitalist Trojan Horses

The achievement of ‘Food Security’ through trade liberalisation and agricultural reforms – is yet another neo-liberal Capitalist Trojan Horse. Agricultural liberalisation is impoverishing and displacing small producer populations by allowing “dumping” of artificially cheapened (via massive subsidies) Northern food into Southern markets, and by reproducing across the South a new development model of agro-exporting to repay debt. The displacement of local foods by global foods intensifies a colonial pattern of extraction of food resources from South to North. Protections of post-colonial national farm sectors in many countries of the Global South have been dismantled under policies of neo-liberal globalisation, dedicated to the principle of universal free trade and the privatisation of public services.¹⁷

In the context of global warming and Climate Change, the development industry is adopting its own version of adaptation, via 'Climate Proofing'. A 2008 policy brief for the Commission on Climate Change and Development argued that 'adaptation', deemed a necessary and "moral responsibility" by the North towards the South, is "often similar to, or sometimes indistinguishable from, development". In other words, adaptation, (to be accomplished via insurance schemes, crop rotations, irrigation systems, drought-resistant seeds, sea defences and what not), reproduces conventional development practices.¹⁸ Climate Proofing represents a new profit frontier, with agro-chemical and bio-technology firms like BASF, Monsanto, Bayer, Syngenta and Dupont filing over 500 patent documents on so-called "Climate-Ready Genes". Clearly, gene patents threaten farmer sovereignty and shift resources away from farmer-based strategies for Climate Change survival and adaptation.

Yet another nail in the coffin is what is happening today in the name of 'Energy Security'. The claim to "feed the world" by improving productivity, by enforcing property rights in seeds and other inputs, brings further "accumulation by dispossession",¹⁹ rather than supporting farmers' markets geared to feeding the working poor, a substantial portion of humanity. It parallels a new enclosure of the Commons, driven by a related security concern: Energy supply. Governments are now identifying what they consider, mistakenly, as "idle lands" to be commandeered for agro-fuels production for valuable energy exports.²⁰ Given the controversy surrounding the competition between bio-fuel and food crops, proposals are emerging for bio-fuel crops to occupy land deemed marginal. Merging "marginal land" with "abandoned cropland" underlies a number of "bio-energy feasibility studies" that inform policy.²¹

However, much of this land supports the subsistence needs of local rural populations, such as pasturing livestock, fuel, medicine and building material. The Gaia Foundation notes that common land used for generations may not be titled, that its fragility means it is used sparingly over the years, and that it is often sacred to communities and may be vital to protecting water sources. In addition to displacing communities to more fragile regions, or peri-urban sites, government-sanctioned land acquisition in the name of Energy Security may undermine customary use and ecological practices geared to sustaining landscapes.

While a recent FAO Report emphasises the significance of marginal lands for subsistence functions of the rural poor, primarily women with no property rights, the Gaia Foundation notes:

“It is no coincidence that the livelihoods of communities who do not practice intensive agriculture, and, in particular, of pastoralists and women, are being ignored in the debate. While deforestation for agro-fuels is seen as something to be avoided, the conversion of pasture lands and non-intensively farmed lands in the South is regarded as essential and desirable, if bio-energy is to replace a significant amount of fossil fuels in industrial societies.”²²

Contemporary Challenges before Agriculture: A Summing Up

According to Lim Li Ching, Elenita Dano and Hira Jhamtani, while agriculture is still reeling from the mistakes of the past, new challenges are emerging, as discussed below:²³

1. Climate Change

The most serious challenges facing agriculture are brought by the impacts of Climate Change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) found that there is abundant evidence that freshwater resources, on which the viability of agriculture depends, are vulnerable and have the potential to be strongly impacted by Climate Change, and that current water management practices may not be sufficient to cope with these impacts.²⁴ More frequent extreme water conditions, stresses on water availability, droughts and overall changing environmental conditions all pose serious threats to agricultural production. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) projects a reduction in global cereal output due to smaller plantings and/or adverse weather in most of the world's major producers.²⁵

Agriculture itself contributes to Climate Change, with around 10-12% of global anthropogenic Greenhouse Gas emissions annually; mostly methane from livestock raising, biomass burning and wet cultivation practices, and nitrous oxides from the use of synthetic fertilizers. If emissions from the production of synthetic fertilizers and the total food chain from the farm to the consumer are considered, the Greenhouse Gas emissions from all sectors related to agriculture may potentially sum up to 25-30% of all Greenhouse gas emissions.²⁶

2. Genetically-Engineered Crops

To adapt to the impacts of Climate Change in agriculture, investments in research and development of Climate-Ready Crops are being directed towards genetically-engineered crop varieties to resist drought

and tolerate flooding and salinity. Major agro-chemical corporations have shifted their investments to the development of so-called 'Climate-Ready' genetically engineered crops, and many have already applied for patent claims on commercially viable traits that adapt to the impacts of Climate Change. Climate Change is seen as an opportunity to push genetically-engineered crops as a silver bullet solution, but this will ultimately concentrate corporate power, drive up costs, inhibit independent research, and further undermine the rights of farmers to save and exchange seeds. Moreover, genetically-engineered crops could pose serious risks to the environment and human and animal health.

3. Bio-fuels

As a response to the climate and energy crises, bio-fuels are presented as a solution, but their rapid promotion has resulted in unintended negative consequences. The competition for food uses and land for bio-fuel production was identified as a major cause for the recent food crisis. Even the World Bank indicted bio-fuels as directly responsible for the explosion in grain and food prices worldwide and as the factor that forced food prices up by 75%.

Large-scale cultivation of crops for bio-fuels increases competition for agricultural resources, mainly for land and water. Even with the strategy to focus more on non-grain oil crops such as *jatropha*, large-scale production would require agricultural lands to grow these crops in a world where 40% of land is already used up for agriculture.

Some serious questions have also been raised on the mitigation potential of bio-fuels. Thousands of hectares of forests and peatlands are burned every year to give way to the expansion of oil palm plantations. Greater use of fertilisers, particularly nitrogen, releases more nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide into the atmosphere from the manufacturing process of nitrogen fertilisers. In the final analysis, industrial-scale production of bio-fuels depends on fossil fuels to keep the feedstock production and processing plants working, and to keep the trucks and tankers running, to transport the end products to the market.

4. Land Grabs

In the global scramble to ensure national food security and energy security, countries with financial resources have been buying up land in developing countries for offshore food and bio-fuels production. Food import-dependent governments are buying up land across the world to outsource their own food production and escape high market prices, while private investors are eyeing overseas farms as a new source of revenue. Hundreds of thousands of hectares of land have been bought up or leased by oil-producing Gulf countries in many developing countries to grow food and bio-fuels to supply the buyers' domestic consumption.²⁷ This has serious implications for the food security and land tenure of local communities.

5. Corporate Concentration

The commercial side of agriculture, namely inputs required in conventional farming, is heavily dominated by corporate interests. A handful of giant

corporations control the seed, agro-chemical and animal pharmaceutical markets globally. The world's top ten corporations in seed production and marketing have a combined proprietary share of 67% of the markets, 89% of market share in agro-chemicals, and 63% of the market share in animal pharmaceuticals.²⁸ Monopoly control makes commercial agriculture largely dependent on inputs produced by giant corporate interests who control both the supply and the prices of their products.

The Story of Agriculture: From Liberalism to Neo-Liberalism

It needs to be understood that the shift from Liberalism to Neo-Liberalism in the field of agriculture, has been based on carefully designed strategies and myopic assumptions, with very little thought for repercussions and consequences, both intended and unintended:

According to Jim Handy and Carla Fehr: *It is important to recognise that modern agriculture was based on a set of exclusions and enclosures that were fundamental to the emergence and strengthening of Capitalism. Through the 18th and 19th centuries, a set of myths about the supposed benefits of capitalist agriculture were constructed and continually reinforced to help make these exclusions more palatable.*"

According to Harriet Friedmann, the "dominant tendency" in the contemporary agri-food system "is toward distance and durability, the suppression of particularities of time and place in both agriculture and diets. More rapidly and deeply than before, transnational agri-food capitals disconnect production from consumption and re-link them through buying and selling. They have created an integrated productive sector of the world economy, and peoples of the Third World have

been incorporated or marginalized – often simultaneously – as consumers and producers.” ²⁹

Central to the process of modernisation of agriculture is the assumption that technologies are universally beneficial. During the Green Revolution of the 1960s, it was widely believed by scientists that they would be able to transform agricultural systems without affecting social systems. It was assumed that technologies existed independently of social context. What was not realized is that *“technology does not take root when it is cut off from culture and tradition. The transfer of technology requires sophistication: adaptation to region, to unique situations and to custom.”* ³⁰

Another assumption of the process of modernisation is the notion that new technologies are better than those of the past and so represent ‘progress’. Such a process is usually depicted as linear, with the new replacing the old, with no co-existence. This linearity is powerful in many disciplines, and usually implies that what has gone before is not as good as what we have now.

The assumption of the universality of technologies has inevitably led to greater standardization. Farmers are made to comply by completely changing “in their own best interests” their age-old practices, to incorporate the new technology. In addition, local institutions are either co-opted or lose power and wither away. The State is acting as if it alone knows best.

As Pretty points out, such universality of approach and technology leads to homogenisation of environments. Where farmers used to grow hundreds of crop varieties, they grow only one or two. Where they used a wide range of biological and physical measures to control soil erosion, they only use a few. Where they used to rely on wild plants for medicine, they

now rely on the market. Modernisation has brought with it the steady erosion of cultural and biological diversity.³¹

This notion is not new. Modernity has always sought to sweep away the confusion of diverse local practices and pluralistic functions accumulated over the ages, so as to establish a new order. This order brings freedom from the constraints of history, and liberty in the new technologies and practices. One of the slogans of the modernist architect, LeCorbusier, was “*by order, bring about freedom*”. As Kisho Kurokawa put it, “*the nail that sticks out is hammered down*”!

³²

But this loss of diversity and increase in homogeneity has done something to us too. We have lost something important, and probably do not know it. As Berman put it: “*The very process of development, even as it transforms the wasteland into a thriving physical and social space, recreates the wasteland inside of the developer himself!*”³³ Modernity does not result in the triumph of rationality; rather it creates an ‘*iron cage of bureaucratic rationality from which there is no escape*’!³⁴ The world so created by this universal modernism is inevitably monotonous. It is associated with “*the belief in linear progress, absolute truths, the rational planning of ideal social orders and the standardisation of knowledge and production*”.³⁵

To sum up, the modernisation of agriculture is founded on a simple, economic ideology of Nature, which in turn depends on the utilisation of certain technologies in the name of efficiency for the expansion of capital-oriented production. As Wittman points out: “*This transformation of agrarian social and ecological conditions has served to disrupt agriculture as a holistic link between human culture and the environment,*

*producing a chasm, or “metabolic rift”, between humans and nature. Agriculture’s historically relatively closed-loop system (food production and re-incorporation of wastes into the traditional agrarian cycle) is disrupted as producers and consumers are increasingly separated, not just in the division of rural/urban spaces but also further afield through agricultural trade and regional specialization. This process of distancing underlies and fosters the systematic effects of agricultural restructuring and its particular implications for both society and nature.*³⁶

As Pretty points out, those concerned with the development of a more sustainable agriculture, if it is to succeed, must not fall into the same traps. They must not make new grandiose claims to have the sole answer. They must be more modest, learning the lessons of modernisation, and so establish a new tradition of science, policy and practice.³⁷ The idea that all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voices, and have their voice accepted as authentic and legitimate, is central to this new tradition.³⁸

The contrast with what is required for a more sustainable agriculture is fundamental. Called ‘Post-modernism’ by some (coming after or contrasting with modernism), it favours heterogeneity and difference as the forces of liberation. What Post-modern traditions have in common is the rejection of ‘meta-narratives’, or large-scale theoretical interpretations, plans or technologies that claim to have universal application.

Post-Modernism and the Case for Sustainable Agriculture: Some Conceptual and Practical Innovations

A host of both conceptual and practical innovations are available, if one is serious in engaging with Sustainable

Agriculture. The following innovations are worthy of careful scrutiny:

✓ **Agro-Ecology**³⁹

Agro-Ecology is a scientific discipline that defines, classifies and studies agricultural systems from an ecological and socio-economic perspective. It is also considered the scientific foundation of Sustainable Agriculture, as it provides ecological concepts and principles for the analysis, design and management of productive, resource-conserving agricultural systems. Agro-Ecology integrates indigenous knowledge with modern technical knowledge to arrive at environmentally and socially sensitive approaches to agriculture, encompassing not only production goals, but also social equity and ecological sustainability of the system. In contrast to the conventional agronomic approach that focuses on the spread of packaged uniform technologies, agro-ecology emphasises vital principles such as biodiversity, recycling of nutrients, synergy and interaction among crops, animals and soil, and regeneration and conservation of resources. The particular methods or technologies promoted by agro-ecologists build upon local skills and are adapted to local agro-ecological and socio-economic conditions. The implementation of such agro-ecological principles within the context of a pro-poor, farmer-centred rural development strategy is essential for healthy, equitable, sustainable and productive systems.

The following are the advantages of agro-ecology, according to Altieri, et. al.⁴⁰:

1. It is an alternative path to agricultural productivity or intensification that relies on local farming knowledge and techniques adjusted to different local conditions, management of diverse on-farm resources and inputs, and incorporation of

contemporary scientific understanding of biological principles and resources in farming systems.

2. It offers the only practical way to actually restore agricultural lands that have been degraded by conventional agronomic practices.
3. It offers an environmentally sound and affordable way for small landholders to sustainably intensify production in marginal areas.
4. Finally, it has the potential to reverse the anti-peasant biases inherent in strategies that emphasize purchased inputs and machinery, valuing instead the assets that small farmers already possess, including local knowledge and the low opportunity costs for labour that prevail in the regions where they live.

The science of agro-ecology – the application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agro-ecosystems – provides a framework to assess the complexity of agro-ecosystems. The idea of agro-ecology is to develop a type of agriculture that does not depend on high chemical and energy inputs. The emphasis is on agricultural systems in which ecological interactions and synergisms between biological components provide the mechanisms for the system to sponsor its own soil fertility, productivity and crop protection. In addition to providing a scientific basis for sustainable and enhanced productivity, agro-ecology promotes the capability of local communities to innovate, evaluate and adapt themselves through farmer-to-farmer research and grassroots extension approaches. Technological approaches emphasising diversity, synergy, recycling and integration, and social processes that value community involvement, point to the fact that human resource development is the cornerstone of any strategy aimed at increasing food production. In short,

agro-ecology can have a significant effect on the region's food sovereignty.

✓ **Seed Sovereignty**⁴¹

If true Food Sovereignty is to be achieved, control over genetic resources must be wrested from the corporations and governments that seek to monopolise them, and be restored to, and permanently vested in, social groups and/or institutions with the mandate to sustain them and to facilitate their equitable use. La Via Campesina has recognised this necessity, identifying “seeds as the fourth resource ... after land, water and air” and declaring that “sustainability is completely impossible if the right of the peoples to recover, defend, reproduce, exchange, improve and grow their own seed is not recognized. Seeds must be the heritage of the peoples to the service of humankind”.⁴² That is, full realisation of food sovereignty must be predicated on the attainment of what we may term “seed sovereignty”.⁴³

✓ **Ecological Agriculture**⁴⁴

A conference on “Ecological Agriculture: Mitigating Climate Change, Providing Food Security and Self-Reliance for Rural Livelihoods in Africa” was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 26-28 November 2008. It was organised by the African Union, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Ethiopia, in collaboration with the Institute for Sustainable Development, Ethiopia and the Third World Network. The main conclusions of the conference were as follows:

1. Ecological Agriculture holds significant promise for increasing the productivity of smallholder farmers,

with consequent positive impacts on food security and food self-reliance.

2. As most poor farmers, particularly in degraded lands and in market-marginalised areas, are not able to afford external inputs, Ecological Agriculture offers farmers and their families a real and affordable means to break out of poverty and achieve food security.
3. Ecological Agriculture also provides many other benefits, such as addressing land degradation and reducing the use of polluting chemical inputs, with consequent beneficial health impacts.
4. Ecological Agriculture helps foster agrobiodiversity and other essential environmental services, which improves agro-ecosystem resilience, helping farmers to better face risks and uncertainties. The productivity and diversity of crops also increases incomes and improves rural livelihoods.
5. Ecological Agriculture has high Climate Change mitigation potential; for example, avoiding the use of synthetic fertilisers results in reduced greenhouse gas emissions, particularly nitrous oxide.
6. Ecological Agriculture practices such as using leguminous crops, crop residues, cover crops and agro-forestry enhance soil fertility and lead to the stabilisation of soil organic matter and to a heightened sequestration of carbon dioxide in the soils.
7. Ecological Agriculture assists farmers in adapting to Climate Change by establishing conditions that increase agro-ecosystem resilience to stress.

Increasing an agro-ecosystem's adaptive capacity allows it to better withstand climate variability, including erratic rain fall and temperature variations and other unexpected events.

8. Drawing on strong local community and farmers' knowledge and agro-biodiversity, ecological agriculture improves soil quality by enhancing soil structure and its organic matter content, which in turn promotes efficient water use and retains soil moisture. Such conditions simultaneously enhance soil conservation and soil fertility, leading to increased crop yields.

✓ **Strengths of Traditional Farming Systems in an Era of Climate Change⁴⁵**

Over the centuries, generations of farmers and herders have developed complex, diverse and locally adapted agricultural systems, managed with time-tested, ingenious combinations of techniques and practices that lead to community food security and the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity. These microcosms of agricultural heritage can still be found throughout the world, covering some 5 million hectares, and providing a series of ecological and cultural services to humankind, such as the preservation of traditional forms of farming knowledge, local crop and animal varieties and autochthonous forms of socio-cultural organization. These systems represent the accumulated experiences of peasants interacting with their environment using inventive self-reliance, experiential knowledge, and locally available resources. These agro-ecosystems are based on cultivation of a diversity of crops and varieties in time and space that have allowed traditional farmers to avert risks and maximize harvest security in

uncertain and marginal environments, under low levels of technology and with limited environmental impact.

One of the salient features of the traditional farming systems is their high degree of biodiversity, in particular the plant diversity in the form of polycultures and /or agro-forestry patterns. This strategy of minimising risk by planting several species and varieties of crops is more adaptable to weather events, climate variability and change and resistant to adverse effects of pests and diseases, and at the same time, stabilises yields over the long term, promotes diet diversity and maximises returns, even with low levels of technology and limited resources.

Such bio-diverse farms are endowed with nutrient-enriching plants, insect predators, pollinators, nitrogen-fixing and nitrogen-decomposing bacteria, and a variety of other organisms that perform various beneficial ecological functions. By properly assembling a functional biodiversity, it is possible to promote synergy which enhances farm processes such as the activation of soil biology, the recycling of nutrients and the enhancement of biological pest suppression. Although these systems evolved in very different times and geographical areas, they share the following structural and functional commonalities:

1. They combine species and structural diversity in time and space through both vertical and horizontal organisation of crops.
2. The higher biodiversity of plants, microbes and animals inherent to these systems supports production of crops and stock, and mediates a reasonable degree of biological recycling of nutrients.

3. They exploit the full range of micro-environments, which differ in soil, water, temperature, altitude, slope and fertility within a field or region.
4. They maintain cycles of materials and wastes through effective recycling practices.
5. They rely on biological interdependencies that provide some level of biological pest suppression.
6. They rely on local resources, plus human and animal energy, using little modern technology.
7. They rely on local varieties of crops and incorporate wild plants and animals. Production is usually for local consumption.

Recent observations, studies and research suggest that many farmers cope with and even prepare for Climate Change, minimizing crop failure through increased use of drought-tolerant local varieties, water harvesting, extensive planting, mixed cropping, agro-forestry, opportunistic weeding, wild plant gathering and a series of other traditional farming system techniques. This points to the need to re-evaluate indigenous technology as a key source of information on adaptive capacity, centred on the selective, experimental and resilient capabilities of farmers in dealing with Climate Change.

Sustainable Agriculture as an Option

It goes without saying that agriculture needs to undergo a radical overhaul to become more sustainable. This is not just because it is important to take care of the environment, but also because sustainability is absolutely necessary for the continuation of the productivity of the agro-ecosystem. Unchecked threats to the environmental sustainability of agriculture threaten agriculture itself.

The IAASTD Report (2008) makes this clear by saying that greater emphasis is needed on safeguarding natural resources and agro-ecological practices, as well as on tapping the wide range of traditional knowledge held by local communities and farmers, which can work in partnership with formal science and technology. It stresses that Sustainable Agriculture that is bio-diversity based, including agro-ecology and organic farming, is resilient, productive, beneficial to poor farmers, and will allow adaptation to Climate Change.

Sustainable agricultural approaches can be in many forms, such as agro-ecology, organic agriculture, ecological agriculture, biological agriculture and the like. According to Pretty and Hine⁴⁶, Sustainable Agriculture should:

- Make best use of nature's goods and services by integrating natural, regenerative processes, e.g., nutrient cycling, nitrogen fixation, soil regeneration and natural enemies of pests;
- Minimise non-renewable inputs (pesticides and fertilisers) that damage the environment or harm human health;
- Rely on the knowledge and skills of farmers, improving their self-reliance;
- Promote and protect social capital - people's capacities to work together to solve problems;
- Depend on locally-adapted practices to innovate in the face of uncertainty;
- Be multifunctional and contribute to public goods, such as clean water, wildlife, carbon sequestration in soils, flood protection and landscape quality.

Sustainable agricultural practices include:

- Crop rotations that mitigate weed, disease and pest problems; increase available soil nitrogen and reduce the need for synthetic fertilizers; and in conjunction with conservation tillage practices, reduce soil erosion.
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which reduces the need for pesticides by crop rotations, scouting, timing of planting and biological pest controls.
- Management systems to improve plant health and crops' abilities to resist pests and disease.
- Soil conserving tillage.
- Water conservation and water harvesting practices.
- Planting of leguminous crops and use of organic fertiliser or compost to improve soil fertility.

Rural Social Movements and Sustainable Agriculture

The development of Sustainable Agriculture requires significant structural changes. This is impossible without social movements that create the political will among decision-makers to dismantle and transform the institutions and regulations that presently hold back sustainable agricultural development. For this reason, many argue that a more radical transformation of agriculture is needed, one guided by the notion that a more radical transformation of agriculture cannot be promoted, without comparable changes in the social, political, cultural and economic areas that conform and determine agriculture.⁴⁷

Only by changing the export-led, free-trade based, industrial agriculture model of large farms can the downward spiral of poverty, low wages, rural-urban migration, hunger and environmental degradation be halted.⁴⁸ Rural social movements

embrace the concept of Food Sovereignty as an alternative to the neo-liberal approach, which puts its faith in an inequitable international trade to solve the world's food problem. Instead, Food Sovereignty focuses on local autonomy, local markets, local production-consumption cycles, energy and technological sovereignty and farmer-to-farmer networks.

Major changes must be made in policies, institutions and research and development to make sure that agro-ecological alternatives are adopted, made equitably and broadly accessible and multiplied, so that their full benefit for sustainable food security can be realised. Existing subsidies and policy incentives for conventional chemical approaches must be dismantled. Corporate control over the food system must also be challenged. Governments and international public organizations must encourage and support effective partnerships between NGOs, local universities and farmer organizations in order to assist and empower poor farmers to achieve food security, income generation and natural resource conservation.

The need to rapidly foster Sustainable Agriculture requires coalitions among farmers, civil society organizations (including consumers) and research organisations. Moving towards a more socially just, economically viable and environmentally sound agriculture will be the result of the coordinated action of emerging social movements in the rural sector, in alliance with civil society organisations that are committed to supporting the goals of these farmer movements. The expectation is that, through constant political pressure from organised farmers and members of civil society, politicians will be pushed to develop and launch policies conducive to enhancing food sovereignty, preserving the natural resource base and ensuring social equity and economic viability.

Policy Making for Sustainable Agriculture

Jules Pretty is convinced that Sustainable Agriculture can be economically, environmentally and socially viable. There are resource-conserving technologies, local institutional structures and enabling external institutions that are all known to work. It does, however, need coordinated action by national governments to encourage and nurture the transition from modernized systems towards more sustainable alternatives.⁴⁹

Sustainable Agriculture should not be seen as a set of practices to be fixed in time and space. It implies the capacity to adapt and change, as external and internal conditions change. Yet there is a danger that policy, as it has tended to do in the past, will prescribe the practices that farmers should use, rather than creating the enabling conditions for locally generated and adapted technologies.

Throughout the world, the history of agriculture shows a common pattern. Technical prescriptions are derived from controlled and uniform conditions, supported by limited cases of success, and then applied widely, with little or no regard for diverse local needs and conditions. Differences in receiving environments and livelihoods then often make the technologies unworkable and unacceptable. When they are rejected locally, policies shift to seeking success through the manipulation of social, economic and ecological environments, and eventually through outright enforcement.⁵⁰

For Sustainable Agriculture to succeed, policy formulation must not repeat the past mistakes of coercion and control. Policies must arise in a new way. They must be

enabling, creating the conditions for Sustainable Development based more on locally available resources, and local skills and knowledge.

The greatest challenge will be the reform of policy processes themselves. These will have to focus more on participation and social mediation, if the contested complexities and uncertainties of sustainability are to be continually addressed.⁵¹

Gandhi, Swadeshi and Sustainable Agriculture

The contemporary meaning of the Gandhian concept of *swadeshi* is the availability of locally produced consumption goods; self-reliance in agriculture; creation of self-sustaining villages; and augmentation of local production and economy.

All these ideas are very much present in a system of Sustainable Agriculture, which systematically pursues the following goals:⁵²

- A more thorough incorporation of natural processes such as nutrient recycling, nitrogen fixation and pest-predator relationships into agricultural production processes;
- A reduction in the use of those off-farm, external and non-renewable inputs with the greatest potential to damage the environment or harm the health of farmers and consumers;
- A more equitable access to productive resources and opportunities, and progress towards more socially-just forms of agriculture;
- A greater productive use of the biological potential of plant and animal species;

- A greater productive use of local knowledge and practices;
- An increase in self-reliance among farmers and rural people;
- An improvement in the match between cropping patterns and the productive potential and environmental constraints of climate and landscape, to ensure long-term sustainability of the soil; and
- Profitable and efficient production with an emphasis on integrated farm management, and the conservation of soil, water, energy and biological resources.

With specific reference to the question of modernizing agriculture, it should be emphasized that Gandhi had no partiality for primitive methods of production. He only challenged the sanity of what passed as progress.

In *'Hind Swaraj'*, Gandhi writes: "*We have managed with the same kind of plough as existed thousands of years ago ... We have had no system of life-corroding competition.*" What Gandhi meant in expressing this view on agriculture was that India was an ancient land which had survived by using the plough as a technological instrument, and which had stood the test of time for the Indian peasantry.

Further, the unity in rural India, especially in its myriad villages, ensured that the harvest produced was not given over totally to the immoral and rapacious forces of the market. There was a humane system of checks and balances which guaranteed food to the hungry, the disabled, and the aged. The absence of the 'system of life-corroding competition' provides the historical context wherein a complementary and moral relationship existed between groups of dominant peasant castes on the one hand, and service and artisan castes on the other,

who had fashioned an elaborate system for organization of production and distribution.⁵³

Gandhi writes: *“From the very beginning, it has been my firm conviction that agriculture provides the only unfailing and perennial support to the people of this country.”* It is clear later in this text that when Gandhi refers to ‘the people of this country’, he is explicitly concerned about the *kisan* or peasant, the cultivator and tiller of the soil.

The quest for Sustainable Agriculture must be related to the critical aspect of social and economic justice. In India, this entails sharing the profits of production essentially with primary producers in such a way that would reduce economic and social inequality, and enhance their moral and ethical qualities. This latter aim would have to be concurrent with the goal of giving higher priority to agriculture. The rationale for this seminal understanding flows from the Gandhian perspective that poverty or agricultural impoverishment is not a pure economic phenomenon. It has moral and ethical components. Therefore Gandhi fixed a moral anvil for testing all changes either in the agricultural or other sectors of the economy. The harrowing results of India’s oft-trumpeted Green Revolution have left ample lessons to show what happens when growth without morality and ethics is given precedence.⁵⁴

In conclusion, it needs to be emphasised that the quest for Sustainable Agriculture must be understood and attempted, as Gandhi repeatedly exhorted, in the context of its moral underpinnings, vision and context.

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Swadeshi Cotton

K. R. Kranthi

Cotton is an immensely important crop for the sustainable economy of India and livelihood of the Indian farming community. It is cultivated in about 320 lakh hectares across the world and in 80 to 110 lakh hectares in the country. India accounts for 30% of the global cotton area and contributes to about 20.0 % of the global cotton produce, currently ranking second after China. India's contribution to global cotton production increased from 14% in 2002 to 20.5% in 2007. The production increased from a meager 23 lakh bales (170 kg lint/bale) in 1947-48 to a previous record production of 176 lakh bales in 1996-97 and an all time highest record of 315 lakh bales during 2007-08. Cotton contributes about 65% of the total raw material needs of textile industry in India. Cotton and Textile exports account for nearly one-third of total foreign exchange earnings of India, each year at a recent estimate of Rs.75,000 crores in 2007. India has achieved significant breakthrough in cotton yarn exports besides increasing its global market share in cotton textiles and apparels. Cotton provides employment and sustenance to a population of nearly six crore people, who are involved directly or indirectly in cotton production, processing, textiles and related activities. It is estimated that more than 40 lakh farmers cultivate cotton in India and about 30 lakh persons are employed directly by the textile industry. There are more than 17 lakh registered looms,

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1500 spinning units, and an estimated 280 composite mills. Therefore cotton production in India is considered to have a wide reaching impact not only on the livelihood of farmers and economy of the country, but also on international trade.

The cotton species *Gossypium arboreum* has its origins in India and the other *desi* species *G. herbaceum* is also believed to have common origins in the Indian sub-continent. The *desi* cottons are known to have survived vagaries of nature for millions of years and have thus evolved to tolerate and resist diseases, pests and adverse environment conditions. Cultivation of *desi* species are good yielders and require less than half the cost of inputs to obtain similar or better yields as compared to the introduced American cotton species *Gossypium hirsutum*. India has the unique distinction of being the only country in the world to cultivate all four cultivable *Gossypium* species, *Gossypium arboreum* and *G. herbaceum* (Asian cotton), *G. barbadense* (Egyptian cotton) and *G. hirsutum* (American upland cotton) besides hybrid cotton. *Gossypium hirsutum* represents 90% of the hybrid cotton in India and all the current Bt cotton hybrids are *G. hirsutum*. *G. hirsutum* L. (American cotton) and *G. barbadense* L. (Egyptian cotton) have superior fiber quality. *G. hirsutum* L. is most widely cultivated because of its wide range of adaptation and high yield potential, whereas *G. barbadense* L. has fine and unique fiber quality. *Desi* cottons have coarse and short fibre.

India-The cradle of the finest cotton fabrics civilization had ever seen

Archeological evidences clearly show that Indian civilization was the earliest to master the art and craft of

ginning spinning and weaving cotton cloth. India was known as the cradle of the finest cotton fabrics ever known to have been produced by man. Evidence indicates that cotton has been in use in India for over 5000 years. Rest of the civilizations across the world, were known to have used other fibre sources such as wool and flax in Egypt, West Asia and Europe and silk in China. References to thread in looms are available in the Rigveda (4000 to 1200 BC). The *Apasthambha Grihya Sutra* of the *Vedangas* (1000 BC) describe the divinity of cotton cloth as follows: *O cloth! The goddess Revathi prepared a sliver by beating you out of seeds, The goddess Krithika spun you into yarn, The goddess Dhee did the weaving, The goddess Gna cut and took you out of the loom, The above goddesses and thousands more made up the ends at both sides of the cloth. The goddesses gave the cloth to the sun god and even as he put it on, Its greatness became explicit. So too, is the cloth.'*

Historically a little bit of cotton was also known to have been grown in Egypt, but it never became important there. Cotton was being cultivated on the Pacific coast of Chile and Peru. However, it is now widely believed that it spread from India to Egypt and Turkey; from the Pacific north to Central America and the Caribbean. Speculations about the earliest use of cotton fibres in Indian sub-continent, were set to rest with the discovery of cotton material in the excavations at Mohenjodaro in the Indus valley carried out during the 1920's. Well preserved fabrics of cotton were discovered in silver vessels. The fragment of fabric was carefully examined at the then Technological Laboratory, Mumbai (now CIRCOT). After critical examination it was concluded that the fibre was spun from *Gossypium arboreum* (Gulati and Turner, 1928). The cotton cloth recovered in relics of the Harappa civilization

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(2300-1750 BC) were found to have been produced by highly sophisticated textile craftsmanship. Subsequently the beauty of Indian cotton and cotton textiles was described by historians from time to time in the course of history. References have been found in Manusmriti (800 BC) that ‘The sacred thread of Brahman shall be of cotton, of right twisted three ply; Kshatriya of hemp and Vaishya of wool. The Greek historian, Herodotus Book III (484-425 BC) described that ‘*There are trees that grow wild there (India) the fruit of which is a wool exceeding in beauty and goodness that of sheep. The Indians make their clothes of this tree wool.* Nearchus, the admiral of Alexander, (327 BC) mentioned that ‘There are trees in India bearing as it were, bunches of wool. The natives make linen garments of it, wearing a shirt which reached to the middle of the leg... and turban rolled round the head...and the linen made by them was fine and whiter than any other’. Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller, (13th Century) described that ‘*The coast of Coromandel produces the finest and most beautiful cottons that are to be found in any part of the world...The Indian Calicoes (from Calicut) are so fine you can hardly feel them in your hand and the thread when spun is scarce discernible..*’ There were several myths surrounding cotton in India. Sir John Mandeville, (1322), Traveller from England wrote that ‘*Cotton: the vegetable lamb, I saw not myself but heard from trustworthy persons. And when these (bolls) be ripe they burst and a little beast is found inside like a little lamb, so they have both melons and meat...hard to believe, yet it may be quite true.....*’

Subhash Chandra Bose, (1938) described anecdotes on India’s cotton history from historical excerpts to quote ‘*Suleiman the Arab traveller wrote in the 9th century that*

cotton fabrics in Rahmi (now, Bangladesh) are so fine and delicate that they pass through a signet ring'. For over centuries, the Dacca (now, Dhaka) muslins ruled the world textile trade and were considered as cloth for the royals. Poets described them as *Ab-i-rawa* or running water, *Beft-hawa* or woven air or cloud and *shab-nam* or evening dew. The type of cotton used in the manufacture of the famous Dhaka muslins was investigated at CIRCOT in 1935 from fabric samples obtained from the Shirley Institute Manchester, England. The results showed that the fibre was from *Gossypium arboreum* with mean fibre length of 18-24 mm, but the yarn was one of the finest ever heard of 345-356 counts. The same cotton will yield 10-20 counts in machine spinning. Andhra *khadi* work women spin 70-100 counts yarn with 15 mm cotton, which will yield only 12s counts yarn in machine spinning.

The rise and fall of Indian Cotton International Trade

The Dhaka Muslins became famous all over the world. Travellers from far and wide would carry the beautiful cotton cloth to all parts of the globe. The first in an organised series of cotton textile trade started in 1615 by the British. The East India Company, with the Royal Charter presented to the Mughal Emperor Jehangir in 1615 AD by Sir Thomas Roe, set up factories in Surat and Madras in 1639. Trading of cotton goods to Britain first began in 1640 through Calicut (Kozhikode, Kerala), thus earning the name 'Calico'. Dacca muslins were the next to be exported to Britain from 1666. The clothes became so popular that wool Industry in Britain was under threat. At the time, India was the world's largest exporter of cotton textiles. The British Parliament passed the 1721 AD act prohibiting Calicoes and import of cotton textiles from

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India, so that the wool industry could be protected from a total collapse. The British also took initiatives to reduce the dependence on India for its textiles. One such step was to encourage the invention of machines that could be used in ginning, spinning and weaving. The first of such inventions was in 1733 when the fly shuttle high speed weaving machine was invented by John Kay leading to the setting up of weaving units in Manchester. In a significant development, the British Parliament passed the Manchester Act in 1736 declaring all import of textiles from India as illegal. In about a decade, nearly 30,000 people were employed in textile production in Manchester and Bolton, England. The invention of spinning jenny by James Hargreaves in 1764 and invention and patenting of the water spinning frame by Sir Richard Arkwright in 1769 laid the foundation for the Lancashire mill empire.

Introduction of American Cotton into India and improvement to suit the British Mills

Sir Arkwright's spinning frame was designed for American cotton of medium staple length and good strength. Therefore *G. hirsutum* from America was imported into England. Just around this time inventions continued and Samuel Crompton invented Spinning Mule in 1779 and Cartwright invented Power Loom in 1785. The textile industry in England established itself as a leading manufacturer of fabrics and garments. The American Revolutionary War during 1775-83 caused shortage of raw cotton exports to England and the British started planning for alternative sources of American cotton. One such plan resulted in the introduction of American cotton var Borbon *G. hirsutum*, *punctatum* race from Malta and Mauritius into Bombay and Madras Provinces of India in 1790.

The Governor General of Calcutta was instructed to encourage growth and improvement of Indian cotton to meet the requirement of the Lancashire textile industry. The textile industry received a boost with the invention of roller gin by Eli Whitney in 1793. (It is interesting that visual evidence of the use cotton gins of the roller type, such as the one patented by Eli Whitney, can be traced back to the paintings by Buddhists in the fifth century depicted the use of single-roller gins in the Ajanta caves (Cave No 1) located in the western region of India). Soon England started importing raw cotton from India and exporting textiles to India. By 1850, India accounted for 1/6th of all textile exports from England and became the largest importer from being the largest exporter in the world.

Since India had cheap labour, the British set up spinning mills in Calcutta (1814), Bharuch (1843) and Mumbai (1854) and started putting efforts in improving American cotton in India to suit their mills. *G. hirsutum* (latifolium race) Var New Orleans was introduced in Gujarat, Deccan and Konkan in 1840. In the meantime, the British discovered that it was possible to grow *G. hirsutum* (Bourbon) in some parts of south India such as Dharwad and Hubli. By 1862, 72,313 ha *G. hirsutum* was grown in Hubli successfully. However, *G. hirsutum* was still not successful in Punjab. In 1905, *G. hirsutum* Var Cambodia was introduced successfully into Madras Presidency. By this time, seeds called 'Punjabi Narma' (Bourbon, *G. hirsutum*) were found to have established in parts of Punjab. Experiments in Uttar Pradesh from 1826, established Cawnpore-American variety in 1909. In 1912, Milne selected a variety '4F', resistant to jassids from Punjabi Narma, which was grown in 72,846 ha out of 1,11,697 ha under American cotton in Punjab. In a landmark development, Sardar

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Labh Singh developed a late maturing jassid resistant variety LSS (Labh Singh Selection) from F4 in 1933, which became very popular. But these varieties were of long duration and caused inordinate delays in sowing of wheat as the next crop. In 1920-29, Hilson and Ramanatha Iyer released Co.1 and Co.2 from Cambodia cotton for cultivation in south India. Egyptian cotton or sea island cotton, *Gossypium barbadense* was also introduced around 1790, but was able to get acclimatized only by 1940. *It is interesting to note that it took about 60-70 years for G. hirsutum and 150 years for G. Barbadense to adapt to the Indian climatic conditions.*

The World War-1 in 1914, caused a major shortage in the availability of raw cotton to the Lancashire mills. Since India was the second largest cotton producer in the world after America, the British immediately considered India as an alternative option to cultivate American cotton to cater to their textile mills and set up 'the Indian Cotton Committee' under the chairmanship of J. MacKenna to suggest an action plan for cultivating long staple cotton in India. Based on the recommendation, the 'Indian Central Cotton Committee (ICCC)' was set up in Bombay in 1924 under the aegis of the Technological Laboratory (now called CIRCOT). The ICCC provided guidance and financial support for cotton schemes on research related mostly to varietal improvement, agronomy and pest and disease control. By the beginning of the 20th century, it was an unwritten gospel that the *desi* Indian cotton varieties *G. arboreum* and *G. herbaceum*, which had been cultivated in India for thousands of years, and which were used for the finest fabrics, man has ever known, were declared 'inferior' and 'coarse'. Gandhi protested the onslaught of the British fabric and stressed on the need to conserve, preserve and revive the

native varieties and the ginning, spinning and weaving handloom technology of India. However, by the time of independence, the notion of ‘inferior’ *desi* varieties was ingrained and research was more focused on American cotton. At the first cotton conference conducted by the ICCCI, Ramanatha Iyer, working at Coimbatore, emphasised that ‘cotton breeding and varietal improvement should be concentrated on *G. hirsutum* (American cotton) to improve fibre quality and yield of cotton in India.

Research and Development in Post Independent India

Prior to Independence, India produced 50-53 lakh bales from 85-90 lakh hectares. When the country gained independence, 23 lakh bales comprising of 67% medium staple and 33% short staple cotton from 97% *Desi* cotton varieties (65% *G. arboreum* and 32% *G. herbaceum*) were produced from 43 lakh hectares. During partition, the cotton mills remained in India and the regions that were suitable for long staple cotton went to Pakistan. Therefore efforts were intensified in India to produce long staple cotton that suited the mills. By 1965, 40% of the area was under *G. hirsutum*, 36% under *G. arboreum* and 24% under *G. herbaceum*. Despite concerted efforts, the two *desi* species continued to occupy at least 25% of the area (18% of *G. arboreum* and 7% of *G. herbaceum*) until 2000-2001, before the introduction of Bt cotton in India.

It is now an established fact that the American cotton varieties *G. hirsutum* and sea island cotton, *G. barbadense* are more susceptible to insect pests such as jassids, whiteflies, American bollworm (*Helicoverpa armigera*) and diseases such

as bacterial blight, *Verticillium* wilt, parawilt and leaf curl virus. The American bollworm derived its name from the fact that it was first noticed only on American cotton *G. hirsutum*, and still continues to cause menacing damage to the species. Interestingly, the American bollworm species *Helicoverpa armigera* was never present in the American continent. By virtue of having been cultivated for ages, the two *desi* species *G. arboreum* and *G. herbaceum*, are known to tide over biotic and abiotic stresses with ease under the native conditions. Therefore these were preferred by farmers over the introduced cotton species. Currently (2009), 90% of the area is under *G. hirsutum*.

Systematic efforts on cotton breeding in India started with the establishment of the 'Department of Agriculture' in 1904. After the establishment of the All India Coordinated Cotton Improvement Project in 1967, research on improvement of *G. hirsutum* varieties and hybrids intensified. Until 2001, about 200 improved varieties and 50 hybrids of cotton in all the four species were released for commercial cultivation in all the cotton growing states of the country. In a landmark development, the world's first cotton hybrid 'H4' (intra *hirsutum*) was developed by Dr. C. T. Patel in India. The hybrid became popular and laid the foundation for research on 'hybrid cotton'. Until 2001, about 50 hybrids were released for commercial cultivation and occupied 45% of the total cotton area.

Gossypium herbaceum varieties

The cultivated varieties of *G. herbaceum* are believed to have originated in India from *Gossypium herbaceum* var.

africanum. The *G. herbaceum* species has a deep root system and are known for their high level of tolerance to biotic and abiotic stresses, requiring less inputs, thus contributing to low cost of production, especially under marginal soils and sub-optimal conditions. Other favorable traits of the species include high GOT, loose attachment of fibres, high fibre maturity and uniform micronaire. A few *G. herbaceum* varieties such as H.1 and 1027 ALF were developed prior to independence. However, the *G. herbaceum* varieties 1027 ALF, *Wagad 8* and *Jayawant* became very popular in the *G. herbaceum* growing tracts of the country even after independence. *G. herbaceum* has been improved using pure line selection, backcross, pedigree and heterosis breeding. Several varieties resistant to *jassids* and *Fusarium* wilt such as Western 1, selection 69, V. 797, Digvijay, Vijalpa, Kalyan, Jayadhar, Suyodhar, Sujay, G Cot 11, G Cot 13, G Cot 17, Raichur 51, Jayawant, G Cot 21 and G Cot 23 have contributed to enhanced productivity with improved fibre traits. The recent release of G Cot 21 in 2001 and G Cot 23 in 2002 have contributed to enhanced yields. It must be mentioned that research on *G. herbaceum* improvement is most neglected. The germplasm bank at CICR has only 568 accessions, but has adequate variability that can be exploited for improvement.

Gossypium arboreum varieties

Gossypium arboreum species comprises of six races (*bengalense*, *indicum*, *cernuum burmanicum*, *sinense* and *soundanense*) of which only the first three are grown in India. The species is native of India and has been grown since times immemorial. It is highly resistant to *jassids* and many other sucking pests. The species is also highly tolerant to drought and

sub-optimal conditions. Prior to independence, a few improved varieties of *G. arboreum*, N.14, V.262, V.434 and C.520 were developed and cultivated in several parts of the country accounting for 65% of the area under cotton. Introgression of *G. hirsutum* genes into *G. arboreum* genotype have been attempted successfully at MPKV, Parbhani and UAS, Dharwad. Cultures DLSA 17 and 19 from Dharwad and PAIG 8/1 and PAIG 8/3 from Parbhani have been developed with improved fibre qualities.

In recent studies conducted by CICR, Among *G. arboreum* strains tested over North, Central and South zones, the strains, JLA 2300, RG 459, KWA 227, PAIG 8/3 and PAIG 8/1 were found promising with good seed cotton yield combined with better ginning outturn and good fibre quality (2.5% span length above 26mm and strength around 19 – 22 g/tex). The genotypes RAC 024, Dela 25 and PA 531, superior in quality (30mm staple length, strength 22g/tex and micronaire 4.0) has performed better consistently over the locations. Fourteen strains, viz. DLSA 1004, DLSA1005, RG 441, CINA 348, PA 528, RG 526, CISA 294, HD 459, LD 937, CINA 1003, CISA 10405, RG 514, PAIG 247, CINA 347 from various centres were sponsored to for the AICCIP during 2007-08.

Impressive results were obtained with quality improvement in *arboreum* cottons. AKA 8401, PA 183, PA 255 are some of the prominent varieties with superior medium staple of 27-28 mm. In South Zone, K 8, K 9, K10 and K 11 expressed 24-25 mm staple length. Improvement in North Zone was focused mainly on yield with LD 230, DS 5, LD 123, RG 18 and HD 107 yielding 20-26 Q/ha and LD327 with higher

yield of 29-30 Q/ha. The fibre of these varieties can spin up to 30-40 counts, which is equivalent to the American cottons. Most of the arboreum varieties have high ginning out turn, but outstanding examples of varietal improvement are LD 694, DS 5 and LD 327 which have more than 40% GOT. Many of the improved varieties have a shorter duration.

The varieties G 27, Lohit, DS 1 and Rohini were developed for bollworm tolerance, while DS 1, Eknath, Mahanandi, Maljari, Srisailam and DH 7 are tolerant to jassids. Variety DS 1 is tolerant to bacterial blight, while AKA 5 is resistant to grey mildew and AKA 5, Sanjay, Eknath, G 27 and K 10 were developed for drought resistance.

Research on Egyptian cotton, *Gossypium barbadense* varieties in India

Egyptian cotton, *Gossypium barbadense* produces fine fibre with extra long staple and strong fibre. However, the species are highly susceptible to insect pests and abiotic stresses. About 45-55 lakh bales (170 kg/bale) are produced by Egypt, Peru, USA, China, India, Sudan and Soviet. In India, *G. barbadense* is grown only in Tamilnadu and parts of Andhra Pradesh. There are only two races, *Darwinii* and *Braziliense*. It took an estimated 150 years for *G. barbadense* to get acclimatized to Indian climate. Sujatha which yields fibre that can spin up to 100 counts and Suvin with fibre of 120 counts are the only two varieties that were released for commercial cultivation. The fibre of Suvin is comparable in quality with Giza 45 of Egypt.

Interspecific hybrids of *G. hirsutum* x *G. Barbadense* were developed starting with Varalaxmi from UAS Dharwad in 1972. Subsequently, DCH 32 was developed and catered to the needs of long staple cotton for a long period of time. Sruthi produces 37 mm fibre and is an impressive example of utilization of heterosis for fibre length.

Gossypium hirsutum varieties

Cotton breeding in India focused mainly on enhancing fibre quality traits such as long staple, good strength, fineness, high yield, high GOT, earliness and resistance to insect pests (jassids, bollworms and whiteflies) and diseases (leaf curl virus, *Verticillium*, *Xanthomonas* etc.). Drought tolerance, salt tolerance and high seed oil were also considered as important criteria for selection in specific cases depending on regional requirements. Several pest and disease resistant varieties have been developed. The varieties Badnawar 1, Khandwa 2, SRT 1, B 1007, DHY 286 and PKV 081 and hybrids PKV Hy 2, NHH 44 and JK Hy 1 became highly popular because of high levels of tolerance/resistance to jassids and other sucking pests.

Improvement of *Gossypium hirsutum* has been receiving maximum attention compared to the other three cultivated species. Several varieties were developed and released for superior fibre traits and resistance to various biotic and abiotic stresses, but only a few became popular. Some prominent varieties were LRA 5166, Anjali, Surabhi, Sumangala, MCU5, MCU 7, MCU 13 and Abhadita. Most of these varieties are high yielders, suited for the textile requirement and requiring low cost for production. Some outstanding examples of quality improvement are MCU 5,

Surabhi, Sahana, HS 6 and Anjali, with fibre staple length of 25.0 to 29.5 and Sahana with GOT of 40%. The varieties became very popular. LRA 5166 had occupied more than 40% of the area at one point of time.

Studies conducted worldwide for a wide range of germplasm lines and genotypes, showed that in general, yield and superior fiber traits are inversely correlated. Selection for yield alone may decrease fibre length and increase coarseness. Selection for ginning outturn (lint percentage) would result in increase of coarseness and length and decrease in seed weight. When fibre length or strength were considered as independent attributes, yield and GOT decreased. Therefore breeders were constrained to compromise for moderate yields when selections were being made for superior fibre traits. Seed cotton yield exhibited positive association with boll number, boll weight, and plant height and negative association with fibre strength and earliness.

Hybrid Cotton

Though Mell (1894) first observed heterosis in fibre length and agronomic traits in F1 hybrids and Cook (1906) suggested the possibility of commercial exploitation of heterosis in cotton, it took 70 years for initiation and about 40 years for almost complete commercial exploitation. Research efforts on hybrid cotton were initiated in 1930 under the ICRC, but, cotton hybrid research in India received a boost when H 4 developed by Dr C. T. Patel from Surat was released in 1970 as the world's first cotton hybrid and became popular in many parts of the country, thereby proving that hybrid cotton production was a practical possibility. An inter-specific hybrid

(*G. hirsutum* x *G. barbadense*) Varalaxmi was developed by Dr Katarki, from Dharwad and released in 1972, thus setting the tone for intensive hybrid cotton research in India. India has the unique distinction of being the only country in the world that has commercial hybrid cotton hybrids. The current hybrid area is estimated to have reached 85-90% of the total area under cotton, thereby creating a record of sorts, of being the only country with such a large acreage under hybrid cotton. During the period 1970-2009 about 50 hybrids from public research institutions, and more than 500 hybrids from the private seed companies were released for commercial cultivation. Though north India was completely covered under varieties until 2005, the release of Bt hybrids for the region suddenly changed the profile and more than 80% of the area came under Bt hybrids by 2009. Currently about 20-30 Bt hybrids are very popular in the country and have contributed to the increase in the long staple fibre from a meager 45 lakh bales of long staple cotton in 2001 to 200 lakh bales of long staple cotton in 2007. The fibre quality of the most popular hybrids ranges from 28-32 mm with strength of 24-26 g/tex and spinning potential of 40-80 counts. The yield potential of the hybrids is also high as clearly reflected by the doubling of yields within 5-6 years of Bt cotton hybrid cultivation in India.

Research Perspectives

Intensive plant breeding programs of many crop plants have capitalized on genetic resources and germplasm collections to develop improved genotypes with significant gains in yield. These intensive hybridization and selection plant breeding programs have also unintentionally narrowed the genetic base and increased genetic vulnerability of many of the world's most

important crops. The area under *desi* species has decreased to less than 6% of the cotton area in India. There is an imminent need to exploit the existing genetic diversity in the *Desi* species for the development of improved varieties.

The fact that it took about 60-70 years for *G. hirsutum* and 150 years for *G. Barbadense* to adapt to the Indian climatic conditions indicates that species of Indian native origin such as *Gossypium arboreum* and *G. herbaceum* are extremely valuable with reference to their adaptability to different parts of the country and also resistance to drought and variable adverse climatic conditions in India. Moreover, the *desi* species are known for their high levels of resistance to almost all the major diseases and insect pests that cause severe damage to American cotton. Therefore development of high yielding *desi* varieties can be ideally suited for low input sustainable cotton farming in India so as to enable India to re-emerge as the undisputed world leader in cotton. *Desi* cotton species will also be ideally suited for organic cotton cultivation.

It is clear that each of the individual cotton genotypes has a specific photoperiod and thermal requirement for optimal performance. Therefore it would be most appropriate to identify individual highest yielding *Desi* genotypes for extremely specific geographical zones that have a common photo and thermal profile across the season. *G. arboreum* varieties PA 183 (27 mm), PA 255 (28 mm), PA 402 (28 MM), Sarvottam (24), and *G. herbaceum* varieties, G Cot 21 (24 mm), G Cot 17 (23 mm), Jawahar Tapti (24 mm) and RG 8 (19 mm) can be subjected for multi-location testing at all cotton growing centres of the country to identify location suitability and also assess wide range adaptability.

Spinning machinery should be developed to suit *desi* cotton fibre traits, so that even short fibres can result in yarn that is of equivalent quality of the high count hand-spun yarn.

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Swadeshi Technology in Solid Waste Management in India

Amiya Kumar Sahu

Current Status of Global Economy's Implication in India and Need for Swadeshi Sciences and Technology:

The rapidly-expanding, globalising economy is built largely on Western lifestyles and Western geographical conditions and it is homogenising human 'wants' in unachievable ways. Across the world, people are being forced to accept that progress, success and modernity as synonymous with Westernisation. Many traditional knowledge systems are relevant to economic planning today, because they are eco-friendly, sustainable, labour-intensive, rather than capital intensive. Modern Western technology has produced amazing achievements, but we must analyse the wider implications of such technologies and their notions of progress. These technologies often bring huge negative consequences that seem negligible in the short-term. We need to dispassionately investigate whether there are alternative technologies that offer more sustainable progress for all, rather than the privileged.

In search for such technologies, traditional knowledge or 'local knowledge' provides a pointer. Traditional knowledge is the technical, social, organisational and cultural collective memory of human responses to the complexities of life. It is a part of the great human experiment of survival and development. Western criteria should not be the sole

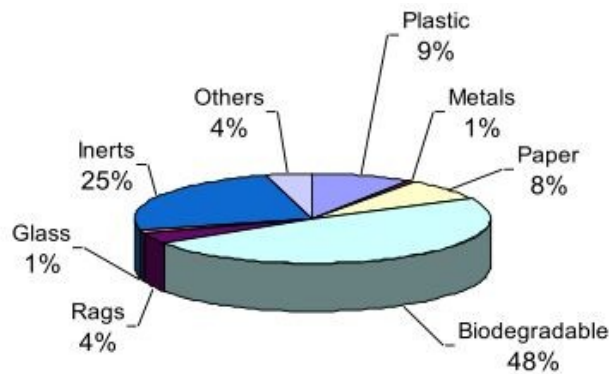
benchmark by which non-Western knowledge system is evaluated. While Western intellectual discourse has marginalised the term 'traditional' as being 'primitive' or 'outdated'. However, many of the traditional sciences and technologies were quite advanced by 'modern' standards as well as better adapted to unique local conditions and needs than their later substitutes.

Indian climatic condition, lifestyle, economy are different from those of the Western world. Sometimes it doesn't make sense to adopt those technologies which might be beneficial for them but not suitable for our environment. As far as solid waste is concerned the nature of waste is very different in India. Here we have more of wet wastes than dry wastes. Their economy has become 'use and throw economy' rather than sustainable. So, it becomes imperative for us to consider *swadeshi* or traditional and indigenous solid waste management technologies for India.

Introduction to Solid Wastes

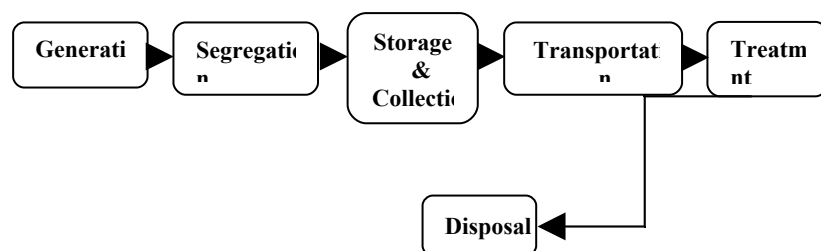
Garbage is generally referred as "waste" and is also termed as rubbish, trash, junk, unwanted or undesired material. As per the Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rule, 2000 garbage is defined as Municipal solid waste which includes commercial and residential wastes generated in municipal or notified areas in either solid or semi-solid form excluding industrial hazardous wastes but including treated bio-medical wastes. Municipal solid waste consists of household waste, construction and demolition debris, hotels and eating houses sanitation residue, and waste from streets. This garbage is generated mainly from residential and commercial complexes. In India the biodegradable portion dominates the bulk of Municipal solid waste. Generally the biodegradable portion is mainly due to food and yard waste. The main

constituent of municipal solid waste is shown in the following figure



Life Cycle of Municipal Solid Waste

Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) is an objective process to evaluate the environmental burdens associated with a product, process or activity, by identifying and quantifying energy and materials used and waste released to the environment, i.e., 'cradle to grave' fashion. Life cycle of solid waste is shown in the following figure. By implementing 4 R principles (reduce, reuse, recycle and recover) at each step of the life cycle can help in protection of environmental pollution.



Implementation of 4 R Concept- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover

As per Gandhian philosophy, simplicity was one of the most virtuous values. It highlights that our usage of materials should be just commensurate with our needs. Unnecessary storing of objects not only creates complexity but it also generates waste. The 4R concept is reduce, reuse, recycle and recover. The concept is based on the waste management hierarchy. This hierarchy classifies waste management strategies according to their potential to minimise waste. Waste reduction, reuse and recycling are the main categories that we need to focus. The 4R concept fosters co-operation among waste generators, waste collectors, processors and manufacturers. It aims at reducing waste to be disposed of in landfills, thereby reducing the deterioration of the environment, reducing the emission that landfill produce, and saving energy and natural resources.

In India the material that have some value are not lost. The 4R concept is not new to India. Recycling is practiced by several stakeholders at different points. The old tradition of households and small business selling reusable and recyclable material such as newspaper, plastic bags, bottle, clothes, tins, and glass to waste purchasers at the doorstep is well known as *kabadiwalas*. However, as their incomes increase, people abandon the behavior of segregating waste at home and tend to throw away all such material with other domestic (organic and inorganic) waste.

Reduce: It includes minimising the production of wastes during any step in the creation or use of a product.

Reuse: It follows source reduction in the Solid Waste Management (SWM) hierarchy. Reusing things is indigenous

to the Indian society. Items normally discarded as waste—such as appliances, furniture, glass jars, and bottles—can be reused as originally intended or as new products. Reusing items by repairing them, donating them to charity and community groups, or selling them also reduces waste.

Recycling

Recycling is the process by which materials otherwise destined for disposal are collected, processed, and remanufactured, follows source reduction and reuse in the SWM hierarchy. Recycling can reduce the depletion of landfill space, save energy and natural resources, provide useful products, and provide economic benefits. Recycling of waste is common practice in India. Though the percentage of paper recycling is not much, only 30% recycling of paper is done by paper mills like Balarsha. Recycling of plastic as well as metal and glass is done by certain industries. There is need to strengthen the current practices.

Recover: It may be possible to recover materials or energy from waste which cannot be reduced, reused or recycled.

Recover - Indigenous processing technology for Sustainable Waste Management

Previously it was believed that waste is useless. Subsequently awareness was created which led a few people to initiate the process of treatment of the wastes. The current buzzword is that the trash can generate cash. Hence by using proper technologies including recycling we can eliminate wastes. This would lead to another favorable sector. The common technologies which have been practiced in India are composting, vermi composting, *gobar* gas, anaerobic digestion which are suitable for the waste type in India.

Composting

Composting has been practiced in rural India for centuries by farmers treating their own domestic and agricultural waste and turning it as compost to their fields. Composting is a controlled biological treatment process in which microbes degrade organic waste under aerobic conditions to a humus substance called compost. Application of this process includes yard waste and kitchen waste. Composting is an excellent medium for growing plants that recycles the nutrients and returns them to the soil. Apart from being clean, safe and economical, composting significantly reduces the amount of garbage. The compost is a kind of organic fertiliser which can be used instead of chemical fertilizers. It works much better especially when used for growing vegetables. It has the capacity to withhold moisture content in the soil and makes the soil easier to cultivate. It supplies part of the 16 essential elements needed by the plants and helps to reduce the adverse effects of excessive alkalinity and acidity. It helps to keep the soil cool in summer and warm in winter. It aids in preventing soil erosion by keeping the soil covered. It prevents water evaporation due to heat. Compost is a stable dark brown, soil like material rich in important plant nutrients. Composting is beneficial in SWM as it reduces organic waste to 25 to 30 percent of its initial weight. If waste is composted close to its source of generation significantly less waste must be transported and disposed of.

In India, 48% of MSW is biodegradable. Making compost out of this would be one of the most effective and economical way. Most aerobic composting processes (windrow, static pile and in-vessel) involve three steps of preprocessing of waste, aerobic decomposition and product preparation or marketing. The process offers simple operation.

However, it is a net energy user due to the need of oxygen supply (forced aeration).

The composting process occurs in two major phases.

- In the first stage, micro-organisms decompose the composting feedstock into simpler compounds, producing heat as a result of their metabolic activities. The size of the composting pile is reduced during this stage.
- In the second stage, the compost product is “cured” or finished. Micro-organisms deplete the supply of readily available nutrients in the compost, which, in turn, slows their activity. As a result, heat generation gradually diminishes and the compost becomes dry and crumbly in texture. When the curing stage is complete, the compost is considered “stabilised” or “mature.” Any further microbial decomposition will occur very slowly.

This process also requires large land area. Other problem associated in this process includes odor and the quality of compost for marketing. To enhance the economics of compost, it should be of consistent size, free from contaminants such as glass, plastic, and metals and free of objectionable odor. Composting is an excellent method of recycling bio-degradable waste from an ecological point of view. However, many large and small composting schemes have failed because composting is regarded as a disposal process, and not a production process. It is essential to consider the marketing and quality of the product.

Compost systems can be classified into two broad categories namely **windrow** and **in vessel**.

Bio-culture

Bio-culture is added to the compost or sewerage as consortia of micro-organism which helps in de-composition. In traditional way cow dung was used as a bio-culture which is indigenous, water is added to cow dung and it is used as bio culture in liquid form which provides a good medium for the growth and proliferation of composting organism. It is to be noted that even human excreta was used as bio-culture.

Bio-Bin Composting

The concept of composting gave rise to a system known as 'Bio-bin' which is an in-vessel composting. Bio-Bin is the innovation to find a better way to dispose of the putrescible waste and turn it into compost on site in a relatively short time. It is now used at various trial sites, turning greengrocer waste into becoming an effective vessel for the collection and disposal of Putrescible Food Waste. The Bio-bin process involves circulation of oxygen into the bin. Ammonia and the high temperatures combine to kill off disease causing pathogens. Nowadays micro-organism culture known as BTM (Bio Trigger Mechanism) is also added to the content of Bio-bin so as to accelerate the process of composting. The use of this technique not only eliminates foul odour but also minimizes the risk of diseases in the environment due to flies and mosquitoes.

Usage of Bio-bin

1. The Bio-bin can be used on a small scale in kitchens.
2. On medium scale, Bio-bins can be brought into practice in buildings, housing- societies etc.
3. Gardens, shopping centers, malls, canteens of commercial and industrial places, hotels and restaurants, institutions

like colleges, schools etc. are the places where composting can be carried out on large scale using Bio-bins. All the generated waste should be segregated at source and then only it can be transferred to a Bio-bin for composting. It should be noted that putrescible waste, which can be degraded fast, only goes to Bio-bin. The organics which take considerable time to degrade like paper, wood, cardboard etc. should not make their way to Bio-bin as the process of composting can become prolonged and takes more days to obtain final compost product. Besides it also alters the quality of the final compost product. Hence one should be careful while putting anything into a Bio-bin.

When in use, the Bio-Bin should be emptied and washed regularly to minimise odors. Placing dry twigs or leaves in the bottom of the Bio-bin reduces things sticking to the bottom. Excessive moisture in the Bio-bin can lead to odor from green waste thus it is necessary to ensure that no liquids are placed into Bio-bin and that the bin is dry after washing.

Benefits of implementing Bio-bin system

- Quicker composting.
- The optimum aeration to maintain aerobic conditions.
- Minimising odors and nuisance.
- Control of leachate.
- The whole process is economical and safe, compared to manufacturing of chemical fertilisers.
- Optimum moisture and heat balance within the mixture.
- Easy handling of the waste and easy operation.
- Safe to use and saves lot of space (simple to install and use).

- Potential economic returns from the bin (by selling compost).
- Reduces amount of waste for final disposal.

Vermi- composting

Vermi-composting is the process by which worms are used to convert organic materials (usually wastes) into a humus-like material known as vermicompost. The goal is to process the material as quickly and efficiently as possible. It is the end-product of the breakdown of organic matter by some species of earthworm. Vermicompost is a nutrient-rich, natural fertiliser and soil conditioner.

The earthworm species most often used are *Eudrillus eugineae*, *Eisenia foetida* or *Lumbricus rubellus*. Small scale vermicomposting is done in bins of varying size and style and three different types of practices, such as non-continuous, continuous vertical flow and continuous horizontal flow, are adopted. The methods for large scale vermicomposting are windrow and raised bed or flow through systems. Flow-through systems are well suited to indoor facilities, making them the preferred choice for operations in colder climates.

Vermicomposting can be done either in pits or concrete tanks or well rings or in wooden or plastic crates appropriate in a given situation. It is preferable to select a composting site under shade, in the upland or an elevated level, to prevent water stagnation in pits during rains.

Kitchen waste, except oily and spicy items are suitable for worms. But too much kitchen waste leads to putrefaction before the worms can process it and becomes harmful to the worms. Similarly, material sprayed with pesticides, high-water-content materials like watermelon,

woody part of garden waste etc are hindrance to the process. The worms digest proteins and fats in meat scraps, but these materials attract scavengers.

Regular removal of composted material, adding holes to the bin, or using a continuous-flow bin etc. improve oxygen supply to worms. Insufficient oxygen leads to anaerobic reactions, producing strong odor and creating toxic environment for the worms.

Anaerobic Digestion (AD)/Biogasification

Biogasification is also known as methane production and Anaerobic digestion (AD). Biogasification is defined as the biological decomposition of organic matter of biological origin under anaerobic condition with an accompanying production of methane and secondarily of other gases.

Anaerobic biodegradation of organic material proceeds in the absence of oxygen and the presence of anaerobic microorganisms it produces mainly 55 % methane and 45 % carbon di-oxide gas and a compost product suitable as a soil conditioner. Anaerobic Digestion is the consequence of a series of metabolic interactions among various groups of microorganisms. It occurs in three stages, hydrolysis/liquefaction, acidogenesis and methanogenesis. The first group of microorganism secretes enzymes, which hydrolyses polymeric materials to monomers such as glucose and amino acids. These are subsequently converted by second group i.e. acetogenic bacteria to higher volatile fatty acids, H₂ and acetic acid. Finally, the third group of bacteria, methanogenic, converts H₂, Carbon di-oxide, and acetate, to CH₄. The Anaerobic Digestion is carried out in large digesters that are maintained at temperatures ranging from 30°C -65°C

Generally the overall Anaerobic Digestion process can be divided into four stages: Pretreatment, waste digestion, gas recovery and residue treatment. Most digestion systems require pre-treatment of waste to obtain homogeneous feedstock. The preprocessing involves separation of non-digestible materials and shredding. The waste received by AD digester is usually source separated or mechanically sorted. The separation ensures removal of undesirable or recyclable materials such as glass, metals, stones etc. In source separation, recyclables are removed from the organic wastes at the source. Mechanical separation can be employed if source separation is not available. However, the resultant fraction is then more contaminated leading to lower compost quality. The waste is shredded before it is fed into the digester. Inside the digester, the feed is diluted to achieve desired solids content and remains in the digester for a designated retention time. For dilution, a varying range of water sources can be used such as clean water, sewage sludge, or re-circulated liquid from the digester effluent. A heat exchanger is usually required to maintain temperature. The biogas obtained in Anaerobic Digestion is scrubbed to obtain pipeline quality gas. In case of residue treatment, the effluent from the digester is dewatered, and the liquid recycled for use in the dilution of incoming feed. The bio solids are aerobically cured to obtain a compost product.

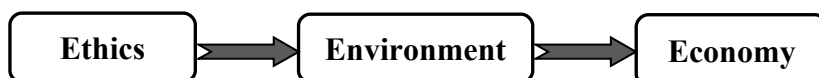
Gobar Gas

Basic research into methane gas production was done in Germany and England during the Second World War when there was fuel shortage. However, most active exploration of the gas's potential is being done today in India. Cow dung gas is 55-65% methane, 30-35% carbon di-oxide, with some hydrogen, nitrogen and other traces. Its heat value is about 600 B.T.U.'s per cubic foot. There are two kinds of organic decomposition: aerobic (requiring oxygen) and anaerobic (in

the absence of oxygen). Any kind of organic material, animal or vegetable may be broken down by either process, but the end-products will be quite different. Aerobic fermentation produces carbon di- oxide, ammonia, small amounts of other gases, considerable heat and a residue which can be used as fertiliser.

Anaerobic decomposition on the other hand creates combustible methane, carbon dioxide, hydrogen, traces of other gases, only a little heat and slurry which is superior in nitrogen content to the residue yielded by aerobic fermentation. Anaerobic decomposition takes place in two stages as certain micro-organisms feed on organic materials. First, acid- producing bacteria break the complex organic molecules down into simpler sugars, alcohol, glycerol and peptides. Then and only when these substances have accumulated in sufficient quantities a second group of bacteria converts some of the simpler molecules into methane. The methane-releasing microorganisms are especially sensitive to environmental conditions.

The 3 E Principle



When the 4 R principles is brought to practice at each stage, starting from waste generation to its disposal then we can say that all the people involved during the life cycle of wastes are maintaining the much needed ethics. The Indian society follows all the ethics of cleanliness during the festivals but same ethics are not maintained for rest of the period. There is need to create awareness among people. Inventing new technologies or putting in a lot of capital behind SWM would be in vain if every individual does not follow the requisite

ethics to maintain cleanliness of the environment. Having ethics in place, everyone will contribute to rejuvenate the environment with hygiene, aesthetics and a better scope for exploration; for its potential into positive contribution to the economy. Previously, waste was considered useless and hence it was burned or buried. Now, this no longer holds true. Waste has become another resource for mankind's necessary needs. Hence we have full possibility to harness the power of waste and give economy it's another growing sector.

12

Cow: An Integral Part of Swadeshi and Sustainable Development

G. S. Murthy

The title looks a bit queer. Everybody has an idea about *swadeshi*, sustainable development and cow, but not about their interconnectedness. The purpose of this paper is to give a glimpse of my understanding on all these vital issues.

Swadeshi: A Notion and Conviction

According to Gandhi *swadeshi* is a way of life with a commitment and dedication propounded and practiced for the benefit of the people of India in general and to the rural masses in particular who live in six lakh villages. Swadeshi demands us to use and serve our immediate surroundings. Hence, it is everybody's responsibility to encourage neighbours who can supply to our needs. The concept of *swadeshi*, according to him, is a necessity for national existence and is very much true even today. This approach given by Gandhi to make our rural economy vibrant and lively was hijacked even before his eyes. Unfortunately, Gandhi's vision of economic development based on *gram swarajya* and *swavalamban* could not be realised till to date.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was deemed to be an acclaimed and unopposed successor to Gandhi right from the

beginning of his political career. It is also known that Nehru with his western exposure and with a kind of socialistic thinking never agreed with Gandhi's thoughts in several aspects including *swadeshi*. The dialogue between Gandhi and Nehru on industrialism, socialism and capitalism dates back to 1928 when Pandit Nehru wrote a letter to Mahatma accusing him of exaggerating the faults of western industrial civilisation, and belittling its achievements. He was categorical in mentioning in the same letter, whether one liked it or not, the western civilization would gradually overtake India. Gandhi was stunned by Nehru's outburst, wanted to make public, the differences between the two and advised Nehru to carry on an open debate. But, Pandit Nehru carefully avoided the debate. Again in the year 1945, Nehru ridiculed Mahatma for his ideas on *gramswaraj* and *swadeshi*. Here too Gandhi suggested an open debate, but Nehru once again avoided the debate saying that the elected representatives of independent India would discuss and decide in which direction the country should move. There was no debate at the national level on whether the ideas of *swadeshi*, *swavalamban*, *gramswaraj* articulated by Gandhi were out of date and irrelevant. There was no debate on whether India should pursue the free market policy, as an alternative to *swadeshi*. That was how the most important debate between the mentor Gandhi and the disciple Nehru never took place on a serious scale. India under Jawaharlal's leadership opted for a rapid westernisation and industrialisation. The corporate world with its command on economic power, the bureaucracy and the rich farmers through political lobbying pushed through and backed this policy to harness the benefits to their advantage. I am not delving on this aspect in detail.

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya propounded a political and economic philosophy called "Integral Humanism". The theme was initially delivered in the form of four lectures in Bombay during April 22-25, 1965. The basis of this philosophy is "We want neither capitalism nor socialism. We aim at the progress and happiness of the Integral Man". He stressed the importance of "*swadeshi*" and "decentralisation" to develop and strengthen our national economy. He rejected the planners' economic philosophy of centralisation and monopolisation and called them as prisoners of the corporate thinking.

He further commented that *swadeshi* today has become a subject of ridicule, old fashioned and reactionary. He also forewarned that, our present growth strategy based on foreign aid and thinking would lead to grave economic crisis. According to him it can never be the road to progress and development. He cautioned that there is a danger of losing our individuality and economic and cultural freedom. Finally he postulated that the *swadeshi* should be the cornerstone of economic reconstruction.

Swadeshi, according to Gandhi, should renew India's vitality and regenerate its rural cultural diversity empowering them with enough powers to rule and manage their own affairs. Rural management should be strong enough to restrict and control the external economic thrusts. The word thrust is used here since the Multi National Corporations (MNCs) are actually controlling the country's economy directly or indirectly. India is now a developing country with vast population. That is

enough for the corporate marketing community to spread their marketing network to get their returns in massive profits. Let me give a simple example how this growing consumerism is draining the country's economy and robbing the ignorant rural masses. The total tooth paste market of India in 1998 was about 1000 crores and it was about 2300 crores in 2008. Nearly 80 per cent of this market belongs to Colgate-Palmolive India Limited and it goes without saying that major chunk of the profit goes to USA.

This is only the tip of an iceberg. One should have a Gandhian mind and heart to go deep and probe into the subject to comprehend the multidimensional intricacies of the corporate activities that apparently appear to strengthen the country's economy but actually driving the country to a point of utter helplessness.

It is suffice to say that the *swadeshi* approach given by Gandhi and also by Deen Dayal is relevant even today.

Sustainable Development

According United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development (Burtland Commission Report, 1987) "Sustainable development is defined as, that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." In other words Sustainable development means designing the right mix of economic, social and environmental policies for today and for tomorrow.

The main interdependent pillars for sustainable development are known to be economic development, social development, and environmental protection. The fourth, the cultural diversity proclaimed by UNESCO is equally important as the biodiversity.

The meeting of the environment and agriculture ministers of OECD member countries held at Paris on 25-26 February 2010 observed that “In the coming decades the global food and agriculture system will have to provide sustainably for billions more people and meet greater demands on quality, affordability and availability. Farming will be competing with other sectors for land, water and investment, while climate change adds a new unknown to the equation.” The climate change mentioned here cannot be a well defined factor since it is impossible to predict exactly the consequences of the present ill managed development. But we have certainly enough reliable information to understand that the consequences will be potentially negative, irreversible and costly. If a change for better is to take place, it needs paradigm shift. It also needs change in the very thinking and the life patterns of the people. It also requires the support and involvement of several groups and institutions both at national and international levels genuinely interested in the future generations’ sustainability. Cow based activities and the economy associated with it has an answer to this. I will try to put in the following pages, how these features of sustainable development as declared by the UN and the principles of *swadeshi* and the cow based economy addresses them in a holistic manner.

The Present Energy and Agriculture Scenario

Gandhi's views on cow are well-known and they are very well rooted in Hindu religious practices. From his writings in the year 1946 in *Gram Udyog Patrika* he made it clear that the resources of power given by Nature are of two categories. One type is of perennial nature belonging to the vegetable and animal kingdoms and the other type is non-renewable like coal, iron and oil. The cow is a perennial source of power which symbolises a way of economic life. Similarly the internal combustion engine symbolises another way of economic life. The first one is a renewable and sustainable whereas the other one has a limit. The choice is before us. If we decide in favour of the [cow we have to take up that economy in all its aspects](#). No haphazard way will solve the problem. This is also supported by the experiences of the cow-power farms in the west.

The oil is a non renewable source of energy bound to be depleted in near future. The opinions of the world experts on this score are given in the website: [*www.oilcrisis.org*](http://www.oilcrisis.org). All these experts agree on the grim situation of the future oil production. They differ only on the point when exactly the oil production would peak and the scarcity begins. The point of oil peak is when its production reaches its maximum and from then on it decreases continuously, while the demand for oil would be increasing at a rapid rate.

Naturally, the supplies go to the preferred nations, it can be from 2012 or 2015. Thereafter, we can safely assume that oil will not be available to India. Just imagine the situation. What is the solution, to continue the same life style, transportation and other activities based on fossil fuels.

The Solution is in Indian Cow and Cow based Economy

In India, cow is an integral part of rural life since times immemorial. It continued to be so till India achieved its independence. Thereafter the industry driven, corporate controlled economy, the shortsightedness of our power hungry political leaders delinked this integral entity from the rural life economy. The result was mechanisation of milk production and agriculture. This delinking resulted in diminishing of the cattle wealth of India from 300 million at the time of independence to less than 200 million presently.

The solution for our rural energy needs and agriculture is in Indian cows which is about 200 million even now. It sounds like a fantasy, an imaginary fairy tale, but it is true. The saying that the truth is stranger than fiction is very much true in this case. If the biogas from the 250 million tons of *gobar* available yearly from the cattle is properly farmed, it can meet all the present energy requirements, met by natural gas and kerosene used for cooking purposes and the petrol for transportation. Arun Firodia, Chairman, Kinetic group of

industries, an MIT engineering graduate, wrote an article “Cows are forever” in *Times of India* way back in the year 2004. He gave a break up assuming 50% of the cattle dung is put to use. *Gobar* from 75 million cows can meet the kerosene and LPG requirements for 100 crore population. 40 million cows can produce energy equivalent to 8 million tonnes of petrol (Our annual national petrol consumption (2003-04 figures). The *gobar* slurry produced in this process will yield 50 million tonnes of organic manure rich in N and P that can meet the entire fertiliser requirement for 150 million hectare of crop lands of India. Recently on 30 October, 2010, an excellent article appeared in ‘People for Animals’ web page posted by Maneka Gandhi adding some more dimensions to the picture given above.

In view of the peak oil situation fast approaching and in the light of huge renewable potential available in cow it is time for us to take up steps to harness this source as it is being done in USA and Europe. Some of the successful efforts made in these countries will be analysed later.

Why Indian Cow?

Indian breeds of cattle have innate genetic capacity to produce better quality milk as expressed by the household practices in India and now substantiated by experiments and clinical trials. Indian cow milk has higher level of CLA. (Conjugated Linoleic Acid) which is anti-carcinogenic. A research study conducted in Finland (Knekt et al,1996) reported that there is an inverse relationship between milk consumption and breast cancer. The beneficial properties have been ascribed

to the CLA content of milk. It is also found through modern researches that Indian cow milk contains relatively higher amount of cerebrocides and these help to increase human brain power and memory. It is known in the Indian tradition since ages there exists a correlation between cow ghee consumption and the memory. Well it is a subject to be investigated how our ancestors knew this fact which is scientifically proved now. Hence the comparison of the Indian and exotic breeds should not be based just on the quantity of milk produced, but also on the quality of the milk and the benefits obtained from the cattle system as a whole. The use of cow urine (Indian) or its distillate enhances body's immunity and resistance. It is useful against tuberculosis and cancer. It has uric acid and dissolves kidney and gall bladder stones and synergistically enhances the impact of vaccinations. It prevents free radical formation and slows down ageing. These observations were the result of the research reports that resulted in US patents No 6410059 dt 25-6-2002 and 6896907 dt 24-5-2005. Again, we in India know very well that Indian cow urine is used in Ayurvedic medicines traditionally.

As a person of science, I can say that though these scientific research findings do throw some light on the traditional knowledge practices, more extensive and systematic research should be taken up by different schools in a co-ordinated way so as to confirm and make them acceptable by the international scientific community.

There is a book called *Dung is Gold Mine* published by International Society for Krishna Consciousness. (See the site: www.iscowp.org) It says that “The only way to the problems of shortage of food grains, water, fuel, shelter, good health, nutrition, eradication of poverty and unemployment is-dung, dung and only dung.”

Subhash Palekar, the pioneer of organic farming in India says Mother Earth is *Annapurna*. Its degradation is our doing. Chemical fertilisers destroy all the useful organisms- billions and billions in the soil converting it slowly into a barren land. We have to put a full stop to this indiscriminate use of fertilizers. To replenish and bring back the soil to living condition the source is cow and its products, mainly its dung and urine. His experiments proved that one cow can cultivate 30 acres of land profitably by using *Jivamrutam*, a value added manure from cow’s dung and urine without using any chemical fertilisers.

In the light of this information available few moot questions come to my mind.

1. What else you require?
2. Why import oil and face oil and energy crisis?
3. Do we have the national will?
4. Are we on the right direction in shaping the industrial and economic policies of our country?
5. Or else are we playing to the tune of Industry driven technologies and policies to serve the interests of few countries?

Cow in the Global Scenario

It is now well realised that cow farms should be the centres of integral planning to harness milk, manure and power. One of the most significant features of these farms is odor reduction by digestion and separating methane. The odor, an important social issue, is tackled by using the separated methane to produce power. The digestion process creates a high-quality fertiliser, converting the nutrients in manure into more usable manure.

There are several such centres distributed globally and covered under the name “Cow Power”. A recent report in the website: www.greenstudentu.com dated 25th April, 2010 highlights the theme of cow power as an alternative energy for the future. It was in Vermont California USA the Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS) in 2005, launched the renewable energy source programme under the name “Cow Power”. The power generated from the methane produced from the *gobar* of 5000 cows has been successfully supplied to 1000 households. It is gratifying to note that both the federal and state government have been extending the help in the form of grants and loans to help the farmers to augment the heavy startup costs of installing the equipment needed to convert methane from cow manure into electricity. These Cow Power Farms are quickly catching up. A glance of the power production from these U.S farms with 500 cows and above are given here.

1. Blue Spruce Farm in Bridport in 2006 produced 1.3 million kwh of electricity

2. Green Mountain Dairy Farm in Sheldon ‘estimated to produce 1.8kwh of electricity a year
3. Montagne Farm in St. Albans – expected to produce 1.4 million kwh of electricity a year
4. Newmont Farms in Fairlee – estimated to produce about 1.4 million kwh of electricity a year
5. Pleasant Valley Farm in Richford – expected to produce 3.5 million kwh of electricity a year

The customers around these farms pay slightly higher tariff to the power to encourage sustainable and green energy.

Haubenschild Farms in Minnesota USA, produced electricity from 760-cows to meet the power requirements of the entire farm and another 78 homes. This was operating since 1999. This dairy claims cows were earning him 40 cents a day from their milk and 30 cents a day from their electricity.

The report from *Science and Technology* titled, “cow power the energy and emissions benefits of converting manure to biogas” estimates that 3% of the total US electric demand can be met from the 1 billion tons of *gober* produced annually from the livestock industry in the US alone and will reduce 99 million tons of GHG emissions.

It is very interesting to note that the mighty HP (IT Company) has started applying its scientific minds to harness the cow power to run one mw data centre on a hypothetical of 1,000 dairy cows. In

the paper, the research team calculates that "a hypothetical farm of 10,000 dairy cows" could power a 1 mw data center or of the order of 1,000 servers. It's just an idea sketched out on paper by a research team; no demonstration project has yet been planned.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's study shows that there are 125 operating digester projects at commercial livestock facilities in the U.S. and they produced 290 million kwh, in the year 2008.

Nearly 2,000 farm-based digesters operate in Europe, where researchers are trying to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness for smaller operators by combining food and animal waste.

According to www.greenbiz.com report of 5 May, 2010 the largest biogas plant in the world is coming up in north eastern China to help ease China's energy shortage by putting gober produced from 2, 50,000 cows. While M/s JENBACH, Austria is supplying the generators M/s GE is executing this project to produce 38000 mwh in a year.

Another recent successful story was at [Ukraine Milk Company, Kiev, Powered by 4,000 cows and GE Biogas Engine](#), completed nine months of successful operation. The excess power produced at the plant is being sold to the grid. The company, received the license for selling power to the grid, based on the

“green” tariff, which is approved by Ukraine authorities under the special law.

Now it is time for India to take lessons from these experiences to rejuvenate cow based activities adopting suitable technologies and policies and induce vibrant economy into the villages where real India live.

Cow based Organic Farming

The organic farming as a movement was originated in developed countries to mitigate the evils of market driven economies. They realised that everybody is a victim of this kind of economics both in the developed as well as the developing countries. It underlines the spirit of Mahatma’s message the earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need but not for every man’s greed.” Now this message is taking its roots firmly in the minds of the social scientists and thinkers. It is also realised that if man does not learn from experiences then nature would teach him by force in the form of global warming, climate change, soil degradation etc.,

The cow and organic farming are inseparable entities in India. Now the whole world is turning to organic foods. There are two million organic farmers in US alone. The concept is catching up fast all over the globe more so in developed countries. India is still far behind, though successful attempts are under way through the efforts of persons like Subhash

Palekar, from Maharashtra, Vandana Shiva from Uttarakhand et al. It is interesting to note that several lakhs of farmers are getting benefited through “natural way of farming” proposed by Subhash Palekar. He has shown the way to farm 30 acres of land profitably by using the gober and urine from just one cow, without any fertilizers or pesticides. Lakhs of farmers are being benefited. It is a ground reality. It is catching up well through the coordinated efforts from persons like Vibha Gupta, Chairperson of Magan Sangrahalaya, Wardha. Again it is cow and its products. This kind of farming through rearing of cows is spreading like a contagion. No doubt it is a silver lining on the dark clouds.

The Government is extending a subsidy to the extent of rupees one lakh crores during the year 2008-09 towards chemical fertilisers, where as the support extended to organic farming is negligible. We as a nation may have to pay heavily on food security front, health and rural energy sector in the absence of any integrated approach towards cow and its related agriculture.

Post War Plot

Post war scenario of the chemical, ammonium nitrate was originated in an international plot. After the World War II the ammonium nitrate lost its importance in ammunition with the invention of Nuclear Bomb. The corporate world that was making huge profits hitherto designed to push this chemical on to the farming all over the world in the name of better productivity. That proved to be fatal to the farming community where ever this chemical was used indiscriminately. The realisation came much later but not before losing the soil

fertility and biodiversity to a greater extent. Several years of chemical farming lead to chemically contaminated foods and destruction of traditional knowledge systems almost irrevocably. The serious problem facing the farmers presently is the shortage of fertilisers. Slowly the farmers opting for alternate natural sources of fertilisers which is abundantly available, instead of chemical origin. This is not only because of the inadequacy of chemical fertilisers but also to meet the essential need of supplying the soil with organic carbon to increase the soil fertility. The discouraging and regrettable aspect of Indian agriculture is the failure of our social and political system in bringing full utilisation of cow based activities and its potential.

Cow based Organic farming and the Environment

There is close link between the organic farming and the environment including the ground water levels. The indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers by the farmers converted millions of hectares into a desert like condition. In India, Punjab tops in this mad rush for chemical farming and facing the consequences, with the degraded lands left behind, with contaminated underground water, mainly with nitrate, a carcinogenic agent. This is not the case with India only, both developed and developing countries are in the same situation. There are scientific reports, even in USA that the soils with rich carbon content with nearly 20% have come to as low as 1%, reducing the fertility to almost to the minimum. Recently a report mentioned that a part of America is becoming desert like because of indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers.

A recent symposium organised on the theme “The Living Soil” by the American Association for Advancement of Science (AAAS) during Feb. 2009, at Chicago published a report based on a decade long experience of several researchers. The interesting conclusions are

1. Organically grown spinach contains less nitrate concern, a carcinogenic chemical.
2. Scientists agree that organic farming delivers healthy and rich soil and nutritionally enhanced food and 30% of increase in anti oxidants and tastier food.
3. Average child in US is exposed to five pesticides daily as result of indiscriminate use of fertilizers and pesticides.
4. Public health to mitigate the effects of pesticides use is costing USA about 1.1 bn dollars each year.

It goes without saying that organic foods are free from them. It is also estimated that 25 million workers in developing countries get poisoned each year by pesticides. The reports say pesticides kill 67 million birds every year in US alone and Mississippi river dumps enough fertilizer into the Gulf of Mexico to maintain 60 mile “dead zone” devoid of fish. This is the limited US scenario and what about the global picture, more so of the Indian, where the accountability is almost zero and the estimates of this nature do not exist.

Organic farming reduces global warming. It puts back carbon into the soil, enriching the soil fertility whereas chemical fertilizers release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere by destroying soil carbon, thus contributing to global warming. The report of United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) in 2002 says, organic sustainable

agriculture practices can provide synergic benefits that include mitigating climate change. It has major potential for reducing Agricultural GHG s (Green house gases)

Energy use in conventional agriculture systems is 200 times more than that of organic systems and contributes to the increase of green house gases. Most of the energy used in the chemical farming goes to the manufacture of pesticides etc., the cost is passed on to the farmer in spite of the so called subsidy. It is also observed that soils rich in organic matter, resulting from organic farming improves soil structure, its carbon content and improves water retaining capacity-improves underground water level ,since healthy carbon rich soil holds water to the extent of 40 kgs per each of carbon in the soil. This slowly percolates down improving the water levels, of course with least chemical contamination. The Times of India report on 14 August '09 says, according to the Latest NASA satellite survey, the underground water levels of north India have been declining 33cm (one foot) per year which was attributed mainly to indiscriminate chemical farming practices.

In short the organic agriculture eliminates energy costs, fertiliser input costs, improves underground water level without any contamination. Above all it reduces global warming by reducing the green house gases considerably. It cannot be an exaggeration, if I conclude that cow based organic farming has the answer for the problem of farmer suicides, mitigation of economic recession, empowerment of the farmer and improvement of the rural economy.

This is the multifaceted picture of organic farming to which cow is the primary source, an integral part of rural India since ages.

13

Significance of Swadeshi Ideals in the New World Order

Joseph Chittoor

Swetlana Alleluva, daughter and biographer of Joseph Stalin one of the architects of Communist Russia, mentions that, whenever anything new; - be it medicine, food, delicacies or any article of curiosity – was brought to him, he used to ask ‘is this made in Russia’? If the answer was ‘no’ he never kept those things for his use. As we know, Stalin was very particular that Russia should be self-sufficient in food, medicine, machines weapons and so on. It was basically to promote the socio-economic and cultural development of Russia. Primarily, India imported machines and technologies like aeroplanes and generators for hydel projects from Russia. In return, India supplied cotton and coal.

More than getting machineries and related technologies from a neighbouring nation, Jawaharlal Nehru, first Prime Minister of India, got inspiration from Russia to set up our own industries. It was manifested through the Five Year Plans devised and implemented with different focuses in the socio-economic and cultural fields. Even before independence Mahatma Gandhi placed before the country the concept of *swadeshi* and we should be proud about that.

In consonance with Gandhi’s idea of *swadeshi*;

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We should produce our own ‘raw materials’ (for example, cotton).

We should produce our own traditional food and practise our traditional food system.

We should nourish and develop our traditional health care for community health needs.

We should employ our own traditional technologies and develop the same with scientific innovations.

We should conserve the nature and eco-systems for the welfare of the humanity.

For an Independent India, ideals had been set by Mahatma himself. Subsequently Rajendra Prasad, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Rajagopalachari, Lal Bahadur Shastri et. al. advocated and propagated the message and struggled for the cause.

Where are we now?

Let us have a retrospect on our current situation. We see a situation now that for the ordinary people of India ‘imported’ and ‘foreign’ food or medicine have become equivalents of ‘genuineness’ and ‘good quality’

Swadeshi Food

What does it mean? Now the modern commercial restaurants serve ‘Indian Food’ like parotta, chappathi, biriyani, papad, curry and chutney and different kinds of sweets like jilebi, khhir etc. It is O.K. for the restaurants to sell food to tourists or visitors according to their taste. This is quite understandable. But the real question is it real Indian food?

Whether, *swadeshi* materials and methods have been used in its preparation.

In a hospital, the doctor was making his rounds. The doctor shouted at the attendant of a patient “I was always telling you not to give apple and grapes to the patient. These are full of poisonous pesticides. If he wants to eat fruits, why don’t you give him banana or orange? At least he can peel it and eat”

When we visit a patient, we seldom give bananas. But the present tendency is to give grapes or apple which carry greater dignity and respect. It should be also noted that they are more expensive. This is only an example of an attitude. Grapes and apple can also be *swadeshi* as they grow in India.

In the area where I work the staple food is ‘ragi’. People make ‘ragi balls’ and eat it with *dal* or leafy vegetable curry. It is very nutritious, low cost, grown by most of the people and they are used to its taste. Then why should they change their agriculture pattern?

Millets are going to be extinct as it has become out of fashion to cultivate and eat. Why only about millets? Many of the native varieties of paddy are also getting extinct. Our government promotes only a few varieties of paddy. In 1985, there was a demonstration of different native varieties of paddy and a seminar on conservation of natural varieties of rice at Rausila Farm, Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh which was managed by Friends Rural Centre of Quakers. The chief

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resource person was Dr. R. H. Richharia. He was one of the leading rice experts in the country and associated with a number of research institutions and was heading the Central Rice Research Institute. In the seminar he said he had been transferred several times to make it impossible for him to work. In his own words, “Mr. Arjun Singh (then the chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh) asked the Department of Agriculture” and the answer was “The World Bank said No.”

We can quote more incidents and cases. But the question is ‘for whom do our Government and Departments work and who influences our scientists? Can scientific findings be adulterated by influence? so that *videshi* can become *swadeshi*?’ Different varieties of rice were introduced for cultivation e.g. Philippine – IRRI, IR-8 & IR-2, Chinese ‘Thainan and Thaiching’ and others. But the farmers like the quality and taste of native varieties. So the question is, “is *videshi* for market and *swadeshi* for the consumption of the producer?”

One more word in this regard. Gandhi dreamt and imagined an alcohol-free India. But now the sugarcane factories in India manufacture sugar only nominally; and the thousands of sugarcane growers now produce sugarcane for the preparation of spirit from which all Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) are made! Sugarcane and paddy are cultivated in our precious irrigated lands. Both sugarcane and paddy needs similar climate, water and manure. But now the paddy fields are changing to sugarcane fields; and we import both rice and sugar! The drastic phenomenon of *swadeshi* becoming *videshi*!

Swadeshi Medicine

We remember Gandhi healed a boy who was declared dead by the people including medical people. He gave an enema and may be some food and drink afterwards. Drugless therapy is not unheard in India. We have also parallels in Europe and China in this respect. The body is an automatic machine which also does self-repair. The medical people will agree that whatever medicine they give or surgery they make, the body has to accept and act. What medicine can do is to assist and accelerate the self-healing mechanism of the body.

In India, we have '*swadeshi* medicine'. Apart from the tribal and traditional medicine, we have three fully developed systems of medicine which the Government of India calls ISM (India Systems of Medicine) and now named as AYUSH (Ayurveda, Unani, Sidha Homeopathy) adding Homeopathy; a system of German origin to ISM.

We can be proud of ISM with its basic concepts 'love for nature and plants; respect to life...' etc. These *swadeshi* systems kept the principle "treatment according to the need of the patient; payment according to the ability of the patient". I don't want to criticise the commercial hospitals. Their commitment and attitudes are reflected in their approach and even in their advertisements. One such I saw was "*Enjoy life, we are first in liver transplant*"!

Human beings have been suffering from illness and accidents from their very existence on earth. These have been treated by healers, not for minting money, but to make sick person whole. Even now there are bonesetters, wound healers,

snake bite managing *vishaharies*. Some traditions are still kept in different families. But often these people have no recognition by the medical community, but some drug companies stealthily try to grab and possess the information in the shade of intellectual property right. Tribal medicine and traditional medicines are *swadeshi*. But what is needed is not to condemn but to keep it out of possible superstitions and strengthen it and support it.

It would be appropriate to share information about some organisations working in this area. One such is *Wayanad Vanamoolika Samrakshana Sangham* in Kerala. It is a registered charitable organisation established in 1991 with the mission of making people 'sustainable partners' of the nature and its resources. This *Sangham* consists of socially committed individuals and enterprising women, who learn, cultivate and propagate medicinal plants. They are engaged in manufacturing and marketing of herbal medicines and also instrumental in dissemination of information on medicinal plants through its publications. For details visit the site: www.vanmoolika.com

Jeeva Daru (tree of life) in Karnataka also works on similar lines. It is an organisation dedicated for the health care of the villagers rehabilitated from the Kabini Reservior project. This organisation has enabled the village women to handle their health problems with herbal medicine which they grow. They are also instrumental in planting thousands of trees in this area. The *Jeeva Daru* is operating from H.D. Kote, Mysore. For details contact: jeevadaru@yahoo.com

The work of *Gramaniketan* in Kerala in this line is worth mentioning. It is a network of self-help groups with the

objective of empowerment of women. It follows Gandhian ideals in its rural development activities. This group is working from Pala, Kodumpady, in Kottayam district from the year 1999. The beneficiaries include 2 lakhs women from the neighbouring seven districts. They make food supplements, soaps without detergents and other products. Using the traditional wisdom of Ayurveda, medicines are prepared in the kitchen of members. Its products are sold through selling centres. For details contact: gramniketh@yahoo.com

Clothing

Gandhi dressed like his classmates in college or when he was in England. Subsequently he took the loin cloth. In 1930, Winston Churchill sarcastically called Gandhi 'half-naked Fakir'. But Gandhi attended the Second Round Table Conference in his *dhoti* and shawl.

Gandhi did not advocate that all should dress like him. But his words and deed proclaimed that people should wear *swadeshi* cloths to promote and protect local industry and artisanship and also local agriculture and production. He condemned extravagancies and show. I think this message we can take and learn from him. The lady who is wearing saree is *swadeshi* in her attire; but if she insists on foreign and super-costly gold-thread embroidered saree, she may be *swadeshi* in origin; but not in her dress any way. So, when we speak of *swadeshi*, the ideal and the spirit are more important than the material.

Education

Our children need education. On the one side, we have thousands of English medium posh schools. On the other side, many children go without schooling and we have a lot of illiterate people. And as things stand now, illiteracy may cross to next century.

India had a tradition of *Gurukula* where the disciple learns from the Master; not only literacy and subject; but also ideas and values. Of course, things change according to times. But can we imagine the situation where the parents cannot communicate with children and vice-versa? English has become universal language and let us learn it. But can we sacrifice our *swadeshi* mother tongue and national language Hindi for the *videshi* language for fashion?

Conclusion

The word *swadeshi*, as we have seen, is not a personal aspiration of an individual; but the totality of a national aspiration for sustainable development of people and nation; as explicitly exemplified by Gandhi through his life and mission. Unfortunately, we now live in a time where these sustainable humane development visions remain mainly in words are super-imposed by our political rulers. They are succumbing to the influences of the global powers. But we are a people capable of determining our destinies. The question is whether we want to be *swadeshi* or *videshi*. If we want *swadeshi* and aspire for sustainable development, then we will have to strive for ensuring an agro-productive system based on food security of the rural communities. This means re-inventing and reinstating the traditional pro-poor and pro-nature agriculture

system to make a breakthrough in food, livelihood and ecological security of the resource-poor communities.

Some points to ponder:

Do I like simplicity?

Am I satisfied with fulfilling my needs? Or, do I go for greed?

Do I like *swadeshi* ways of life-style, food, shelter, manners and relationships?

Do I respect the great men who lived in our land and gave us good irrespective of their language, caste and creed?

Do I prefer to use things made in our country by our own people to those that come from outside?

Am I proud of my own country and being an Indian?

14

Swadeshi and Religion

Tanmaya

What is your country? - India. What is your own country? - Self. Be an Indian and realise that Self, through true emancipation from the bondages of the body. The word *swadeshi* literally means pertaining to one's own country, insistence on the use of goods made in one's own country, preferably hand-made and those too of the immediate neighbours. First in the order of priority *swadeshi* relates to, traditional way of life. This is how we have to practice *swadeshi*, in the ordinary world of necessity. Not only humans but the entire creation is to be in our mind when we try to live *swadeshi* by serving them. *Swadesh* is the multi-cultural India comprising more than 100 crores of people on the globe. *Swadeshi* as a movement was started as early as 1905. It was one the most successful pre- Gandhian movements. *Swadeshi* was a key focus of Mahatma Gandhi, who described it as the soul of *swaraj* or home rule. The contemplative wisdom teacher in Gandhi had taken individual soul to the ultimate self-realisation when the word *swadeshi* is used in spiritual sense of reality. According to Gandhi, the law of *swadeshi* was the *swadharma* of the *Gita* interpreted in terms of one's physical environment. In other words *swadeshi* is "*swadharma* applied to one's immediate environment." It is best to die performing one's own duty or *swadharma*, *paradharma*, another's duty is fraught with danger. Gandhi also considered *swadeshi* as the law of laws ingrained in the basic nature of man. In its ultimate

spiritual sense it stood for the final emancipation of the soul from her earthly bondage and realising her oneness with all life. Contemplative life by living one's own *swadharma* can lead one to the ultimate realisation of truth—to the “silence filled ocean of immortality”. Regional empowerment of the Indians is the need of the hour to withstand the challenges of the market ridden, globalised world of multinational corporations. Illiteracy and untouchability which are still prevalent among various groups or communities in India are to be removed through *swadeshi* concept with proper education using religion and modern science to have an integrated value notion.

Religion means ‘that which binds together’. *Re- ligare*, is a Latin word from which the word ‘religion’ is derived. The aim of religion is to make human happier and to help her/him to find peace within herself/ himself and in her / his relation to the world without. But modern man has lost confidence in the present day religious systems which promote herd mentality. Happiness is to be there in the individual person's inner world and in the interactions with the outer world. This is what we hope for. What we get from the world are experiences like pain and pleasure with paradoxes and contradictions. This world is always in change. As in the case of waves in a sea, different specific manifestations relativistically appear on the surface. The truth which is one and changeless, transcends all these changes is like water in the ocean. Religions help to understand the whole truth through belief. Modern scientific reasoning helps to understand the varieties in the world through questioning or skepticism. The truth is approached in India through transcending the paradoxes like one and many with an overall normative notion of the existence, knowledge and value

(*sat- cit- ananda*) as given in the *Upanishadic* context of India. We can say that the *Vedantic* philosophy is ontologically biased by giving stress to the existence with name and form. The knowing also has the *vidya* and *avidya* concepts as mentioned in the *Isavasya* Upanishad. *Vidya* is the correcting knowledge within us which helps to transcend the dualities including one from the ego or I consciousness. The *avidya* is way of knowing with the division of the knower and known. Seeing earth as flat is *avidya* and conceptualising earth as round is *vidya*. We have to use both *avidya* and *vidya* to transcend death and attain immortality respectively. The harsh world of necessities is to be encountered with the vision of oneness. There is a widespread false belief that simply ignoring problems is being spiritual. It is not in the context of *swadeshi*. In the transactional ordinary world you have to serve not only humans but the whole creation through compassion. The wisdom to live in compassion is derived from the ultimate identification with absolute truth which knows no second. The graded inequality in India, as observed by B. R. Ambedkar is to be reduced in a spiritual way through wisdom and planned action of each individual in India through the *swadeshi* concept. Gandhi had developed a model for such an encounter, which he called *Sarvadharmā samābhava*—Equality of religions and equal respect for religions.

The equality of religion in the everyday life is to be lived by each person through living compassion or kindness. Each person has a creative power to add beauty to this already beautiful world and reduce the suffering brought by relativistic approaches to life. The middle path of wisdom is to be lived through absolutist vision of truth, which cancels all paradoxes in the actual world of relativism. Thus compassion, beauty and

the wisdom of one religion of humanity is to be lived in one's own world.

Compassion

Tradition bound superstitions and harmful practices to propitiate God through animal sacrifices are still prevalent in most of the Indian villages. Exclusiveness, hatred and unilateral position stressing duality suggest the negation of life and love. Negation of life is against the religious teachings. All world religions upheld love, compassion or kindness as a central doctrine. But Indians are practising a cruel method of killing animals to propitiate god. When are we going to stop by a unitive understanding of the world and purpose of life on earth. This is a violation of the principles of *swadeshi*.

Grace is the blessing one receives from the nature or God. Love is compassion one shares with the equals. Mercy is the compassion one gives to the suffering or needy. Grace, love, and mercy stand for the same reality—compassion. “One who loves only really lives”.

Compassion treated in the globally comprehensive, impartial manner forms a central common human value. One acts compassionately and receives grace. The kindness shown to an ant is the same measureless quality as the Grace we expect from God. This universal idea of kindness is the essential attitude belonging to contemplation. Neutral or Global awareness as self-realisation amounts to the same thing. This central concept can be understood as the normative principle or correlation for all the various forms of religious expressions.

Philosophically, kindness is to be conceived as 'knowledge'. Psychologically, kindness is to be conceived as 'self'. Cosmologically, kindness is to be conceived as 'supreme divinity'. Ethically and religiously, kindness is to be conceived as the 'universal language of brotherhood/ sisterhood or mercy'. Ignorance is the cause of hatred. Knowledge tends to make a human generous and universal in his sympathy and outlook. Joy- yielding positive and the suffering – productive negative forces are in a person. We can equate grace to love on the positive side. Darkness and suffering are also to be understood as referring to the negative side of human personality. These positive or negative factors interact themselves to produce an idea of value with the Self or personality of man. An underlying principle of compassion regulates the personal relations according to a subtle dialectics of wisdom. This consists in viewing all neutrally in the light of the Absolute truth. In common language we refer to such a reality as God. Then only the concepts like love and grace begin to have consistently rational, convincing and non-dogmatic and even some kind of scientific meaning.

Sin and grace must be taken together and fitted into a common context of self- knowledge. When such a general scheme is accomplished it would help to minimise ideological conflicts. It is not enough to understand love as a doctrine to believe. Love or compassion and other values have to enter into intimate union with the self as a part of life that is lived.

Contemplation stabilises, harmonises and equalises the opposing factors of suffering and compassion producing the good life at all levels in different forms. A life of goodness of a

certain person and the behaviour in a certain locality can create around him or her associations and memory factors. It is like the perfume of a flower in its surroundings being carried away across the fields. Human values are subtler than the perfume of a flower. The reputation of a Christ or a Buddha or Gandhi belongs to this category. It does not depend upon the passing away of the body.

Beauty

The truth which science discusses existed before they were discovered; without human mind they will survive for ever. But the truth of art and religion is based on human action. It is not the affiliation to religion that matters, but the practice of virtues. The desire for a human being to be more than human is the impulse that drives them to great music and art. Music allows to transcend to the very helm of divinity.

Devadasi is a woman who serves God through art. *Devadasi* tradition was practiced in India for centuries. In the Hindu religious tradition girls were dedicated to a deity—*deva* or *devi*, God or Goddess. They were taking care of the temple and performing rituals. These women practiced and learned dance music and other Indian classical art traditions. The *devadasi* system was outlawed all over India in 1988.

The *devadasis* originally practiced art according to the conventions and rules of a traditional religious system. The modern *devadasi* system that subjugates women and children is to be interfered with. Feminist group and moralist group attack the modern practice.

The village temples, where animal sacrifice is practiced is to be stopped and converted into Knowledge centres. The *devadasis* can be rehabilitated in these knowledge centres. Let them regain their pure status by cleaning temple premise, lighting lamps, dressing the deities etc. Let them teach music and dance to all the boys and girls in the region. Let the village temples once again become a centre of art festivals.

There are not less than 5000 *devadasis* in India (2002). Now the supporting institutions for them in the immediate environment have ceased to exist. Here is a poor person who is dependent on the community, who had hardly any land, who had no organisation to support. Let us look at her with compassion rather than moral condemnation.

Wisdom

Wisdom from *apourusheya* revelation is a unique contribution from India. All religions share truth from *apourusheya* revelation or general revelation or natural revelation. Nature itself reveals truth regarding human life. *Rishis* or sages in India received the wisdom regarding truth in their consciousness and wrote them as four holy Vedas.

The main concern of revelation is to teach humans morality and *dharma* or righteousness. From the natural revelation, human knows what is to be done to maintain harmony and peace in the world and sustain humanity intact.

The Indian group of religions derives morality from the general revelations. Traditions are the ongoing understanding of natural revelation. God comes in this group of revelations as the perfection of morality. The purpose of this general revelation is to make human live a moral life in acquiring wealth and power (*artha*) and pleasure (*kama*) in such a way to lead to liberation. The religious devotion and *purusharthas* are permanent and universal in Indian culture.

Dharma, artha, kama and moksha are called as *purusharthas*; which is the content in the natural revelation. It is discipline in oneself and discipline in relation to others, in acquiring wealth, power, pleasure and liberation. A disciplined life in acquiring wealth, power and pleasure, that is without interfering in the right of others will lead to liberation. The goals of man are interconnected. One cannot be achieved without the other.

Dharma alone is ritualism. *Artha* alone is avariciousness. *kama* alone is lust. *Moksha* alone is other-worldiness. What is mentioned by these four in a particular situation will change, but their inter-relationship does not change.

The natural revelation (*apaurusheya*), the revelation by incarnation (*avatara*), revelation by experience (*anubhava*) are rooted in truth (*satya*), harmony (*rtha*) and righteousness (*dharma*). *Satya* is what is that which exists in all the past, present and future without any change. It is the law of all laws. It is the correct understanding of world, man and God. It is in the words. *Rtha* is the mental realisation of the actual truth. It is

the truth in thought. So also is the moral order of the cosmos, which leads to the harmony of the world, man and God. *Dharma* is in dealing with our interpersonal contacts and our way of dealing with the world in acquiring wealth, power and pleasure. These three concepts –*satya*, *rtha* and *dharma* play important roles in Indian thought religion and social development. Mythic, mystic and aesthetic traditions came respectively from *satya*, *rtha* and *dharma*.

Shruti (all scriptures dealing with pure *Vedantic* wisdom), works of religious duty demarcates *dharma* (righteousness). If these two are not available as a source of wisdom then we have to identify with the morality based on tradition of truth to guide humanity on the right path. We have intuitions (experience), philosophies (theories or reason) and religious life (practice) in the tradition. Religions are different in theory and practice but are one in experience. The paths in the religions are different but the aim is the same. A happy man is the last model of *dharma* to follow. In a happy man, there is something in such a way that it gives happiness.

Spiritual growth is the highest priority. Look for the compassion and wisdom that is waiting for you in your most difficult situation. The real world is world of compassion and wisdom. Brutality, suffering and violence in our world are there because we created them. The remedy is not to withdraw from what we have created but to create differently.

When unbound knowledge shines through a human being, that person will become a centre of experience of unlimited oneness. Around such a wisdom teacher, the village knowledge centre in a temple is to be founded. Around this

leader should be constituted an auspicious council. Whoever joins shall consider others as brothers and sisters. Start an *ashram* council and schools in each region separate for men and women. Within the first 15 years of age the *swadharma* of a child will become evident to the parents and the teacher. The wisdom teacher at the knowledge centre has to help the child to find out the proper vocation for her / him. After 35 or 40 years of living a life through a proper vocation, idealistic education can be started.

One has to live in one's *desha*—*swadesha*, immediate environment. *Swadesh* is to become vibrant in our life by practising compassion, creativity and wisdom. Each individual is to be provided with proper education. Religion will take one to wisdom as well as silence filled with mystery and wonder. All religions give the humans the same experience. In theory and practices only religions are different.

Nepal's Polity and Political Economy: A Swadeshi Perspective

Shankar Tiwari

Introduction

The whole process of globalisation has attracted the attention of the people all over the world. It was assuming the form of a ruling ideology of the world till the advent of global financial meltdown in 2008. There are some serious questions need to be raised at this crucial juncture. Will globalisation fade away? Equally pertinent question is how Capitalism emerges as a victor out of every crisis? Will it continue? Luckily the economic crisis had minimal effect in India and China this time. Does it mean that economic crisis will never hamper the economies of India and China? The answer is absolutely no. As the nature and structure of global economy and that of India does not differ fundamentally so the crisis the present crisis at the global level is bound to happen at anytime in India or any other country in the coming days.

Gandhi, the apostle of truth and non- violence inter alia propounded *swadeshi* and *swaraj*. In context of the present Seminar one can legitimately ask whether *swadeshi* is the answer to the recurring economic crisis? In this paper I will try to view *swadeshi* in the context of Nepal, how global trend and India's role have been shaping Nepali political economy and polity itself

Nepal's Political Economy

Before the entry of East India Company, India used to export jute and cotton products to the West. Nepal was also a rich country. Traditionally India and China were rich and prosperous nations in history. Nepal was also affluent. But now Nepal is lagging far behind, while India and China are gaining double digit economic growth. If the political situation of Nepal stabilises it is likely to achieve similar growth rate. However, under the present pattern of economic growth the downtrodden and marginalised people are unlikely to get the right share of dividends. Why the pace of Maoists violence, social unrest and workers unrest are increasing in an unprecedented manner? This small example indicates that things are not going well in the right direction.

When Jung Bahadur Rana went to England as Prime Minister of independent Nepal, lot of gifts were bestowed to the Queen Elizabeth- I. Even the queen was stunned by the lavish display of the riches.

Till 1960, Nepal could export agricultural products. But today 42 districts out of 75 districts are facing acute food crisis. How this situation arose? Are domestic policies only responsible for this grim situation? or global trends have also contributed to it. On a close examination one could easily see that with the neglect of agriculture by the state and clear preference for profession and other fields sowed the seeds for the present crisis in Nepal.

To illustrate, from 1885 onwards, Nepal allowed open recruitment in the British Indian Army. Almost 30,000 adults were recruited in the beginning. Roughly 2 million adults -20 percent of the adult male population in the country participated in the First World War. Approximately, the same number

participated in Second World War. Such a mass exodus of able bodied adults considerably damaged agriculture and food supply in rural areas of Nepal.

One has to remember that the British mainly deployed Gurkha forces to suppress Indian mutinies and Jalianwala Bagh massacre. The Nepali ruling class was quite happy without thinking about the far reaching consequences it would bring to nation's economy as they were compensated by the British to the tune of one million rupees. The amount was doubled after the Second World War. In addition, Rana, the Prime Minister was also awarded a handsome gift of 1,750,000 sterling pounds for his help.

As a result of globalisation, Nepal is now sending unskilled workforce to make modern structures in the Arabian Peninsula, Malaysia and Europe. Every year 4 million people join the work force as new entrants. Out of four, 2 million go outside the country every year through nation's only international airport in Kathmandu. During recent economic crisis almost 50,000 workers had to come back in the midst of their contract. There is no record how much Nepalese join Indian labor market every year.

The underlying cause for the large majority of unskilled adults joining work force is that there is no spirit of *swadeshi* in the education provided by the state. As it trains only to produce the clerks, the education system needs a complete revamp as Gandhi outlined in "*Hind Swaraj*". This education pattern which was ditto copy of Indian model that India inherited from the British Empire completely destroyed the indigenous technology.

CPN's (Maoists) decade long civil war gave a death blow to the local agricultural economy. The landlords had to flee away to save their lives to the city centres and the vast

majority of their land remained barren. The marginalised people, *dalits* and *janajatis* used to work as seasonal labors during harvesting season and remained busy with their indigenous modes of production during the remaining part of the year. Once the civil war was in full swing the majority of *dalits* and *janajatis* left their ancestral profession related to indigenous technology creating a void in the domestic market. The gap was automatically filled by the products of multinational companies. The laborious people became lazy because they were turned into political activists and knew how to manage their life through looting, forceful extortions and other unethical means during the civil war. After the ending of this armed conflict these people are rarely joining their old profession. Nor have they tried to modernize their indigenous technology.

The other far reaching consequence was because of structural adjustment policy forwarded by Brettonwood institutions. The government was restricted to invest meager amounts of their budgetary allocations in the agricultural sector. The tragedy was such that two third majority of the population depended on agriculture for livelihood but the budget allocation remained strictly below 10 percent. Subsidy was provided only to chemical fertilisers so that the organic mode of farming would degrade and the production will decrease in long run.

Nepal's Polity

After the unification of small states into a single "*mala*" by Prithvi Narayan Shah, Nepal's modern size and shape took place. Prithvi Narayan Shah had stated the limitations of Nepal as an independent state. Nepal is a yam between two huge stones. Because of hard and tough border in the northern side, Nepal's relation with Southern border (which is

comparatively far easy) the relation of '*roti and beti*' (bread and marriage) fostered.

In the Anglo- Nepal War ended with Sugauli treaty, Nepal lost one third of its territory. British regents started to stay in Nepal. By this time Britishers had almost total control in South Asia. The British Empire was in its hey days. The Britishers were made to leave India just after World War-II. Ranas were already enjoying power in Nepal for nearly one hundred years.

At this time Nehru was at the helm of political power in India. The anti-Rana or pro democracy movement was gaining momentum in Nepal. The Ranas which were maintaining their family autocracy in Nepali politics with the help of Britishers hoped that now they have to ally with the new establishment in New Delhi. The astute Indian Prime Minister Nehru compelled Rana's to sign the treaty of 1950 just before the success of 1950 revolution in Nepal. The power sharing agreement between Rana, Shah and Nepali Congress was orchestrated by Nehru single handedly. This incident marked the modern vantage point from which India started playing its active role in Nepal's internal affairs.

The time around 1950 was watershed moment in India, China and the whole world. After the ultimate ending of World War-II, USA and the then USSR tried to advance their respective ideology of liberal democracy and communism with great fanfare. This unhealthy competition among superpowers to promote their ideology gave an opportunity for India to put Nepal under its security umbrella. USA tacitly agreed for this so that the idea of communism would not land in Nepal via any means.

In every regime change in Nepal (may be that of 1950,1960,1990,2003) India has played a dubious role with Nepali political players sometimes in favor of establishment or other times in favor of dissenting voices putting her interests in higher priority. The role of midwifery played in 1950 was again repeated in 2006. India took pro active role while CPN (Maoists) and seven agitating political parties signed a 12 point agreement paving the way for the peaceful demise of monarchy in Nepal heralding the republican set up. Because of CPN (Maoists) strong pressure and Girija Prasad Koirala's consent, United Nations peace mission was invited to monitor the peace process which India tried to oppose vehemently. India now seems to be quite happy that UNMIN which remained as extra but powerful player in Nepal's affair has gone back and the western interest especially that of USA cannot take centre stage. And there is no clear signal whether the peace process will reach to its logical end or not. The advantage of this void will certainly be utilised by India to reassert its hegemony in Nepal's affair for which India waited for 4 long years with great anxiety. The Indian foreign secretary has already made her trip to Nepal recently before the new government is going to be formed and the roadmap ahead is not understandable.

If we view Indian interference in Nepali politics from Gandhi's spectrum of *swadeshi*, it is positive signal that nearest neighbors are playing crucial role. But in the bleak side because of excessive interference Nepal's polity could not be stable. The real *swadeshi* or *swaraj* would come if the domestic political players can play their role without falling in any external pressure either from the north or south or from faraway. The possible alternative cure for this excessive interference can be met in Gandhi's line, "Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate

surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote.....In the domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects." If the domestic political players build and innovate indigenous institutions there will be less need of foreign help to settle the disputes. Quoting Gandhi again, "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides, and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to blow about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any." Because of real politics reigning supreme in international affairs, the situation is such worse that to save one's feet from being blown off remains a Herculean task for small nations. The pace of wind comes like a whirlwind from where no light is seen deep down the tunnel and small countries automatically fall in bad traps.

Let's take the example of Haiti. The American army took control of overall security mechanism once the devastating earthquake ruined the capital city of Haiti. One year after the elections took place and two politicians are declaring themselves as President. This drama has not ended till now and is continuing for more than a month. To let the roots to be firmly grounded the neighbours should not act as bad Samaritans. The strong ones should leave helping with bad intentions the poor ones during their crisis (which is itself created by the strong ones) and exploiting the poor ones once they are in track to be in right condition. This has become a vicious circle neither helping the poor ones nor the richer ones. If one thinks to help, then help should be done without any mal-intention in mind to exploit the poor one in future unnecessarily. The strong ones cannot remain happy by keeping the graveyards nearby in the long run. It will certainly be counterproductive.

I

Towards a Swadeshi Educational System

C. S. Dharmadhikari

Though India became politically independent, the impact of British colonialism continued in all facets of human life. Literally India followed all institutions and systems during the colonial period with slight modifications in independent India. It may be because of the fact that India is still in “British Commonwealth”. Everybody thought that after independence, the system of education will radically change, but nothing of that sort happened and practically the same system of education continued. Here I am reminded of a couplet by a well known English poet, John Dryden, who rightly said, *By education most have been misled; So they believe, because they so were bred. The Priest continues what the nurse began, And thus the child imposes on the man.* On the other hand one should also remember what Lord Henry Brougham said, “Education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive, easy to govern, but impossible to enslave.”

Education plays an important role in the life of an individual. In fact, school is the place where the life of a pupil is moulded. The great philosopher, Leo Tolstoy, said about the impact of his school as follows, “It was all my life, it was my monastery, my church in which I redeemed myself while being saved from all the anxieties, doubts and temptations of life.”

2 Continuing Relevance of Swadeshi

Almost all philosophers and thinkers reflected on the education, the role of schooling and the issues connected with it. Alvin Toffler the author of well known works *Future Shock* and *Third Wave* expressed his opinion about the education system, in the following words:

“In every school system, there is an overt curriculum and a covert curriculum. At overt level, there are differences from place to place. We teach American History, Japanese teach Japanese History. But underneath all these systems teach three basic courses. The first course is punctuality; kids must show up on time or be punished. The second is a course of obedience. Even in schools that pride themselves on teaching kids to think and ask questions, the smartest kids quickly discover which questions not to ask. The third is a course of rote work. The school has the task of breaking the child into a life of routine and repetitive toil.

We must teach what life would hold later on- an advanced stimulation of adult life. It is not history that we need to know. It is fabulously valuable experience for students to start thinking about their own and the society's alternative future.”

In the late '60s the Students' Movement took place in the western countries and its leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit severely criticised the then education system because it was creating only a stereotype society or the society of employees. Daniel and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit aptly described the disgusting system of education in the work *Obsolete Communism: The Left Wing Alternative* “...many students are becoming increasingly disgusted and sickened not only by this system but by the very culture that produces and fosters it.” After the Students' Movement, the Director General of UNESCO observed that,

“The gulf between young and adult seems to be growing every day not only with university but with society as a whole. With their needs for absolutes, the young are less than ever able to tolerate injustice and disorder of this world.”

If this has to become a reality, then the education system must undergo a drastic change. What is required now is a deep rethinking about the whole system and process of education. It should include not only about the teacher-students relationship, but also their relationship with the parents, because the values cannot be taught, but can only be caught. The catching of values by pupils will obviously depend upon the educational system as well as the society in which they live. ■■■■

Rabindranath Tagore wrote, "A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its flame." The teacher must invest his life in the development of the personality of students. To borrow the words of the immortal Helen Keller, (blind and deaf, who touched the lives of millions) "I will not just live my life; I will not just spend my life; I will invest my life." In the primary schools, students either worship or fear the teacher. In the middle school, they either admire or ridicule him. In the senior classes, they assess their teachers and emulate them. Whatever students do, they can never be indifferent to their teachers because they have become an inseparable part of their lives. As a matter of fact, a teacher must have a mother's heart. Mother does not love her children by adopting percentage formula. For her every child is a cent percent personality and integral whole. ■■■■ The whole system of education will have to be an integrated and correlated one, and it must be a system, which can be rightly described as “learning and teaching” system. This system should be organically correlated with social and physical environment of the country.

Having spent my earlier years of life in Wardha and having been associated with the concept of Mahatma Gandhi's Basic Education, I feel that we should consider Gandhi's concept of education, which is known as *Nai Talim*, very seriously. I am aware of the fact that we are living in an era of globalisation and we have to look at the issues from a global perspective. But it is my conviction that ultimately we will have to "think globally, but act locally." Therefore all of us have to do a loud thinking about the system of education we follow and the issues involved in it. Mere thinking, planning and legislations will not solve the problem in the field, because our nation is well known for its maximum legislation and minimum implementation. So far, we are following a top to bottom implementing system, but in that nothing reaches at the bottom and everything is vanished in between. Therefore, the implementation will have to be oceanic, meaning thereby that there is first a small circle, and then circle widens up and up. Therefore, the beginning should be from the bottom. Then alone fruits will reach to the bottom.

When I travel abroad, I have experienced that people from the western and other countries are eager to know much more about the *Nai Talim*, because they feel that the present educational system will not solve the problems, faced by today's world. Instead of cut-throat competition, they feel that the education should help in developing the qualities of love, friendship and fraternity. It was thought that the modern education could solve all the problems, but unfortunately, education itself has become a problem. That is the reason why rethinking and relooking about the educational policy, as a whole, is necessary. It is good that compulsory and free

education at the primary level for all is being introduced. But that will not be enough. Equality means to treat equals equally. To treat unequal equally results in inequality. The concept of reservations or concessions, as contemplated by the Constitution of India, is basically meant for achieving the said object, because the starting points of lives are not the same or common. Concept of equality contemplates equal opportunity. We cannot achieve equality without equal opportunity for all.

In the field of education, there is gradation and classification of the educational institutions. Rich people choose public schools for their children, which are run at the public cost, but where the common public can never go. Others choose convent education, children of this class, which is known as middle or upper middle class, get all the advantages because their parents are educated. Apart from this, they can afford tuitions or attend tuition classes. The last and the worst category is of the children, in whose house, nobody is educated, no facilities such as electricity and water are available, no books, and ruthless poverty. They normally opt for the educational institutions run by the municipalities or the *Zilla Parishads* or *Ashram Shalas*.

Even if we want to achieve the goal of universal education, still inequality persists, because of poverty and other circumstances. Apart from universal education, neighbourhood school system will have to be vigorously implemented because the culture at home and the culture at school will have to be harmonised. Today, unfortunately, students are well disciplined in the school, but they are undisciplined at home. Therefore, the system will have to be such which will reach the homes. We want to educate parents through these children. In a sense, it

will be an education of the parents also. Ours is basically an economy based on agriculture. Even if there is free and compulsory education, it is noticed that the children are not able to go to the schools at all, because of the domestic circumstances prevailing in rural areas where the children has to help the parents in agricultural operations. Elder brother or elder sister is forced to live at home to take care of their younger brothers or sisters, as their parents go out in the field for the agricultural work. Therefore, the whole time-table of the educational institutions will have to be rationalised. It was alright, when the British rule was there and as the rulers wanted to go to the hill stations in the summer. Therefore, there was a summer vacation for the educational institutions also. These vacations have no meaning for the Indian situations. Now, we will have to think to give vacation in a season, when the parents can live at home, and when the initial agricultural work is over. Therefore, children can go to the school, because their presence at home is not necessary to take care of their younger brothers or the sisters, or for the household work. Vacation will have to be harmonised with the agricultural work, so that the children can afford to go to the school or to be precise, their parents can afford to send their children to the school. In my view, this is the crucial question before the system of compulsory education.

Martin Luther King (Jr.), in his speech "Youth and Social Action" has rightly observed, "The largest group of young people is struggling to adopt itself to prevailing values of our society. The second group is of radicals. They agree that only by structural change can current evils be eliminated, because the roots are in the system rather than in men or in faulty operation. They are in serious revolt against old values and have not yet concretely formulated new ones. Ironically, their

rebelliousness comes from having been frustrated in seeking change within the framework of existing society.” It will be almost impossible to think about *Nai Talim* or a *swadeshi* education within framework of society in which we are living. A total restructuring of political and economic system is a necessary prerequisite for the natural flowering of the education system.

In today's educational system, there is no *swadeshi* spirit. Everything is based on foreign ideas and concepts. Akbar Allahabadi, a noted Urdu poet described present day education in his Urdu couplet as follows:

بہتر ہے اس کو دیکھ کر کہ اس کی
 دس سڑکیں دیں
 نہ کھانے کی گھر کی گلیں
 ہر گھر کی گلیں

The above couplet means that the culture of parents is not reflected in their children because they are brought upon the powder milk and government education.

According to Gandhi, literacy in itself is no education. He said “Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning.” Literary education should follow the education of the hand - the one gift that visibly distinguishes man from beast. True education must be self reliant and should fulfill the requirements of individual and correspond to the needs of the society. Otherwise it is not a healthy growth. The function of *Nai Talim* was not merely to teach an occupation, but through it

to develop the whole man. The true education should be easily accessible to all and should be of use to everyone in his daily life. The notion of education through handicrafts originates from truth and love pervading life's activities. Persistent questioning and healthy inquisitiveness are the first requisite for acquiring learning of any kind. If we want to impart education best suited to the needs of the villagers, we should take the *vidyapiths* and educational institutions to the villages. In a democratic scheme, money invested in the promotion of learning gives a tenfold return to the people even as a seed sown in good soil returns an abundant crop.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave also expressed views about education or *Nai Talim*. He said,

“On the day India attained independence, I had said that as a new flag necessarily followed in the wake of the establishment of a new State, new education or *Nai Talim* should also follow in its wake in the same manner. I do not see anything but want of sense in now maintaining here the same system of education which suited those who kept the country under bondage.

The second misfortune was that the standard of living of those who were given education was raised, which was against the cultural traditions of this country. Here a spirit of sacrifice has been deemed to be a concomitant of learning and knowledge, and it has been held that while there is not much harm, if those who are uneducated indulge in the enjoyment of sense pleasure for they are ignorant, it is not proper for men of knowledge to indulge in them.

The third misfortune was that work was not linked with education. The result is the tendency in the educated to

enjoy pleasures without doing work and to look down upon physical labour, even of their parents.

There is no true joy for the man whose life is cut off from the heavens above and the world of Nature around. This means that the task before education is to change the whole system of values and the way of life that is current in our cities. How this is to be done is not a question for you and me alone, but for the whole humanity.

Whether the children have been educated or not should be decided by the criterion, if they have developed such qualities as loyalty to truth, spirit of service and fearlessness. What is to be looked into is how far they have developed practical knowledge and qualities useful for social service.

I am personally of the view that just as judiciary is independent and the government has no authority over it, similarly the education institutions should be free and independent. If the education is in the hands of the government, it is open to two objections. (1) It acquires a rigid form and is coloured by the complexion of the government, (2) All teachers become employees. What should really be is that education should be in the hands of public men of knowledge and if the government so desires, it may somewhat help it.

The philosophy of *Nai Talim* does not accept the unequal values assigned by our present society to physical and mental work. It takes the position that every kind of service rendered by a man, whether it is physical or mental, is ethical in its nature. The value of an ethical act cannot be calculated in economic terms.

The spiritual principle of *Nai Talim* is that knowledge and work are not two things but one. It is a mistake to say that knowledge is higher than work or work higher than knowledge. *Nai Talim* is education based on the unity of knowledge and work.

It is not possible that the people may take over education into their hands all at once. Till that happens, it is bound to remain in the hands of the government, precluding any reform. Hence there should be such independent schools in the country as will be able to act as models for the government. By 'independent' I mean that the government will have no control at all over them, be it of any type. If, in spite of it, the government helps them, it does not matter. This is one definition of 'independent' schools. But there are also institutions which are totally independent in the sense that they neither accept government aid nor any control by it. As such there should be three kinds of schools in the country; (1) government schools, (2) schools accepting government aid but not controlled by it, and (3) fully independent schools, accepting neither government help nor its control in any form, whatsoever. They would be looked upon as the best schools, and it is they which would be undertaking independent research and experiments to show the way for the progress of the nation." This will give us an idea how Vinoba looked upon education and related matters.

H. L. Wayland has correctly said, "Universal suffrage, without universal education, would be a curse." After framing of the Constitution and adopting adult franchise as the basis of election process, it was said that, "We must educate our own masters, meaning thereby, a common

man, who is real master of democracy." No political party was interested in this because obviously, if the people are ignorant and poor, then they can manipulate the whole election process for their advantage. Therefore, no political party undertook this sort of education. Today, it is necessary that at all stages, education should be such, which will make a person a good citizen. Preamble of the Constitution lays down broad blue print of the direction in which country should move forward. while emphasising upon fundamental rights, incorporated in the Constitution, we are forgetting that, every right has a corresponding duty. Since we did not realise this, at initial stages, chapter relating to the fundamental duties namely Article 51 (A) was added to the Constitution by an amendment. It includes the duty of the parents to educate their children. This necessarily calls for the inclusion of fundamental duties of the citizens in every system of education directly or indirectly. This should also be a part and parcel of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* or adult education. The education will have to be two fold - one as students and another level as citizens of the country. *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* should cover such subjects, which will help them to become good citizens and realise their duties and responsibilities towards the society, as a whole.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was the Minister for Education, when the Constitution was under preparation. He was of the emphatic view that education as a subject should be included in the union list and that under no circumstances should it be left to the States. He had an apprehension that if education was retained as a subject in the State list, an educated man in India would become a narrow provincialist. In a letter written to the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, Maulana

Azad advocated that education should be under central guidance if not under central control. He strongly opposed leaving the said subject with the States. According to him, if the said subject was not under central guidance or control, the intelligentsia of the country would become regional in outlook. Azad also believed that the educational planning should be a union subject. Nehru also supported his point of view.

Gandhi was an advocate of national education. He established national level institutions like Gujarat Vidyapith during the wake of non-cooperation. The aim of national education according to him was the inculcation among the young people of the values of patriotism, without consideration of personal gain or loss.

National education was not just a change in the medium of instruction. Singing the glory of slavery in Gujarati or Marathi instead of in English could not be called national education. A change in the medium of instruction was a matter of detail. Similarly, a change in subjects taught could not be equated with national education. Change in the medium of instructions and in subjects or syllabus are incidental to the idea of national education. They would be subject to change as per changing needs. The content of national education must be truly national. Its object must be to create patriotic citizens who would be prepared to give their lives for the nation's regeneration. A student is a citizen of tomorrow and, therefore, the custodian of a nation's future dreams, of what the country ought to be in future. Therefore, the direction and the content of education must not be and cannot be guided by present needs. Experts in the field of education ought to rise above the trivialities of today and think of the coming world of future

generations. That is why education was considered a national question.

National education did not consider intellectual labour superior to physical labour. In fact, one of the purposes of institutions imparting national education was to give dignity to physical labour. It was a national programme to foster the ideals of equality and fraternity and promote genuine nationalist feelings. Our leaders wanted a system of education which would instill among the students feelings of common nationality and fraternity. Under a uniform system of education, the new generation would become truly Indian in outlook. That is the reason why many insisted on avoiding regionalism in our educational system. We think, education moulds the minds of men. But today our national situation has deteriorated to such an extent that even an educated Indian is not accustomed to thinking in terms of India. There seems to be a common view that when everyone thinks of his own province, the sum total will be thinking of India. This is a fallacious view. If every individual thinks of himself, he does not thereby ensure social good. The sum of individual interest does not add up to social welfare. Every individual and region has to think in terms of the nation. Many educationists are of the view that conflicts among provinces can be avoided, inter-provincial amity promoted and the outlook of education Indian broadened, if all citizens are imparted the uniform or same type of education. For this purpose, the syllabus and the medium of instruction will have to be the same throughout the country. Such a policy will accelerate our march towards equality. To achieve this, a 'three languages formula' was framed, but it did not work, because ultimately regionalism prevailed over nationalism. In

substance, we will have to prepare a blue print of the whole educational system.

When we say that "India's culture is agriculture", then the said culture should be reflected everywhere, including in education. When Rahul Gandhi visited a house of an agriculturist in Vidarbha, and enquired whether any of his sons, would like to be agriculturist? The reply was in negative. Because they told him that there is no status or dignity for an agriculturist. Even Class-IV Government servant is respected more than an agriculturist. The problem of suicide by the agriculturists cannot be solved by giving proper price to agricultural products. The more important question is respect and dignity for productive labour. Today Government employees are paid city allowance, where all the facilities are available. Even a teacher gets an additional income by running tuition classes or taking tuitions. Now what is necessary is to pay rural allowance, so that the teachers will be encouraged to go to villages or rural areas, where though there are schools and the educational schemes, but teachers or tutors are not available. Therefore, all these aspects have to taken into account while planning the educational policy at the national level. These are my random thoughts on matters relating to education which I hope will provide scope for loud thinking and may be of some help in developing a *swadeshi* educational system. It is my optimism that a day will come when system of education will change from Macaulay to Mahatma.

This piece is basically culled out from a letter written by Justice C.S. Dharmadhikari to the Member (Education) Planning Commission and Chairman of the Consultative Group on School Education and

Literacy, Government of India, Planning Commission (Education Division), New Delhi in October 2009. The matter was slightly revised and edited for the requirements of the present volume.

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