

CSS @ 50 Years

(1969-2019)

Lecture Series : V

Why We Need Gandhi Today?

Sudarshan Iyengar



CENTRE FOR SOCIAL STUDIES, SURAT

2020

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PREFACE

On the momentous as well as emotional occasion of completing 50 years of its voyage (1969-2019) Centre for Social Studies, Surat (CSS) has planned series of activities. We have started with Lecture Series; *CSS@50 Years*. This is the fifth lecture in the series. The earlier four lectures were delivered by Prof. E. V. Ramakrishnan; Prof. Vibhutipen Patel; Prof. D. Rajasekhar and Prof. Paramjit Singh Judge. All the four are published and available on CSS Website.

Founded in 1969 as Centre for Regional Development Studies by founding director late Prof. I P Desai, CSS is an autonomous research institute recognized by MHRD of central Govt., and receiving financial support from ICSSR, New Delhi and Govt. of Gujarat. Though the faculty strength has remained small over a period of time, they have been representing variety of disciplines of social sciences as CSS has adopted interdisciplinary research approach. Apart from its primary engagement in research, CSS has also been active in holding seminars, dialogues and lectures on various subjects, organising interactive courses for mainly teachers and researchers as well as publication of books based on research and other academic pursuits of faculty and other scholars. So far CSS has published 190 books, both in Gujarati and English, 19 selected bibliographies and 37 Occasional/Working papers on important themes. The institute has been publishing quarterly journal in Gujarati ARTHAT since 1981 providing social sciences literature on various subjects to Gujarati readership and also a medium to publish articles for scholars and teachers. Till date CSS has organised 107 national and international seminars and dialogues. The institute regularly holds lectures under its 'Colloquia' initiative in which scholars and others present their research papers and ideas. So far CSS has organized more than 400 lectures. We have founded I P Desai memorial lecture series to commemorate our founding director under which so far 28 lectures have been organised, being delivered by renowned social scientists and which are also published. In all CSS has organised 50 interactive courses and programmes including, on 'Application of Computer-SPSS in Social Science Research' - which were held continuously for 25 years as well as on 'Research Methodology' and 'Capacity Building', interacting with more than 1000 scholars and teachers from all over the country till date. We also have interacted with another more than 200 scholars pursuing their Ph.D. and M.Phil. under our 'Guidance and Consultancy Programme'.

In terms of research, the key areas that CSS has been mainly focusing are: issues and problems of marginal communities such as tribals, dalits, working sections, women, minority groups and others, sects and religion, migration, rural transformation, social conflicts, movements, riots and violence, urban society, literature and social consciousness, human resource development (education and health), coastal studies, environmental issues, social impact assessment of projects, land and credit markets, governance, social justice and civil society. Theoretical contributions of CSS have been well-recognised in the field of social stratification, agrarian relations, social movements, sociology of education, issues related with dalits, tribes and development studies. The purpose of Centre's research since inception is not only to contribute to theoretical knowledge but also to assist in policy formulations and implementation on issues pertaining to social development. Institute has accomplished more than 300 research projects so far.

For the CSS@50 Years Lecture Series the larger theme of "Social Change and Social Movement" is chosen in accordance with CSS central focus in terms of academic pursuit. In the Vth lecture of the series, which was held on 21 December, 2019; Prof. Sudarshan Iyengar, a renowned Gandhian scholar has chosen a subject while keeping in focus a significant date of Sesquicentennial year of Gandhi: *Why We Need Gandhi Today?*

Prof. Sudarshan Iyengar underscores three reasons for significance of Gandhi in present context. Indian society faces severe crisis of character, as on one hand unholy nexus between the state and business is blossoming, and on the other, honesty and integrity are at stake in public life. Religion and civil society as institutions are expected to inculcate moral values and also performing task of social auditing. However, moral degradation is rampant. In the west morality in private or personal sphere does not matter much so far as public goods are served. But Gandhi believed that private morality had public consequences. For him self-rule is crucial for public figure, and through it Gandhi was offering alternative civilization. Gandhi wanted to reconstruct Indian society based on non-violence and for the purpose he experimented

collective self-rule through establishing ashrams in various parts. He firmly believed that individual is the starting point to effect outer changes in the character of society. He clarified further that the truth was not only truthfulness in word, but it was truthfulness in thought and deed too.

From the childhood he tried to transform his personality based on truth and honesty. And in the young age he became a person of character. Gandhi equated education with character building. He remained eternally self-vigilant through self-observation, self-examination and self-correction; for self-regulation. Gandhi emphasized connection between self-realization and politics.

Prof. Sudarshan Iyengar further observed that Gandhi was not alone in firm belief that individual is the starting point to effect outer changes in the society. He also delineates Gandhi's *Ekadashvratas* for self-regulation. The author also advocates that the concept of self-regulation should be introduced in school education. Gandhi believed in absolute truth as his God. He has conviction that the quest for truth and non-violence cannot be pursued with hatred for different religious beliefs. For him, communal harmony was not a political strategy, but it was a way of co-existing. Gandhi redefined the scope of *dharma* to include notions of citizenship, equality, liberty, fraternity and mutual assistance. He was a sad person as partition took place on religious line and gory violence that followed it. Prof. Iyengar considers Congress responsible for creating further rift between Hindus-Muslims after independence due to electoral politics. He implores citizens of India to launch Satyagraha against biased state and religious fanatics.

Gandhi's vision of non-violent society is also relevant today to save humanity from the current environmental and ecological crisis. He was highly critical of modern, materialistic civilization. Sudarshan Iyengar deliberates on worries of humanity due to unbridled consumption that uses up material resources from nature on two grounds: moral and ecological. Gandhi raised the moral concern and in the last fifty years, scientists world over are raising environmental and ecological concerns – especially apprehension over climate change.

Gandhi was strong proponent of *Gram Swaraj* and was against urbanization and industrialization, on moral grounds. He emphasized on 'Swadeshi' and 'Swavalamban'. In Gandhi's framework, the physical world of human species will have to shrink to reconstruct a non-violent and harmonious society.

CSS takes this opportunity to express its profound gratitude to ICSSR, New Delhi and the Government of Gujarat for supporting CSS during this long span. I am also grateful to members of our Board of Governors for guiding and steering us, as well as our former and present colleagues, including our administrative staff, who have collectively contributed significantly and immensely to take CSS up to this point of achievement. And how can I forget a vast circle of our friends and well-wishers; scholars from different institutes not only from India but also from abroad, from neighbouring university campus and colleges of different parts; also from other institutes and universities across the country; those organizations with whom we have done collaborative research endeavours; our activist friends who have shared their grass-root experiences to make our research earthy and concerned members of civil society who have been meeting us and attending CSS events regularly and encouraging us. I express deep gratitude towards them all.

And finally, I am immensely grateful to Prof. Sudarshan Iyengar, who had worked at CSS previously, for accepting our invitation and delivering an enlightening lecture on a very pertinent theme in the present context. CSS also expresses gratitude toward Shri Uttam Parmar, a known activist-thinker and an educationist for chairing the lecture. I am also thankful to my colleagues at CSS-faculty as well as administrative, for extending support in organising the event and in publishing this lecture.

Place: Surat
Date: 31 July 2020

Kiran Desai
Officiating Director

Why We Need Gandhi Today?

Sudarshan Iyengar

Dear Shri Uttambhai, Chairperson of the session, Dr.Kiranbhai, Officiating Director, Board members, my former colleagues at CSS, and invited guests,

It is indeed a matter of pleasure and privilege to be delivering this special talk today as part of celebrating 50 years of the Centre. It has had a very illustrious past with many outstanding scholars and researchers working here. The Centre can claim to have contributed to serious debates at national and international levels; and in a modest way helped in shaping social policies in the state and the country as well. I have been fortunate to work at the Centre although for a brief period.

Let me now come to the topic on which I am going to speak today. As we are celebrating Sesquicentennial year of Gandhiji, I will talk on 'Why We Need Gandhi Today?' We need him for three reasons. First and foremost, as individuals we need to build our character in our personal and public lives. Second, we need to revisit and follow his precept and practice for establishing communal harmony in the country. Third, we need him to help us solve the environmental and ecological crisis we have landed ourselves into.¹

Gandhi for Building Character

In my assessment, there is a crisis of character in the Indian society today. In 1969, when the country celebrated the

¹ I have dealt with this topic briefly in an article '*Why I need Gandhi*' that appeared in the *Indian Express* on 7 October 2019.

centenary year of Gandhi's birth, those who claimed to be the travellers of Gandhi path redeemed their pledge. However, the combined efforts made by individuals and institutions did not prove enough to influence the society and the government to turn to Gandhi's path in social reconstruction and political governance.² Centralisation of political and economic power continued. Unholy nexus between the state and business blossomed.³ Honesty and integrity are at stake in personal and public life. Modern civilisation which celebrates individual liberty assumes that character building happens best when left to individuals who are free to choose and act in all spheres, mainly economics. In the past, religion was the institution through which moral and ethical values were inculcated in individuals from childhood; and thus the societies were to have moral and ethical standards. Whether such morals and ethical standards were maintained to a high degree could be debated. However, the discourse of modern civilisation rejects the role of institutionalised religion and emphasises that the morals are best maintained when left to individuals. Roderick Church, a scholar working on Gandhi's associate K.G. Mashruwala, says:

One problem, I find, in much social and political philosophy, is the assumption that people are essentially similar (greedy, stupid, fearful, altruistic, and so on.) or that they will behave similarly in certain circumstances. But what strikes me most is the variety in groups, from families to societies. And if we

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² Readers interested in knowing why Gandhian institutions could not do well may refer to S Iyengar (2014).

³ Readers interested in knowing how the unholy nexus developed and how the India's parliament became the nerve centre of wheeler dealers may refer to S Iyengar (2011a). Readers may also be interested in knowing that in 2009-14 Parliament, 34 percent of all members had criminal charges; in 2014-19, the percentage was 39; and presently in 2019-24, it is 43 percent.

take socio-biology and genetic evolution seriously, there is good reason for a population to be diverse in personality and other human traits. This is not to say that typical population characteristics will not change over time, but it will be a slow process. In the meantime, social theorists will have to allow for the complexity we have.⁴

According to Anthony Giddens, neo liberals believed that social solidarity was to be left to civil society institutions which had self-generating mechanism for building it.⁵ He quotes David Green who has noted that the virtues of civil society if left to its own devices, would include 'Good character, honesty, duty, self-sacrifice, honour, service, self-discipline, toleration, respect, justice, civility, fortitude, courage, integrity, diligence, patriotism, consideration for others, thrift and reverence'. Giddens then comments that unfortunately, gluttony, pride, selfishness, and greed have become prominent.⁶ It has allowed permissive behaviour and left the aberrant behaviour to be corrected by systemic checks loaded with ever new technologies.

Moral integrity in private and public life has caught attention in recent times. In our own country, we have seen the crisis of moral standards in public life in abundance. National leaders have been accusing one another of speaking blatant lies, indulging in corruption and practising nepotism. Post-truth has gained currency and it has come to stay. Social media without any gate keeping fans the fire. Discussing political leadership of Gandhi, Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph have brought up the point about morality in private and public life. They write:

4 Personal communication.

5 Anthony Giddens (1998), p.11.

6 *Ibid*, p.12.

There is no country whose people do not in some way worry about the private morality of their leaders. Gossip about highly placed is never merely gossip; to some extent it reflects the assumption that there may be some continuity between a man's personal self-indulgence or self-constraint and his capacity to act disinterestedly in matters of state and the general welfare. But in modern times we have come to assume that the processes of differentiation that characterize our lives and that touch all our affairs have made private morals less relevant for public action. In the United States, it is assumed that if a senator or perhaps even a president pays attention to ladies others than his wife, doing so will not affect his capacity to manage affairs of state – provided he conducts himself with some circumspection and gives no cause for scandal. It is differentiation of realms of conduct that suggests to us that conduct in one realm need not be affected by conduct in others.⁷

The Rudolphs provide the background for the kind of public expectation described above in the United States. They have analysed that the basis for such public mind-set is in the individual liberty thesis of modernity. Based on their thesis, there are constitutional provisions of the kind where individual can have a deviant behaviour in private not affecting his public conduct. Let us see the analysis in their words:

Certain constitutional assumptions also lie behind the belief that private behaviour is to a point irrelevant to public, in a public man. The Western political tradition has been disposed to rely upon external rather than internal restraints, on institutional rather than ethical

⁷ Lloyd I Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph (2006), p.208.

limits, to control those who wield power... Political theorists in the West have emphasized the virtues kings must have and practice and have found in ethical restraints and their acceptance by kings and the means to curb arbitrary actions. But in the main, there has been a greater emphasis on institutional rather than on ethical means of ensuring that those who rule use their power for good rather than ill.⁸

The Rudolphs then put their main argument of the chapter *Self-Control and Political Potency* by quoting Gandhi who said that it was from 'experiments in the spiritual field' that he derived such power he possessed for working in the political field. They argue that Gandhi believed that private morality had public consequences and his belief was affirmed by the traditional Hindu thought on ethical against institutional restraints.⁹

It is in this light that the public impact of Gandhi's asceticism must be understood. If Gandhi lived his private life in public, it was because both he and those who observed him believed that a man's claim to be just, to command others, to attain wisdom, was proportional to his capacity for self-rule.¹⁰

It is in the above context that I find Gandhi's life, his practice and his prescriptions for character building and transforming self-relevant for the present times at least in India. Because in the West, the feeling may not be uncommon that even in the supposedly greedy, materialist world, some people may argue and reject Gandhi's life as the approach to regulate character of self and society.

⁸ *Ibid.* pp.208-09.

⁹ The subject has been discussed well by L. N. Rangarajan (1992). *Introduction*, pp.42-98, and Part III - *The King*, pp.141 - 76.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p.210.

However, Gandhi's proposition is not limited only to demonstrating to the world that how by practising self-rule, one could boldly lead private life in public; he was offering the humanity an alternative Civilisation. He wanted to reconstruct Indian society based on non-violence. It could happen only if every individual who shared this vision practised self-rule. During his life time, he experimented with his thesis in collective living in *Ashrams*. He began his experiment in South Africa with Phoenix Settlement. Later, Tolstoy Farm was set up. Every inmate there was advised to practise self-rule. After returning to India, he set up Kochrab¹¹ and Sabarmati *Ashrams* in Ahmedabad, and in the mid-1930s, he set up Sevagram *Ashram* in Wardha, Maharashtra. All these institutions were social laboratories to practice self-regulation or rule that he called *Swaraj*.

Gandhi's effort to build his own character was not a late realisation and a strategy after he entered public life. It was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who transformed his persona from childhood to a level that earned him the title of *Mahatma* (the great soul) over time.¹² The process of transformation began from a very early age. His regard for service began with serving his parents especially the ailing father, and later turned into the service of humanity. Discussing the impact of a play *Harishchandra*, he wrote in his autobiography, "To follow the truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me".¹³ Truth and honesty got engraved

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¹¹ Kochrab was set up in May 1915 and by June 1917 it was moved to Sabarmati where Gandhi lived until March 1930.

¹² Those interested in understanding the process in detail should read Gandhi's autobiography titled *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. It was first published in 1927 by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, a press set up by Gandhi. For the purpose of maintaining authenticity, all quotes from Gandhi are from the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG) (1956-94), Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi.

¹³ CWMG Volume 39, p.11.

permanently on the young Mohandas' mind and changed his personality completely in years to come.

Gandhi learned at a young age three aspects of improving self; acknowledgement, repentance or remorse, and willingness to accept punishment for wrong-doing. He also thought that it was possible for others to do the same; he expected that every individual should, indeed, do so. When he moved to England to become a barrister, he took three vows in the presence of his mother and a priest: not to eat meat, not to touch wine and be away from women. His resolve of being truthful and honest to the vows under the most trying circumstances helped him to acquire a strong self-discipline. Young Mohandas was becoming a person of Character. This practice hardly failed him during the rest of his life.¹⁴

Following a brief and unsuccessful career as a barrister in Mumbai, Gandhi, then around twenty-three, took up a job offer in South Africa, where he became acutely aware of racial discrimination. His historic travel from Durban to Pretoria exposed him to a jarring experience. Readers will remember the famous train travel and the insult heaped on him at Maritzburg railway station. Rajmohan Gandhi has captured this incident very well.¹⁵ It may be recalled that he was a young man of twenty-four only. He could have pocketed the insult as almost all Indians in South Africa did in those days and get accustomed to the discriminated treatment. Or as an angry young man, he could have turned violent and hit back. He did neither. Instead, he resolved to fight back using non-violent means or passive resistance. A

¹⁴ I have dealt with this subject in some detail in Sudarshan Iyengar (2013), pp.267-76. Also, for a more detailed account, see S Iyengar (2011), pp.65-94.

¹⁵ Rajmohan Gandhi (1995), Chapter 2, pp.37-8.

quote from his autobiography reflects the young barrister Gandhi's state of body and mind:

It was winter... the cold was extremely bitter. My over-coat was in my luggage, but I did not dare to ask for it lest I should be insulted again, so I sat and shivered... I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India, or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults, and return to India after finishing the case? It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial – only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardship in the process. Redress for wrongs I should seek only to the extent that would be necessary for the removal of the colour prejudice.¹⁶

Gandhi's further travel in the stage coach to Johannesburg added injury to the insult. Later when he was settling down in Pretoria, the incident of kicking by a police petrol constable who guarded the President Street also showed that he had stopped taking insults as personal. He told Mr.Coates, who agreed to be a witness if Gandhi wanted to take the constable to the court, that he had made it a rule not to go to court in respect of any personal grievance.¹⁷ He argued that for the public cause, he was prepared to suffer at individual level.

By the age of twenty-five, young Gandhi had become staunch practitioner of truth, honesty and non-violence. He had firmly internalised that as seeker of truth and practitioner of non-violence, one should be ready for self-

¹⁶ CWMG Volume 39, p.58.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.97.

suffering in situations of injustice and exploitation rather than inflicting injury and violence to the perpetrator. It was this transformed Gandhi who led the struggle for civil rights for Indians in South Africa between 1896 and 1914 and later became the most followed political leader in India's fight for Independence. His strength was his character. Eric Ericson, the psychologist analyst, has observed the following in the process of young Gandhi's efforts for character building:

That young Gandhi left England with this vow intact was a matter of enormous importance, not only in his own eyes, but later also for his ethical stature among his people. The clinician must add however, that this victory also reinforced Gandhi's obsessional trends, set him against women and even against milk... He left England learned much that he could rely on later in adapting to the best in British; but above all he left England as an augmented Indian, and that means a stronger man as well as his mother's son.¹⁸

The mother's son eventually was replaced by the son of motherland for whom building one's own character was a prime requirement for serving the country and humanity. In *Hind Swaraj*, he wrote that for him education meant character building.

Character building has the first place in it and that is primary education. A building erected on that foundation will last.¹⁹

He found resonance in Aldous Huxley:

That man I think has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready

¹⁸ Eric Ericson (1970), p.152.

¹⁹ Aldous Huxley's quote in *Hind Swaraj*, *CW/MG* Volume 10, p.55.

servant of his will and does with ease and pleasure all the work that as a mechanism it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic[al] engine with all its parts of equal strength and in smooth working order... whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the fundamental truths of nature... whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience... who has learnt to hate all vileness and to respect others as himself. Such a one and no other, I conceive, has had a liberal education, for he is in harmony with nature. He will make the best of her and she of him.²⁰

Narayan Desai, Gandhi's biographer in Gujarati, in his rendering of *Gandhi Katha*²¹ explained the process of being eternally self-vigilant for self-regulation. Desai says that the process is that of *Atma-Nirikshan*, *Atma-Parikshan*, and *Atma-Shodhan* – self-observation, self-examination and self-correction. Scholars like Roderick Church would continue to take a position that Gandhi's way of building character of self and thereby institution of values in society is not the only way. However, in the Indian cultural context, Gandhi's approach is most likely to touch the inner chord, if communicated appropriately. Gandhi firmly believed that the individual who wanted to enter public life and be a political person should necessarily follow the principle of inner change first. Parel writes:

Finally, there is one aspect of *Hind Swaraj* which past critics have underlined and which deserves underlining again today. That aspect refers to Gandhi's conception

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.54.

²¹ Public story telling from religious texts and *Puranas* has been a tradition in India. Narayan Desai, son of Gandhi's private secretary Mahadev Desai used this form of storytelling *Katha* to render in public Gandhi's life and works.

of the connection between self-realisation (*atmadarshan*) and politics (*rajyaprakaran*). According to Gandhi, the two may not be radically separated. Inner change within the individual ought to be the starting point of outer changes in society. Modern social science tends to ignore this principle. Gandhi reinstates it into political philosophy.²²

Gandhi was not alone and his position need not be dismissed as a product of his idiosyncrasy. That individual is the starting point to effect outer changes in the character of society. Parel writes:

George Carlin understood Gandhi correctly on this point when he drew comparison between *Hind Swaraj* and the *Spiritual Exercises*; both teach that the project of outer transformation ought to begin with the inner transformation of the moral agent. Gerald Heard also saw the same point when he drew a comparison between genuine *satyagrahis* and Jesuit trained in intelligence and deep will.²³

Gandhi returned to India from South Africa in January 1915. He toured the country and addressed people in many places. In an address delivered at the YMCA auditorium, Madras (now Chennai) on 6 February 1916, he said:

I feel and I have felt during the whole of my public life that what we need, what a nation needs, but we perhaps of all the nations of the world need just now, is nothing else and nothing less than character building.²⁴

²² Anthony J. Parel (1997), p.lxi.

²³ *Ibid*, p.lxii.

²⁴ M. K. Gandhi (1955), p.75.

The Rudolphs have devoted a full chapter titled *This-Worldly Asceticism and Political Modernisation* in their book. They note that Gandhi's contribution to political modernisation included mundane issues such as introducing work ethics and economising behaviour with respect to time and resources, and making India's political structures more rational, democratic, and professional.²⁵ In present times, it is important to understand that in public life in India today men of character are in insignificant number and they are unable to influence persons and processes that inculcate honesty, truthfulness and non-violence in character although some impress and influence people and their behaviour by their demagoguery.

How could one practice self-regulation? The Satyagraha Ashram, Ahmedabad inmates asked Gandhi this question in 1930 when he was in Yeravda Jail. He wrote weekly letters to the inmates and according to him the letters contained 'cursory examination of the principal Ashram Observances'. They were written in Gujarati and later compiled into a book form titled *Mangal Prabhat* in Gujarati and Hindi. In English, it was titled *From Yeravda Mandir*. It contained eleven principles and these came to be known as *Ekadashvratas* – Eleven Vows. They were:

- Satya* – Truth
- Ahimsa* or Love – Nonviolence
- Brahmacharya* - Chastity
- Aswada* – Control of the Palate
- Asteya*– Non-Stealing
- Aparigraha* – Non-possession or Poverty
- Abhaya* – Fearlessness
- Sprushyabhavna* – removal of untouchability
- Shram* – Bread Labour

²⁵ Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *op. cit.*, pp.230-252.

Sarvadharmā Samābhava – Tolerance, i.e. Equality of Religions

Swadeshi – Serving the neighbour first

It may appear difficult, but the people need to revisit Gandhi's principle of self-regulation and undertake character building exercise. An effective way of doing it is also introducing the concept in school education. A caveat here is essential. It should not be a moral science class everyday as a ritual. The activities and learning exercises must weave these values and thus should form part of the curricula. *Nai Talim* or basic education is the way of doing it because educating the heart is attempted by *Samoocha Jeevan* – Living together, working together and learning together.²⁶ Sadly, India chose to ignore *Nai Talim* after Independence.

Gandhi for Communal Harmony

Gandhi was acutely aware about the tension between Hindus and Muslims. It pained him. Although he was born in an orthodox Hindu family, both his parents were open about other religions. Young Mohan was exposed to people from all sects and religions right at his home and he like his parents developed respect for all religions. He had for a brief period during his teens disliked and disapproved the ways in which the Christian priests ridiculed Hindu Gods and used tricks in the process of proselytising. Gandhi's mother Putalibai's parents belonged to Pranami or Sat-pranami sect. Pyarelal notes that it was an eclectic religious sect that aimed combining best of Islam and Hinduism. Putlibai had taken young Mohan to one of its abodes near their Porbandar home and Mohan had retained distinct memory of it²⁷.

²⁶ Gandhi's concept of education was named as *Nai Talim* in 1937. For details, refer to Sudarshan Iyengar (2019), pp.36-54.

²⁷ For detailed account, interested reader may refer to Pyarelal (1965), pp.213-4.

Childhood exposures and impressions go into the deep recesses of mind and last lifelong. Gandhi in his autobiography has discussed religion in a number of places. He notes:

In Rajkot, however, I got an early grounding in toleration for all branches of Hinduism and sister religions... Jain monks also would pay frequent visits to my father and would even go out of their way to accept food from us – non Jains. They would have talks with my father on subjects religious and mundane. He had, besides, Musalman and Parsi friends, who would talk to him about their own faiths, and he would listen to them always with respect, and often with interest. Being his nurse, I often had a chance to be present at these talks. These many things combined to inculcate in me toleration for all faiths.²⁸

As he grew up, reason and experience helped him to strengthen his faith that communal harmony was an essential feature of a harmonious society. He did not stop at tolerance alone. He clearly understood that if only tolerance was practised, it would hold till the patience was tested and after a limit it will give rise to hate and conflict. Gandhi believed in *Niraakar Brahma* and defined it as Truth. In the introduction to the autobiography, he explains how he arrived at Truth as God. For him, truth is the sovereign principle that included several other principles. He practised those principles and thus he wrote that his life story was the story of his experiments with truth. He clarified further that the truth was not only truthfulness in word, but it was truthfulness in thought and deed too. One's conception of truth was relative and Gandhi affirmed that his quest was for

²⁸ M.K. Gandhi, Volume 39, Op. cit., p.24.

realising the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle that is God. He understood that there were innumerable definitions of God because God manifested in innumerable ways. Although they overwhelmed him with wonder and awe, he worshipped God as Truth only.²⁹ Discussing the need for Gandhi's perspective of religion and his practice in inter-religious dialogue in present times, Bhikhu Parekh clearly shows how Gandhi positioned himself on existence of God with reason and experience. He writes that Gandhi believed that the natural world was not a chaotic mass but an ordered whole and was governed by laws and exhibited a natural structure. The subtle and highly complex through which the minutest living beings survived and flourished could not be explained in purely functional or even evolutionary terms. Gandhi believed that the creation was governed by supreme intelligence, a cosmic spirit, a mysterious power that he preferred to call Absolute Truth.³⁰ Parekh has built a strong case and argued that Gandhi's belief, his practice and perspective were essential for inter-religious dialogue which is a felt need of the humanity today.

Building communal harmony and including it in the practice of individual character building for every Hindi were integral part of Gandhi's experiments in South Africa. In Phoenix settlement and Tolstoy Farm, he could get to build community living that consisted of people practising different religions. His faith was reaffirmed in religious tolerance. Gandhi's clients in South Africa were Muslims and Parsis. His best and close friends were Christians and Jews. Discussing one of the eleven vows, *Tolerance, i.e. Equality of Religions* in his booklet *From Yeravda Mandir*, Gandhi noted about the religious integration that took place at an emotional plane:

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.4.

³⁰ For entire discussion on Gandhi's position on religion and his perspective on harmony among different religions refer to Bhikhu Parekh (2015), Chapter 11, pp.292-307.

If my memory serves me right, Maganlal or Kashi was once leading us in singing this hymn, when Rustomji Sheth exclaimed joyously, 'Say the name of Horamzad instead of Rama.' His suggestion was readily taken up, and after that whenever the Sheth was present, and sometimes even when he was not, we put in the name of Horamzad in place of Rama... Joseph Royeppen often came to Phoenix. He is a Christian, and his favourite hymn was '*Vaishnavajana*'... He loved music, and once sang this hymn, saying 'Christian' in place of *Vaishnava*.³¹

Gandhi's conviction was that the quest for Truth and Non-violence cannot be pursued with hatred for different religious beliefs. He had acquainted himself with all major religions practised in India.

When I was turning over pages of the sacred books of different faiths for my own satisfaction, I became sufficiently familiar for my purpose with Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Hinduism. In reading these texts, I can say, that I was equiminded towards all these faiths, although perhaps I was not then conscious of it.³²

Thus, in South Africa when he organised people for *Satyagraha* including all 'Hindis', it was not a strategic alliance of Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsis, but it was the beginning of an experiment in building a non-violent harmonious community. He was 'Gandhibhai' for all and he was fearless to face any brute force. Was Gandhi naïve to

³¹ M.K. Gandhi (1932). *From Yeravda Mandir*. Reproduced in Shriman Narayan (General Editor) (1968). *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Volume 4). Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, pp.242-3.

³² *Ibid*, p.243.

think that communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims was not a serious issue and he could just by his magnanimous behaviour easily win over all the communities? No, he was fully aware of the problem. One cannot say that Gandhi was the only tall figure and no one else was there in other communities to lead in South Africa. But everybody had realised that Gandhi's approach to fight for the rights was novel and completely inclusive. For Gandhi, communal harmony was not a political strategy; it was a way of coexisting. Long before the *Satyagraha* in South Africa was launched, he had dragged Kasturba to the door to send her away when she determinedly refused to empty the urine pot of a *Pancham* – Dalit co-habitant in the house. He had internalised that caste, sect and religion were the identities that should not come in the way of living together. He was fully aware of the history of Hindu-Muslim acrimony in the Indian society for centuries. Gandhi was aware that the British rulers after the 1857 revolt in which Hindu-Muslim unity was manifested to the fullest – may be even for political convenience, spelled danger for their rule; and hence they had initiated the divide and rule strategy. By the turn of the 19th century, the British were successful to an extent. The division of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon and formation of Muslim League in Dhaka in 1906 were the beginning of the political discord between Hindus and Muslims. It ultimately gave birth to the two-nation theory both by the Hindus and the Muslims.

Analysing the *Hind Swaraj*, Rajmohan Gandhi writes:

This is a mind that among other things anticipates the future, including his own role, with uncanny accuracy. In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi writes in 1909 that Bengal partitioned in 1905, 'will be reunited,' and the split in

the Indian National Congress...in 1907 'will not last long.'³³

Gandhi was invited to India House in London in 1909 by Indian students when he led the deputation from South Africa. They wanted to hear him and also Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a firebrand nationalist and excellent orator. Gandhi addressed being calm and composed without rhetoric, but Savarkar gave a spirited speech invoking *Ramayana*. Gandhi was disturbed at Savarkar's reference to *Dharma*. It justified the use of violence for India's freedom. Gandhi defined *Dharma* differently in *Hind Swaraj*. Anthony Parel in his analytical commentary on *Hind Swaraj* notes that Gandhi had;

...an updated conception of dharma, that would fit them for life in the modern world. In the past dharma was tied to hierarchical system of duties and obligations and to the preservation of status. It gave little or no attention to the idea of democratic citizenship. Gandhi felt that the time had come to redefine the scope of dharma to include notions of citizenship, equality, liberty, fraternity and mutual assistance.³⁴

Chapter X in *Hind Swaraj* on 'The Condition of India (continued): The Hindu and the Mahomedans' needs to be revisited in the above context and one would realise how Gandhi viewed the Hindu-Muslim issue. The first question he framed and responded was whether introduction of Mahomedanism led to unmaking India. The question is raised with force even today after hundred and ten years. Gandhi responded that his idea of nationalism was not that

³³ Rajmohan Gandhi (1995), p.139.

³⁴ Anthony J. Parel (1997), p.xvi.

of one nation one religion. India had assimilated many religions and culture and had yet retained its unique identity as India. He was aware that the 'inborn enmity' between Hindu and Muslim was there and quoted a popular proverb in Gujarati '*Miya ane Mahadevne na bane*' and argues that this proverb was outdated and the use of it during present times was harmful. The Hindu and Muslims had ceased to in-fight.

Pray remember this too, that we did not cease to fight only after British occupation. The Hindus flourished under Moslem sovereigns and Moslems under the Hindu. Each party recognized that mutual fighting was suicidal, and that neither party would abandon its religion by force of arms. Both parties, therefore, decided to live in peace. With the English advent quarrels re-commenced.³⁵

Importantly, he pointed out that such proverbs were there also for generating animosity or fuelling condescension between sects and castes. Did it mean that they ceased to be Indians? He argued that the evil thoughts were put in mind by religious leaders and the English put the finishing touch! He argued that the discord which was settled once was raked again. He wanted the Indians to rise above it.

After his return to India in 1915, he could touch the hearts of all and identified himself with all. He carried them and led them to *Swaraj*, although conceding that it would only be political freedom to begin with. His message reached the world humanity and people saw new hope amidst two world wars. However, political situation and British rulers' strategy to divide the Hindus and Muslims, India's political freedom was gained at a heavy cost of partition and the gory violence

³⁵ Hind Swaraj, *CWMG* Volume 10, p.29.

that followed. Gandhi was a sad person.³⁶ His own trusted associates had failed him. He had an intuitive feeling much early, of serious disharmony and conflict. Rajmohan Gandhi, in the chapter: *Freedom and Reconciliation? Gandhi's Large Bid*, has shown how intense Gandhiji was since his return to India to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity and how later despite critical support from North West Frontier Muslims had become disillusioned by 1939.³⁷ Speaking at Abbottabad on 23 July 1939, he thanked the Muslims who stood by him and also expressed his anguish. He said:

Let no one imagine that because the Hindus constitute the majority community they can win swaraj for India or even for themselves by organizing civil disobedience without the backing or support of the other communities... Who knows, in spite of my incessant heart-prayer I may not be found worthy for this great work... Pray for me that my dream may be fulfilled in my lifetime.³⁸

Unfortunately, Gandhi's perception proved right. Riots in Noakhali began in mid-October 1946. Gandhiji did not give up his efforts to bring the warring communities together. He walked alone in Noakhali to wipe tears and apply love force which he had expressed in *Hind Swaraj* quoting Tulsidas:

*Daya dharm kaa mool hai, deh mool abhimaan,
Tulsi daya na chhandiye, jab lagi ghat mein pran.*

³⁶ Interested readers should read Pyarelal (1958), Part I, Book I, chapters iv, viii, xi and xii. Also Part II, Chapters 13 to 17.

³⁷ Rajmohan Gandhi (1999). Chapter 8, pp.226-261.

³⁸ CWMG Volume 70, pp.22-24.

Gandhi's faith in *Daya* or love force³⁹ was so deep and he practised it with such passion that during the communal riots before and after Independence, the Governor General Lord Mountbatten famously said: "In Punjab we have 55,000 soldiers, and large-scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting."⁴⁰

Hindu-Muslim harmony remained impaired to some extent ever after the partition pains were internalised. Nehru tried his best to regain the harmony. But Congress's nationalism had already given way to playing appeasement politics. The tendency increased with the Indian National Congress branching into parts. There is substantial literature containing political analysis on the vote bank politics of the Congress that helped the fundamentalist Muslim and Hindu forces to communalise the country further. Role of secular politics also needs mention. This nuance was brought distinctly by the influence of Marxist political parties in India and their deep influence on Congress politics. Appeasement politics also received encouragement in the name of providing protection under the Constitution and pro-active steps to help the minority. However, the real protection and effective improvement measures for the minority did not take place. Justice Sachar Committee Report showed how the Muslims in the country remained neglected. Nevertheless, the politics seriously hurt the sentiments of the moderate and tolerant Hindus and Gujarat became a laboratory for Hindu fundamentalists. It resulted in the infamous Gujarat 2002 riots. The Hindu-Muslim discord is perhaps at a peak. The challenge has to be met.

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³⁹ *Daya* generally means pity. However, Gandhiji while translating the *Hind Swaraj* for his friend and associate in South Africa H.S. Polak, wrote, 'Of religion, pity of love is the root, as egotism of the body... The force of love is same as the force of the soul'. CWMG Volume 10, p.47.

⁴⁰ Pyarelal, *op. cit.*, Part II, p.382.

The Indian state should be secular as guaranteed in the Constitution. In modern times, there is a significant secular population in the country. They are non-believers. They think that religion and religious identity has no place in humanity's future. This is true of non-believing secular people all over the world. On the idea of religion helping forming vision for humanity's future in present times, Harari notes:

Secular people are likely to react to this idea with ridicule or apprehension. Holy Scriptures may have been relevant in the Middle Ages, but how can they guide us in the era of artificial intelligence, bio-engineering, global warming and cyber warfare? ⁴¹

Harari hastens to add that secular people are in minority; billions have faith in scriptures and religious movements influenced politics deeply in countries as diverse as India, Turkey and the United States. Gandhi therefore becomes relevant at least in the Indian context first. The efforts to build tolerance and mutual respect or *Sadbhava* have to be made. Explaining Gandhi's framework for the *Sadbhavana*, Parekh writes:

For Gandhi, truly religious persons have one absolute commitment that overrides all others, to lead a life anchored in God. The ultimate loyalty is to God, not to any particular religion. While seeking to live by their religion, they appreciate that other religions too have their treasures, which they should draw upon in their constant concern to increase their understanding of the divine. They neither merely tolerate other religions in a spirit of resignation or condescension nor just respect them with its associated distance and relative

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⁴¹ Yuval Noah Harari (2018), p.127.

indifference, but show them positive *Sadbhava* or good will and wish them and their followers well⁴².

Gandhi would not be soft to the fundamentalist forces. He was tough in Noakhali to Muslims and in Bihar to Hindus. It is time that we the citizens of India who are both believers and secular should be tough in words and action towards the fundamentalist Muslim and Hindu forces. This may call for *Satyagraha* against biased state and religious fanatics. We should ready ourselves for it but our practice for *Sadbhava* has to be cultivated deep.

Gandhi for Facing Environmental and Ecological Crisis

The third reason I need Gandhi today is because his vision of non-violent society has good potential to save the humanity from the current environmental and ecological crisis. Our relation with *Srushti* – nature has to significantly alter. Gandhi was a person of the modern era who practised and offered peace and harmony between *Vyakti* –Individual, *Samashti*– society and *Srushti*. Humanity appears to be at a major turning point. Our existence is seemingly at peril. However, there is divided opinion. One is that humanity will sail through with its genius. The other opinion cautions of peril if humanity does not mend its ways of conducting life. In 1946, Albert Einstein noted the following in the foreword for Rudolf Kayser's book on Spinoza:

The confidence in the sure and constant progress of mankind that inspired people in the nineteenth century has given way to a crippling disillusionment. No one, it may be presumed, can deny the progress made in the realm of knowledge and in the field of technological invention, but we have experienced the

⁴² Bhikhu Parekh, *op. cit.*, p.301.

disillusioning fact that all these advancements have not essentially alleviated the hardship of man's destiny, nor have they ennobled his actions. The habit of casual interpretation of all phenomena including those in physical and social spheres, has deprived the more wide-awake intellectual of the feeling of security and of those consolations which traditional religion, founded on authority, offered to earlier generation. It is a kind of banishment from a paradise of childlike innocence. Such in brief, is the description of the distress experienced by the thinking man of our time. Often he escapes from his misery into a fanciedly superior scepticism or into distraction of all kinds which keeps him from coming to his senses. But the effort is in vain. We cannot in the long run substitute narcotics for wholesome nutrition.

There are only a few individuals whose inner clarity is such as might enable them to impart their own subjective experiences to their fellow men in comprehensible form. Here it is of great importance for the people of our time to become acquainted with the lives and struggles of those eminent personalities who have endured and overcome their severe spiritual distress, and whose life story and life works can offer us penetrating insight into this heroic conflict.⁴³

Gandhi was one such person. He could not have foreseen the current ecological crisis during his times. But he was not in agreement with the material progress of the modern civilisation. Gandhi through his subjective experience had sensed that the modern civilisation was not on the right

⁴³ This text is from the Foreword written by Albert Einstein in Kayser Rudolf (1946). *Spinoza: Portrait of a Spiritual Hero*. New York: The Philosophical Library. Now available as Facsimile reprint.

path. So, he reasoned and voiced his criticism and concern in 1909 in *Hind Swaraj*. He wrote:

Let us first consider what state of things is described by the word "civilization". Its true test lies in the fact that people living in it make bodily welfare the object of life... The people of Europe today live in better-built houses than they did a hundred years ago. This is considered an emblem of civilization, and this is also a matter to promote bodily happiness. Formerly, they wore skins, and used spears as their weapons. Now, they wear long trousers, and, for embellishing their bodies, they wear a variety of clothing and, instead of spears, they carry with them revolvers containing five or more chambers. If people of a certain country, who have hitherto not been in the habit of wearing much clothing, boots, etc., adopt European clothing, they are supposed to have become civilized out of savagery.⁴⁴

The civilisation has gone far ahead with material consumption. The focus on bodily pleasure has been ever increasing. The most important development indicator in the post Second World War period for a country has been the 'per capita income'. Countries with high per capita income are called developed countries and rest are under-developed, developing or undeveloped countries. Higher incomes in the family are used for acquiring items of comforts and luxuries. Interestingly, over time, what was a comfort has today become a necessity and luxury a comfort. Let us see some examples of the focus on body and material things that are consumed. Germaine Greer a scholar studying feminism has noted the following in her book:

⁴⁴ CWMG Volume 10, p.19.

The UK beauty industry takes 8.9 billion pound a year out of women's pockets. Magazines financed by the beauty industry teach little girls that they need make-up and train them to use it, so establishing their lifelong reliance on beauty products. Not content with showing pre-teens how to use foundations, powders, concealers, blushers, eye-shadows, eye-liners, lip-liners, lipstick and lip gloss, the magazines identify problems of dryness, flakiness, blackheads, shininess, dullness, blemishes, puffiness, oiliness, spots, greasiness, that little girls are meant to treat with moisturisers, fresheners, masks, packs, washes, lotions, cleansers, toners, scrubs, astringents, none of which will make the slightest difference and all of which would cost money the child does not have. Pre-teen cosmetics are relatively cheap but within a few years more sophisticated marketing will have persuaded the most level-headed young women to throw money away on alchemical preparations containing anything from silk to cashmere, pearls, proteins, royal jelly, placenta extracts, ceramides, biotin, collagen, 'phyto-tensers', bisabolol, jojoba, 'hydra-captors', serine, fruit hydroxyl-acids, oleospheres, corneospheres, nanovectors, glycerol, anything real or phony that might fend off her imminent collapse into hideous decrepitude.⁴⁵

How are these products sold? The free market economists tell us that in the world of given tastes and preferences, production and supply take place in response to the demand for goods and services. This is theory; however, what happens in practice is different. Continuing the example of the beauty products about which Greer wrote, let us see how

⁴⁵ Germaine Greer (1999), p.28.

markets function. In *The Economist* (17 April 2010), in a Special Report on Emerging Markets, it is noted:

Because of the lack of brand loyalty, companies have to put even more thought into marketing than they do in West. Shanghai plastered with advertisements on everything from airport trolleys to lavatory walls. Companies project giant logos on to the sides of skyscrapers. Many lifts and cabs have televisions that pour out a constant stream of commercials. Mobile phones are bombarded with texts advertising holidays, massages and much more. Emerging market companies are particularly adept in adding the human touch. Most consumer-goods firms, and a growing number of electronic ones, use sales representatives to demonstrate their products to consumer. Unilever employs an army of "Pond Girls" who show department store customers how to use the eponymous face cream. (p 7).

The article further notes that the consumer-goods giants Procter & Gamble and Unilever were the acknowledged masters in the game. They segmented the markets for different income groups and lead the consumers up the value chain as the incomes go up. Unilever assessing the practice in rural India of using soap bars for washing clothes introduced the detergent in bar forms and gradually took them to the use of washing powder. Introduction of tea bags as per the local taste was also a similar marketing strategy. The global cosmetic market was 507.75 billion US dollars in 2018 and was estimated to reach 758.45 billion US dollars by 2025 growing at a rate of 5.9% per annum. Of the cosmetic products, skin care has the highest market share

while oral cosmetics would be the fastest growing market during the forecasted period.⁴⁶

Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) estimates Indian cosmetic and beauty industry size in 2014-17 was US\$ 950 million with growth estimated at 15% to 20% per annum and overall wellness industry was worth US\$ 2680 million.⁴⁷ It is also interesting to note that in post liberalisation time, Indian girls suddenly found top ranks in beauty pageants! Another example of focus on body and its beautification is that of breast implants. A news report in *Indian Express* in 2018 exposed the quack in doing breast implant plastic surgery because the demand was so high and the returns were highly lucrative.

These are some examples of the consumerist society. On a more serious note, economists have conceded the point that beyond a certain level, it is the supply that creates its own demand. Alfred Marshall who lived during Gandhiji's times discussed contrived demand and said:

Although it is man's wants in the earliest stages of his development that give rise to his activities, yet afterwards each new step is to be regarded as the development of activities giving rise to new wants rather than of new wants giving rise to new activities.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20181005005158/en/Global-Cosmetics-Market-2018-2025-Analysis-Product-Type> Accessed 23 June 2019.

⁴⁷ <https://www.slideshare.net/YogendraVerma11/project-on-cosmetic-industry#:~:text=The%20figures%20disclosed%20by%20Confederation,market%20includes%20US%242%2C680%20million-> Accessed 23 June 2019.

⁴⁸ Cited in Romesh Diwan and M. Lutz (Editors) (1985), p.xxi.

John Maynard Keynes, one of the great economists of twentieth century also acknowledged the problem. He said:

Now it is true that the needs of human beings may be seen to be insatiable. But they fall in two classes: those needs which are absolute in the sense that we feel them whatever the situation of our fellow human beings may be, and those which are relative in the sense that we feel them only if their satisfaction lifts us above, makes us feel superior to, our fellows. Needs of second class, which satisfy the desire for superiority, may indeed be insatiable, for higher the general level, the higher still are they. But this is not so true of the absolute needs; a point may soon be reached much sooner than we are aware of, when these needs are satisfied in the sense that we prefer to devote our further energies to non-economic purposes.⁴⁹

Consumer behaviour has been discussed among economists and there is an admission that individual choices and preferences are influenced both in positive and negative ways. It is given to understand that Thorstein Veblen discussing conspicuous consumption argued that one is influenced by the consuming habits of others and then tries to emulate. James Duessenbury and Robert H. Frank are credited with introducing a name for such behaviour as 'demonstration effect'. In the post Second World War period, a phrase that was popular in United States was 'keeping up with Joneses'. Ragnar Nurkse, a Nobel Laureate in Economics, argued that the 'demonstration effect' had negative impact on the developing countries. That the preferences are not given as the economic theory assumes

⁴⁹ *Ibid* p.7.

was confirmed further by a well-known economist Kenneth Boulding. He wrote:

One of the most peculiar illusions of economists is a doctrine that might be called the Immaculate Conception of the Indifference Curve, that is, that tastes are simply given, and that we cannot inquire into the process by which they are formed. This doctrine is literally 'for the birds,' whose tastes are largely created for them by their genetic structures, and can therefore be treated as a constant in the dynamics of bird societies. ... (We) do have certain latent drives which may guide the formation of later preferences ... but by far and away the largest part of human preferences are learned, again by means of a mutation-selection process.⁵⁰

An obvious question that crops up here is why should the humanity be worried with unbridled consumption that uses up material resources from nature? There are two concerns: one is moral and the other is ecological. Gandhi primarily raised the moral concern. And in the last fifty years, physical and social scientists are raising environmental and ecological concerns. It is established that the increasing levels of material consumption has caused climate change, ecological damage that threatens human species' welfare and perhaps survival. In recent times, social scientists have also raised moral concerns in dealing with matters that are economic. Kenneth Boulding expressed the moral concern in the following way:

The almost complete neglect by economists of the concepts of malevolence and benevolence cannot be explained by their inability to handle these concepts

⁵⁰ K. E. Boulding (1969), p.2.

with their usual tools.... The familiar tools of our trade, the indifference map, the Edgeworth box, and so on, can easily be expanded to include benevolence or malevolence, and indeed without this expansion many phenomena, such as one-way transfers, cannot be explained.⁵¹

The ecological concern has arisen because there is perceptible climate change causing serious disturbances in human lives. Climate change is caused because of carbon dioxide emissions exceeding the normal limits in the atmosphere. Industrialisation and urbanisation is the main cause. Both are energy intensive and use fossil fuels. Burning of fossil fuels emits carbon dioxide. Notable fossil fuel consumption began in 1850 with coal being the major fossil fuel. Measured in terawatt hours, coal consumption rose from a very small amount in 1850 to more than 40,000 terawatt hours in 2017. Similarly, crude oil and natural gas's use began in early decades of the 1900s. From an insignificant amount, it has risen to 90,000 terawatts in case of crude oil and 130,000 terawatts in case of natural gas during 2010-17.⁵² So, the total fossil fuel energy used every year amounted to more than 260,000 terawatt hours. In terms of per capita energy consumption, Gulf countries top the list followed by Canada and the US. Although China and India rank way below at 73 and 126, respectively among 158 countries listed,⁵³ the total energy consumption is high due to the huge population. The high per capita energy consuming countries consume more than 7000 kg of oil equivalent. In China, the per capita consumption is 1695 kg of oil equivalent; and in India, the consumption is 560 kg of oil equivalent. In China, the consumption is three times

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.6.

⁵² <https://ourworldindata.org/fossil-fuels> Accessed 10 June 2020.

⁵³ <https://www.economicshelp.org/blog/5988/economics/list-of-countries-energy-use-per-capita/> Accessed 10 June 2020, Data are for 2017.

more and hence China's contribution to global warming is higher. The point to be understood is that per capita energy consumption is associated with material production and consumption. It should be conceded that humanity is at work to make the physical material production as low carbon emitting as possible, but the volume of total physical material production is very high and increasing. Hence, the amount of carbon dioxide that is released in the atmosphere is increasing at a faster rate. Climate change is the result of emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

Gandhi had clearly realised the limitation of the material world. While he understood that essentially all economic activities had to be governed by demand and supply, the wisdom for humanity was in regulating the demand. Marshall and Keynes perhaps did not want to say clearly that the morals aspects in economic behaviour also had a place. But Gandhi put it very clearly. As Dasgupta notes:

It was Gandhi's conviction that "one's behavior as an economic agent could not be isolated from one's behavior as an autonomous moral agent."⁵⁴

Gandhi although not an economist, presented in his thought framework an economic system. The system as he explained has innate potential to deal with the environmental and ecological crisis. Gandhi proposed that the country should largely be a rural society. For the industrialized and urban society, he had serious reservations on moral grounds. He argued that if Indians wanted to live in true freedom, people will have to live in villages and not in towns. Crores of people will never be able to live in peace in towns and palaces. Untruth and violence will dominate such a society. Gandhi's village in a rural society is not the village of today.

⁵⁴ A. K. Dasgupta (1996), p.13.

It has to move towards 'Gram Swaraj.' Briefly put, a village will be autonomous for its governance; people will have full control over natural resources like land, water, forests and minerals. All citizens of the village will be members of the governing body – Gram Sabha. Each village will try to be self-reliant in basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, housing, education and health. There will of course be interdependence between the villages. There could be most modern and innovative technologies that would support the rural livelihood and enterprises. There will be higher level of habitations for supporting services to a cluster of villages and enterprises to take advantage of scale. The key effort would be to bring in decentralization of economic and political systems. Gandhi used two words *Swadeshi* and *Swavalamban*. They are values and methods both. There will be trade including international trade but for goods and services that cannot be produced locally and is necessary for survival without drudgery and with dignity.

Gandhi's vision may be easily dubbed as utopia. But if one considers the ecological crisis that cannot be overcome only through improved technologies and production patterns, Gandhi becomes relevant because he has suggested a low energy using economic system. However, in adopting the low energy using economy of Gandhi, demand or wants will have to be contained. Life style question will have to be addressed upfront. The world humanity has set for itself sustainable development goals. These goals include ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns, taking urgent actions to combat climate change and its impacts, conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development, and protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. Achievement of these goals is not

possible only through techno-economic solutions. Human behaviour will have to change and some thought has to influence attitude, behaviour and practice.

Thus, if we focus on the individual who has basic responsibility towards self, others and nature, Gandhi's vision of political economy remains no longer a utopia. In the section of character building, it has been discussed that every individual should be practising eleven vows that he suggested for self-improvement, actualisation and realisation. Besides truth and non-violence, non-stealing and non-possession or voluntary poverty, are of special importance in the context of the present ecological crisis. Non-stealing is not restricted to theft alone, it also implies that a person does not take more than what she needs and does keep acquiring material wealth for the sake of acquiring. People who are able to create wealth will of course do so in the free economic system, but they would become trustees of the wealth. They would take only what is essential for their comfortable survival and rest of the wealth will be spent for the society. Moral consideration and ethical behavior would restrict wants. The case for largely rural society will become strong and low energy economies will come into existence. Put it simply, in Gandhi's framework, the physical world of human species will have to shrink. Such efforts will lead to reconstructing a non-violent and harmonious society.

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Founded by late Professor I.P. Desai in 1969 as the Centre for Regional Development Studies, CSS receives financial support from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR, Government of India) and the Department of Higher and Technical Education, Government of Gujarat. A multi-disciplinary institute, CSS formulates ideas, undertakes empirical studies, theorizes and disseminates knowledge through training and publications in vernacular and English languages.

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Prof. Sudarshan Iyengar, did his Ph.D. (Economics) from M.S. University, Baroda, and is a social volunteer by disposition. He actively participated in Jay Prakash Narayan led '*Sampoorna Kranti*' movement as a student. He worked for rehabilitation of tribal people displaced in the Narmada Dam Project (1989-95) with ARCH Vahini. He also had worked in 2001 in relief and rehabilitation of earthquake affected people in Kachchh, Gujarat. He Served as Director of research institutes; Gujarat Institute of Development Research, Ahmedabad (1999-2004) and Centre for Social Studies, Surat (2004-05). He was Vice Chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad, during 2005-2014, a deemed university founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. He was invited to as Distinguished Chair Professor, Gandhian Philosophy at Department of Humanity and Social Sciences, IIT, Mumbai during 2016 and 2018. His major foci of research have been: Commons and Natural Resource Development and Management, People and Civil Society Institutions and Gandhian Thoughts and Practice. He also had been engaged in various state and central government committees. Most recently he was Vice Chairman of the High Level Dandi Memorial Committee and member of Gandhi Heritage Sites Mission, Ministry of Culture, Government of India. He has contributed more than 70 research articles and 8 books. *In the Footsteps of Mahatma: Gandhi and Sanitation* (published by Publication Division, GoI, 2016) is his recent publication. Prof.Sudarshan Iyengar currently lives in Dharampur, Valsad in Gujarat and works with 'Action Research in Community Health and Development' (ARCH).