

Chapter 1

The Gandhian Perspective on Development

Adi H. Doctor

Mahatma Gandhi—the father of the Indian nation—had one of the deepest insights into the Indian reality. He had neither time and patience nor inclination to formulate any theory. He wrote voluminously, but his writings do not constitute theory; at best, they provide raw materials for subsequent theorizing. Gandhi often made extreme statements and then proceeded to qualify them in many ways. Again, Gandhi did not think out his concepts. Rather, he arrived at several concepts intuitively. This has made the task of both interpreting as well as determining what Gandhi stood for somewhat difficult. Nevertheless, this paper seeks to elaborate, as far as this is possible, what may be called the Gandhian perspective on development.

What, in the first place, does the concept of development stand for or imply? Generally speaking, when we talk of development, we have in mind the concept of change—a change that is broadly predicted or planned and administered. Gandhi rarely used the term “development” and, yet, development in the sense of change in a definite direction is implicit in all Gandhi’s writ-

ings. Gandhi found modern man dehumanized and suffering from a pervasive feeling of loneliness and helplessness in a hostile world and attributed this to the prevailing social conditions. Gandhi saw his countrymen crippled by colonialism, an expanding industrialism and a corrupting caste war. We can speak of a Gandhian perspective on development since Gandhi certainly wanted change in the existing social, political and economic structures with a view to help create a new integrated human being who would overcome his helplessness and loneliness.

In the Gandhian perspective of development, personal growth is congenial with communal life while mutual co-operation is an extension of self-respect. As an activist, Gandhi devoted more attention to identifying the political and economic structures which thwarted the development of the autonomous self and sought to change them rather than adjust to them. In this sense, Gandhi's model of development involves unlearning much of what India had learnt during the past half century. The endeavour in this paper is to outline the specific directions in which Gandhi sought and attempted to bring about political and economic change and indicate the relevance and utility of the various Gandhian insights to India's future political and economic development.

The Concept of Political Development

The terms "models" and "political development" are of recent currency in political science. There is abundant literature on the theme of what constitutes political development.¹ In 1966, Lucian Pye spoke of three characteristics of political development, viz., *equality* or the thrust towards increased participation and mobilization; *capacity* or the thrust towards increased effectiveness and efficiency in execution of public policy; and *differentiation* or the thrust towards diffusion and specialization of structures. Pye acknowledged that the three developments may pull in contrary directions. In the 1970s, Leonard Binder, taking

into account the particular scenario of developing countries, emphasized the following implications of political development: change of identity from religious and parochial to ethnic and societal; change of legitimacy from transcendental to immanent sources; change in participation from elite to mass and from family to group; change of distribution from status and privilege to achievement; and, finally, change in degree of legal and administrative penetration to remote villages. Another contemporary writer Riggs has sought to integrate the concept of political development with the forces of environment. Development, says Riggs, involves "a growing understanding of both constraint and resources of the environment". Developing societies, according to Riggs, need to bring about changes in environment that reduce the element of constraint and increase the elements of resources, thereby expanding their decision-making capacity.

The Gandhian Perspective

Gandhi, as was said earlier, was no sophisticated political theorizer. Yet, his shrewd insight into the Indian reality enabled him evolve a number of concepts and ideas quite akin to the many points made about political development by Pye, Binder, and Riggs. Thus, what Pye elaborates as *equality* and *capacity*, Gandhi would consider as corner-stones of "Ramrajya" (the ideal state). However, in Gandhi's perspective, equality and the self-regulatory capacity are best developed in small, near self-sufficient, village communities. Similarly, Gandhi would heartily agree with Binder that development involves a change of identity from the narrowly religious (communal) to the societal and change of participation from elite to mass. As to the emphasis by Riggs on integrating development with environment, Gandhi was a most enthusiastic crusader for understanding the constraints and resources of nature. Gandhi insisted that man must live in harmony with nature and not let his greed exploit the non-renewable resources of nature to the point at which

they stood exhausted, impoverishing mankind as a whole. In short, in Gandhi's scattered and voluminous writings, one can find several of the components of change that Pye, Binder, and Riggs mention. However, it must be mentioned that the Gandhian perspective on development is not merely an alternative path of reaching the same goal which certain western scholars have postulated. Rather, it is a path leading to an alternative goal of human life and experience.

Gandhi found the present political structure to be characterized by persistent tendencies towards concentration and centralization. He deplored the pervasiveness of politics without morality and condemned politics which sought power without a commitment or sense of dedicated service. To Gandhi, democracy was a matter of morality and not a mere state-structure. The mere imitation of the Westminster model, Gandhi held, would not usher in democracy. The western models of democracy based on multi-party system and periodic elections had only concentrated power in the hands of a few and led to consequent dehumanization and alienation of man. Gandhi, therefore, sought to provide an alternative model which would make for a qualitative change in the form and content of democracy.

Let us briefly state the Gandhian critique of parliamentary democracy and then outline the new directions along which Gandhi sought to change the polity.

Gandhi's case against the state was that it was incapable of doing service to morality. The state can make men work under compulsion, pressure or necessity, but any action done under pressure, necessity or compulsion is not moral. A moral action is never done mechanically at the behest of the state; it is done consciously, voluntarily and as a matter of duty. Gandhi conceded that the state may have done some good by curbing exploitation but simultaneously contended that it had done greater harm by cutting at the root of all real progress, namely, is individuality. Again, in matters of conscience, the state (understood as government based on majority rule as in the Westminster

model) had no place, since mere numbers could never determine what is right.² In matters of conscience, the law of the majority has to be replaced by the enlightened and willing submission to social restraints.³

In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi condemned parliament as “a sterile woman” since it could conceive of no legislation on its own; also because “legislation without prior conversion of hearts is a dead letter”. A parliament may confer rights by law, but in practice the mere conferring of rights does not ensure the enjoyment of liberty. Liberty is the consequence of people performing their duties. One cannot enjoy the liberty of practising one’s religion unless the others perform the duty of respecting all religions. Gandhi also used the unparliamentary term “prostitute” to describe parliament since it comprised a pliant majority and every new prime minister could get it to do what he wanted. In short, Gandhi dismissed parliament as, at best, “a mere talking shop” and “a costly show”.⁴

Gandhi did not have a good word to say for the essential ingredients of parliamentary democracy, viz., parties and elections. Parties, in Gandhi’s view, put narrow considerations above the national; they never paid attention to the means in achieving their sole end of gaining political power.⁵ A political party would lie, propagate falsehood and even deny others the opportunity to render service to the community if it meant that the others would get the credit for rendering service. Vinoba gives the example of how a political party sought the distribution of relief through its official agency lest the other parties earn a name.⁶ For Gandhi, parties were opportunists; they were incapable of bringing about change in the hearts of others. In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi claimed that parties bred mutual distrust, led to the imputation of motives and engendered the spirit of littleness. Likewise, Gandhi condemned elections since they “imply propaganda”, encourage “telling of lies”, and provide opportunities to “self-seekers and job-hunters”.

Gandhi sought political development along lines which

would do away with the “modern leviathan”. He was for the progressive “withering away of the state”. He said: “The state evil is not the cause of but effect of social evil”.⁷ Gandhi wanted men to become self-reliant and life to be self-regulated for “if national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary... in the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power for there is no state”.⁸ The coercive apparatus of the state is necessary so long as men are violent in their behaviour. As men become progressively non-violent, the need of the state would become progressively less.⁹

Gandhi was aware that development along the lines of self-reliance or self-regulation (“going on with our programmes without the leaders”¹⁰) and non-violence was bound to be a slow process. Hence, he spoke of the “immediately attainable goal” being “the predominantly non-violent state”, a state akin to Thoreau’s which would govern least. As an activist, Gandhi never sought to go beyond “one step at a time”. The first step towards *swaraj* (which Gandhi understood in the *Brihadarnyaka Upanishad* sense as implying the autonomy of the moral self, or the moral rule of each individual over himself) would have to be decentralized power and simple living. As non-violence, decentralization and simplicity in life-style progressed, the state would begin to wither away.

Gandhi’s faith in the possibility of political development along these lines was based on his assumptions regarding human nature. He opined that it is more natural for man to be good than evil; that man’s moral evolution was in some sense predestined and that the primary virtues of mankind are capable of cultivation by the meanest of human species.¹¹ Gandhi firmly believed that ultimately a society would emerge in which there would be no need for police and armies, no need for law courts (“crime must be treated as a disease”) and criminal justice (“justice that gives love is the best”).

In February 1939, in *Harijan Sevak*, Gandhi wrote: “I have purposefully refrained from dealing with the nature of govern-

ment in a society based on non-violence...When society is deliberately constructed in accordance with the law of non-violence, its structure will be different in material particulars from what it is today." As a first step in the direction of attaining the ideal goal, Gandhi advocated restructuring the present polity along the lines proposed by the federal anarchists, viz., a political structure in which the villages (communes) enjoy all real powers and these federate voluntarily to achieve certain common goals. Gandhi was aware that certain problems would be common to neighbouring villages federating to form a taluka panchayat to attend to such problems. Gandhi had no objection to such a development for it would be voluntary and only such power would be given to the taluka panchayat as the villages deemed fit. The taluka panchayats, in turn, could federate to form a district panchayat; the district panchayats, in turn, could federate to form the provincial panchayat; and finally, the Provincial Panchayats could federate to form the national panchayat. These various panchayats would not be related to each other as in a hierarchy, since they would be voluntarily formed, the "higher" panchayats enjoying powers as are bestowed on them by the "lower" panchayats. The control exercised by the higher panchayats over the lower would be purely moral and not coercive; its function advisory and co-operative and not authoritarian and dictatorial. J.P. Narayan—a leading Gandhian and Sarvodaya philosopher—described such a development as "organic" since the higher panchayat "organically" emerged from the lower. To use Gandhi's phrase, the various panchayats would constitute "oceanic circles" whose "centre would be the individual ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages...the outermost circle will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it."¹²

Gandhian political development then would imply the gradual replacement of the present "top-heavy" and centralized state by a federal anarchist structure and growth of maximum num-

ber of local voluntary associations and agencies (strong consumers and producers co-operatives) to meet the various needs of citizens. It would also imply converting or bringing about change in various coercive instruments of the state; for instance, it would imply replacing prison houses by reformatories; it would imply the state and its police force making it their primary duty not merely to catch culprits but rather to eliminate those conditions which, in the first place, give birth to crime; it would imply replacing the present hierarchical judicial set-up by people's courts which would help people settle disputes among themselves preferably at the local level. Gandhi was convinced that the present legal system based on law courts and lawyers only helped the lawyers to make money; it helped the lawyers develop a vested interest in perpetuating strife and ill-feeling; it roused the baser self by tempting witnesses to sell their souls for money or for friendship's sake; and worst of all, it supported the authority of government.¹³ In 1947, Gandhi wrote: "When panchayati raj is established, public opinion will do what violence (read law courts) can never do."¹⁴

Developing a National Secular Polity

One of the characteristics of political development is the change in identity from the religious and parochial or casteist to secular and societal. Gandhi was profoundly interested in (a) Hindu-Muslim unity—he was never tired of emphasizing our "Hindustani" identity; (b) breaking down casteism; and (c) developing Hindustani as the country's *lingua franca*. The cumulative effect of these three movements was certainly in the direction of change and towards a new national secular identity.

Secularism has two accepted meanings. One is the western concept of secularism, implying separation of state from religion. The other is the Indian tradition of the state, equally respecting all religions. Humayun Kabir in his classic work, *Indian Heritage*, describes Akbar's policy of tolerating all religions as "perhaps the first conscious attempt to formulate the

conception of a secular polity". The former Chief Justice P.B. Gajendragadkar, in his well-known work entitled *Secularism and the Indian Constitution*, traces this secular tradition to the period of the ancient Hindu kings. Although the word "secular" was not initially used in the Indian Constitution, it has found mention in the "Preamble" of the Constitution after the forty-second amendment.

For Gandhi, Hindu-Muslim unity was one of the central planks of his "constructive programme". He devoted his entire life to this cause and finally even paid the supreme price of martyrdom for the same. In this respect, it may unhesitatingly be said that Gandhi stood and died for secularism understood as equal respect for all religions. As early as 1920, Gandhi warned his countrymen: "Divided we must remain slaves. This unity cannot be a mere policy to be discarded when it does not suit us. We can discard it only when we are tired of *swaraj*. Hindu-Muslim unity must be our creed to last for all time and under all circumstances".

Gandhi's approach to religion was in a sense strikingly modern.¹⁵ Gandhi wanted religion to serve a moral purpose and made a clear distinction between what he called "true religion" and "the irrelevant rituals", superstitions and dogmas that often go in the name of religion. Gandhi insisted that his concern for cow, for instance, was not religion but an expression of non-violence with regard to sub-human life. In his booklet, *Constructive Programme*, he speaks of cow protection and improvement of cattle as a national problem and not as an issue in religion, though it is also true that at times he appealed to the Muslims to give up cow-slaughter out of respect for the Hindu religious sentiment.

Gandhi's lifelong endeavour did bear fruit. When the Indian Constitution was framed, the members of Constituent Assembly were unanimous in the view that the Indian State should not support any one religion, but should show equal respect to all religions. The Indian Constitution makes the Indian State ac-

cord equal legal recognition to all religions. It also makes the Indian State responsible for social reform and for purging Hinduism of such age-old evils and superstitions as untouchability, etc.

But working for religious unity was not enough. It was also necessary to develop a new society based on the abolition of caste barriers and untouchability. Gandhi proclaimed that the *Shastras* never sanctioned untouchability and gave forth the challenge that if anyone could prove to him that they did, he would renounce Hinduism itself. He spent his whole life denouncing untouchability and made it a point to practise what he preached. Thus, he adopted a Harijan girl, voluntarily chose to live in a Harijan *basti*, and conducted *satyagrahas* for temple-entry by Harijans. Gandhi insisted on separating, what he termed as "the inessentials of the caste system" from "its fundamentals". He claimed the essentials of the caste system to be the four-fold division of labour on the lines of the natural division of men according to their *gunas* or innate qualities and hereditary skills, while the inessentials of the *varna* system were the subsequent development of false notions of superiority and inferiority attached to the different *varnas*, the ban on interdining, on intermarriage, and the multiplicity of castes.¹⁷ In Gandhi's perception, development should be along the lines of retaining the essentials while working to eliminate and discard the inessentials of the *varna* system.

Economic Perspectives

The Gandhian perspective on development not only visualized political change, it necessarily had to include economic change too. This is because the three principles which were mentioned, viz., decentralization, simplicity and non-violence, governed life as a whole and should therefore characterize not only the development of the new polity but also the new economic order. Economic development, in the Gandhian perspective, if it is to be based on the principles of decentralization, simplicity

and non-violence, must be in the direction of: (a) development of an agro-industrial, self-sufficient village economy; (b) development of an economy based on limited wants; and (c) development of a trusteeship economy.

Gandhi was opposed to a centralized economy and to machines resulting in mass production on various grounds. Gandhi had a conception of work very different from those who condemn it as something basically unpleasant, something to be avoided and minimized with the help of machinery and/or technology. To Gandhi, work was an integral part of the concept of good life. It was one of the avenues for establishing harmony with nature and of solidarity with fellow humans. Just as a devotee gets satisfaction by performing *yajna* himself and not by ordering a robot to do it, in the same way (Gandhi would argue) it is only when man himself performs labour that he has the feeling of serving society. Gandhi's concept of "bread labour" (that is, labouring yourself to earn your bread) sought to give man control over production from inception to conclusion.¹⁸ It also sought to give him control over some of his basic needs. It was in psychological terms "an identity giving activity". Gandhi, as such, was not opposed to the machine. Like Hannah Arendt, Gandhi made a distinction between machinery and tools. The machine, says Arendt, determines the worker's response, but when he uses a tool, he is the originator of the activity.¹⁹

Gandhi rejects large-scale production and industrialization regardless of whether the economic system is capitalist or socialist. Gandhi does not consider work a drudgery only under capitalism. The machine reduces man's sense of identification with work. One rarely comprehends the whole work in performing a minutely subdivided section of it. Minute subdivisions also reduce creative satisfaction in the work. The price is inherent in the adoption of high technology. The adoption of large-scale production technologies inevitably creates "a soulless authority" and makes labour soul-killing.

This does not mean that in the Gandhian perspective on development, machines have no place at all. Gandhi was ready to accept machines which did not adversely affect the individual psyche. Economic activity and development must be related to the psychological integration of individuals. Gandhi, time and again, reiterated that he accepted machines conditionally, that is to say, machines must not replace labour, they must not lead to the city exploiting the countryside.²⁰

Now, the tendency of machinery to displace labour cannot be denied. Marx too spoke of this tendency and attributed it to the raising of the "organic composition of capital", but felt that under socialism, since capital would be socialized, it would not be allowed to impoverish the workers. Gandhi was personally a witness to the industrialization under British rule which disintegrated cottage industries and threw labour out of employment faster than the factories could absorb. Gandhi made it clear that he had no partiality to the return to primitive methods of work, grinding and husking, for the sake of them. "I suggest the return", he said, "because there is no other way of giving employment to the millions of villagers who are living in idleness."²¹

It may be mentioned here that today even in the West we are beginning to see the first signs of the realization of the adverse effects of indiscriminate labour-saving industrialization. The latest report of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) thus reveals that there is little hope in sight for the millions of young unemployed persons in Europe, despite signs of economic recovery. OECD first identified the problems in 1977 and rightly fears that as the unemployed move into their twenties, the sociological spin off of an uncontrolled adult unemployment problem could be crippling and would take its toll in the form of frustration, violence, and crime.

Hence, as Gunnar Myrdal²² points out, underdeveloped countries must evolve methods of production suited to their own resource endowments. Indiscriminate use of western tech-

nology will produce more unemployment than is "either safe or good for them, especially since population growth rate here is faster than in the West".

The Gandhian perspective is relevant today to the extent that it wisely emphasizes providing the maximum number of people with productive work. Just as people need bread, they need work; and even if it were possible to provide them with bread without work, it would be unwise to do so because nothing can be more corroding than enforced idleness.

The second condition Gandhi lays down for accepting machines is that they must not lead to the city exploiting the countryside. It is interesting to note here that in England, towns and country had developed in a complementary fashion. Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nation* has a full chapter entitled "How the Commerce of the Towns Contributed to the Improvement of the Country", wherein he brings out this fact of mutual complementary development of English towns and countryside. However, when the British came to India and established commercial towns and trading centres, the relationship that developed between the new centres and countryside turned out to be one of town exploiting the rural hinterland. The new commercial and trading centres began to attract rural talent. The more enterprising among the villagers left for the new towns. The villages were denuded of the more progressive elements, and so began to decay. With the traditional balance between agriculture and rural industry upset, villages began to lose their social cohesion and their economic life got disorganized. As Schumacher noted, the rise of Indian cities began to afflict the countryside with a peculiar sickness.²³

As industrialization progressed (the growth of the textile industry in Western India, for instance), Gandhi saw how power and wealth was getting concentrated and centralized in the cities. "Villages", he lamented, "have become appendanges of cities. They exist as if they were to be exploited by the latter".²⁴ Gandhi sought to end this exploitation of the countryside by the

town by not allowing cities to produce anything which “can be equally well produced by the villages”. He thus emphasized *charkha* as a basic village industry.

There is much of value in the Gandhian insight regarding machines. If we interpret the *charkha* to mean (as J.P. Narayan does) any industry supplementary to agriculture, that is, any industry that reduces the villagers’ dependence on agriculture and supplements agriculture, the development of such agro-industries would stop the flight to the urban centres and raise the economic standard of villagers. Since one of the advantages cities have in producing a large variety of goods is better transport, credit facilities, etc., it is imperative for us to realize that unless villages get these facilities (including primary education and vocational training centres), it will not be easy to realize the dream of building a modern agro-industrial village economy.

Thus, on both counts—unemployment and colonization of the countryside by cities—Gandhi was opposed to big industries and centralized mass production. He was, of course, aware that a few big centralized units of production were inevitable and insisted that such “heavy industries will necessarily be centralized and nationalized”. But, significantly, he went to add: “They will occupy the least part of the vast national activity in the village.”²⁵

According to the Gandhian perspective, economic development must not only be in the direction of an agro-industrial village economy, it must also be based on the doctrine of limited wants. An economy based on unlimited wants, Gandhi claimed, was bound to prove a disaster for mankind. It would not only lead to indiscriminate exploitation of non-renewable resources like iron and steel, but also engender endless strife and competition. Gandhi wrote: “Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment and increases capacity for service.”²⁶

The mind, Gandhi warned, “is a restless bird; the more it

gets, the more it wants... The more we indulge in our passions, the more unbridled they become".²⁷ In a letter sent to Pandit Nehru, Gandhi said: "We can realize truth and non-violence only in the simplicity of village life. The essence of what I have said is that man should rest content with what are his real needs and become self-sufficient."²⁸

An economy based on mass production to cater to unlimited and ever rising wants can only produce a "baffling vastness" in which the individual will get lost. On the other hand, an economy based on limited wants will promote the "all round and balanced development of personality" and "save us from the evils of corruption and perdition".²⁹ The Sarvodaya Plan Committee in 1958 drew up a "Sarvodaya Plan" which stipulated that the basic annual family requirements in food, clothing, housing, health, education, and recreation will need a money income of about Rs. 3,000 per annum, at the price level existing in 1955.³⁰

To indulge in or crave for wants beyond these necessities was to seek material progress at the expense of spiritual or moral progress; it was to destroy the truly human values like honesty, high thinking, and encourage competition, exploitation, state control and centralism. Gandhi also felt that with economics built on the principle of limited wants and self-sufficiency, imperialism would be eliminated since no country would have a surplus to dump on others. "England", Gandhi wrote, "is the cloth shop of the world; it therefore needs to hold the world in bondage to secure its markets."³¹

Although it would be difficult to accept the Gandhian view regarding limited wants in *toto*, there is an increasing realization among intellectuals today that the growing "atmosphere of permissiveness" in the country, coupled with adoption of western standards of consumption, especially by the upper strata of society, would, as Dr. Manmohan Singh pointed out to a gathering of financial writers in July 1987, "lead to social tensions". Dr. Singh suggested that the government should revert to the

old Gandhian values, claiming that unless conspicuous consumption was checked, the rate of savings would not go up, and education and other social objectives would suffer.³²

The third direction in which Gandhi desired economic development to take place was towards the trusteeship economy. Ownership, to the extent it made for exploitation, was not consistent with the doctrine of non-violence. Expropriation of private property or its nationalization, in Gandhi's perception, was a violent remedy and would only serve to perpetuate further violence. The vested interests would lie low waiting for an opportunity to strike again. Besides, Gandhi had deep misgivings about state ownership. Nationalization, as J.P. Narayan observed, would only add economic power to the political power already possessed by the state. In any case, the Gandhian argument runs, property has always to be managed by someone, even after expropriating it. Then why not let the present property owners manage it as trustees on behalf of society?

Landowners (*Zamindars*) and industrialists, Gandhi asserted, should retain for their personal use only so much of their property as was necessary for "an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others", and utilize the rest for the welfare of the community.³³ Elaborating the trusteeship *mantra*, Gandhi explained: "Earn your crores by all means; but understand that your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for legitimate needs and use the remainder for society."³⁴ In this sense, trusteeship was nothing else but an extension of the idea of non-possession or limited wants.

Adapting the Gandhian insight regarding trusteeship to modern societies, M.R. Masani argues that it is "an attempt to secure the best use of property for the people by competent hands... A trustee can use his talent not for self only but for the social structure of which he is but a part and on whose sufferance he lives".³⁵ The doctrine of trusteeship can today be made a powerful instrument for humanizing capitalism.

J.P. Narayan argued vehemently against nationalization since it would mean adding more power to the existing leviathan. In his utterances and interviews during the seventies, he sought to de-emphasize social ownership and instead emphasized the concept of a responsible company (as advocated by George Goyder) which would work under “the joint trusteeship of workers, consumers of products, and managers”. Alternatively, he does not mind neutralizing the power of capital by setting up an “independent association for administration of capital” as suggested by Folkert Walkins.³⁶

I would like to end this paper with a brief reference to the Gandhian perspective on education since I think that it is closely related to the attainment of his political and economic goals. Gandhi firmly believed that the present educational system is unequal to the task of societal change and development. Gandhi saw education as the most powerful instrument for both moral and material development. It not only implied imparting knowledge of fundamental truths (truth and non-violence) and developing physical and moral courage, but also participating in the attainment of social objectives and of acquiring some useful vocational skill.³⁷ To Gandhi, mere academic advancement and scholarship were of the least importance. He preferred to emphasize what he called the “Three Hs”—Head, Heart and Hand—along with the “Three Rs”—Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.

Gandhi lamented that the present educational system made students a burden on society. “Boys are lost to the parents and to the occupation to which they are born. They pick up evil habits, affect urban ways.”³⁸ For Gandhi, meaningful education meant training students in manual work, teaching them the value of dignity of labour and to earn a livelihood by learning some relevant vocational skill like weaving, spinning, carpentry, gardening, etc.³⁹ Such “craft education”, asserted Gandhi, stimulates creativity and integrates the student with his social environment.

Such a “basic education” which Gandhi also called *nai talim* or new education would ideally suit India’s rural setting and requirements since it would involve no huge expensive buildings or equipment. Further, it could be self-supporting since the products of crafts learnt can be sold by the schools. With a rare but accurate insight, Gandhi observed: “You have to start with the conviction that looking to the needs of the villages of India, our rural education ought to be made self-supporting, if it is to be made compulsory.”⁴⁰

Today, if we have to attain the goal of universal primary education in rural areas, then, given our scarce resources, basic education would be the only way available to us. Gandhi’s basic education is ideally suited to attain the goals of village economic self-sufficiency. In addition, it emphasizes values badly needed to be cultivated in our youth, viz., concern for truth and non-violence, work ethics and dignity of labour. With a modified orientation, basic education is today our best bet for reviving our stagnant rural economy and for removing age-old social evils as casteism, communalism, dowry system, and the like.

Conclusion

To sum up, the Gandhian perspective on development implies in the political arena working towards a federal anarchist model in which the village would be the basic unit; and, working for establishing a new secular (equal respect for all religions) and Indian (with Hindustani as *lingua franca*) identity. In the economic sphere, it implies developing an economy based on agro-industrial, self-sufficient villages; building an economy based on limited wants and developing a trusteeship economy. To help realize development along these lines, Gandhi emphasized the need for a “new education”.

Gandhi may not have grasped the whole truth or the complete Indian reality, but then who can? But, certainly, what Gandhi has to say should be seriously taken into account and integrated with our own ideas of how we intend to develop in

the future, if we want to cry halt to the present elitist and perhaps un-Indian path of development we have adopted.

Notes

1. Lucian Pye, *Aspects of Political Development*, Amerind and Co., New Delhi, 1972; Leonard Binder, *Crisis and Sequences in Political Development*, Princeton University Press, 1971, p.66; and F.W. Riggs, *The Ecology of Public Administration*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1967.
2. *Young India*, 18.3.1921 and 15.12.1921.
3. *Harijan*, 1.1.1942.
4. *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, Navjivan, Ahmedabad, 1958.
5. In *Hind Swaraj* (pp.32-33), Gandhi argues that the prime minister, as leader of the party, is less bothered with seeing that parliament enacts the right legislation than with seeing that it enacts such legislation as benefits his party and increases its power.
6. Vide Rambhai S. (Suresh Ram), *Vinoba and His Mission*, Akhil Bhartiya Sarva Sewa Sangh, Kashi, March 1958, p. 291.
7. *Young India*, 23.2.1921.
8. *Young India*, 2.7.1932.
9. *Harijan*, 21.7.1940.
10. *Young India*, 27.10.1920.
11. *Harijan*, 16.5.1936.
12. *Harijan*, 28.7.1946; also Gandhi, *Rebuilding our Villages*, Navjivan, Ahmedabad, April 1956, pp. 58-59; Vinoba Bhave, "Lokniti", Akhil Bhartiya Sarva Sewa Sangh, May 1958, and "Swaraj-Shastra", Akhil Bhartiya Sarva Sewa Sangh, February 1959; J.P. Narayan, *A Plea for the Reconstruction of the Indian Polity*, Akhil Bhartiya Sarva Sewa Sangh, November, 1959,
13. *Young India*, 6.10.1920; also Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*, *op. cit.*, and *Law and Lawyers* compiled by S.B. Kher, Navjivan, Ahmedabad, 1950.
14. *Harijan*, 1.7.1947.
15. Vide Gandhi, *Ethical Religion*, Madras, 1945; also *Hindu Dharma*, Navjivan, Ahmedabad, 1950.

16. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme*, Navjivan, Ahmedabad, 1948.
17. Gandhi, *Varnashram Dharma*, Navjivan, Ahmedabad, 1962.
18. Bread labour, as a concept, also discouraged the holding of private property which enabled the holder to earn income for which he had not worked, such as rent, interest, etc.
19. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Conditions*, University of Chicago Press, 1958, pp. 122-129.
20. As Amlan Datta points out, Gandhi's views here correspond with the theories of imperialism which try to explain how the imperial nation of the metropolis exploits the colonies (vide *The Gandhian Way*, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, 1986).
21. *Harijan*, 30.11.1934.
22. Vide *Asian Drama*, The Twentieth Century Fund, New York, 1968, Volume 2, Ch. 25.
23. Schumacher, *The Roots of Economic Growth*, Gandhian Institute of Studies, Varanasi, 1962.
24. *Harijan*, 1.10.1937.
25. Vide B.N. Ganguli, *Gandhi's Social Philosophy*, Vikas, Delhi, 1973, p.156.
26. Gandhi, *From Yerawda Mandir*, pp. 12-13.
27. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, *op.cit.*, p. 61.
28. Cited in Dhebar, *Lectures on Gandhian Philosophy*, Annamalai University, pp. 40.41.
29. J.P. Narayan, *A Plea for the Reconstruction of the Indian Polity*, *op.cit.*, Ch.1, pp.5-6.
30. Sarvodaya Plan Committee, *Report on Planning for Sarvodaya*, 1958, p.37.
31. Gandhi, *Village Industries*, Navjivan, Ahmedabad, 1960, p.13.
32. Vide 'A Times of India News Report', *The Times of India*, Bombay, 1.8.1987, p. 15.
33. Gandhi, *Theory of Trusteeship*, Navjivan, Ahmedabad, 1960, p.5.
34. *Harijan*, 1.2.1942, p.2.
35. M.R. Masani, *Socialism Reconsidered*, p. 64.
36. For an example of the trusteeship company, viz., the Scott-Badar Commonwealth, see Dr. Schumacher's essay in *Sarvodaya* (monthly), Tanjore, September 1972, pp. 105-113. Also see Folkert Wilkens, *New Forms of Ownership in Industry*, Sarwa Seva Sangh, Varanasi, 1969.
37. Gandhi, *Basic Education*, Navjivan, Ahmedabad, 1951.

38. Cited in V.T. Patil (ed.), *Studies on Gandhi*, Sterling, New Delhi, 1983, p.182.
39. Bread labour was a phrase Gandhi borrowed from Tolstoy to mean that no man is entitled to eat bread if he does not perform some useful work for society.
40. *Harijan*, 18.9.1937.