

The Gandhian Ethic as A Modern-day Business Paradigm

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Paradigmatic shifts in the socio-economic scene in Asia is occurring, following the political upheavals in the hitherto Eastern bloc. These shifts call for reassessment of the developmental strategies of all future aspirant states aspiring for a prominent niche in the rapidly emerging re-structured world scenario. The Indian situation in particular desires rapid take off. In this pre-flight stage, the country is confronted with a plethora of models ranging from the East Asian rapid economic recovery modes—signified by Japan and South Korea, to the democratic-identity-consciousness sweeping Latin America. The Indian situation can never be sated by the application of any one model, for, while the prime Indian requirement is indeed rapid economic recovery, this process should be essentially correlated with the very prominent underlying philosophical-basis of the Indian society.

Therefore, our problematic may be stated in these terms—(1) what is required today for the Indian situation is a reframing of our business ethics—which is of prime significance for our global survival, at the same time, (2) it must not be averse to the prevailing socio-philosophical ethos.

Our purpose would be to indicate the model which has the inherent dualities of combining both these requirements of the Indian situation. Gandhian theory of action has largely been unacceptable, both to rightists and leftist on account of the misreading of innate Hindu religiosity into it and thus its contradictions with the political goal of a secular India. Our supposition is, Gandhian theology of action combine within it the requisite dynamics for progressive economics and the theoretical content explaining the Indian socio-philosophico ethos, over time.

The attempt to juxtapose the methods of two disciplines the economic and the philosophical arises from an awareness of the intellectual need to formulate right strategies for survival. In the rapidly changing international scene, it is absolutely necessary on the one hand to formulate one's own methods of action prudently and secondly, the logistics ought to be strategically placed, so that

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in the reformulation of positions, the country need not fall behind.

The concern with right strategies of growth seems to be not a singular, but a world-wide phenomenon, particularly besieging the developed world. Cautiousness about future possibilities and national approaches seems to be in-built into the post-Soviet world order. It is an infiltration of the same strategical consciousness which activates the developing world as well.

Interpretations centering around Gandhi today are legion. Similarly, myriad dimensions have been read into his philosophical thought. One more endeavour is being attempted with the knowledge of the still immense possibilities immanent within Gandhism. Moreover, given the needs of our strategy it is the continuing popularity of Gandhism and its comprehensive encapsulation which despite sectional reservations against it, makes it the most appropriate choice of today.

In the first section, we recount the idioms popular among business groups today, it tries to locate the ethics behind economic endeavours.

The second section looks at the transience/intransience of economic ethics from the western philosophical concept of the self and the understanding of actions.

The third section provides a narrative of the Indian philosophical reading of the self/concept of man, and this is followed by the fourth section, where a reading of the Gandhian understanding of actions is presented.

I

Reputed economic journals report the resurgence of interest in the ethics of corporate managers. This is evidenced by discussions in the media as to the role of lax business ethics and corporate greed in promoting the current economic downturn, by moves to expand the emphasis on ethics in business-school curricula and on-the-job training programmes.¹ It has moreover, long been recognized by economists, historians, and sociologists that business ethics both have a significant impact on economic activity and exhibit significant intertemporal variation. Thomas Cochran, listing the factors that impeded economic development in the Western United States in the second half of the 19th century, said:

The low business ethics of many American entrepreneurs were a hindrance both to business efficiency and to the raising of capital. Confidence men selling shares or lots were abundant. Bankruptcy with concealed assets was a common recourse for avoiding embarrassing obligations. Capital was frequently

squandered in ways that make it hard to draw the line between over-optimism and outright dishonesty. In the building of the western railroads, for example, construction was often managed and partly financed by local entrepreneurs who were, at the least, somewhat careless in handling easterner's money.²

Even Eugene V. Rostow,³ points to the belief still current among analysts that the Great Depression was a direct result of the lack of ethics exhibited by the business leadership of the 1920s. Similarly, worldwide it is acknowledged that the current dismal fiscal panorama is a product of 'the excesses of the 1980s'.

Thomas H. Noe and Michael J. Rebelló,⁴ draw up a model, examining the role of internalized social norms in regulating managerial effort and investment-decisions. In the context of their model, aggregate welfare is maximized when all projects are undertaken by managers and maximum effort is exhorted by them to realize financial ends. In this, each manager inevitably makes unobservable effort decisions which influences the projects' return distribution. Once projects are realized, the returns are divided between manager and outside investors. Ethical managers derive utility from undertaking actions that maximize aggregate welfare (they exert high effort for maximising product and fiscal returns), unethical managers, however, are unencumbered by such ethical considerations. The model does not assume that ethical standards remain static over time, as the level of economic activity induces change in the ethical level. A manager's ethical disposition is not an exogenous constant. Although they say that his ethical disposition is a characteristic of his preferences and not a matter of choice, it is according to them affected by the environment. The authors cite the cases of Coleman,⁵ Arrow⁶ and George A. Akerlof⁷ each of whom identify various factors in the formation of ethical conduct. For instance, Coleman discusses about the role of parents in the transmission of norms. Arrow, indicates the role of educational institutions, social institutions each of which facilitate cross-cultural norm transmission. Akerlof, on the other hand, mainly highlights the role of educational institutions in instilling norms of behaviour.

The model assumes,⁸ that past ethics indirectly affect current ethics and, thereby, current losses from ethical behaviour. The authors indicate the references determine aggregate economic activity in the short run, but economic activity induces change in preferences in the long run.⁹

An unstable and stable ethical trajectory is presented by their model. In periods when business ethics is low, opportunity losses from ethical behaviour is also low, and this in turn induces a rise in the level of ethics. The sensitivity of losses from ethical behaviour

to the proportion of ethical managers and the sensitivity of ethical development of managers to the losses incurred by ethical managers in the past should be large.

In contrast, when the losses from ethical behaviour are fairly insensitive to the proportion of ethical managers or the ethical transition probabilities are fairly insensitive to the level of losses, stable ethical trajectories emerge. In this case, as the losses from ethical behaviour exert only a weak influence on the ethical development of managers, a rise or fall in ethics never raises or lower the cost of ethical behaviour by an amount sufficient to induce a reversal in the ethical trajectory.¹⁰

Noe and Rebello's model reiterates the urgency for incorporating a right and permanent strategy for development, which has its applicability for the third world as well.

Despite the fact that model-building has followed business soul searching scholars in the west have not yet come to terms with the resurgence of business activity in the developing world. Therefore neither the implications of this resurgence, nor perhaps a reframing of their idioms governing business, is a priority with them. The reason for this attitude may be: the field is still conceptually structured by these scholars own contexts; scholars in business ethics, trained in either the business schools or departments of philosophy and theology, are without the language skills or sufficient knowledge to understand the complex changes going on in Asia, finally as Richard T. De George states, what is attracting attention is not business ethics in the academic sense, but ethics in business—courses in business schools do not encourage critical discussions of the changing world order.¹¹ Noe and Rebello's model indicate a soul searching perceptible in business schools, in trepidation that Western competitive corporatism need not fuel a western structural collapse.

As an academic discipline, business ethics carries out ethical analyses on all levels of business. The level of economic systems, the level of corporations and the level of individual action. Asian models of growth try to encapsulate all these perspectives within their framework.

Given the near-exhaustion of dynamism in the Western role-constructs, Eastern scholars are increasingly resurrecting and reiterating historical nationalist traditions which not only correlate with the nationalist temperament with greater positiveness, but provide eminently viable models of growth as well.

Since the 1960's Confucianism as the prime motivator of modernization in the East Asian countries has been hotly debated by scholars such as Tu Wei-Ming, Yu Ying-shih and even overseas by S.N. Eisenstadt for instance.

Tu Wei-Ming, one of the key figures in the discussion suggests to the signalling of a new age, the 'Age of the Pacific Rim'. According to him, the rise of Japan and the Four Mini-Dragons (viz. South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore) raise challenging questions about tradition in modernity, the modernization process in its different cultural forms.¹²

In an earlier work,¹³ Tu Wei-Ming discusses more fully the relationship of Confucian ethics and the entrepreneurial spirit in East Asia. He rejects a simple mono-causal relationship between the two. Tu elucidates Confucian tradition's multi-dimensional influences on motivational structure, value-system, and leadership pattern of society. He identifies some of the core Confucian values internalized by many east Asians: The understanding of the self as a centre of relationships, the emphasis on the cultivation of a rounded personality rather than an aggressive type, the importance attributed to learning as transmission of wisdom involving the whole person, the stress on harmony and adjustment and the requirement that leaders embody such cultural values.¹⁴

Many of these Confucian values are radically different from the spirit of capitalism identified by Max Weber: emphasis on individualism, mastery over the world, competitiveness, laissez-faire and a kind of Faustian quest for knowledge. While Weber came to the conclusion that Confucianism was incompatible with the development of modern capitalism, Tu raises the question of whether there can be an alternative form of capitalism. "If modernization must be pluralistic, industrial East Asia may present a non-western model of modernization, bearing distinctive qualities of Confucian tradition."¹⁵

While Tu focuses on the philosophical and moral dimensions of the Confucian tradition, other Chinese scholars examine its legacy from other angles. Sociologist Ambrose King discusses the impact of social relationships and networks on doing business in Asia.¹⁶ Similarly historian Yu Ying-shih tries to understand the work ethics of Chinese businessmen.¹⁷ Moreover, economist John Fei delineates three influences of Chinese traditional culture on modern economic growth: cultural nationalism, secularism, and rational egalitarianism.¹⁸

The concern with all these authors is to provide the correct cultural and religious framework to explain economic growth in Asia. They do not challenge the capitalist approach nor the concepts of free trade and the global market economy. To them, however, it is important to emphasize the influence of the Canopy—i.e. Confucian tradition, as the viable tradition in modern times. Moreover, the very possibility of there being an alternative to Western-styled

capitalism is an attractive possibility—that the crucible of future, viable growth can be found in Asia.

The East Asian experience is very much a reality for India today. Economists reading the liberalisation measures fear that a cut and dry economic reform may not be either long-lasting or widely distributed, its impact may generate economic upheavals more serious than the pre-liberalization phase.

The stabilization and growth-oriented measures undertaken recently do not indicate any novel measures, but have been wielded by the International Monetary Fund for the last forty years. They include:

- fiscal and monetary austerity aimed at restricting aggregate demand e.g. tax increases, cuts in public spending for both current purposes and capital formation, high interest rates, and credit restraints (especially for the public sector);
- devaluation or weakening of the local currency by increases in the rupee/dollar exchange rate, aimed at stimulating exports and restricting imports;
- other relative price shifts, such as changes in the agricultural terms of trade and reductions in the real wage; and
- income redistributions (typically unequalizing, or regressive) in support of all of the above.

Lance Taylor¹⁹ refers to the above methods as the 'Washington blend' for developing economies. The point he raises is, this mix, has not generated long-lasting upward trends in all cases where it has been tried. A review of Latin American and other cases is done by Taylor, where the "Fund and Bank" combinations had been tried out—all semi-industrialized economies. It is seen wherever, the market had sole responsibility in decision-making, long-term success has not emerged.

Chile is usually considered the number one success case for liberalism, or the basis of its rapid, export-led growth since the 1980s. However, "the new Chilean way is certainly via capitalism but it combines strong elements of public and private sector partnership veiled by free market rhetoric."²⁰

In Mexico, however, since the debt crisis of 1982, intensive Bretton Woods influence was visible—as a result financial speculation flourished but income distribution became substantially more unequal. Mexico has had a trade deficit for the past few years of the order of 5% of GDP. The main reason for this state of affairs is collapse of private investment—partly as Taylor puts it, because Mexican authorities have had to maintain high real interest rates to keep money flowing in from Wall Street. This tendency affected national savings as well. The North American Free Trade association

(NAFTA) in 1993 promised a Mexican boom, but, instead the threat that massive maize imports under the agreement would wipe out the livelihood of small farmers triggered off a revolt in the tribal state of Chiapas.²¹

The South Korean case indicates that relatively 'stable' success has been due to the creation of "an independent economy ... with sufficient technological capability to permit a reasonable living standard without a chronic balance of payments deficit."²² The state has retained its primary interventionist goal. The Korean goal was a successful blend of macro-economic and industrial policies. Instead of aggregate demand management, keeping up investment was the order of the day. What is to be noted is that Korea did not follow a "type"—the belief being, institutions developed nationally cannot be transferred without modification to other national contexts.

The above indicates not all economic restructuring from "above" in line with the Washington financial institutions can bring about the necessary growth-oriented model—a proper blend of national institutions moored in a national ethos, alone can provide the right strategy for growth.

In India, similarly mere economic planning without regard to the underlying social ethos, has not brought about the desired changes in the economic sphere.

In the post-independence years, it was the Nehruvian growth model which dominated Indian business concerns not only till the life time of the latter but till about twenty years after his death. I.G. Patel, in an anonymous article written immediately after Nehru's death in 1964, pointedly indicated the confusion in strategy:

... at the level of an idea, the Socialism of the Nehru era has emerged as a rather weak and hollow reed in which one can blow almost any kind of music. In its concrete achievements, the socialism of the Nehru era can certainly lay claim to a respectable degree of public ownership of the means of production in the sphere of basic industries. But amidst the vast ocean of private property in land, buildings, commerce, small industry and a major part of large industry as well, the prevailing tone of social behaviour is unmistakably that of social behaviour is unmistakably that of acquisitiveness and private profit. What is more, these erstwhile vices are increasingly—and rightly—acclaimed as necessary agents of progress.²³

It is for this purpose that the prevailing interpretations, both eastern and western need to be elucidated, which influenced our developmental ethos.

II

The Western philosophical traditions have struggled immensely over time to construct proper idioms to explain the contradictions apparent in the social structure. The most glaring contradiction has been between a purely individualized understanding of human motivation (i.e. economic endeavours) and at the same time to read "socially relevant meaning" into such individual motivation.

The proverbial swing of the pendulum describes best the two kinds of situations that arose in an effort to explain perceived reality. While the underlying ethos governing human motivation has remained constant, it was merely the methodological understandings of such ethos which ebbed or flowed over time.

Thus, early Protestantism was faced with the challenge of pietism—which "melted down" its dogmatic structures, which were characteristic of an earlier, all-pervading objectivity. The new approach signified "subjective perception"—which in turn was responsible for psychologization of Christianity. Along with this flow, arose Enlightenment rationalism—ultimately leading to merger with the earlier pietism. The period was characterized by Protestant liberalism and the cultural and material expansion of the bourgeoisie. "Subjective intuitionism" guided individual growth and bred "like mindedness" among similarly motivated.

However, the swing of the pendulum to the earlier phase of neo-orthodoxy made the reappearance of the dialectical possible since WW I. The new objectivity perceived external control and direction of human endeavour—man's actions were not mediated from within his own being, but guided from without the self. Therefore "meaning" in human actions is divinely regulated.

This phase was gradually overshadowed by a greater swing in favour of neo-liberalism and greater subjectivity. The intervening period of neo-orthodoxy and subsequent objectivity seemed an "accidental interruption". The latter, ultimately serves to alienate the human being from his activity, since his actions are divinely ordained. Therefore actions have meaning only in relative terms. The gradually ascending subjectivity on the other hand transposes meaning of human actions from the cosmos or from history into human consciousness.²⁴

The subjective-objective dichotomy explaining human actions and concept of the self has governed Indian thought processes as well. However, the eastern philosophical traditions not only explain the Indian developmental model more explicitly but also provided the background for an appropriate understanding of Gandhian thought as well.

III

Indian philosophical traditions hold quite a different conceptual understanding of the objective-subjective dichotomy. The self may be interpreted as having two levels of existence, the essential and the empirical. At the empirical level it is clothed with the body-mind-intellect-complex and thus assumes an individuality.²⁵ Ordinarily, a man identifies himself with the body which is nourished by food and made of the five physical elements. But if a man were really this body, he would be subject to the changes which overcome the latter and cannot be said to remain the same person through different stages of his life. The self therefore is not the body and life. The self is also not identified with the senses. The mind controls the senses, but is susceptible the change, therefore the real self does not constitute the mind—neither is it the intellect which controls the mind. Even the intellect has periods of activity and non-activity, and is thus distinct from the real self-which 'continues to be when ... consciousness ceases and is no longer'.²⁶

The real self of man is revealed in a state of deep concentration (samadhi) which is attainable by following a long and laborious course of moral and religious training (sadhana). In deep concentration, the mind and the intellect cease to function. Empirical consciousness or existence ceases, of even internal mental states, but real/sure consciousness and real/sure existence continues.²⁷

The real self is neither the doer (kurta) nor the experiences (bhokta), and is, as a matter of fact, in no way involved in the doings of the phenomenal world. It is essentially immutable and eternal not being governed by the laws of time, space and causality. It is of the nature of *sat*, *cit*, and *ananda*, and is, on that account, to be identified with the ultimate cosmic reality.²⁸

The self is the reality underlying both man and the world. It is, therefore, identical with God. Thus God is the self or spirit in us and beyond us. And, as self. He is pure existence, consciousness and bliss; He is one infinite and eternal; His free and immoral. Such, according to Hinduism, is God in his essential and transcendent character.²⁹

Thus, Indian philosophical traditions would equate the "objective" perceptions and actions of the western tradition with the essential self. To the extent that the "objective" perception is not guided by the empirical self-centeredness. However, one must say, that Western philosophical traditions have never attempted to define the ecstatic state of continuous bliss which emanates from the real self. Their perceptions have remained at the level of the practical, which is ruled by mind and intellect.

IV

Gandhi, in line with committed nation-builders, was concerned throughout his life with the construction of a social and moral philosophy which would provide not only better and unique conditions of growth for India but which would also help in the exudence of the "other" in human beings. Herein lies the basic difference between Gandhi's ideas of development and that of others, the difference is in the orientation evinced towards the human person and his/her world. It is essential, to Gandhi that every individual answer the eternal questions of what he/she is, what the meaning of his/her life is and what the purpose of his/her being is these questions invariably project human quest for his/her destiny as that of prime importance, subjugating the question of the prospects of a particular civilization to a secondary position. To Gandhi, then the destiny of his civilization is directly proportional to and positively correlated with the central human concern for self-understanding. Therefore the answer to questions related to the self are to be obtained through self-knowledge, which an individual can gain through self-transformation. Gandhi's critique of modern civilization is radical and total since, for him the only progress worth its name is the progress in self-discovery and the civilization that does not give due recognition to it is not worth preserving.³⁰

It is the outwardly ascendant observable personality which causes the inner, essential self to remain hidden. Attempts should therefore be made to stifle the observable personality, Gandhi uses the analogy of the "brute" within us, to help in the evolution of the essential self. "In eating, sleeping and in the performance of other physical functions man is not different from the brute. What distinguishes him from the brute is his ceaseless striving to rise above the brute on the moral plane."³¹

What was necessary, then, was the construction of a moral person free from internal and external constraints. These constraints, were layered upon human consciousness and his surroundings, by the attributes of modern civilization.

Gandhi's position is that modern civilization, brings in its wake poverty, disease, suffering and war. This is so, because consumerism grows contagiously, and to meet the insatiable demand, oppression, inequality and large-scale violence results. The death-like clutches of the determinants of modern civilization result in moral turpitude. In an effort to resurrect the diminishing "essence" of the human person Gandhi castigated modern civilization itself, particularly the methods of growth espoused by the latter. Thus, industrialization became the bane of society. However, it would be very erroneous to

conclude that Gandhi stood against industrial development for all times and for all places. Since industrialization for India at that particular point of history would have invariably accentuated the tenacious hold of the few over the teeming unemployed human power, a production process and production relations positively correlated to those seeking employment was called for. In fact there is much evidence that Gandhi wished to confine his khadi programme and antithetic ideas on mechanization to suitable contexts. Analysts of Gandhian critique of civil society infer a propensity developed in later life to "suspend" the debate about the larger moral issues of mechanization per se, again with respect to the current infeasibility of the Indian employment.³² "I would welcome every improvement in the cottage machine, but I know that it is criminal to displace the hand-labour by the introduction of power-driven spindles unless one is at the same time ready to give millions of farmers some other occupation in their homes."³³ Then again he said, "Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the back of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might.

"Then you are fighting not against machinery as such, but against its abuses which are so much in evidence today."³⁴

The arguments advanced indicate, not mechanization alone, but the related attributes of civil society, namely, the socio-political system, contributed to the miasma of inequality. Gandhi's problematic is thus the construction of a moral order which can be sustained, against India's developmental ethic.

What constitutes the relevance of the Gandhian moral code today? The structure which constituted his initial problematic has undergone minuscule changes, so far as the dilemma of the teeming millions is concerned. The earlier possible explorations into mechanization, has become an imperative today. In the multipolar possibilities of the post cold war scene India's industrial assertiveness is nothing short of a primary determinant. And yet, to repeat, the initial problematic reiterates itself. Both the within and the without societies are in trauma. While newly awakened sub-nationalisms are busy reconstructing their "micro-histories" the pulls of globalization and subsequent integration into the world systematic ethos seems inevitable.³⁵ The most virulent repercussion of the necessary yet portentous globalization is the trauma of "cultural imperialism". This feature legitimizes itself on the plea that in today's world isolation is neither possible nor is it desirable. The cultures of the world have to meet and interact since there is accelerated movement towards each other, compared to the previous "away from each other".

That the move is deliberate and meticulous, is visible from the legitimization received from national planners. In their perspective world systematic social development is an inevitable consequence of the pursuance of world systematic economic methods. However, what is at stake is the slow uprooting of indigenous cultural formations by the blast of cultural expository techniques employed by the exogenous bourgeoisie. The tremendous power of commodification and appropriation of local cultural forms exhibited by the former nullifies attempts by local groups to "hold back".³⁶

It is the dire need of the hour to reconstruct the ethical paradigm which propels progressive action and at the same time catalytically desists. Such a structure is possible through the re-situation of Gandhian socio-ethical philosophy. It is perhaps with such realizations that policy planners of the Asia subcontinent are linking their present economic successes to influence of local traditions.

Gandhi's basic premise was morality should govern business, interpersonal relationships, distributive justice, power devolutions and all other attributions and all other attributes of civil society.

To try to encapsulate Gandhian morality within a few paragraphs, is perhaps indulging in over-simplification nevertheless, it is possible to identify the pillars of his moral doctrine as truth, self-realization, renunciation and sarvodaya. Each of these is enveloped in the capsule of love and ahimsa and oriented towards "karma" or action.

The ultimate reality, to Gandhi was truth, which he equated with the supreme imagery of the phenomenal world. "Truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. The truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God."³⁷

Then again he says,

"The word Satya (Truth) is derived from sat, which means "being". Nothing is or exists, in reality except truth. That is why "Sat" or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God".³⁸

To find truth completely is to realize oneself and one's destiny. However, the realization of this absolute truth is not always possible. Therefore, it is essential, as Gandhi says, as long as the Absolute Truth is not realized, one must hold on to the relative truth, which has been realized by the seeker. Here, obviously is implied, the seeker after truth attained that level of cognition which enables him to distinguish between phenomenal truth which is also perceptual and relative from essential truth—or absolute truth. The penchant for attainment of this level of perfection is manifest in all, yet it is only through karma, interpreted as "sarvodaya" can one actually do so.

“Karma” or action elevates the phenomenal self. This theory of liberation of the human form from materialist trappings through *niskāmakarma* forms the basis of Indian philosophical thought. Gandhi drew from this thought, his conception of the practical human person. The practical person is rational and is oriented towards achievement, which again denotes struggle towards perfection. Thus, perfect life is not the mere negation of activity, rather it is a positive state of constant endeavour. The law of nature impels action, even the perfected ones must therefore, devote themselves to the work of conserving the social order and moral values of the world (*loka-Samgrahartha*).³⁹ However, there is a problem, “since all action binds, and all beyond doubt have to act in order to attain perfection, how is one to be free from the bondage of action, even though he/she may be acting”? Gandhi cites the Gita in answer; “Do your allotted work but renounce its fruit—be detached and work—have no desire for reward and work”.⁴⁰ This is *niskamakarma*.

Gandhi introduces the concept of renunciation as positive involvement in actions, yet no desire for reward. This does not in any way indicate indifference to the result. In regard to every action one must know the result that is expected to follow, the means and the capacity for it. “He who is thus equipped is without desire for the result and is yet wholly engrossed in the due fulfillment of the task before him is said to have renounced the fruits of his action.”⁴¹

The problem is not fully solved by a mere exposition of renunciation. An act done by us in itself is neither good nor bad, it should have been done with the intention to do good. “Whether an act is moral or otherwise depends upon the intention of the doer.”⁴² It is *Sarvodaya*, that is, the good or welfare of all, which should be the aim of all human activities.

The word “*Sarvodaya*” is a compound of two words “*sarva*” (All) and “*udaya*” (Welfare or Upliftment). The welfare and uplift of all should be our summum bonum, our highest end—such welfare encompasses the human and non-human world. In this Gandhi differs from the utilitarians like Mill, according to whom the aim of our actions should be the greatest good of the greatest number, Gandhi could never subscribe to a view that the majority ought to gain prominence at the expense of the minority.

“The greatest good of all inevitably includes the good of the greatest number, and therefore he (the absolutist) and the utilitarian will converge in many points in their career, but there does come a time when they must part company, and even work in opposite directions. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself the absolutist will even sacrifice himself.”⁴³

At one point Gandhi equated his philosophical communism with Sarvodaya. However, as Jayprakash Narayan revealed in his analysis, Sarvodaya has essential spiritual connotations—it nourished high ideas of freedom equality, brotherhood/sisterhood and world peace, whereas socialism or communism were based merely on material and social considerations.⁴⁴

Herein Gandhian structure to a certain extent merges with Western philosophical model—in paying, that action is supreme which is “objectivity” determined. Gandhi however goes a step further by introducing the concept of self-realization.

According to Indian philosophical traditions, the operation of ignorance (avidya) distances the essential self (atman) from the phenomenal self (jiva). The limitations of individuality grasp and layer the essential self, thus right direction or methodologies of “karma” are lost in a materialistic miasma. Self-realization would constitute the peeling off of the layers of avidya through mental (manasa) prowess. It would involve superceding knowledge and luminosity (i.e. the sattvaguna), by passionless detachment (vairagya) and focussing on the glory of the essential self (aisvarya)—this achievement is necessarily through the exercise of knowledge (jnana).⁴⁵ It is such a structure of action which is painted by Gandhi to be projected into the progressive civil society. The perimeters of the law of nature necessarily bind actions to the self-centered form. Thus, a perspective that allows selfless action, involves the superceding of the empirical self. To Gandhi, freedom consists in transcending human nature and thus action also must be such that it helps in subjugating human nature.⁴⁶ Gandhi’s conception of action, that is community-involvement does not imply world-negation but merely the negation of the empirical self.

Thus a re-reading of Gandhian ethics indicates that the distance between a practice of such precepts and the necessities of dynamic globular business enterprise is not really immense. Gandhian precepts are neither anti-mechanization nor against the profit motive of individual enterprise the purposiveness of such enterprise are merely relocated—one may say towards the achievement of a better national—community/world-community product.

For instance, Gandhi refers to Puskin’s elaboration of the qualities of the man of commerce. These are basically two: First, commitment to his engagements, and second, paternalism, devoid of authoritarianism. Translated into the parlance of modern business economics these would mean a) standardization of both “within-productive” system and “without-production” system. This implies awareness of the quality of the products and the producers—their viability or lucrative appeal vis-a-vis those qualities existing outside

one's own production system.⁴⁷ b) Modern administrative sciences have long denounced the form of structural paternalism⁴⁸ which was advocated by management theorists at the turn of this century, for instance, Frederick Taylor⁴⁹ and his associates. To the latter, a rigid structure of authority was the optimum means for stemming indiscipline and maximizing output. However, the later situational theorists inspired by the behavioural school not only denounced all forms of formal structure but emphasized on the uniqueness of individual events. This process encouraged on the one hand adoption of requisite means of production to dynamic goals of production; and on the other the involuntary growth of interpersonal relationships—which is responsive to needs and yet is not fully divested of authority.⁵⁰

While Gandhi was formulating his third world theology of action, the very same model was piecemeal being fed into the very sophisticated business world of finance. Critiques of Gandhi have been limitless. The weaknesses sighted into his methodology are also manifold. R.G. Fox,⁵¹ for instance indicates, (1) the fragmentary impact the ideology had upon the Indian masses and (2) the exogenous underpinnings of the ideology never allowed firm foundation in Indian soil, (3) it had faulty methods of application and finally the masses were “incapable” of accepting the ideology. Fox accumulates his critique after a reading of Ashish Nandy⁵² and Partha Chatterjee.⁵³ Fox indicates that a world system of cultural domination took place in India, though it allowed indigenous resistance to that domination—that was ultimately handicapped due to its world-systematic origins. The Gandhian socialism provided the basis for cultural resistance, yet, “since it never contested the basic notion behind cultural domination, that Indian culture was essentially different, ... all it did was shift positive evaluation from modern (Western) society to traditional (Indian) society”. Thus from the outset, “The new India of Gandhian socialism is ... the old India of Hindu identity and both of them are the Indian cultural beliefs constituted within the unequal world system”.⁵⁴ Moreover, the authorship of the cultural resistance is not wholly Indian, Fox says, since “European and American utopians used their positive stereotypes of India ... to negate capitalism at home, while Indian nationalists marshalled (the same) ... ideal from afar against nationalism”.⁵⁵ Fox asserts, citing examples of recent studies of subalterns that neither the subalterns acceptance of Gandhian socialism, nor the projection of cohesive leadership was uniformly visible in the rural areas.⁵⁶ Finally, Fox's charge is that the Gandhian ideal was successful only in painting a utopian image presenting a revolutionary challenge to the present and the possibility of a better

future becomes only an ideology that legitimates contemporary society. "This transformation or devolution is most likely to come when the cultural resistance fails to achieve its utopian goals".⁵⁷

Much of Fox's charges are baseless as he basically does not subject the methodology of colonial exploitation/subjugation of India, to rigorous analysis. Chatterjee's brief answer amounts to this: in western social philosophical traditions, there is a tendency to braid together the concept of community and that of capital. The strict discipline necessary for the continuity of subjugation, allows neither capital nor community to attain full expansion. The emphasis is on the individual. Therefore communitarian precepts including resistance to colonial rule may for the time being, appear weak or fragmentary. However, with the relaxing of controls the distinctions between the "inner" (community), and the "outer" (civil society) reassert themselves.⁵⁸ The immense possibilities of the former at development, organization and when thwarted in its goal—also resistance is amply manifest. What Gandhian morality has served to edify is that while the "outer" is not prevented in its march towards world systemic monetary transactions, through the practice of ethical tenets, such as immanent within the "inner", the purity of achievements of the former are retained—unpolluted by world systemic miasmatic excrescence.

Conclusion

Widespread within systemic changes has induced the unintentioned corporate world of the west to concoct complex "ethical" paradigms that would restructure and thus keep within control managerial relations and subsequent industrial losses. Such explorations have been necessitated by some amount of soul-searching, following the collapse of political economic models. Similar, if not with a varying objective, endeavours are on in the Eastern World, to try and locate, and thus resurrect the local, ancient cultural types which have undoubtedly been the cause for sustained success in current business enterprises. The focus increasingly is on the self, and its ethical underpinnings, which in turn motivate actions. The understanding behind such indigenous explorations is that mere economic restructuring does not provide viable stability. Rather, systems with long histories of philosophical tradition find sustainable answers which are not only regionally legitimate but progressive as well to structure their economic programmes. Gandhi's model does not remain a mere academic ideal if the programme of economic restructuring and liberalization is translated to mean holistic programme of reform and development, where the state does not

remain at the level of the initiator of the programme, but continues as an active internal propellant. While this strategy of action essentially means the grounds for protest against projects such as the Narmada Valley or the Silent Valley is not created, it would also mean that all policies are not necessarily for all national purposes. The intention is, redirection of "controlraj" and "internal inertia" to greater communitarian objectives.

The problem was the situation of a model which would effectively thwart the all-comprehensive "commodifying" tendency of the world-systemic production system. The dynamism immanent within Gandhian ethics provides immense possibilities, capable of progression and resistance.

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