MUSINGS ON THE MAHATMA
Picture the slightest, frailest man in Asia, with face and flesh of bronze, close-cropped gray head, high cheekbones, kindly little brown eyes a large and almost toothless mouth, larger ears, an enormous nose, thin arms and legs, clad in a loin-cloth, standing before an English judge in India, on trial because he has preached liberty to his countrymen Picture him again similarly dressed, at the Viceroy’s palace in Delhi, in conference on equal terms with the highest representative of England. Or picture him seated on a small carpet in a bare room at his Satyagraha Ashram, or School of Truth-Seekers, at Ahmedabad, his bony legs crossed under him in Yogi fashion, soles upward, his hands busy at a spinning wheel, his face lined with the sufferings of his people, his mind active with ready answers to every questioner of freedom. This naked weaver is both the spiritual and the political leader of 320,000,000 Indians, when he appears in public, crowds gather round him to touch his clothing or to kiss his feet, not since Buddha has India so revered as any man. He is by all probability the most important, and beyond all doubt the most interesting, figure in the world today Centuries hence he will be remembered when of his contemporaries hardly a name will survive. . . .

—Will Durant
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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Albert Szent-Gyorgyi once said, “Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought”. Each of the articles in this publication has a unique perspective on the influence the great leader, Mahatma Gandhi has had on societies and people around the world. Each article possesses originality and oneness.

At the heart of our University’s vision is “Excellence”. Excellence can be attained through commitment to intellectual discovery, which is facilitated by research. It is essential to develop a culture of research because it teaches one the art of thinking and analysing. Originality in thinking leads to the birth of new ideas and perspectives and it is a pleasure to see students of the Department engaging in such activities.

Events and competitions like these provide an opportunity to develop a culture of research among students. They facilitate and strengthen the research culture in academics and inculcate values of a diligent researcher among our students.

I take this opportunity to congratulate all the students whose articles have been chosen to get published. I would also like to commend Professor Vineeth Thomas and all faculties in charge for encouraging and guiding the students to develop their capabilities. Reading each of the articles was a delight. I look forward to more such efforts from students in the future.

Reverend Dr. Father Jose CC
Pro Vice Chancellor
Christ (Deemed to be) University
Bengaluru.
EDITOR’S NOTE

Every intellect who has trod on earth is a product of their time. Hence, it is wrong to say that a person can be well understood outside the social settings of their time. Mahatma Gandhi is no exception. The people of his time and the posterity wished to comprehend and understand him in totality by dedicating volumes of writings for the same. Writers, critics and supporters have devoted their time and efforts to recreate the social times of Gandhi to unravel the man who has been respected in the realm of spirituality, politics, philosophy, education, social reformation among many others.

A lot has been said and written about the man with some endorsing him and his ideologies and the others either criticizing or critiquing him. But every soul in the above process, desperately wishes to know him, to earn that satisfaction that they have finally understood him.

The attempt, here is to communicate through these articles our take-aways from Gandhi’s way of life and philosophy and to pen down our conception about the man whose life has served as a rendition of his teachings. The students of the Department have also ventured out to narrate his remarkable life, reflections and associations which have influenced leaders across the world. Lastly, an endeavor is made to reemphasize his undeniably stout moral character in times of adversity that epitomizes the connection between thought, word and action which find its relevance even after times to come.

Sahar Basharat
A. Linciya Saji
ECONOMICS AND ENVIRONMENT

The incessant search for material comfort and their multiplication is such an evil and I make bold to say that the Europeans themselves will have to remodel their outlook, if they are not to perish under the weight of the comforts to which they are becoming slaves.

-Mahatma Gandhi
ENVIRONMENTALISM IN GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY

- Anjana Anil Kumar

Gandhism is much more than a political ideology or a philosophical doctrine. Over the years, Gandhian philosophy has transformed itself into a way of living for its followers that guide their thoughts and actions in all spheres of life. The imprint of Gandhian values has become so influential that its benevolent followers have even mentioned Gandhism as a religion – the Gandhian religion. It is a framework for realizing a better society with compassion and cooperation, upholding civilizational values. It is an undeniable fact, even for critics, that Gandhism is a philosophy that enjoys an irresistible impulse of charisma that continues to convince people even after decades of Gandhi’s departure.

It is not possible to argue that Gandhiji was a strong proponent of modern day environmentalism. However, many scholars have attempted to deduce elements of environmentalism from the Gandhian ideas. And many of them have acknowledged Gandhiji with the title of an ‘early environmentalist’. Significant concepts from the doctrine of Gandhism are perceived as early calls for environmental consciousness and conservation.

“Nature has got enough for everyone’s need, but not for everyone’s greed”. These compelling words of Gandhiji propound a strong message for conserving the limited resources of nature. Gandhian ideas of simple living promote minimum exploitation of nature and its resources. Apart from this, he is also known to have written extensively on limited human usage of natural resources.

Mahatma Gandhi’s most seminal work, the ‘Hind Swaraj,’ is a clear reflection of his pioneering ideas on the destructive effects of industrialization and urbanization. Gandhiji’s thoughts on the deleterious consequences of urbanization, industrialization and mechanization, as elaborated in Hind Swaraj, are recognized as prompt and early wake up calls. And these propositions have become increasingly relevant in the twenty-first century when these exploitative tendencies have caused irrevocable damages to nature.
Gandhism places solid criticism on the consumerist culture that Britain followed during that point of time and for the same reason he strongly warned against the Indian tendency to blindly follow the patterns of the West. This message is of primordial significance in a world which has seen a sharp depletion of natural resources at an accelerated rate due to unrestricted consumerist and materialistic consumption patterns. His request to the Indian people was to forget about ‘worldly pleasure’ and to focus on ‘godly pleasure’ which meant rejecting the practices of the industrious West.

Some scholars have even identified Gandhiji as an initial exponent of ‘Deep Ecology’, which tries to see an inherent worth of all creation of nature regardless of their utility to humans. This philosophy of deep ecology falls in line with the Gandhian ideal of nonviolence. Gandhi was an ardent lover of nature and his philosophy attempted to project the sacredness of nature in all its dimensions. His journey, too, was a passionate search to find the traces of sacredness in each minute element of nature.

Renowned historian Ramachandra Guha points to the fact that many environmental movements of India in the decades that followed, trace back their ideological roots to Gandhian Environmentalism. He identified Gandhian influence on ground breaking movements like Chipko and Narmada Bachao Movement. He also points out how notable environmentalists like Sundarlal Bahguna and Medha Patkar have repeatedly mentioned the influence of Gandhi on their works. While there might not have been stright-forward evidence of the Mahatma’s philosophy on environmentalism, it is evident if one simply takes a look at his life and livelihood.
In his essay Three Disciples, B R Nanda wrote, "It would have been difficult to think of a more unlikely candidate for the discipleship of Gandhi in 1929 than J.C. Kumarappa" (Nanda, 2002). Looking at the phase of his life before and after meeting Gandhi shows that this proposition is beyond question.

Joseph Chellandurai Kumarappa’s age was 37 when he met Gandhi for the first time in 1927. At that time, Kumarappa was a graduate in Business Administration at Syracuse University in New York, Fellow of the Society of Incorporated Accountants and Auditors, Chartered Accountant with 10 years of legal practice in Bombay. He had no interest in politics and never had a glimpse of Gandhi. In 1928, he presented a thesis Public Finance and India’s Poverty at Columbia University for his Master’s Degree in Economics. With his thesis, Kumarappa “added his own contribution to...lineage with many an illustrious predecessor like Dadabhai Naoroji and R. C. Dutt” (Govindu & Malghan, 2016) whose works Poverty and Un-British Rule in India and The Economic History of India Under Early British Rule respectively explored the economic exploitation in India under British Rule.

Kumarappa wanted to publish his work Public Finance and India’s Poverty in India and when he was in search of a publisher, on the advice of his friend, he sent the manuscript to Gandhi. Kumarappa got an appointment to meet Gandhi on 30th May 1929. His first meeting with Gandhi is better described in his own words:

On the way up, I saw an old man seated under a tree on a neatly cleaned cow-dunged floor, spinning. Having never seen a spinning wheel before, I leaned on my walking stick and standing akimbo was watching, as there were still ten minutes for the appointment. This old man after about five minutes opened his toothless lips, and with a smile on his face enquired if I was Kumarappa. It suddenly dawned on me that my questionnaire might be no other than Mahatma Gandhi. So I, in my turn, asked him if he was Gandhiji; and when...
he nodded I promptly sat down on the cow-dunged floor regardless of the well-kept crease of my silk trousers! Seeing me sitting without stretched legs, more or less in a reclining position, someone from the house came rushing down with a chair for me, and Gandhiji asked me to get up and sit in the chair more comfortably. I replied that since he was seated on the floor I did not propose to take the chair (Kumarappa J. C., 1949).

One of Gandhi’s greatest achievements was his ability to identify the potential in people and nurture the potential in them for a fruitful cause and to make them leaders. In the meeting, Gandhi understood the potential of Kumarappa and asked him if he can do a Gujarat Rural Economy survey with assistance from Gujarat Vidyapith, National University in Ahmedabad. Refusing Gandhi’s request is beyond question. Gandhi gave one advice on methodology “that the ‘Indian Economy had to be built by a method of securing rock bottom facts and drawing from them, by the most rigid process of reasoning, scientific conclusions which no amount of juggling could controvert”’ (Nanda, 2002, p. 185).

Kumarappa went on to do the survey and the results of the survey revealed the deprivation that is prevalent in the Indian Villages. This survey brought out an ‘On ground Economist’ in Kumarappa.

Later when Gandhi commenced the salt march, he sent Kumarappa to help Mahadev Desai and write articles in his journal Young India. This brought out Journalist in Kumarappa. His sedition writings in the journal made Britishers put him behind the bars. Kumarappa used his time in Jail to study and understand Gandhian ideas. In his jail days in 1944, Kumarappa wrote the Economy of Permanence, which is an exploration into Gandhian Economic thought. Gandhi presented a “vision of a utopia in which economic behaviour had a far secondary role to the philosophical and political purposes of his idea” (Rosen, Jan 1982) and this idea is reflected in Kumarappa’s work.

Exploring various types of Economics in Nature, he advocated two forms of Economies for mankind: The Economy of Gregation and Economy of Service. The economy of Gregation is an extension from self-interest to group-interest and from acting on the immediate urge of present needs to planning for future requirements’ ' (Kumarappa J. , 1945) like Honeybees that work for the benefit of many.
The Economy of Service is when a living being works "neither for its present need nor for its personal future requirement, but projects its activities into the next generation, or generations to come, without looking for any reward" (Kumarappa J., 1945). These two forms reflect a modern-day notion of Sustainable Development, which is the need of the hour. Gandhian Economic thought is very close to the environment. Gandhi advocated in protection and maintaining the permanence of Nature. In 1928, Gandhi warned:

God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 millions took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts. Unless the capitalists of India help to avert that tragedy by becoming trustees of the welfare of the masses and by devoting their talents not to amassing wealth for themselves but to the service of the masses in an altruistic spirit, they will end either by destroying the masses or being destroyed by them (Gandhi M., 1928).

The above warning clearly shows Gandhi’s vision to link Environment and Economics and not going in ‘the manner of the West’.

Kumarappa set to implement Gandhi's thoughts when he was appointed as secretary of All India Village Industries Association (AIVIA) in 1934 by Gandhi. AIVIA aimed “at rebuilding the village economy on sustainable lines, by promoting water conservation, community forest management and chemical agriculture” (Guha, 2018). Even after Independence, Kumarappa remained a strong voice against Nehruvian Economic ideas, which completely renounced Gandhian ideals of Self Sufficient and Self-Reliant Village Economy Model.

Based on the correspondence between Gandhi and Kumarappa, we can see an Economist, Environmentalist and an Ideal teacher in Gandhi. In 1948, burying "an urn containing the Mahatma's ashes in a pit in Sevagram Ashram…. he murmured: ‘Instead of burying Gandhi deep in our hearts, we are burying him deep into the earth’” (Nanda, 2002, p. 190). Kumarappa died on
30th January 1960, a sad man with anguish and pain in him as Gandhi was when he died (the same day Gandhi was shot in 1948).

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A NEW ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK IN GANDHI’S WAY

- Anirudh Bharadwaj

Gandhiji, a social reformer, through his economic ideas wanted to build a credible India. Although his ideas were guided more by social and cultural values of decentralization, non-violent economy, self-sufficiency, curtailment of concentration of wealth and focus on agro-based economy, the economic importance of these ideals cannot be denied; especially considering the fact that he wasn’t a member of any formal committee but influenced all decisions taken by the Planning Commission (Koshal & Koshal, 1973). Questions have been raised over the relevance of Gandhi’s economic policy in today’s world of globalization, privatization and liberalization but more than anything ideals propagated by him have become relevant wherein the solutions to economic disparities can be found in the traditional framework based on Gandhiji’s idea of Trusteeship (Singh & Goit, 2009). Gandhian archetypal of economic working was largely ignored by the bureaucrats and now steadily they are incorporating Gandhi’s insistence on inclusive growth which is seen in discrete policies despite facing the criticism of being non-violable for decades. This is a testament that answers to modern economic problems can be found in the traditional Gandhian framework which speaks about the viability of his ideas.

Even though time and again, Gandhiji’s ideologies have been criticized on the grounds that his teachings are very much in lieu of Marxian principles of class struggle and ultimate rule of the proletariat, this isn’t true and one cannot deny the fact that he was an ardent supporter of social capitalism. In his Theory of Trusteeship, Gandhiji denies being either a socialist or a communist. He professes that ‘everything belonged to god and was from god. Therefore, it was for His people as a whole, not for a particular individual. When an individual had more than his proportionate portion, he became a trustee of that portion for God’s people’ (Gandhi, 1960).

The underlying principle of Gandhism lies in the fact that man by nature is very good. That the notion of Hobbes in his State of Nature of Man which said that man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short isn’t true. This is also similar to the modern-day notions of the Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus who in his book, ‘A World Of Three Zeroes’ states that the modern-day
economic system is broken and also totally negates the neoclassical theory of economics which considers man as being indifferent and for ‘selfishness’ to be the highest virtue in what he termed as the ‘Capitalist Man’. He always believed that the ‘Real Man’ who is a part of the integrated society is always motivated to work for others beyond his own petty selfishness (Yunus, 2017). This ideology is the driving force behind Yunus’s concept of Grameen Bank which provides credit at zero percent collateral and interest rate but still has an impressive 96% payback rate. A variety of multinational corporations like Danone have supported the Grameen Bank and this model has also expanded to some of the biggest nations which traditionally championed capitalism like France and USA. This is a blot on all those who criticize the Gandhian way of life as being too altruistic and too utopian.

Thus, not only is the social capitalism model very relevant and implementable but it is also self-sustaining. With our country having an exorbitantly high unemployment rate of 6.1% which is the highest in the last 45 years according to the latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), a revamping of our entire economic framework needs to be done. But any great social change has always needed the backing of a powerful principle and ideology and this is where we must incorporate the ways of the Father of our Nation. In accordance to his principles of uplifting the rural economy which is the backbone of our country, policymakers should invest more into developing a self-sustaining model of credit creation as well as the promotion of Entrepreneurship, MSME’s and most importantly, traditional handicrafts which are essentially the job creating spheres of any economy.

While expounding Gandhian ideals in the contemporary world it becomes important to truly understand economic augmentation according to a substructure of prevailing social conditions and time. He provides a chassis which ends exploitation, takes care of man’s need not greed, ends the eternal conflict between labor and capital and moves towards an apparatus which favors the worst-off. In retrospect of the prevailing economic conditions where unemployment statistics are towering, Gandhiji’s proposition of social capitalism should be the cardinal value which ushers the policymakers of today towards a buoyant economy.
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REVISITING THE MAN HIMSELF

Our greatest ability as humans is not to change the world; but to change ourselves.

-Mahatma Gandhi.
DEPARTURE FROM TRUTH

-Georgy Thomas

Thomas Carlyle said, “No great man lives in vain. The history of the world is but the biography of great men.” It is only a pertinent question to be asked when one comes across a new article, book or any literature on Gandhi that what aspect of his life could possibly have been explored which has not already been detailed, debated and divulged into the public forum. The truth is that there has been a lot of literature on the life and philosophy of Gandhi that it has resulted in confusion and ambiguity, but this is a conundrum conspicuous of the lives of great men which are open to interpretation and investigation to construct and reconstruct their life, legacy and history.

M.K. Gandhi or affectionately Mahatma Gandhi is a man remembered for the life he lived, the principles he materialised and his infinite search for truth that he believed always existed and only awaited discovery. I consider it an impossible task to document the Mahatma’s illustrious life in an article in order to give you a perspective but I could say he is the hero solidified by convention and immortalised by tradition. An extensive part of his life was dedicated to the independence struggle of India where he manifested the principles of ‘ahimsa’ and ‘satyagraha’ that realised great achievements in the struggle against the most powerful colonisers in history. Anyone accustomed with his autobiography would know that this was only parts of his struggle. He was on a mission of greater self-actualisation through his experiments with truth.

TRUTH AND TRAVESTY

The course of human history has painted a very distinct and dramatic picture of heroes and villains and this is conspicuous of many ideas, stories, events and literature that have been around for so long and are conceived to be so authentic that they have immortalised the obvious heroes or villains. However, there is one factor that can alter such a convention and repaint a different version; history calls it ‘revolution’, indeed such monumental changes occur only in a revolution. Every revolution mandates changes that they perceive are progressive, but the inherent problem is that the supposed progressive path or the contrary can only be juxtaposed years after the revolution has attained fruition.
Mahatma Gandhi is by all means a hero of this nation. His legacy has however not been devoid of controversy and it would be evasive on the part of any true admirer to not address the many allegations that have been raised against him through various debates, literature and interpretations. The ‘racism controversy’ is one to be addressed. The question of Gandhi being a racist has sparked recent interests with the anti-racism call of action like the BLM (Black Lives Matter) Movement. This is not a revolutionary step against racism but it sure seems to be a call to revolution. There is no need for one to defend against these allegations but there is a need to address its scope of impact on the legacy of one of the greatest men of the 20th century.

This article is not meant to debate his innocence. A quintessential reading of two distinct literatures from the left and right wing political writers will detail enough argumentative points for even a naïve but impartial or unprejudiced reader to understand the validity or apparent absurdity of the claims. The motive is to indulge the readers in understanding the ambiguity of multiple interpretations and the resultant consequence of such ambiguity in tainting the legacy of an obvious hero. The core of the issue is not taking down a statue, not the problem of allegations but the distortion of an entire legacy based on delicately fabricated opinions.

MY LIFE IS MY MESSAGE

“The heart of man is very much like the sea, it has its storms, it has its tides and in its depths it has its pearls too”, said Vincent van Gogh. There is only one thing more dangerous than dishonesty, partial truth. The life of Gandhi is perfectly symbolic of lessons from failure and his views and philosophy have been authored in such a way that it teaches not lessons of greatness but lessons of humility and fortitude. The problem is that varied interpretations bring out parts and perforated proportions of his life and philosophy which is not just inaccurate but far from the truth.

A message can only be understood when perceived in its entirety, the Mahatma’s life is his message and not parts of it, not just the monumental glory but also the tremendous failures, not just the lessons he taught but the lesson he learned, not only his experiments with truth but its inferences. Without an air of exaggeration and taking reference from Einstein’s view it is true that the greatness of this man is difficult to comprehend. This is where the final problem arises that
people like the Mahatma, Mandela and Martin King have been fashioned with a saintly effigy that their lives, histories and legacies are conceived to be immaculate and any error they have committed is often blown out of proportion.

To lead millions is one thing, to leave behind a legacy for billions to reflect and refer, to influence great movements, thoughts and leaders and most importantly to be relevant in a day and time where the greatest threat to history is a lack of knowledge of it, is perhaps the greatest accomplishment of Mahatma Gandhi and generations to come will find it difficult to comprehend the history of this man and acknowledge his great ideals for what they truly are, if we let distortions and misinterpretations transcribe the truth.
RELEVANCE OF MAHATMA
-Aparajita Pauranika

“A ‘NO’ uttered from the deepest conviction is better than a ‘Yes’ merely uttered to please, or worse, to avoid trouble” said Mahatma Gandhi. This quote is a testament to the fearlessness and truthfulness of our Bapu. He lived a life that not only Indians but people from across the world look up to. He was not merely a great person who guided people on the path of truth, but was a person who believed in leading by example. He said, ‘My life is my message’ and it truly is.

The more a person reads about the various aspects of his life, the more they are enlightened by it. His philosophy of the ultimate truth and Ahimsa or non-violence, are relevant even in the present scenario proving that GandhiJi was a man who thought well ahead of his time. He fought for India and became a ray of hope that guided Indians to use nonviolent means to fight the British, who clearly were more armed in terms of warfare technology. He led the path, gave strength to innumerable people, while also preaching about ways to better our society.

Fearlessness, as we know, is one of the pre-requisites for the growth of any individual. One cannot hope to go further in the path of morality without being fearless, and our Bapu had mastered this art. He was not afraid of standing against the entire empire of oppressors in his simple dhoti and shawl to fight for what is rightfully ours. He knew the Indians possessed something that even the so-called ‘civilised’ British did not. It was the indomitable willpower of Indians which was more powerful than any bullet or cannon that the colonists were armed with.

His experiments with truth are certainly a source of inspiration to millions but apart from this, his teachings and experiments with nature find the same status, if not higher. Especially in times such as these, when we are struggling with global warming, melting of glaciers, climate change, and whatnot. His idea of sustainable development has been recognized recently by the United Nations and the Gandhi Solar Park at the headquarters of the UN is a confirmation to that. Since childhood, we have been made familiar with the phrase that the Earth has enough for everyone's needs but not for one’s greed. This quote by the Mahatma himself, tells us that we should not be focused on discovering new ways to exploit the Earth’s resources, but rather, should be concerned about using
it sustainably and making sure we pass on this Earth, with all her resources, in the able hands of our future generations.

One of the things that I deeply admire Gandhiji for was his will to establish peace among the two warring religions at the time of Independence. At the time when the whole nation was running amok in the joy of the long-awaited freedom, he spent his days trying to control the riots in Bengal. He refused to rejoice when there was a looming possibility of conflict between India and Pakistan and could not bear the thought of further violence. Bapu was always deeply dedicated to the country and its secular features. Secularity was one of the principles he followed religiously and it is unfortunate that Nathuram Godse, when on trial for Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, blamed the Mahatama for India’s partition and also for the atrocities against Hindus. It is no wonder that even in the present-day world, there is a lack of trust between Hindus and Muslims, and the acts by extremist outfits of Hindus and Muslims, are contributing nothing to the unity of our nation, but only increasing this gap.

Few unaware people often attempt to cite Gandhiji’s life and existence as not being instrumental towards shaping the Independent India that we breathe in but I think hardly anyone would be willing to contest the kind of effect his death had on the nation. Gandhi Ji in his last days had planned to travel to different cities such as Delhi, Punjab, Lahore to bring peace. However, it is Gandhi Ji’s death that brought a pall over the country and its violence. The riots stopped and people mourned the man who had said ‘I do not want to die... of a creeping paralysis of my faculties - a defeated man. An assassin's bullet may put an end to my life. I would welcome it. But I would love, above all, to fade out doing my duty with my last breath.’

The more we read about the father of our nation, the less it seems we know of him and have truly understood him. In my opinion, each individual should read about his philosophies, understand them, and incorporate at least a few things that they agree with into their lives. This will help us all to be a better version of ourselves. I am certain that I speak for a large number of citizens when I say that we are proud that such a man walked this Earth in his flesh and blood, and we, the Indians are his children. At last, I would like to end with a powerful quote of his, “A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes.”
Writing an essay on Mahatma Gandhi, Indian Philosopher Akeel Bilgrami noted that “It is generally foolhardy to write about Gandhi, not only because you are never certain you’ve got him right, but because you are almost sure to have him wrong”. This is a pessimistic proposition in the light of the huge corpus of literature that has been brought out by notable thinkers from all walks of intellectual endeavors exploring his politics, ethics, socio-political philosophy, and psychology, and still, did none of them get him right?

But at the same, it is a realist's proposition because Gandhi was unsure about himself. He repeatedly experimented with his ideas in actions, and there was a constant conflict of various thoughts in his mind. Gandhi reserved the rights for jettisoning his ideas to present new one's from time to time. In 1934, he said, “I make no hobgoblin of consistency. If I am true to myself from moment to moment, I do not mind all the inconsistencies that may be flung in my face”. He also said that “when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the latter of the two on the same subject”. It is a troubling idea for champions of Gandhi and Gandhism that Gandhi isn’t a perfect Gandhian himself. Yet as Ashis Nandy pointed out, it would be a tribute to the memory of Mahatma to call him ‘imperfect’.

Does all this suggest that it is not possible to agree on one set of ideas as his final thoughts? Bearing in mind the huge collection of writings Gandhi left behind (published in 100 volumes in English by Publications Division of Government of India and many unpublished writings), and the variety of hermeneutics that is surrounding Gandhi’s ideas, it seems tough to settle on some ideas as ultimate. Despite all this, there is something to cheer about. Though it may not be feasible to agree on some of his ideas as ultimate, it is possible to conceptualize a framework to understand the way of Gandhi’s thinking. If this framework is developed, then it is possible to evolve a lens through which the world can be looked at the way Gandhi looks at it and find solutions for the alarming crises of our times in his way.
There is a common strand in Gandhi’s thinking that is found in how he acted in the face of any crisis or for transforming the conditions of an existing order of things-Gandhi sought for ‘alternatives’. Here ‘alternatives’ connotes two things. Firstly, it is searching for newer means to lead a way out of crisis and to bring about changes in the status quo. Secondly, it is fixing alternative ends that are to be achieved through alternative means. For Gandhi, these two connotations of seeking for ‘alternatives’ are not separate. Instead of trying to make changes in the existing status quo or to reform it, Gandhi sought newer alternative means and ends. To understand this proposition, take the case of Gandhi’s role in the national movement and his Constructive Programme.

Before the entry of Gandhi into the Indian national movement, there were moderates and extremists in their own ways trying to get independence for India. But there was no popular national wide struggle under their leadership. The methods employed by both moderates and extremists are different, and there was also widespread unsureness about the effectiveness of their methods within both sections. The end they were seeking, which was achieving ‘Independent India’ was vaguely defined. Their period was characterized by a lack of collective consciousness and certainty about means and ends, and these factors atypical of that time prevented the chances for creating a national-wide movement.

Gandhi brought with him a new force and new message into the national movement with an ‘alternative’ politics. His method of alternative politics, from its outset, quoting Ashis Nandy, is to “de-intellectualize Indian Politics”. Here de-intellectualization should not be understood as being something against intellectuals. But Gandhi was against “giving importance to intellectual activities and ideologies in a culture which believed intellection to be ritually purer and more Brahmanic, and where the primacy of idea aver action had a sacred sanction behind it”. He was actually hitting at the Brahminical hegemony in the national movement and through the process of de-intellectualization, he tried to de-Brahminize Indian politics. Gandhi brought in elements of culture that are associated with the underprivileged classes in India into the mainstream struggle against the British rule. This appealed to the masses. In the initial period after he came to India in 1915, Gandhi tried to understand the conditions and struggles of the masses in India and he developed an ‘alternative’ political technique which aims at permeating the consciousness of the
masses with the spirit of struggle for India’s freedom. He spoke to the masses in their language and prepared them, gradually and consistently, to sacrifice for achieving the nation’s independence.

The method employed by Gandhi to prepare Indians to struggle for their freedom needs elaboration. His method can be broadly seen under the term ‘Constructive Programme’ which he calls as ‘the truthful and non-violent way of winning Poorna Swaraj’. According to Gandhi, just like the people participating in armed revolts are taught how to use arms, it is necessary to train masses in their struggle for Independence. This programme also imbibes Gandhi’s vision of self-reliant India. He wrote this idea in a book titled ‘Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place’ in 1941 in which he listed 18 programmes like communal unity, removal of untouchability, Promoting Khadi and other village industries, Farmer, Labour, Adivasis, and Women empowerment- only through empowering every individual in the country irrespective of their socio, economic, ritual, and political statuses in all these elements can India attain Independence. It is clear that his ‘alternative’ politics is complex and multi-layered, where he sought to create an Indian society composed of constructive workers. Along with actively taking part in the higher political affairs of the country, Gandhi has constantly engaged in his constructive work. For him, the freedom struggle is synonymous with constructive work. The culmination of the efforts of this preparation is felt during the Quit India movement when Gandhi finally gave the call for ‘Do or Die’.

A closer look into Gandhi’s ‘alternative’ politics will make it clear that Gandhi placed these elements of the Constructive Programme integral not only in his scheme for Independence but also his vision for Independent India, the form of the ‘alternative’ end which he sought to achieve. Unlike the phase of freedom struggle before his, Gandhi clearly thought about the form of Independence that is best suitable for India.

His vision for free India is to create a nation of constructive workers. It is important to observe here how Gandhi’s politics merge means and ends together. This is a practical, vale-centric, and normative ‘alternative’ to the vision of Western modernity. Gandhi cautioned India against adopting the manners of the West. He said, “God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism
after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts”.

After Independence, Gandhi decided to attend a conference of constructive workers at Sevagra, in the first week of February 1948. He was very anxious to attend that conference. Before that happened, Gandhi was stopped by three bullets. But without Gandhi, the conference was held six weeks after his death in May of 1948 which was attended by ‘Gandhi Family’ - Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Azad, J.C. Kumarappa, Vinoba Bhave, Kamalnayan Bajaj, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, and many others who are all apostles of Mahatma. In the conference, all its attendants discussed various ways of taking forward Gandhi’s Constructive Programme. This shows how Gandhi prophetically set the tone for ‘alternative’ means and ends of Independent India.

From above, it can be claimed that Gandhi’s way of thinking is premised on seeking ‘alternatives’, that is alternative means and ends (sometimes both merging). His method is not altering an existing ‘status quo’, but creating a completely new order of things, a new arrangement where masses, not any particular sections of them, but all, could be better off. This way of thinking makes Gandhi, arguably, the most radical and relevant individual of his times and ours.

In settling on a conceptual framework, it could be said that Gandhi tried to do two things at a time in his thinking about finding solutions for problems. Firstly, framing ‘alternative’ means and ends and secondly, including the masses in striving for that ‘alternatives’, i.e., of the masses, by the masses and for the masses. This framework could be applied for the times we are living in and to address the menacing crises that the world is grappling with. In this way, it is hoped that we may avoid being ‘almost sure to have him wrong’.
MY LIFE IS MY MESSAGE

-A. Linciya Saji

The forces that maintained and influenced the historic character of the nation-state must be traced to its origin and also to the course of developments it produced. This premise, then keeps the basic traits of political, social and administrative governance under constant change ascertaining the subtlety of events. To reproduce a historical event which is conceived to have produced sweeping changes in times to come or that which is recognized to be the underlying cause for the present stature need not be accounted to a particular individual's caprice or as an outcome of an individual's misdirected objective. For the historical account of any nation must be perceived as a physical body, subject to the influence of certain competent forces, produced under human or non-human environment that determines the course of its actions. This law of physics holds good in the understanding of a nation's history during a particular period of time where the competent forces appear subtle and cannot be measured. This leads to the genesis of various causes for the occurrence of a particular event.

Since the posterity is well aware of the outcome of the event, it records the responses of the direct participants without any uncertainty. The revelation of the history of a nation marked by different perspectives and circumstances seems impossible given the different forces contributing to the causes and effects involved. Hence, reproducing historical events with the help of memoirs, gazettes, official records and literature do not justify the essence of the past either it leads to over exaggeration or understatement of events and peoples of the time. The history of a nation is the history of all the peoples in the nation within a given time period in question. For the purpose of reproducing the history of a nation, the historians conspicuously choose few individuals or factors around which the events in question unveil and revolve. But this fails to describe the life of the nation and the peoples in it as writers of history themselves are pertained to a particular social living and therefore present facts regarded by them as the cause. This attitude does not establish a full fledged outlay of any event in history as they do not establish all the causes which always fall short in deducing the effects.
This may hold true in case of history and that too in our attempt to describe reality and political culture of any nation at present. The experimental population is huge that it is difficult to deduce the overall causes and effects of events of present from studying and analysing only certain selected causes. This overwhelming attempt to identify the competent forces that make up the resultant force which in large influence the events at present appears to be a herculean process. At least there is an opportunity to study the causes and effects scientifically. But in the case of studying the history of a nation, this becomes difficult. The same holds good in tracing the life of an individual of the past.

The task of understanding Gandhi must be done critically and empirically to describe a man about whom extensive writings, both criticisms and endorsements, have been made in the past and present. The attempt here is not to justify or criticize the response of this individual to the events that occurred. But only to capture the response of the individual since the causes for an event might be numerous to which the individual's influence might be negligible. And the attempt is not to romanticize or criticize the individual's response for it need not necessarily make up the collective response that directed the overall course of the response of the nation and its peoples. But to analyse the individual's response to the inevitable events that marked his uniqueness. And this analysis must be made in the light of uncertainty that was shrouded in the time of Gandhi. We are disclosed of the course of events of the past by historians though not full fledged explanations but the significance of certain happenings are accepted by all of us. And while understanding the character of a past we must look at it in the context of uncertainty similarly as individuals we may not predict our response in the near future so is the case with historical figures who are clouded by the uncertainty of events and though their responses might be contradictory during their lifetime, it marks the genuinity of the case in question.

Gandhi must be regarded as an individual who attempted to identify the essence of his life just like any other individual but his uniqueness lies in his attitude to life that is deeply rooted in framing moral goals for himself and in attaining them. As any other human, Gandhi failed but that did not stop him from exploring. This nature of Gandhi's exploration into life and living can be understood from his political and social ideas. Gandhi's commitment to eleven core values or Ekadashavrat includes Truth, Non-Violence, Non-possession, Non-stealing, fearlessness, celibacy, Swadeshi,
Bread labour, Temperance, Eradication of untouchability and equal respect for all religions. From the above commitments mentioned by Gandhi, we are introduced to a human who had set himself the moral goals for life. The remarkable achievement of Gandhi comes in his persuasive ability through his own actions to produce himself as an example to the rest of the members in the Society. Gandhi is picked out as a strong and compassionate individual among all the other nationalist leaders for his unique response towards humankind. Gandhi, a nationalist, loved India but did not love only India.

All his experiments were for humanity around the globe. That’s why Gandhi and his experiments were successful and still is pondered upon more. India was an experimenting ground for Gandhi and his experiments. The significance of Gandhi’s Ideals did not base only to get India its independence but to show humanity the lesson of love and tolerance as the only weapons that can penetrate deep into a person’s heart. He did not appeal to a person’s mind rather to the conscience of a person. Gandhi can be appreciated or criticized for his opinions on various subject-matter concerning his social, economic and political ideas. The search here is not for an exceptional Gandhi devoid of mistakes but a fellow human being whose philosophy of life and living sets an example for others and his responses to events though may not appear right in the eyes of compatriots or posterity, showcases a strong willed individual who overtime had developed a sense of convictions in regard to certain phenomenons. As Gandhi himself had said that his life is an experiment with truth, the remarkable feature of Gandhi is formulating the moral ends for himself and practicing it throughout his entire lifetime with the help of rightful means. The history of a nation is the history of all individuals of the time but to influence fellow beings to an extent morally and consciously makes Gandhi a remarkable person who had ever trod on earth.
MESSAGE FOR OUR TIMES FROM THE MAHATMA

I offer you peace. I offer you love.
I offer you friendship. I see your beauty.
I hear your needs. I feel your feelings.
My wisdom flows from the highest source.
I salute that source in you.
Let us work together for unity and love.

-Mahatma Gandhi
The controversial passage of the farm bills has engendered a large variety of responses from outrage (notably from the farmer’s groups) to consternation by the political leadership but the economic debate seems to a reification of 'The Protagoras Paradox' with proponents arguing that this will increase farmer’s incomes while opponents point out the important price discovery function that the APMC markets play. The object of this essay is not to address the economics of price determination, but to contextualise the politics of agricultural reform using concepts borrowed from Gandhiji and the communitarian philosopher Alisdair MacIntyre.

But before one gets to discussing the external significance of these ordinances, it would be prudent to discuss each of them on their own merits. The first one is an amendment to "The Essential Commodities Act" which only allows the government to trigger this act in the event of an emergency or in the event of a drastic price rise (to the tune of 100% and 50% with regards to horticultural products and non-perishable (agriculture) goods respectively). The second "The Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020" basically does away with restrictions in states with APMC acts which limits sale to APMC markets, allowing for electronic trade and the abolition of market fees in APMCs. The third and final bill titled "The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020" allows farmers to enter into farming agreements with specified pricing mechanisms and dispute resolution mechanisms with provision for an appellate authority comprised of the SDM.

Towards Self-Rule for the Farmer?
In some ways, the removal of restrictions on selling of crops to only the APMC markets does augment the autonomy of the farmer who is now free to pursue a higher price in either the haat or in private shops as the case might be. The absence of restraints is a precondition for true emancipation of the individual which was envisioned by Gandhi in his concept of Swaraj. Besides as Gandhi noted state action is immoral since it relies on coercion to enforce its will. However, the positive liberty to achieve higher incomes may well be elusive. With the prolonged crisis in the Indian economy taking its toll on the economy, will the extension of marketing actually
improve farm incomes. There is also the fact that this “pro-farmer” legislation has not been carried out in consultation with the farmers themselves as noted by this article. Swaraj can only come when self-rule is won by the hands of those who want it, not foisted upon them by a paternalist state which has been the case throughout the history of postcolonial India

**Farming as a Practise**

All this rhetoric of the objective interest of farmers seems to smell of the spurious odours of utilitarianism and Marxism which claims that the interests of persons and classes which do not conform to their philosophy as either deluded or “endorsing false consciousness”. But the cure for this rhetoric lay not in the Enlightenment tradition, but in the reaction against it as found in the Catholic philosophy of MacIntyre. Rather than posit a scientific theory of politics, he tries to understand practises as essential to the realisation of virtue.

He differentiates between two types of goods associated with a practise such as that of architecture goods which are associated with the practise by social circumstance such as remuneration and fame (external goods) as opposed to goods which can only be realised by the practise itself. One can only enter the practise by accepting the tradition underlying that practise just as the practise of law depends on precedent, and unlike liberalism posits a substantial critique can only come in from the “man in the arena” or the community which practises that tradition.

If we are to acknowledge farming as a practise, we would have to realise that farming would no longer be a mere means for one to make a living, but a practise which generations of parents and children are trying to realise moral virtue. From becoming a mere instrumentality it would become an act of self-affirmation carried out by the living in hour of the dead before them and the unborn yet to come as Edmund Burke would put it.

It is only when the farmer can truly be the maker of his destiny as MacIntyre would want it, that Swaraj would be achieved. Mill and Marx have to be discarded in favour of Gandhi and MacIntyre if we are ever to reach that lofty goal. But if we do not aim for the moon we will never reach the stars.
**BAPU’S MUSIC**

- Kesiraju Sanskruthi

"We shall consider music in a narrow sense to mean the ability to sing and play an instrument well, but, in its wider sense, true music is created only when life is attuned to a single tune and a single time beat. Music is born only where the strings of the heart are not out of tune."

-Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma’s engagement with Music is often painted in anodyne colours. Rajmohan Gandhi said, “He (Mahatma Gandhi) is invariably portrayed as a person who rejected the pleasure of his senses, which is untrue- Gandhi enjoyed Music.” When he was asked if he was fond of music, Bapu replied, “If there was no music and no laughter in me, I would have died of this crushing burden of my work”. Music had a very important role to play in Gandhiji's vision.

Songs during his public prayer meetings provided a basis for his discourse. The songs selected for his prayer meetings were bhajans, hymns, verses from the Holy Quran and the Avesta. He saw music as an example of National Integration. He noticed that people were united at a musical concert regardless of their religion or faith. According to Mahatma, “In true music there is no place for communal differences and hostility”. He believed that chanting the Ramdhun at prayer meetings had nothing to do with one particular religion, but signified the unity of all religions. He believed in celebrating the true essence of the lyric and not the name of the God referred to in the song. He was no connoisseur of Music, but was definitely conscious of the impact music could create on the common person. During a prayer meeting in Madras in the year 1946, Mahatma Gandhi eulogized the divine Telugu compositions of the Saint Tyagaraja. The mention of Tyagaraja’s Telugu composition was a well thought out statement. It was to awaken the conscience of few members of the esteemed Madras Music Academy who insisted on abandoning the Telugu composition of the Saint Composer, and singing only the Tamil Compositions. Gandhiji was of the belief that the essence of the composition ought to be celebrated and it should not matter what language the song is in.
To Gandhiji, Music was a means to communicate his message to the masses. The use of music in meetings should be seen as a holistic nationalist effort to inspire people and bring them together. When he heard Manu Ben sing the lines “Ishwar Allah Tero Naam, Sabko Sanmati De Bhagwan”, he urged that the lines must be included whenever the prayer was sung. In a letter to the Music teacher in the Sabarmati Ashram Pt. Narayan Moreshwar Khare, Bapu wrote, “Music is a constructive activity, which uplifts the soul.” He opined that in a narrow sense, music involved only singing and playing an instrument, but in the wider sense, music is a way to unite people and a catalyst in self-cleansing and self-purification.

In 1926, Pyarelalji wrote in his diary that a group of Sitarists offered to play the Sitar while Bapu spun his Charkha, if Bapu permitted. Bapu agreed but it was his day of silence. He chose to listen to the sounds and work at the Charkha. He reflected in his diary, that the yarn he spun while listening to music was far superior to the days he spun in silence.

Singing hymns and bhajans was part of the daily routine at the Ashram. He looked upon music as a means of spiritual development. He felt that the manner in which a song was sung determined the impact it would create. He inducted Pt Narayan Moreshwar Khare, a disciple of his trusted friend and musician Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar. A typical day at the Ashram began with an hour-long prayer session between 4 am and 5am. Shlokas, Bhajans, Hymns and Geets from the Ashram Bhajanavali would be sung. This was followed by the Ramdhun. In the evening, portions of the Bhagavad Gita were recited, after which Bhajans were sung and the Ramdhun was chanted. Gandhi ji felt that regardless of the language the bhajans were in, the meaning should be known, since it would invoke spiritual conscience in individuals. He translated slokas and Bhajans to English, during his time in Yerwada Jail. Some of the themes among the prayers sung were renunciation, self-effacement, and surrendering to the Almighty. These were attributes of Bapu’s life.

In a letter to Rathindra Nath Tagore, he suggested that along with Rabindra Sangeet and Hindustani Sangeet, Western Music should also be taught at Shantiniketan. Addressing Young India, he stated, “If more people send their children to music classes, it will be a part of their contribution to national uplift.”
Any talk about Mahatma Gandhi’s involvement with Music is incomplete without the mention of Narsi Mehta’s “Vaishnava Janato Tene Kahiye Je”. The Bhajan was Bapu’s favourite and a part of the Ashram Bhajanavali.

“Vaishnava Jana To, Tene Kahiye Je
Peed Paraayi Jaane Re,
Para Dukhe Upakāra Kare To Ye
Mana Abhimāna Na Āne Re”
Call those people Vaishnav who
Feel the pain of others,
Help those who are in misery,
But never let self-conceit enter their mind.”

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Mahatma Gandhi is the personification of the song Vaishnava Janato.

In times when the reach of music has increased by leaps and bounds, we must follow in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi in using Music as a means to not only create Political and social consciousness, but also create a spiritual conscience.
AHIMSA AT HOME - THE CASE OF INCREASING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

-Sahar Basharat

With the advent of a hundred and fifty years of one of India’s most loved leaders - Mahatma Gandhi, it becomes essential to look back at how he impacted Indian society then and continues to do so now. His many philosophies have had a lasting impact on societies across the world and continue to be discussed and debated because of their increasing relevance. “Ahimsa” or the practice of non-violence is one of the Mahatma’s most well known philosophies. This article aims to analyse the practice of ahimsa, or rather, the lack thereof in the domestic aspect of the Indian society today.

Mahatma Gandhi viewed violence to be either passive or physical. While passive violence occurred daily around us consciously and unconsciously, it also fueled physical violence. Gandhiji was against them both and believed that whosoever could practice ahimsa while surrounded by violence was truly blessed. Over the years, ahimsa has reduced to a mere philosophy spoken about by one of India’s freedom fighters and is no longer viewed as something to be actively and consciously achieved everyday.

The ongoing pandemic has shed light to the increase in domestic violence around India. As Indians, we pride ourselves for being the home of Gandhian philosophy and his ideologies are much quoted in domestic politics. Yet, the idea of ahimsa is seldom taken into homes and implemented there. Ahimsa is non violence not just in the political sphere but in every sphere including the societal, personal and professional.

Recent reports have suggested that during the first four months of the pandemic, the number of women who filed for domestic violence was at a ten year high. The reasons for the same could be many but it’s near impossible that any is justifiable. One such reason could be the loss of income and the resulting economic insecurity faced by multiple families across India which has brought many men into the realm of the household. Domestic violence could have occurred out of frustration because of lack of income.
Moreover, since women too have had to give up their jobs and remain at home for longer periods, this has also led to an increase in acts of violence being carried out against them. This is because, by going to work, they are able to contribute financially to the household which has weighed in as a factor preventing violence against them. This absence of work has pushed couples in close quarters increasing the friction between them resulting in physical conflict.

There are other cases where family members engage in substance abuse. Since initially, the sale of alcohol and other such products was limited and in some cases completely absent, many people faced symptoms of withdrawal. This in turn spills over into acting out the symptoms on family members, most often women and girls.

It is imperative that we look at practicing ahimsa in our personal lives and spaces. There is no justification in practicing the act of non violence in our communities and politics but failing to follow the same in our homes. The spike in domestic violence during the pandemic shows us that we have a long way before we realise ahimsa in its fullest sense. We will be ignoring such a drastic increase in domestic violence without addressing it at its roots and finding a solution from there.

Cases of domestic violence have increased across the world during the pandemic and each nation has responded within their own capabilities. However, when the pandemic ends and people go back to work, we should not ignore those women and men who are abused, physically, emotionally and sexually on a daily basis. We cannot end this debate and the help extended by the governments when the pandemic finally ends. On the contrary, our efforts towards creating a society that values the principles of ahimsa within homes should increase.
THREE MESSAGES FROM MAHATMA GANDHI

-Rishvanth Reddy

150 years after his birth, relevant or not, Gandhi remained the most interesting and inevitable figure in the global arena. It is an undeniable truth that he is one of the greatest human beings of this century or even for the centuries to come. Gandhi is a man of multitudes. For his most adherent followers, he is no less than a Prophet. To his dissenters, his methods seem to be forms of Anarchism. He can’t be owned by anyone completely and at the same time denied by any. He is venerated completely by many and also vilified by many more. There are people who shared a frank friendship with Gandhi and also who advanced forthright enmity to him. A very comprehensive understanding of what Gandhi means to people from different walks of life can be understood from the remarks made by a friend from his London days in 1934 and expanded by a contemporary biographer of Gandhi in 2018:

Gandhi ‘is a problem, To Rulers and Governors he is a thorn in their side. To logicians he is a fool. To economists he is a hopeless ignoramus. To materialists he is a dreamer. To communists he is a drag on the wheel. To constitutionalists he represents rank revolution.’ To this list we might add: ‘To Muslim leaders he was a communal Hindu. To Hindu extremists he was a notorious appeaser of Muslims. To the “untouchables” he appeared a defender of high-caste orthodoxy. To the Brahmin he was a reformer in too much of a hurry.

Gandhi almost touched all aspects of human life, East and West, Charka and Machinery, Hinduism and Christianity, Environment and Economics, Science and Humanity, Religion and Insanity, Celibacy and Passions, English and Mother tongue, etc. This diversity in his thoughts forms a very complex legacy of Kathiawar Bania, a failed lawyer, ‘Half-Naked Fakir’ (as described by Winston Churchill) who finally rose to become Mahatma.

Through his writings, speeches, and conversations, he reached to millions across the world. His collected works published by the Publications Division of India consists of 100 bulky volumes. Gandhi took knowledge from every corner of the world (his major influences include Russian
writer Leo Tolstoy, English art critic and political economist John Ruskin, American essayist and poet Henry David Thoreau, Indian philosopher Raychandbhai and Freedom Fighter Gopala Krishna Gokhale) and gave in return knowledge and wisdom to the world. Gandhi’s contributions to the world are amassing. In this essay, I listed out what I believe are the three most significant contributions of Gandhi: Non-Violence, Warnings about the satanic nature of Western Civilisation, and openness to ideas.

More than anything, Gandhi showed to the world that there is a powerful and supreme alternative through which any greatest evil can be fought and won over: Non-Violent struggle. This is the single most significant contribution of Gandhi to the world. This message is adopted by movements across the globe that sought to attain emancipation from brutality and discrimination. This message is closely connected with another important Gandhi’s belief that ‘Ends don’t justify Means’. This anti-consequentialist and the anti-utilitarian assertion are explained in simple terms with an example by Gandhi in his seminal work, Hind Swaraj:

> If I want to deprive you of your watch, I shall certainly have to fight for it. If I want to buy your watch, I have to pay for it; if I want a gift, I have to plead for it, and according to the means I employ, the watch is stolen property, my own property, or a donation. Thus, we see three different results for the three different means employed. Therefore, it is very clear that the means employed decide the nature of ends produced (Gandhi, 2015).

Gandhi led the struggle against the British with nonviolence and with well-thought means. He strongly believed that Independence in itself doesn’t lead to wonders; it depends on how citizens of a nation use it effectively. If the ends are attained with incompetent means, the situation can be compared to the “sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells” (Marx & Engels, 1969) and this is not the kind of Independence he wanted. The fruits of Independence and prosperity we bore today are fruits of Gandhi’s well thought means. Gandhi’s thoughtful means is one of his greatest contributions to political theory. Writing a tribute to Mahatma, Social theorist Charles Drekmeier said:
Gandhian philosophy postulates a universe very different from that governed by the law of the fish. History is as much the record of harmonious adjustment as it is the story of conflict. The technique for adjusting and reconciling differences, a method on which Mahatma Gandhi’s fame must ultimately rest, assumes the moral potential of the wrongdoer, the possibility of reasonableness in the adversary. In his political theory Gandhi concentrated on the means of achieving political ends to a degree uncommon in the history of Western thought. If there is a single theme in his philosophy it is that the character of the means determines that of the results (Cousins, 1969).

Another significant contribution of Gandhi, which is more relevant to the times we live in, is his thoughts on destructive, evil, and satanic western civilization. According to him, “The tendency of the Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality” (Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, 2015).

We clearly see the effects romanticised western ideas had on people across this planet. Western ideas sought to create a greater urge for wealth, status, power and to attain a “commercial society of self-interested rational individuals that was originally advocated in the eighteenth century by such Enlightenment thinkers like Montesquieu, Adam Smith, Voltaire and Kant…in which human beings are programmed to maximise their self-interest” (Mishra, 2017). Whether the universal romanticised ideals as stated above are attained? It’s debatable. But largely and clearly, those romanticised ideas failed humanity.

It can be clearly seen, universally, that the manifestation of globalisation and individualism is far from the ideals it has set to attain. In contrast, what they have actually resulted in, as Indian Essayist Pankaj Mishra calls it, is an ‘Age of Anger’:

The crisis of recent years has uncovered an extensive failure to realise the ideals of endless economic expansion and private wealth creation. Most newly created ‘individuals’ toil within poorly imagined social and political communities and/or states with weakening sovereignty. They not only suffer from the fact that, as Tocqueville wrote in another context, ‘traditional ties, supports and restrictions have been left behind along with their
assurances about a person’s self-worth and identity’. Their isolation has also been intensified by… junking of social democracy by globalised technocratic elites…. Individuals with very different pasts find themselves herded by capitalism and technology into a common present, where grossly unequal distribution of wealth and power have created humiliating new hierarchies (Mishra, 2017).

In this Age of Anger, universally, Humankind “has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order” (Benjamin, 2020). The situations that are stated above, which are globally observed are replicated in India. Gandhi was prophetic in predicting and foreseeing these effects of Western civilization. In 1928, Gandhi warned:

God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 millions took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts. Unless the capitalists of India help to avert that tragedy by becoming trustees of the welfare of the masses and by devoting their talents not to amassing wealth for themselves but to the service of the masses in an altruistic spirit, they will end either by destroying the masses or being destroyed by them (Gandhi, 1928).

Gandhi envisaged a world where there is “an extension from self-interest to group-interest and from acting on the immediate urge of present needs to planning for future requirements” (Kumarappa J., 1945) like honeybees that work for the benefit of many. He wanted to “resist the superficiality of mass produced, pop culture and the way it threatens to displace local indigenous cultural production. We must abandon imitative lifestyles that seek to replicate hedonism, waste and decadence of the West” (Patti, 1981).

Not much and not many paid enough attention to Gandhi’s warnings and his vision, and here we are now trapped in a world of perpetual fear, destruction, pollution, and inequalities. In the name of development and in the nation’s urge to become superpowers and dominate the world, the poor are exploited more, tribal people are forcefully displaced from their homes, traditional livelihoods and employment are made unprofitable, the environment is destroyed and inequality was made
into a modern norm. Maybe the world would have been a much better place to live in than it is today if we have paid attention to Gandhi’s warnings.

The third and significant contribution of Gandhi is having a ‘great openness to ideas.’ In a letter to Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi wrote:

I hope I am as great a believer in free air as the great Poet. I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any (Bhattacharya, 1997).

Gandhi was a great proponent of diverse viewpoints. He debated on many issues. He openly changed his views if they are proven wrong by others or if he finds them to be inconsistent. And he did all this openly. He always encouraged criticisms on his thoughts and methods. He published letters which are written criticising him in his journals and replied to them. This I believe is one of the most unique characteristics of Mahatma.

The notion of being ‘open to ideas’ is now under a serious threat. Indian government especially is turning intolerant towards diverse views. Dissent is crushed and dissenters are marked as anti-national, urban Naxal, ignorant, chamchas of opposition parties (sycophants), and agents of the CIA, and many are put behind the bars. If Gandhi would have been alive, maybe he will also meet the same fate. Having said that, I would like to reiterate the point I have mentioned above: we should look back to Gandhi and preserve and protect the culture of tolerance to diverse views.

These I think are the three most significant contributions of Gandhi. They stand relevant to our times of crisis. The solution to many current days problems lies in Gandhian methods. If not a solution, for sure, Gandhi offers us a framework to work with complex problems.

I would like to conclude with what J C Kumarappa (Gandhi’s student and possibly greatest Gandhian economist) said in 1948 while burying “an urn containing the Mahatma's ashes in a pit in Sevagram Ashram: ‘Instead of burying Gandhi deep in our hearts, we are burying him deep into
the earth”’ (Nanda, 2002, p. 190). Today we shall rethink: Should we leave Gandhi just buried in the earth or bury him deep in our hearts?

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RELIGION AND SECULARISM

Hinduism tells everyone to worship God according to his own Faith or Dharma and so it lives at peace with all the religions.

What does Jesus mean to me? To me, He was one of the greatest teachers, humanity has ever had. To his believers, he was God's only begotten Son.

Islam's distinctive contribution to India's National Culture is its unadulterated belief in the Oneness of God and a practical application of the truth of the Brotherhood of Man for those who are nominally within its fold.

I believe in the fundamental Truth of all great religions of the world. And I believe that if only we could, all of us, read the scriptures of the different Faiths from the stand-point of the followers of those faiths, we should find that they were at the bottom, all one and were all helpful to one another.

- Mahatma Gandhi
MAHATMA GANDHI: RELIGION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

- Kevin James

India today, as it has for decades, is confronting a tremendous crisis of communal violence. Violence that the forces of modernity and the spread of more liberal ideologies through the progression of time has done little to curb. Though a single ruling government cannot be directly blamed for this seemingly never-ending series of violence, India has seen a 28% rise in communal violence from 2014 to 2017 with the entrance of the National Democratic Alliance government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party. Though the Indian constitution proudly declares India a secular state, research conducted on 198 countries in 2017 by the PEW Research Center has ranked India the 4th worst in the world for religious intolerance. The recorded cases of communal violence have continued to increase in the years proceeding 2017, leaving many communities torn and pushing the issue of Hindu-Muslim violence to the forefront of India’s shortcomings. It is in such times, that it is paramount to look back at the principles and teachings of the man who has become synonymous with India itself.

India’s identity has been furnished for many centuries as an essentially religious society, and Gandhi has been regarded pre-eminently as the conductor of that religion. Though this notion isn’t far from the truth as Gandhi himself proclaimed to be a believer in Sanatan Dharma, or the idea of Hinduism as an eternal faith, the basic doctrine of his ideologies has been somewhat misinterpreted by the novice masses. Gandhi perceived religion as one that pervades all of one’s action, ‘a belief in ordered moral government of the universe. This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonizes them and gives them reality’ (Harijan, 10-2-1940, p.445). In his concept of religious doctrine, morality and true service of mankind are the integral formation of its essence. He chose to propagate and follow the principles that worked for the service of the downtrodden and the insistence of self-realization through understanding the dimensions of morality and the idea of being inherently good and divine.

Gandhi ardently believed that the pursuance of material wealth and wants weaken the rationality and wisdom of man, thus digressing society into a state of chaos, confusion and unrest. The only
solution for which lies in the knowledge of one’s self, where he believed God rules every breath and prompts oneself to follow the path of truth and non-violence, which is the Law of God inherent in everyman. From his notion of God as a formless representation of love and dharma, he states that ‘I worship God as Truth only. I have not yet found him, but I am seeking after him. I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in pursuit of this quest. Even if the sacrifice demanded to be my very life, I hope I may be prepared to give it. But as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative Truth as I have conceived it’ (My Religion, p.42). It is precisely in this search for Truth that Gandhi advocates the equal value of all faith. There is no religion outside the sphere of human activity, hence he was certain in his mind that religion could not be held in comparison to one or the other on the standard of value. Gandhi said to segregate them on the claims of superiority, is not only deceitful but also deplorable. Religion was to be measured by the extent to which it influenced the activities of daily life rather than by religious rituals, temple observances, and, though perhaps one must be more guarded about such an assertion, even prayer.

Though Gandhi was raised a devout Hindu by his family, from a young age he was in constant dialogue with men of all religions, which he further developed upon as he grew older. In Islam, Gandhi observed peace, love and most markedly the brotherhood of man. He remarked that ‘my association with the noblest of Mussalmans has taught me to see that Islam has spread not by the power of the sword, but by the prayerful love of an unbroken line of its saints and fakirs.’ (Young India, 10-7-1924). He noted that the religious sufferings and humiliation endured in graceful silence by Prophet Mohammed teaches man the value of simplicity and purity and stands as a beacon of example for the peaceful and non-violent approach of the Hindu concept of Satyagrahi. Through the ideologies presented in Jainism, Gandhi strengthened his own ideas and principles on non-violence towards all beings. He also deeply studied and imbibed in the discipline of Brahmacharya many of the virtues which create the core of Jainism, such as purity, chastity, celibacy, non-possession, compassion, truth, non-stealing, non-attachment and fasting in the tradition of ‘Vratas’ to abstain from physical adornments and temptations. But most elaborate was his journey in the Christian faith.
As expressed in his autobiography, Gandhi first became acquainted with the Bible through a Christian man he met in a vegetarian boarding house in Manchester. Not so much with Hinduism as with Christianity that Gandhi commenced his interrogation of the idea of religion and initiated a life of religious thought. The gospel of personal suffering to win over the enemy was a lesson he learnt from his readings of the New Testament. He was deeply touched by the ‘Sermon on the Mount’, which he considered ‘as the gift of Christianity’ to the world. He observed that ‘Christianity’s particular contribution is that of active love. No other religion says so firmly that God is love’ (Young India, 31-12-1931). To Gandhi, ‘Jesus on the cross chose to meet evil unarmed and unafraid with love and good will for even those who were ready to kill him’ (Tiwari, p.39) was a spirit of sacrifice that had a profound impact on his journey of growth in religion. Thomas Merton, a venerable Christian monk wrote much later in an article called ‘The Gentle Revolutionary’, ‘Gandhi knew the New Testament thoroughly. Whether or not Gandhi “believed in” Jesus in the sense that he had genuine faith in the Gospel would be very difficult to demonstrate, and it is not my business to prove it or disprove it. ... What is certainly true is that Gandhi not only understood the ethic of the Gospel as well, if not in some ways better, than most Christians, and he is one of the very few men of our time who applied Gospel principles to the problems of a political and social existence in such a way that his approach to these problems was inseparably religious and political at the same time’ (The Gentle Revolutionary,12-1964).

Gandhi’s true test with Christianity came not with the faith itself but rather the proselytizing of the colonizers. For the Indian colonial rulers, Christianity was the faith of the enlightened man and it was hence their burden to reinvigorate Hinduism and transform it from ‘grotesque, fearful [and] vindictive, marked by licentious sexuality [and] much maligned monsters, bearing all the marks of a people sunk in depravity’ (V.Lal, p.32) to a proper religion. Though Gandhi himself was not against the practice of conversion, he strongly believed that for it to yield ‘a life of greater dedication to one’s own country, greater surrender to God, greater self-purification’(ibid) it must be a private and inner pursuit. He suggested that in the quest to find Truth and self reflection, ‘we can only pray, if we are not Hindus, not that a Christian should become a Hindu; or if we are Mussalmans, not that a Hindu, or a Christian should become a Mussalman; nor should we even secretly pray that anyone should be converted; but our inmost prayer should be that a Hindu should be a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim, and a Christian a better Christian’ (Sharma 1996).
Hence, he requested those who were forthcoming to convert Indians to Christianity to refrain from conversion as to him, a man of any religion, can attain Truth and be morally upright in the service of society. “Will not the great missionary bodies of India, to whom she owes a deep debt of gratitude for what they have done and are doing, do still better and serve the spirit of Christianity better, by dropping the goal of proselytising but continuing their philanthropic work?” (4:219–225). Gandhi’s involvement and extensive understanding of other faiths created what superficially looked like a series of paradoxes in his own life. Though a devotee of Ram, and venerated the Ramacaritmanas of Tulsidas, he unequivocally rejected passages in Tulsidas that he found offensive or degrading to women and the lower castes. He frequently proclaimed his alignment with the institution of Varnashrama, or the idea that a well-regulated society is to be understood as a collection of varnas or classes. Yet only a handful of leaders at his time had such a great impact in lessening the degrading and humiliating system of Untouchability.

Gandhi in the most enlightened fashion understood a very fundamental truth, that one cannot ever possess a complete understanding and practice of one’s own religion without embracing and understanding the virtues of other faiths. He explained further that ‘just as a tree has one trunk but many branches and leaves, so there is one true and perfect religion, although it is divided into many as it appears through a human intermediary’ (From Yervada Mandir, p.39) Hence ‘this study of other religions besides one’s own will give one a grasp of the rock-bottom unity of all religions and afford a glimpse also of that universal and absolute truth which lies beyond the “dust of creeds and faiths.”’ (Religious Education, 1928).

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ARGUMENTS WITH BILGRAMI: REVISING GANDHI’S IDEAS OF SECULARISM

-Mucheli Rishvanth Reddy

Secularism is one of the important pillars of India’s Constitution and guiding light of its national polity. “In the early years after independence it was believed that secularism would fast acquire a consensus as a value underlying Indian polity. But today it is under fierce attack” (Mohanty, 1989). Notions of Secularism are shrouded by hegemonic tides of elitist pseudo unification forces. This situation compiles and necessities the need to revisit Gandhian principles of Secularism to revert the damage caused to the same.

Mahatma Gandhi is often referred to as “the spiritual father of Indian secularism” (Madan, 1993). But often his ideas are misunderstood. Indian philosopher Akeel Bilgrami, in his essay Two Concepts of Secularism: Reason, Modernity and Archimedean Ideal, said that “Gandhi, no less than the Chitpavan nationalist Tilak…, encouraged the communal Hindu elements in the national movement by using Hindu symbolism to mobilise mass nationalist feeling…. his support of the reactionary Muslim Khilafat movement had exactly the same motives and the same communalist effect on the Muslim population. I will not say a word more about this since this point is very well understood by many who have studied the national movement, even cursorily” (Bilgrami, 1994). This assertion is, using the words unsympathetically, is unsound and over generalised because he provided no concrete evidence for such an assertion. There is also a great irony that follows his assertion that Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, who belongs to Chitpavan caste.

But what could have triggered Bilgrami to make the assertions he made? Possibly Gandhi’s usage of religious terms as idioms in his methods and his continuous emphasis on the role of religion in various spheres of life. So, to assess Bilgrami’s assertion and to understand Gandhi’s Secularism, firstly, it is necessary to understand what meaning does Gandhi attach to various religious idioms which he frequently used and secondly, the contexts in which Gandhi defined the role of religion in human life.
Malabika Pande set to define the actual meanings which Gandhi attached for his religious idioms (Pande, 2009-2010). Four frequently used terms are explained here: ‘Ramrajya’ was used as a synonym for ethical rule based on the consent of the governed where public opinion was highly valued. Supreme ‘Yajna’ (ritual sacrifice) for an Indian was the plying of the charkha, which would give employment to millions of poor people and stop costly imports of cloth. ‘Dana’ (charity) was to dedicate one's all (body, intellect and possessions) to the service of the country. ‘Tapas’ (austerity) consisted in burning with agony at the suffering of the countless untouchables and others who were starving for want of funds or because of famines. As is evident, Gandhi’s use of the religious idiom was related to issues of national and universal importance and not narrow communal interest. Gandhi addresses the fundamental virtues of mankind using these idioms and it is an interesting strand because it helps people connect better with issues and act upon the same.

Now, turning the focus on how Gandhi defined the role of religion. For Gandhi, Religion is a universal force. Gandhi didn’t establish superiority of a religion over another. For Gandhi, “(1) all religions are true, (2) all religions have some error in them, (3) all religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism” (Nehru, 1985). Gandhi’s religious philosophy was so vast that Bhikhu Parekh asserted that, “there was hardly a Hindu religious category and practice to which [Gandhi] did not give a worldly and secular content” (Parekh, 1989).

Gandhi campaigned throughout his life for unity and tolerance among all religions in general and for Hindu-Muslim unity in particular. He also envisaged the need for evolution in religious dogmas with best intentions and practices from other religions. His emphasis is on taking good from all religions, to respect all and never annihilating any particular religion. Saddened by the wide spread communalism in March 1947, he said, “Muslims will not serve Islam if they annihilate the Hindus; rather they would thereby destroy Islam. And if the Hindus believe that they would be able to annihilate Islam it means they would be annihilating Hindu dharma” (Chandra, 2004).

Gandhi completely saw religion as a personal affair. Talking with a Christian missionary in September 1946, Gandhi said, “If I were a dictator, religion and state would be separate. I swear by my religion, I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The state has nothing to do with it. The state would look after your secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations,
currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal concern" (Madan, 1993). Here we can see the firm resolve of Gandhi to separate religion and state. Universality of religion for Gandhi is individual experience and does not require state intervention.

In conclusion, acknowledging that it is foible either to call him a secularist in actual western sense or communal as Bilgrami ascertained, Gandhi is secularist in the sense that he wants to make religion purely a personal affair, separate religion from state, and prevent state interference in individual religious matters. Religion should be a guiding light for individual action, for developing individual conscience and a force for the emotional integration of the nation. These principles that Gandhi apprehended in his philosophy should be taken as pillars on which secularism should be defined and acted upon.

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A FRANK FRIENDSHIP AND ENMITY

Wherever Gandhi went, he transformed situations and lives. As one friend and biographer wrote, “He...changed human beings by regarding them not as what they thought they were but as though they were what they wished to be, and as though the good in them was all of them”

- Benjamin Hoff, The Te of Piglet
MACHIAVELLI OF NON-VIOLENCE

The field of social sciences is extremely vast, catering do a great number of researchers studying and analysing various patterns, to develop incredible theories. Gene Sharp is one such political scientist and sociologist, whose works on non-violence have been responsible for various anti-government uprisings in the world. Nominated for Nobel Peace Prize four times, Gene Sharp was awarded the El-Hebri Peace Education Prize and the Right Livelihood Award. When it comes non-violence, it is impossible to ignore Mahatma Gandhi’s contribution to this field. Gene Sharp, during his initial days of study was influenced by Gandhi’s ideals.

The influenced Gene Sharp
Gene Sharp acknowledged Mahatma Gandhi’s contribution to non-violence and was also influenced by him (Weber, 2007). In 1953–54, Sharp was jailed for nine months after protesting the conscription of soldiers for the Korean War. He wrote his first book, “Gandhi Wields the Weapon of Moral Power: Three Case Histories”, during this time. He was also in constant touch with the great scientist and pacifist Albert Einstein when he was jailed, who also wrote a foreword to this book. Sharp considered Gandhi, as the pioneer of the practical application of non-violence through the Indian independence movement. He thoroughly studied the methods adopted by Gandhi. He considered ‘Gandhism’ as a way of life or a philosophy of life and rejected the narrow-minded approach towards it. He also wrote another book on Gandhi, “Gandhi Faces Storm”.

Pragmatic Gene Sharp- Machiavelli of Non-Violence
As Sharp progresses his study on non-violence, he completely abandons Mahatma Gandhi’s theory of non-violence. In his later works, there are hardly any references about Mahatma Gandhi (Weber, 2007). Gene Sharp saw non-violence in a different perspective from that of Gandhi’s. Non-violence for Gene Sharp was the most practical and efficient method to solve a political crisis, then war. Unlike Gandhi, he didn’t believe that himsawas a sin; it was just ineffective and unnecessary. He was very practical, when he gave solutions to political problems without taking ethical grounds into consideration. He believed Gandhi’s principles were too ‘idealistic’. He also felt Gandhi contradicted himself when he spoke about the different kinds of Non-violence. (Weber, 2007:
237). Sharp wanted to practically use non-violence to solve political problems like, border conflict, overthrowing dictatorship and establishing democracy, which he believed was the ideal form of government.

**Gene Sharp vs Mahatma Gandhi**

Gene Sharp and Gandhi, are at loggerheads on the basic purpose of non-violence. Mahatma Gandhi’s non-violence was based on ‘Satyagraha’, which was meant to be fighting for truth. He believed in dealing with issues on ethical grounds. The Mahatma also believed that the ‘means and ends’ should be equally pure and, if the means are pure the ends will definitely be pure. However, Gene Sharp completely separated ethics and non-violence. Truth is subjective; he considered fighting for truth to be very ambiguous. He separates ‘non-violence as a political technique’ from ‘non-violence as an ethical principle’. Mahatma Gandhi also advocated the ‘conversion theory’ which Sharp, strongly rejected. The ‘Conversion theory’ seeks to change the enemy’s mind and convince him to oblige. Gene Sharp also failed to understand the religious arguments posed by Gandhi.

Though Gene Sharp disagrees with Gandhi on a lot of aspects, he acknowledges the fact that, because of him, non-violence and methods of nonviolent action has risen to 'sufficient prominence' in the world (Weber, 2007). Mahatma Gandhi may have borrowed the idea of non-violence from Thoreau and others, but he was the first one to practically use this method on such a large scale. Moreover, in reply to the claim that Gandhi contradicted himself for the methods he used, Gandhi always believed in conducting experiments with truth and exploring it deeply.

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There is no doubt that the Iron man of India was the most trusted lieutenant and an ardent follower of Mahatma Gandhi. History bears evidence proving the intensity of Gandhi’s influence on Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The fellow barristers from Gujarat have always worked towards the same goal of unity and harmony. Patel’s entry into the nationalist movement, his course of actions during the freedom struggle and his decisions as a member of constituent assembly exhibits the deep-rooted Gandhian ideals in him. This can be understood by a simple interpretation of Patel’s activities on three major issues at three different time periods of the nationalist movement.

**Pre-Independence**

The year 1918 marks the full-fledged entry of Patel into the nationalist movement through the Kheda Satyagraha in Gujarat. He was a principal figure in the absence of Gandhi, leading the farmers against unfair agricultural cess of British Raj and instilling the importance of collective action among peasants. When one tries to trace the roots of his interest and arrival in the struggle, it is evident that the Champaran agitation led by Gandhi in 1916 had played the pivotal role. Similar movement like this which is considered Patel’s most famous intervention is the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1925 which earned him the title ‘Sardar’. The method used by him in this venture replicates that which was used by Gandhi along with a touch of his own strategic mind. Patel urged the farmers of Bardoli, who were suffering from famine, to refuse tax payment to the British as an effort against the 30% increase in the tax rate. He instructed the people to remain non-violent to the incitements of British and continue their protest until the cancellation of taxes. Patel added the aspect of his strategic mind by appointing volunteers at each village to signal the arrival of tax inspectors. On hearing the signal, all the villagers hid in the jungle, thus stopping the tax inspectors from seizure of properties.

The outcome of his movement was a huge success leading to cancellation of taxes and making Patel one of the important leaders in the then political arena (Singh, 2013). While analyzing this course of events, it is observable that Patel had placed huge importance on farmers similar to Gandhi which later formed a significant part of Gandhi’s Constructive Programme (M.K.Gandhi,
Thus one can realize that the beginning of Patel’s political career and methodology has been the fruit of Gandhian influence.

Independence

An event that shook the entire India during independence was the partition. Though Patel and Gandhi seemed to have differences of opinion in this matter, Patel was more practical in it while Gandhi was more idealistic. Patel realized that if Congress rejected the May 16 plan of the Cabinet Mission, then the Muslim League would be called to form the government which would strengthen the possibility of partition. Thus, Patel convinced Gandhi and approved the May 16 plan. Later, he was outraged by Jinnah’s Direct Action, induction of League ministers into the government and revalidation of the grouping scheme in the May 16 plan by British which was earlier rejected by Congress. He was aware of Jinnah’s popular support among Muslims and the possibilities of Hindu-Muslim war. He realized that if the central government continues to be weak and divided, the possibility of a united India along with princely states would remain a dream. He had perceived the existence of a de-facto Pakistan in Punjab and Bengal. Thus, he convinced Gandhi and Congress over the partition.

Though Patel seemed to take double standards as he initially called Pakistan as Jinnah’s mad dream and later supported partition, we find an underlying idea of establishing the Gandhian ideals of unity, peace and harmony in either decision. He initially tried to avoid partition to uphold unity and later approved it to sustain peace and harmony though the aftermath of partition was expected by none (Singh, 2013).

Post-Independence

After Independence, Patel had a major tussle with Ambedkar over reservation for untouchables. Patel was aware of Gandhi’s mind during Poona Pact and perceived the chances of division among Hindus. Post-independence, Patel who was the Chairman of Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities and Tribes made maximum opposition to all the electoral ideas of Ambedkar. He reversed Ambedkar’s idea of qualified joint electorate ensuring 20% of Dalit votes as qualifier
to acquire a reserved seat. The draft constitution provided neither separate nor qualified joint electorates and as a step further, in May 1948, Patel proposed to abolish reservation citing the violent outcomes of partition and abolition of untouchability by the constitution (Vundru, 2018). In this matter, we find a direct correlation of Patel’s and Gandhi’s ideas.

As it is evident that Patel’s ideals have always been in tandem with Gandhi, it leads one to question if Patel was a blind disciple or a practical realist. He has followed Gandhi and his advice throughout his political career and also gave up the chance of becoming India’s first prime minister. At the same time, he has also tried to put Gandhi’s ideals, often considered idealistic, into practice which is evident in all the three scenarios considered above and was also successful to some extent. Thus, the answer to such a question is left debatable.

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Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, popularly known as Babasaheb Ambedkar was born on 14th April, 1891 in the military cantonment of Mhow, Central Province (now Madhya Pradesh). He was born into a poor low caste Mahar family of 14 children. Being born a Dalit, he was treated as an “untouchable” at school. This ill treatment is what led to him fighting for the rights of the Dalits.

The relationship Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar shared, is often considered to be controversial and sometimes over exaggerated by their followers. They exchanged views on various matters on many occasions. The rivalry between the contemporaries lives on, through bitter conversations and debates on television, in films, books, newspaper articles and even street corner casual conversations. B.R Ambedkar said, “I know Gandhi better than his disciples. They came to him as devotees and saw Mahatma. I was an opponent and saw the bare man in him. He showed me his fangs”. He also said, “I have never called him Mahatma, he doesn’t deserve the title, not even the point of his morality”. These quotes do paint a picture of antipathy between them due to the differences of opinions they have.

Gandhi wished to save Hinduism by abolishing untouchability, whereas Ambedkar saw a solution for his people outside the fold of the dominant religion of the Indian people. Gandhi was a rural romantic, who wished to make the self-governing village, the bedrock of free India; Ambedkar an admirer of city life and modern technology who dismissed the Indian village as a den of iniquity. Gandhi sought for reform and Ambedkar cried for revolution and annihilation of the caste system. Gandhi was a crypto-anarchist who favoured non-violent protest while being suspicious of the state; Ambedkar a steadfast constitutionalist, who worked within the state and sought solutions to social problems with the aid of the state. (Ramachandra Guha,2010, p 33). Definitely no one can be the same and are bound to have differences, but there will also be few similarities and B.R Ambedkar and Gandhiji were no exception to this.

To begin with, both were educated in foreign countries. Dr. B.R Ambedkar did his studies from the University of Columbia and later from London School of Economics. Gandhiji too did his law education from University College of London Law School. Both started their struggle for
achieving a feeling of safety, acceptance and respect for their group of people. For Gandhiji it was Indians as whole, and for Dr B.R Ambedkar, it was the Dalits specifically. Both victims of discrimination, returned from abroad to help the depressed and exploited. Their return was a ray of hope in the lives of many. B.R Ambedkar says “caste is a state of mind. It is a disease of mind” and Gandhi says “the purification required is not of the untouchables but of the so-called superior castes”. Mahatma believed in the Varnashrama system in the Vedic sense but was not in support of the innumerable divisions of society into castes. Varnashrama is inherent in human nature and Hinduism has simply reduced it to a science. It does attach to birth. The division, however, into innumerable castes is an unwarranted liberty taken with the doctrine (M.K. Gandhi, 1921).

The biggest similarity lay in the faith in non-violence, where both believed that a bullet would not realise their goals. Ambedkar believed that violence destroyed too many people and valued ends that one needs for an ideal democratic community. Gandhi said “I object to violence because it appears to do good. The good is only temporary and the evil it does is permanent”. In his essay ‘Gandhi-Ambedkar Interface: When shall the Twain meet’, Suhas Palshikar stated that Gandhi and Ambedkar were fundamentally concerned with emancipation, even though their approach and area of concentration were different. Following Palshikar in bringing out the similarity through the goal of emancipation, Pantham wrote “In their truly emancipatory though largely different ways, Gandhi and Ambedkar… both shared a genuine and deep commitment to the eradication of untouchability”. (Pantham, 2009). But it can be commonly agreed upon that though Ambedkar and Gandhiji were political rivals in their time, we realise now, that their efforts and contributions complemented each other’s.

B. R Ambedkar studied several social models and religions as he rejected Hinduism due to its caste system. He was approached by several scholars of different religion and he was finally attracted by the beliefs of Marxism and the teachings of Buddhism. Marxism came with a belief of no classes and differences in the society and Buddhism came with the teachings of tolerance, love for all and nonviolence. Finally, after a long period B. R Ambedkar chose Buddhism due to its nonviolent principle and Marxism for it allowed maintaining a continuous rule by the government and to safeguard the cadre and hence maintain a firm hand.
B. R Ambedkar and Gandhi had several differences but the similarities in few ideologies is what makes them the most loved and respected. Non-violence, satyagraha, dhamma and equality are few among their common ideologies. Gandhiji and Ambedkar reacted against social evils in their own way. The end was the same but the perception of the problem and the approach to solving the problem were different. The greatest similarity they have, is their vision. The vision of an ideal Indian society in which benefits and privileges are not concentrated in the hands of only a section of the society but are shared by all.

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There is a very specific reason for including this comparison in this collection of essays. One is an apostle of non-violence and the other one is an exponent of war and bloodshed. Whatever they may be in their lives, both destined to the same fate in their own countries, where they lived and fought for. Relationship between these two contemporaries was described by Rajmohan Gandhi as ‘Vexed Relationship’. Gandhi and Churchill met for the first and the last time in 1906 in London when both were not very well known figures. At that time, Churchill was colonial secretary and Gandhi was in England that time to seek imperial protection for South Africa’s Indians. This 1906 interview “was cordial enough, but the torchbearers of Empire were fated to clash” (Gandhi, 2017) till their death.

One of the most remembered and popular clashes between these two figures occurred in February 1931, when Viceroy Lord Irwin invited Gandhi to the Empire’s grand mansion (Rashtrapati Bhawan) in New Delhi to talk about the dominion status for India. After this incident, Churchill wrote to Irwin that “a seditious Middle Temple lawyer now posing as a Fakir…striding half-naked up the steps of the viceregal palace to parley on equal terms with the King-emperor” (Churchill made a factual mistake here: Gandhi studied in Inner Temple and not the Middle Temple in London). What is more profound and less known is the subtle and cardinal reply of Gandhi on Churchill’s comments. Gandhi wrote to Churchill nearly fourteen years after Churchill's comments in 1944. Here I reproduce the full text of that letter:

_Dear Prime Minister,_

_You are reported to have the desire to crush the ‘naked-fakir’, as you are said to have described me. I have been long trying to be a fakir and that, naked- a more difficult task. I therefore regard the expression as a compliment though unintended. I approach you then as such and ask you to trust and use me for sake of your people and mine and through them those of the world._

_Your sincere friend,_

_M. K. Gandhi_

It is not known whether Churchill read this letter or not. But it is certain that no reply came from Churchill for this letter. What could have prompted Gandhi to write this letter is a derogatory
message from Churchill to viceroy Lord Wavell in May 1944 where Churchill sent him ‘a peevish telegram to ask why Gandhi haven’t died yet’. This is a speculation. But it surely reflects the frank enmity that Churchill extended to Gandhi.

These two rivals shared such a ‘vexed relationship’ throughout their life. Arthur Herman in his seminal work Gandhi and Churchill: The Epic Rivalry That Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age drew an interesting parallel between these two. Both Churchill and Gandhi ended their lives getting “what they most wanted, but at the cost of what they most treasured. Gandhi and Churchill both died as heroes to their fellow countrymen and as icons to the rest of the world. But what they are celebrated for achieving is not what they had set out to do” (Herman, 2009).

Churchill set to attain the imperial grandeur to his country. He lived and worked tirelessly towards this dream. His leadership in driving British to victory in World War II is a testimony for his vision. But Britons did not live up to his dreams. “Britons preferred to remain human beings rather than become heroes. To his sorrow, Churchill was left with fragments of his broken dream, including the dream of the Raj in India” (Herman, 2009).

Gandhi also set out to create an Independent self-sufficient India with Ahimsa and Satyagraha as his weapons to bring down the mighty British empire. He sustained his dream throughout his struggle for freeing India from shackles of foreign rule. But when his goal was in sight, “his vision lost its values to others if not to him. Gandhi too was left with dream’s broken fragments, while India dissolved into chaos and violence. On the eve of Independence, India was partitioned and there is bloodshed in many parts of the country. Gandhi didn’t participate in the first Independence Day celebrations. Religious harmony and tolerance were an integral part of Gandhian ideals and finally, he was assassinated in the hands of a religious fanatic just months after Independence.

In short, “the world refused to be reshaped in either Churchill’s or Gandhi’s image….in Gandhi’s case, to a world without violence or exploitation, in Churchill’s, to a British Empire blossoming into a robust union of English-speaking peoples” (Herman, 2009). This is why it can be said that both were destined to a ‘common fate’. Here the problem is not to assess whose ideals were relevant or irrelevant, good or bad but it is important to realise how we have taken for granted their
contributions and forgotten their visions. Gandhi and Churchill died sad men seeing their respective nations moving away from what they envisaged for it.

REFERENCES