

Can Mahatma Gandhi be Called a Third World Precursor of Development Ethics?

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Introduction

Development ethics is a branch of practical ethics that deals with the ends and means of local, national and global development from an ethical perspective. It tries to solve various problems regarding the nature of ethically desirable development. It also discusses various moral dilemmas that we encounter in our practice of development. It studies such normative issues as the meaning of good life, social justice and the human attitude towards nature. This branch of practical ethics is a meeting place of different areas of knowledge such as economics, political sciences, religious studies, anthropology, environmental studies, ecology, ethics, and others. Though development ethics is a relatively new field of study, it can be traced back to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. But, with the rise of an economic and humanistic approach in economy and society in the first half of the 20th century, viewing development from an ethical standpoint came to the fore. There the roles of the French economist Louis-Joseph Lebert (1897–1966), his American student Denis Goulet (1931–2006) and Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) from India were extremely significant. But here I would like to focus mainly on Mahatma Gandhi. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, known as *Mahatma*, meaning 'great-souled', who was the greatest political and ideological leader of Indian nationalism and development movements. As a part of his wider involvement in the Indian independence movement, that is to say, as a part of one of his main concerns of changing the then ruling paradigm by making India free of colonialism, he worked ways out to wrestle India's extreme poverty, backwardness and socio-economic challenges. Yet he is not considered to be an academic thinker of development by many. In this paper, I would like to put an endeavor to show that

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Gandhi can also be regarded as a precursor of development ethics from the third world.

Gandhi's Ideas of Development

In Gandhi's time, the term 'development' was not in vogue in the same way as it is today. Hence we see his use of the term 'progress' instead of the term 'development,' and the term has more affinity to ethics. In a speech titled "Does economic progress clash with real progress?" delivered at Muir Central College of Economic Society in Allahabad in 1916, Gandhi (*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWG), vol. 13: 311) said, "By economic progress, I take it, we mean material advancement without limit and by real progress we mean moral progress, which again is the same thing as progress of the permanent element in us". As against materialistic thinking of development which is based heavily on material achievements, Gandhi pioneered spiritual development and harmony. Citing the examples of the Romans and the Egyptians who suffered a moral fall after achieving a plethora of material goods, Gandhi mentioned that the society that thrived materialistically experienced a moral fall (CWG, vol. 13: 312-3). Gandhi's concept of development aimed at the preservation of human dignity rather than material development. For Gandhi, in economic development, the concept of self-respect¹ was very important since it could be used as a criterion of measuring the development of the villagers (Dasgupta 1996, 179). So his concept of economic development was more concerned with the spiritual development than the raising of living standards of man. In relation to his emphasis on the spiritual development, we find in him a distinction between "standard of living" and "standard of life." The former favors the material and physical standard of food, cloth and housing whereas the latter favors cultural and spiritual values and qualities along with material advancement. This distinction is surely ethical in character, which shows that Gandhi's development

¹ Dasgupta (1996, 179) observes that the concept of self-respect was the most important 'primary good' for Gandhi like Rawls. He also comments that Gandhian concern of the concept of self-respect is absent in the literature of development economics.

thinking is utterly centered on ethics. According to him, in measuring the value of an industry, its effect on the bodies, soul and spirit of the people employed in it are more crucial than the dividends it pays to shareholders. In fact, supreme considerations are to be given to man and morality than to money. This shows that Gandhi can be considered as a development ethicist, because like the mainstream development ethicists, Gandhi emphasized the qualitative enrichment of human beings in all relevant aspects of human life which is the true indicator of development. As for Goulet (2010, 61), “The essential task of development ethics is to render development decisions and actions humane.”

Gandhi’s development thinking is spiritual in character, because spirituality in its true sense works as a motivation to his idea of development (Singh 2006, 107). Consistent with his spiritual character, Gandhi suggested “Seven Social Sins” to be avoided for harmonious coexistence. They are as follows:

- i. *Consumption without conscience.*
- ii. *Knowledge without character.*
- iii. *Wealth without labor.*
- iv. *Business without morality.*
- v. *Religious duty without sacrifice.*
- vi. *Science without human sense.*
- vii. *Politics without principles.*

For harmonious coexistence of man and nature, we should follow ethical values as it will ensure sustainability for the well-being of the human beings. For this reason, rethinking development is necessary so that we can shift from the present-day development crisis for which these social sins are responsible. But this rethinking should in line with the value of one’s own culture. For Gandhi, this foundational value is *ahimsa* (non-violence, which he understood as ‘firmness in the truth’) which is ‘sacredness of land’ for Aldo Leopold (Singh 2011, 19-20).

Ahimsa as a Foundational Ethics of Gandhi's Development Thinking

Gandhi's understanding of development is mainly characterized by its affinity to the principles and objectives of non-violent humanistic socialism, because contrary to many Indian socialists and communists of his time, Gandhi anathematized all notions of class warfare and concepts of class-based revolution, which he saw as causes of social violence and disharmony. He believed that socialism could only be achieved through non-violent and democratic method. He also believed that any resort to class-war and mutual hatred would prove to be suicidal. Hence he formulated a vision and practice of development for India centered on values of non-violent cooperation among social agents. So it is necessary to compose some words on this foundational ethics of *ahimsa* upon which his development thinking is grounded.

The concept of *ahimsa* in Indian philosophy is at least as old as the Vedas. It is evident from the command of the Veda, "*ma himsyat sarva bhutani*," meaning "Do not kill any living being." We find this notion also in the Jaina Tirthankar Mahavira and the Buddha who were in favor of the practice of *ahimsa* in the religious field with the lone goal of guiding suffering individuals towards a trouble-free state of *moksha* (emancipation). But, as Gandhi was a man of the masses, and as he was interested in the social, economic, political and mundane well-being of the people, his sole purpose was to bring heaven down on earth by spiritualizing secular life. So with the intention of developing *ahimsa* as a modern concept with broad political consequences, Gandhi drew various ideas from the Jainas, the Buddha, the *Bhagavadgita*, the *Bible*, and from the writings of Leo Tolstoy and Henry David Thoreau. Thus he became the first man in the history of Indian philosophy who applied the concept of *ahimsa* to practical life (Sharma 1965, 325-6).

Mahatma Gandhi expounded non-violent struggle for numerous reasons. Violently backed injustice is often resisted by violent means. But it carries to dangers that are disregarded. Though sometimes violent resistance is able to remove an evil, it leaves everything else unchanged. If victory is ever achieved, it

leaves many deaths and resentful enemies. Though violence is resorted to capture the power that is centralized and authoritarian “[i]n practice the violent battle against power creates a counter-power hierarchy which itself becomes centralized and authoritarian” (Gasper 2004, 128). As Gandhi (1949, vol. II: 265) pointed out, “Impure means result in an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalized by cutting off the prince’s head, nor can the process of cutting off equalize the employer and the employed.”

Considering its efficacy, Gandhi did not restrict his adherence to *ahimsa* to his personal life only; rather he applied it to the service of fellow beings. The goal of non-violent action is two-dimensional: self-purification and social well-being (Sharma 1965, 331). It is Gandhi’s teaching that if somebody slaps you on the left cheek, turn your right cheek towards him, because the best way to overcome evil is not to aggress the aggressor but to change his heart by refusing to retaliate.² This humanistic religion of Gandhi has social impact as the notion of *ahimsa* implies self-sacrifice. One dimension of this self-sacrifice is one’s sacrifice of his will of retaliation. In this way, Gandhi’s *ahimsa* implies a classless society and a world without economic, political or social inequalities, because if the principle of *ahimsa* is applied to the life of the individuals and of communities, it should beget eternal peace to mankind. Hence Gandhi thought that the cruel inequality prevalent in the world would be removed by purely non-violent means. Though Gandhi was in sheer agreement with the socialist principle of universal brotherhood and income equality, he was averse to the very concept of a violent class struggle. He also severely criticized those who following the tradition of Adam Smith supported *laissez-faire* economic system on the ground that the ultimate good of a society resulted from the selfish run behind individual economic gain (See Nachane 2008, 21). Nachane (21) sees Gandhi’s theory of

² This sort of teaching is not unique in the history of mankind. It was not first taught by Gandhi. Jesus Christ also preaches that when someone is slapped on the right cheek, he should not go for revenge, but should rather offer the other cheek to be slapped.

trusteeship³ as “uniquely Gandhian golden mean between the ruthless acquisitive philosophy of capitalism and the destructive violent philosophy of communism.” I. C. Sharma (1965, 334), therefore, sees the Gandhism as “a golden mean between the two extremes of individualism, based on a capitalistic outlook of the exploitation of the labour of others, and communism, which reduces an individual to a mere cog in the social machinery and has no respect either for the spirit in man or for fundamental human rights. The path of non-violence advocated by Gandhi raises above all artificial barriers of caste, creed, religion and nationality, and yet raises the dignity of man in all spheres of life.”

Moreover, Gandhi viewed *ahimsa* as not one which is restricted to human life only. He also considered all natural phenomena as divine, sacred and of equal value, because his view of *ahimsa* is based on the idea of total spiritual interconnectedness and divinity of life as a whole. So we should not consume anything from nature arbitrarily. Rather as human beings, we have to take the main responsibility towards nature through a moral approach.⁴ Here it is relevant to mention that Gandhi said to control our wants, because he did understand that human wants given the freedom of choice were insatiable. This wants control theory of Gandhi, I think, can be a very significant theory in the ethics of development as it simultaneously solves the problem of consumerism and unsustainable resource use. How? Reducing our wants will minimize the consumption which will in turn reduce the burden on nature by avoiding hazardous wastes. As Kumarappa (1951) pointed out, “More and more things are produced to supply our primary needs, less and less will be the violence. The more we produce luxuries, the greater will be the violence that is generated. If you starve people and try to produce luxury articles, it will lead to

³ Regarding his theory of trusteeship, Gandhi (CWG, vol. 36: 289) said: “What I expect of you ... is that you should hold all your riches as a trust to be used solely in the interests of those who sweat for you, and to whose industry and labour you owe all your position and prosperity. I want you to make your labourers co-partners of your wealth.”

⁴ Man's relation to the nature will be discussed in the subsection titled “*Sarvodaya*.”

violence. Production of a luxury like tobacco at the cost of a primary need like cereals, will weigh the scales towards violence.”

Gandhi and Sustainable Development

Though Gandhi's work did not use the label of development ethics, it covered some of development ethics' concerns (Cf. Gasper 2004, 16). As an example of it, we can mention the traces of what we today call sustainable development. His twenty-one years of experience in South Africa, according to Singh (2006, 109), helped Gandhi to look at the world from a 'poverty-trapped peasant's perspective', rather than from a 'middle-class bourgeois perspective', which, in turn, led him to the creation of three principles of sustainable development: *sarvodaya*, *swadeshi* and *satyagraha*.

Before discussing in details the three principles of sustainable development that we can extract from what Gandhi said and practiced, it is pertinent, I think, to mention the definition of sustainable development given by the United Nations in 1987. Here, it will not also be irrelevant if we could connect Gandhi's ideas of development with this definition to show how Gandhi prudently indicated some of the agendas of sustainable development.

According to the definition given by the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development's publication *Our Common Future* (1987, 43) which is also known as "The Brundtland Report 1987", "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Though the definition of the Brundtland Report 1987 is the most celebrated definition of sustainable development, there are many interpretations of it. Among them, one of the most quoted interpretations of sustainable development is the one adopted by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) which is given below: "Sustainable development is a process of change in which the direction of investment, the orientation of technology, the allocation of resources, and the development and functioning of institutions [are directed] to meet present needs and aspirations without

endangering the capacity of natural systems to absorb the effects of human activities, and without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and aspirations” (cited in Harris, Pritchard, and Rabins 2009, 193). This is an echo of what *Our Common Future* (1987, 46) says: “In essence, sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations.” This formal definition of sustainable development given by the United Nations offers us three dimensions or pillars – also known as “the triple bottom line”: environmental protection, economic development, and social equity (Cf. Elkington 1997, 2 and 397). So it can be said that sustainable development is an integral framework in which environmental protection, economic development, and social equity are considered to be inseparably connected for environmental, economic and social well-being of today and tomorrow.

Now, let’s elucidate Gandhi’s creation of the three principles of sustainable development with reference to his thoughts of development.

(1) *Sarvodaya*

An important principle of Gandhi’s sustainable development is *sarvodaya* (the uplifting of all or well-being for all or universal welfare). *Sarvodaya* as proposed by Gandhi is a philosophy of revival and peace of a society whose road to progress and development comes to a dead-end if it loses the ethical code. Gandhi initiated the term from two Sanskrit roots: *sarva* (all) and *udaya* (uplift) meaning “the uplift of all” (or as Gandhi’s autobiography glossed, “the welfare of all” (Gandhi n.d., 187). Gandhi came to use this term for the ideal of his own political economy which he coined first as the title of his 1908 translation of John Ruskin’s tract on political economy, *Unto This Last*. One of Gandhi’s close friends in South Africa gave him this book to read on a twenty-four-hour train trip from Johannesburg to Durban. After reading the book, he resolved to amend his life as the ideals of

the book dictate. Gandhi later admitted that the book brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in his life. He was so impressed by the book that he translated (or more precisely paraphrased) it into Gujrati under the title of *Sarvodaya* (the welfare of all). Thereafter *sarvodaya* became a central plank of Gandhi's philosophy. The teachings of *Unto This Last* as Gandhi understood are (a) the good of all contains the good of the individual, (b) all sorts of works are equally valuable, and (c) a life of labor is the life of worth living (Gandhi n.d., 187).

The Gandhian ideal of *sarvodaya* encompassed the dignity of labor, an equitable distribution of wealth, communal self-sufficiency and individual freedom. Here Gandhi's vision of economic development was holistic. Gandhi maintained that society should not strive for the material advancement (economic) only at the cost of social, moral or spiritual impoverishment (non-economic). It should try for the economic, social, spiritual and physical well-being of all, not just the majority. He favored the well-being of every individual, because he thought that if economics wanted to work for human welfare rather than individual welfare, the goal had to be *sarvodaya*, the welfare of all. As Gandhi (CWG, vol. 32: 402) asserted that "a votary of ahimsa cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula. He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realise the ideal."

Moreover, Gandhi's principle of *sarvodaya* is not limited to human beings only. It also looks for the welfare of the natural environment. This universality of ethics has metaphysical ground because of Gandhi's belief in the essential unity of all existence. It is this belief in the essential unity of all existence that affects man's relationship with the animal kingdom and with the natural world as a whole. As a result of his relationship with them, man is not permitted or tolerated to implement any violence to animals and any insensitive, deliberate exploitation of nature. Gandhi mentioned the cessation of killing animals for food and the acceptance of a vegetarian diet as signs of spiritual progress. But this does not mean that Gandhi was antagonistic to the killing of animals for food, to the killing of harmful animals, and to the killing of essential plants to a vegetarian diet. Gandhi admitted that though man is striving for perfection, in this imperfect world at times he has to make

concessions to human weakness. He should not be obsessed with non-violence. Rather in cases of moral dilemma, a man may need to act contrary to his fundamental principle or ideal. But it does not mean that here the standard of the ideal (for example, of non-violence) is lowered or compromised. It is true that Gandhi permitted the destruction of some forms of life. But at the same time it is also true that he firmly believed in the essential unity of all life and the principle of non-violence (See Richards 1991, 64-6). The kind of leeway from the principle of non-violence we see in Gandhi in some cases is also seen in Aldo Leopold's land ethic. Leopold's land ethic allows us not to be overly concerned with some tiny issues like killing a mosquito, cutting a tree, or tearing up a lawn as, according to the theory, the overall functioning of the system is the main and primary concern (See Jardins 2001, 189).

In this way, Gandhi's principle of *sarvodaya* implies the essential unity and equality of all earthly creatures. This sort of sympathetic or empathetic approach to the natural world that Gandhi taught is an important agenda of sustainable development program.

(2) *Swadeshi* and *Swaraj*

The duty of helping one's neighbors is at the core of Gandhi's *swadeshi* principle, which is apparent in his definition of *swadeshi* as "that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote" (*The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (SWG), vol. VI: 336). Consistent with the aforementioned definition, Gandhi (CWG, vol. 36: 400) also defined *swadeshi* as "a principle which is broken when one professes to serve those who are more remote in preference to those who are near." It shows that Gandhi's *swadeshi* principle is a normative concept of preference, which can be called, following Dasgupta (1996, 13), a principle of 'ethical preference.'

Gandhi used the terms *swadeshi* and *swaraj* (self-government) synonymously. We find that there are four dimensions of Gandhi's notion of *swaraj* which are complementary to each other though they are about four different characteristics of *swaraj*. They are a) national independence; b) political freedom of the individual; c)

economic freedom of the individual; and d) spiritual freedom of the individual or self-rule (Chakrabarty 2006, 35). These dimensions cover the removal of untouchability, end of Brahmin-non-Brahmin dispute, unity of Hindus and Muslims, and complete religious freedom with respect for other religious faiths, self-reliance and self-protection of every village and town, mutual respect between the ruled and the ruler and between capital and labor, and the equality of all etc.

However, Gandhi's concept of *swadeshi* can be traced back to the economic circumstances of the closing decades of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century. In response to the series of measures passed by the British parliament in the 18th century to discourage the use of Indian textiles in Britain and the technological superiority enjoyed by British textiles by the middle of the 19th century that was seriously putting in jeopardy the very existence of the handloom cottage industry in India, Gandhi launched in the 1930s the *swadeshi* movement based on the principles of economic self-sufficiency. Gandhi regarded European-made products as not only the symbols of British colonialism but also the source of mass unemployment and poverty, as European industrial goods had left many millions of India's workers, craftsmen and women without a means of living. So his principle restricted all Indians to the exclusive use of articles made in India and insisted on economic independence that could help to revive village industries. Thus Gandhi was greatly concerned with the problem of protecting village crafts against further intrusion from foreign industry, and the *swadeshi* concept which embodied this concern became the progenitor of his entire thinking on economic issues as it would go a long way to removing the poverty of the people.

To make the village a self-sufficient unit, Gandhi opposed large-scale industrialization, and favored small local industries. Gandhi opposed industrialization mainly on the ground that whatever development had occurred in British India's organized sector over the fifty years 1881–1931 as a result of industrialization was counterbalanced by the fall in the chasm of unemployment in the traditional sector. As Gandhi (CWG, vol. 87: 326) said, "I am

against machines just because they deprive men of their employment and render them jobless. I oppose them not because they are machines but because they create unemployment.” Gandhi (SWG, vol. VI: 376) believed that it was possible that industrialization on a mass-scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the people as the problem of competition and marketing came in, because much of the organization of machinery was used for the purpose of concentrating wealth and power in the hands of the few and for the exploitation of the many. Hence Gandhi said that investment in large-scale industry and infrastructure was to be kept to the lowest possible consistent level with the small-scale sector growth plan. But from this it cannot be surmised that he was totally antagonistic to industrialization; rather he admitted the necessity of a moderate amount of industrialization with the conditions that heavy industries would be centralized and nationalized and they would occupy the least part of the vast national activity which would be mainly in the villages. So he believed that for an economy to be self-containing, it should manufacture mainly for its use even if that necessitates the use of modern machines and tools, provided it is not used as a means of exploitation of others.

Concomitant of his deep rooted antagonism to industrialization, Gandhi was also skeptic to the success of technology in British India. He was against that sort of technology which was essentially ‘labor replacing’ and often ‘labor degrading.’ So to be an appropriate technology, it, according to Gandhi, should have two criteria: (a) not labor displacing, and (b) conducive to increasing the general well-being (Nachane 2008, 19). So through his antagonism to industrialization and technology “what Gandhi is advocating is a proper philosophy of work which neither degrades nor dehumanizes people and which shows concern for the quality of life of ordinary people,” (Richards 1991, 123) and “this philosophy is consistent with his teaching concerning the oneness of humanity and the unity of life” (124).⁵ That is why Gandhi defined a helpful machine as “any machinery which does not deprive masses of men of the opportunity to labour, but which helps the individual and

⁵ A discussion on the unity of life can be found in the sub-section “*Sarvodaya*.”

adds to his efficiency, and which a man can handle at will without being its slave" (CWG, vol. 61: 187).

With his concept of *swadeshi*, Gandhi linked the wearing of *khadi* and the use of *charkha* (spinning-wheel) as symbols of self-help, freedom and national prosperity as well as clear indications of the dignity of labor. Gandhi described them also as symbols of non-violent economic self-sufficiency. As he (SWG, vol. VI: 393) said, "When once we have revived the one industry (*Khadi*), all the other industries will follow. I would make the spinning wheel the foundation on which to build a sound village life; I would make the wheel the centre round which all other activities will revolve." Everyone has also duty to participate in the production of *swadeshi* articles that uphold the native country's economy. In fact, the test of *swadeshi*, according to Gandhi, was not universality of the use of an article which goes under the name of *swadeshi*, but the universality of participation in the production or manufacturing of such article. This was his *swadeshi* spirit, which currently means "buy local, be proud of local, support local, uphold and live local" (Singh 2011, 32). Myrdal (1977, 264) evaluates the lasting impact of the *swadeshi* principle as follows:

Swadeshi ... was elevated to a moral principle. ... This is the lasting legacy of Mohandas Gandhi, whose ideas still form a powerful force among traditionalists in today's India. ... *Swadeshi* thus came to lend ideological support to national economic planning and undoubtedly contributed to an autarkic approach to that planning.

(3) *Satyagraha*

Satyagraha is extremely important in Gandhi's economic and political ideas. It was a method deployed by Gandhi to fight against such injustices as racial discrimination in South Africa, British rule in India, and ugly social practices in his own society, because, it, according to Gandhi, was the way in which *ahimsa* was implemented or put in action, that is, it was the technique of implementing *ahimsa* in the world of actuality. As Chakrabarty

(2006, 39) points out, “*Satyagraha* is ‘a science’ of political struggle in the sense that a *satyagrahee* [someone who practices *satyagraha*], endowed with highest moral values, is trained to fight the most ruthless state machinery in accordance with the canons of non-violence.”

Interestingly, the principle of *satyagraha* had existed before the term was coined. It was due to Gandhi’s dissatisfaction with the phrase “passive resistance” that he felt the need for a more suitable and more accurate term to designate and describe the principle he was propounding. In order to find a term out that correctly designates the real nature of the principle, Gandhi offered a nominal prize through the news-sheet *Indian Opinion* in South Africa in 1906. Gandhi accepted one of the entries with a little change. Hence we get the term “*satyagraha*” which is a portmanteau of the Sanskrit words *satya* (truth) and *agraha* (insistence, or holding firmly to). The essence of the principle of *satyagraha* (insistence/holding of truth) is to find a way out of how to eradicate antagonisms without harming the antagonists themselves and of how to transform or purify it to a higher level. As Bhikhu Parekh (1997, 68) says, “For Gandhi *satyagraha*, meaning civil insistence on or tenacity in the pursuit of truth, aimed to penetrate the barriers of prejudice, ill-will, dogmatism, self-righteousness, and selfishness, and to reach out to and activate the soul of the opponent.” Euphemistically, *satyagraha* is used as a “silent force” or a “soul force.” It makes the individual equipped with moral power rather than with physical power. *Satyagraha* essentially makes no distinction between kinsmen and strangers, young and old, man and woman, friend and foe. As regards this, Singh (2006, 110) notes that *satyagraha* entails “respect for all beings regardless of religious beliefs, caste, race or creed, and a devotion to the values of truth, love and responsibility.” Hence *satyagraha* is also labeled as a ‘universal force.’ Using *satyagraha* in the senses mentioned above, Gandhi gave up using English phrase ‘passive resistance’ to describe them.

Primarily in 1906, Gandhi set out *satyagraha* as a protest against the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance of 1906 (a law discriminating against the Asians) that was ratified by the British

colonial government of the Transvaal in South Africa. But later in 1917, we got *satyagraha* campaign for the first time in India which was mounted in the indigo-growing district of Champaran. During the subsequent years, non-cooperation (*hartal*, strikes, boycott and fasts unto death) and civil disobedience (picketing, non-payment of taxes and defiance of specific laws) were employed as methods of *satyagraha*, until the British left India in 1947. Thus Gandhi's *satyagraha* was used as a major tool in the Indian struggle against British rule. How a powerful, novel, and predominantly moral method of social change is theory of *satyagraha* of Gandhi is evident from the unsurprising fact that it has been borrowed and tried out in different countries with suitable adjustments to local circumstances. It inspired Martin Luther King, Jr.'s campaigns during the civil rights movement in the United States, Nelson Mandela's struggle in South Africa under apartheid.

However, Gandhi used *satyagraha* in his dealing with injustice, because it, according to him, was a method of a moral person's struggles against injustices. One who uses the process of *satyagraha* refuses to accept a law which he considers inconsistent with his conscience. Because a *satyagrahee* has a courageous spirit, a compassionate nature and a positive commitment to a righteous cause, namely, justice. Hence Gandhi (1949, vol. II: 267) pointed out that "every worthy object can be achieved by the use of Satyagraha. It is the highest and infallible means, the greatest force. Socialism will not be reached by any other means. Satyagraha can rid society of all evils, political, economic and moral."

The result of *satyagraha* is invariably good if the rules are followed strictly. Securing one's rights is one of the results of *satyagraha*, which should not be its sole aim. *Satyagraha* can be practiced without having the result in mind. It makes no difference whether the result is attained or not (Mahadevan and Saroja 1985, 141). But from this we cannot brand Gandhi as a deontologist, because like the deontologists he did not sort actions (e.g., keeping promises, helping neighbors, fighting for the oppressed, and so on) out as right *per se*, regardless of their consequences. Instead he sought to justify such actions on the ground of how far they contribute to a broader purpose – the service of humankind. Assessing that contribution necessitates a look at consequences (See

Dasgupta 1996, 07-12). This shows that Gandhi was fundamentally a consequentialist.

Let's see how Gandhi's philosophy of development is connected with the definition of sustainable development mentioned earlier. One of the Gandhian principles of sustainable development, namely, *sarvodaya* upholds welfare of all. I think, this is something that should be considered as the social equity dimension of the UN definition of sustainable development. The principle of *sarvodaya* expands itself to the welfare of the natural environment as well from the sphere of human beings. It upholds the essential unity and equality of all earthly creatures. For this reason, Gandhi prohibits any violent attitude to nature with the provision of a sort of leeway in special cases. From this, it should also be clear that how concerned Gandhi was in dealing with the environment. So the dimension of environmental protection of the UN definition of sustainable development is also present in Gandhi's philosophy. Now let's come to the point of economic development. For economic development, Gandhi proposed to make village a self-sufficient unit of economy, and opposed large-scale industry to prop small local industries up. He also favored wearing *khadi* and using *charkha*. It shows that Gandhi believed that everyone has responsibility in producing and using *swadeshi* articles in order to bolster one's native country's economy. For this, he told us to rear *swadeshi* spirit in our mind as it encourages us to consume products produced in our villages. The points that have been made above, I believe, should be indicative of the thing that the three dimensions of the UN definition, namely, environmental protection, economic development, and social equity, have traces in Gandhi's thoughts and practices. Whenever he says to behave non-violently with other human beings and natural entities, he has in his mind not only the present generation, but the coming generations also. This is because he was well aware of the fact that the world has enough to meet people's needs, not the greed. As he was well aware of the needs and interests of the future generations, he said us not to be greedy, to be violent in dealing with the nature so that the future generations can fulfill their necessities. Moreover, *sarvodaya* upholds the rights of the future generations through the welfare of all. If we look at the thoughts of Gandhi that have already been discussed, we will see a lot of references where he suggested harmonizing nature with the

needs of the people. This harmonization could be possible if, following the idea of *satyagraha* (which is based on truth and non-violence), we do not do any harm to nature and human beings. So the adherence to the technique of *satyagraha* will help us not jeopardize the capacity of natural systems to absorb the effects of human activities. This is because of the thing that followers of *satyagraha* will not over-exploit natural resources for the purpose of development. In doing so, they will not create serious environmental hazards that will endanger the existence of the present and future generations.

Gandhi: A Development Ethicist

Gandhi emphasized the means of achieving the aim of development, and this means must be non-violent, ethical and truthful in all economic spheres. He advocated trusteeship, decentralization of economic activities, labor intensive technology and priority to weaker sections in order to achieve this means. His economic ideas are considered to be a sovereign remedy to India's poverty, unemployment, economic disparity, population explosion and rural-urban imbalance. Gandhi, according to Das (1979, 59), favored collaborative economic system and institutions consisting of "(a) cooperative groups of small farmers and artisans, (b) the cooperative institutions of credit and marketing, (c) large-scale private-owned and state-owned industries organized on the trusteeship principle, and (d) large-area infrastructure systems run by the state." In order to materialize this collaborative economic system, Gandhi, according to Das (59), figured three types of planning processes out which included "(a) the area development plans of local communities and clusters, (b) the marketing and reinvestment planning of the cooperative structure, and (c) centralized planning of large industries."

Gandhi (CWG, vol. 88: 17) described as ideal villages those which "are self-reliant in regard to food, which have not a single flour-mill and in which the residents grow all the cotton they need and manufacture their own cloth, right up to the stage of stitching garments in their own homes." These small, civilized, well-ordered, completely rejuvenated and autonomous ideal village communities

are *swaraj*-based polities which would administer justice, maintain order and take important decisions. These *swaraj*-based polities would be not merely administrative but powerful economic and political units. Considering their given texture, they would have, argues Parekh (1997, 100), "a strong sense of solidarity, provide a genuine sense of community, and act as nurseries of civic virtues." The emphasis on rural development via making a self-sufficient local unit or village is an important feature of Gandhi's idea of sustainable development. People of this self-sufficient unit, according to Gandhi, would be employed and could sustain themselves and their families with dignity and work. Thus we see that one very important objective of Gandhi's development economic system was to attain a zero structural unemployment state in the shortest possible time. As Gandhi (SWG, vol. VI: 323) said, "We must utilize all available human labour before we entertain the idea of employing mechanical power." For the acceleration of the rate of employment, Gandhi prescribed primarily to reallocate the investment and encouraged appropriate technical innovations. His notion of economic equality is not that everyone should possess equal amount of worldly goods; rather it means that "everybody should have enough for his or her needs" (SWG, vol. VI: 340).

According to Gandhi, if mankind is to progress and realize the ideals of equality and brotherhood, it must act on the principle of paying the highest attention to the prime needs of the weakest sections of the population where the rich have also role to play. They should serve the society by not enjoying their lives unnecessarily after satisfying their needs. It will limit their wealth to a reasonable state. At the same time it will also create a certain amount of happiness among the poor. As Das (1979, 58) observes,

... there is nothing 'anti-growth' about Gandhi. ... There is nothing 'metaphysical' about this conclusion. It is an arithmetical truism that an employment-biased growth leads to rapid increase in consumption of basic necessities and a slow growth in the luxury elements of consumption. In this sense it calls for the giving up of luxury consumption as the *summum bonum* of life.

But Gandhi was extremely aware of the fact that it would be a utopian expectation from the rich to give up all their wealth. Rather what could be expected was to persuade them to surrender their surplus of the worldly goods voluntarily instead of making them forced to do so as it might involve violence which was entirely contrary to Gandhian teaching. The term used by Gandhi to describe the voluntary sharing of riches is trusteeship. The essence of Gandhi's doctrine of trusteeship, according to Richards (1991, 114), is that "a rich man should be allowed to retain his wealth and not be forcibly deprived of it. He should use it for whatever he reasonably requires to satisfy his personal needs and then act as trustee for the remainder of his wealth which should be used for the benefit of society as a whole."⁶ Gandhi believed that equitable distribution of the wealth of a country would be achieved through voluntary renunciation of wealth by the rich. Richards has described it as a "voluntary form of socialism" (114). Gandhi mentioned the forms of *satyagraha* like non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience as methods of persuasion, not coercion. Hence these could also be employed if the rich did not agree to act as trustees of their surplus wealth, because they could work as the most useful means of removing social and economic inequalities. Parekh (1997, 95) has described the advantages of Gandhi's theory of trusteeship gracefully,

If [a rich man] owned a firm, a factory, or a large tract of land, he was to work alongside his employees, make profit by just means, pay decent wages, take no more than what he needed for a moderately comfortable life, plough the rest into his business or use it for worthwhile social purposes, involve his workers in decision making, and provide healthy working conditions and welfare schemes. For Gandhi such an economic arrangement had capitalists but not capitalism, socialism but not state ownership, and used capitalist managerial skills to achieve socialist purposes.

Now the question arises: Why is Gandhian development thought so important? Development strategy is generally thought to be a value-neutral mechanism which is good for equitable

⁶ See also the Footnote – 03.

distribution of resources. But as improved technology produces myriad goods for human consumption, our greed for goods becomes unlimited that causes poverty. Theories of value-neutral development economics overlook questions regarding the right to employment, the state as an institution of violence and the corporate system as an institution of exploitation etc. The maximization of consumption and the continual raising of living standards are considered to be the measures of success in value-neutral development economics. The expansion of production that leads one to run behind this success is highly appreciated by value-free development economics. But this causes environmental problems, unemployment, exploitation, and international inequalities. The aftermaths of these evils make the study of Gandhian development thought necessary, because it is against value-neutral system of development economics through its emphasis on making ethical means the pivotal point of development theory and practice. As Gandhi (SWG, vol. VI: 321) said, "I must confess that I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurts the moral well-being of an individual or a nation is immoral and, therefore, sinful." In order to evaluate Gandhi's position in development thinking, Singh (2006, 111) says,

We are slowly realizing that reducing poverty or moving towards sustainable development is not just an economic or a technical problem or one of acquiring greater financial inputs. All these are important but achieving these goals also needs an inner awakening, an inner transformation of man – a path already paved by Gandhi.

It cannot be denied that we have no explicit ethical system of development worked out by Gandhi himself, which can be labeled as Gandhian development ethics. As parts of his general philosophy of life, we find his ideas of development merged with other related topics. Now, our duty is to construe Gandhi's ideas of development and erect what may be tagged as Gandhian development ethics from what he did and said. His sayings and actions show that he was a practitioner of sustainable development in the real sense of the word. His economic, social, political, ethical, and other considerations are governed by two life principles: truth and non-violence. E. F. Schumacher, who popularized Gandhian economics

with his slogan “small is beautiful” through his famous book *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (1973), thought that predicaments like resource depletion, ecological destruction, and personal alienation of the modern world could be outweighed by Gandhian work with a spirit of truth and nonviolence that inspired Gandhi (Weber 2011, 148-9). Weber, therefore, points out that, in the present economic and environmental state of the earth, “perhaps a superficial negative appraisal of Gandhian economics is less than helpful” (149). So I should say that, the Gandhian development ethics should be erected by way of applying these two criteria of truth and non-violence. The understanding of the application of these criteria will help us to realize Gandhi’s sympathy and concern for the welfare of his fellow countrymen by dismissing any economic development that disregards creative activity, emasculates social structures and endangers spiritual well-being of fellowmen.

Like any great economist, Gandhi dealt with any economic problem with ease considering them from the then economic contexts of British India. That made him a critic of any attempt that recognized the separation of economics from ethics. “... Gandhi is concerned not only with what ethics can do for economics but also with what economics can do for ethics. The latter concern, which is quite unusual among moralist critics of the economic approach, leads him to suggest that if a project, however good it may be from an ethical point of view, requires continuing economic loss, it is unsound and should be avoided” (Dasgupta 1996, 177-8). To be true and good, economics, according to Gandhi, should stand for social justice; it should promote the good of all equally, including the weakest. Hence Gandhi's concept is egalitarian in character. According to Gandhi, inequality in society should be measured on the basis of differences in consumption, life-styles and the standard of living rather than just income (91-2). But that could not keep him aloof from decrying any economic development program that did not do anything to reduce poverty, because poverty, according to him, could lead to nothing else than moral degradation. In this way, the absolutely technical aspects of traditional value free economics were surpassed by Gandhi’s development thinking. His development thinking then elevated to an “ethical charter” of organizing the productive resources of an economy (Nachane 2008,

17). In doing so, Gandhi's economics merged into ethics. Gandhi drew no distinction between ethics and economics. In fact, moral value was extremely important for him. He contended that no truly acceptable economic policy could ignore moral values. His extraordinary emphasis on the ethical aspect of development activities differentiates him from some other mainstream development thinkers. The importance of his philosophy can be read as follows:

In his economics of locally handmade goods, the Mahatma saw the poor as being delivered from the "bonds of the rich". His approach was "wholly different" from ordinary economics, which "takes no note of the human factor". He added that the "former wholly concerns itself with the human. The latter is frankly selfish, and the former necessarily unselfish" (Weber 2011, 140).

In this way, in his struggle against the mightiest imperial power in terms of non-violent theory and order, Gandhi discovered his own ideas of development entirely based on ethics.

Conclusion

Living in a world where hot debates on numerous aftermaths of unsustainable development and economic growth like the presence of global warming, lack of water due to deforestation, and chronic depletion of natural resources and diversity on earth are taking place, shouldn't we practice what Gandhi preached? The answer to this query should be a positive one; because by observing no *ahimsa* to the nature, by establishing *swarajya* that exacts a fiscally autonomous land, by using *swadeshi* products that necessitates the support of local industrialization, and above all, by following the process of *satyagraha*, we can ensure *sarvodaya* – universal welfare – which is an important aspect of development ethics. What my discussion so far suggests is that Gandhian development thinking is an exemplary work that advocates a sort of ethics that argues against any dependency on the exploitation of our fellow human beings, and thus against a high standard of material living of the few at the cost of that exploitation. Fitting its eye to spiritual and moral standards the ethics of development inherent in

Gandhian development thought favors a fairly even standard of material comforts for everybody and tries to bring about a type of civilization where there will be no need for periodic wars as at present. Thus my preceding discussion should suggest that Mahatma Gandhi is not only a political leader, he should also be categorized as a development ethicist. Since Gandhi was from India, a country that belongs to the third world, and since his development thinking is ethical in character, he can easily be ranked as a third world precursor of what we today call the ethics of development.

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