

# Development Discourse: Mainstream and Gandhian

*Siby K. Joseph*

## ABSTRACT

*Development has emerged as a major theme in the discourses of social sciences in recent times. Starting with Truman's and Rostow's concepts of economic growth, it has run into several phases assuming different intellectual hues in the post war period. Of late it has taken new forms like sustainable development and inclusive growth. The major thesis of the paper is that all these efforts have failed to make any significant dent in the crisis confronting the mainstream development. It is in this context that Gandhi's concept of development has come to attract attention of scholars and activists all over the world. This paper has tried to examine Gandhi's critique of development as an integral part of modern industrial civilization as well as adumbrate the features of a viable model of economic development which could be sustainable and enduring proposed by him.*

## Introduction

THE TERM 'DEVELOPMENT' is popular in many social science disciplines. The notion of development in economics can be traced to the writings of classical economists, starting with Adam Smith, to the present neo-classical school. It was in the wake of the Second World War that the idea of concerted efforts to rebuild the economies of the European countries emerged on a significant scale. The primary reason for the need for such a massive reconstruction was unprecedented destruction of the economies of the West European countries during the Second World War. It was a top priority for the West, and the US became the prime mover in the development process. It was very much reflected in Harry S. Truman's Inaugural Address

*January-March 2013*

delivered on January 20, 1949 as the 33<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States.<sup>1</sup> He emphasised the fact that technological resources of the various countries of the world should be pooled together to promote a new pattern of development which would provide 'peace, plenty and freedom' to the people of the world.

Though economic development differs from economic growth, in the post-Second World War scenario, economic development was looked upon as synonymous for economic growth and concerned primarily with the expansion of wealth in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and per capita income. In the initial years the concept of growth, as enunciated by Walt Whitman Rostow, became popular in the academic field and Rostow's Stages of Growth was seen as one of the major models of economic growth.<sup>2</sup> It virtually became the ruling idea of development both in developed and developing countries. Rostow's model attempted to take traditional society to the stage of high mass consumption through exponential growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and per capita income. This 'non-communist manifesto' even influenced the planning pattern of countries following the Soviet model. If we look at the process of planning in India, one could easily trace the influence of Rostow's growth model despite its apparent emphasis on soviet model of development. Such an idea of growth became the prime mover of the Second Five Year Plan of India. Under this plan, there was a paradigm shift from agriculture to industry under the guidance of P.C. Mahalanobis. However, soon it became clear that the prevailing model of economic development suffered from a number of inadequacies and limitations. Some of its crystallised limitations could easily be put in the following categories.

### **Inequitable Development**

Despite the initial promise of plenty and prosperity, the mainstream model of development became a breeding ground for growing inequality. It is to be noted that it not only created vertical inequalities, but also caused horizontal inequalities with some groups primarily benefiting from development in most of the societies. Thus the fruits of economic growth are being pocketed by a small section of the elite resulting in inequitable development. This was a universal problem and Indian society was no exception to it. What was more, the process of development resulted in North-South divide in which the developed countries of the North got the lion's share of the benefits of development. The countries of the South were left to fend for themselves which stunted their economies. The problem of inequality both intra- and inter-society became too glaring to be ignored by

the ruling classes. That led to a number of measures to tackle the persisting problem of growing inequality throughout the world. One could easily take India as an illustrative case. India initiated a number of measures including Integrated Rural Development Programme, Tribal Welfare Schemes, reservations for economically and socially deprived sections of the society, Employment Guarantee Schemes and the most recent Cash Transfer Scheme. All these measures were supposed to contribute to inclusive growth resulting in elimination of steep inequality both in economic and social terms. Not only that, India also entered into a new phase of economic policies characterised by Globalisation and liberalisation. It aimed at hastening the process of development which could at least lessen the problem of inequality, if not end it. Now it is more than obvious that all these measures have failed to tackle the problem of mass poverty and inequality. Contrary to the claim of the Government for taking a large section of people above poverty line, it goes without saying that the problem of mass poverty and inequality remain as intractable as ever. This could be easily illustrated by the Planning Commission's most recent statistical jugglery which claims that anyone with a daily consumption expenditure of Rs. 28.35 and Rs. 22.42 in urban and rural areas respectively is above the poverty line. This new poverty estimate for 2011-12 further brings down the definition of poverty line given in Commission's affidavit in the Supreme Court in October 2011, in which the BPL cap was fixed at an expenditure of Rs. 32 and Rs. 26 by an individual in the urban and rural areas respectively at the rate of inflation in 2010-11.<sup>3</sup> The scenario of poverty and inequality is not country specific; rather it covers almost all countries of the world. In short, the present model of development had admittedly failed to tackle the problem of persistent poverty and inequality on a universal scale.

### **Growing Violence**

There is a growing awareness among the social scientists all over the world that there is close relationship between development and violence.<sup>4</sup> The problem of violence has taken an endemic form, particularly when development uprooted and displaced large sections of people including tribals, indigenous communities, fishermen, migrant labour, and others who are turning out to be the worst victims of development. They are gradually being deprived of their traditional sources of livelihood. In the process of industrialisation, millions of people are forcibly deprived of their land without any proper scheme for their rehabilitation. Such a forcible eviction not only creates physical suffering but also psychological disorientation.

*January-March 2013*

In the process they are being driven to the edge of desperation. At times some of these groups, out of extreme suffering and helplessness, are resorting to violence in desperation. Thus a vicious circle of violence is being created which most of the societies find it difficult to tackle and wriggle out. Rapid phase of urbanisation, unbridled and forcible acquisition of land for mining, construction of big dams, hydro electric projects, mammoth real estate businesses etc., have become primary sources of displacement of people in most of the societies. A clear message is going to the dispossessed and downtrodden people that the present model of development only promotes the interests of the elite. The escalation of violent movements by Naxals or Maoists in different parts of the country is posing the most serious internal security threat in the country. It is symbolic of the resentment of the people which is being exploited by groups which ideologically stand for violence and class war. Even though the Government seems to be aware of the different dimensions of the problem, the dynamics of development hardly leaves it with any other alternative than to persist with its present policy. Thus development and violence go hand in hand.

#### **Effects on Environment**

Apart from leading to inequitable development and growing violence, the present development pattern continues to create ecological imbalances causing a serious threat to the very existence of human society. Climate change, ozone layer depletion, global warming, melting of the polar ice, and rising of sea levels and pollution are the resultant problems of mainstream industrial development. The Governments all over the world are aware of the ill effects of global warming. However, the various steps taken by them to mitigate the emission of green house gases failed to produce the desired results. In this connection, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) cautions everybody about the deteriorating situation. Scientists warn that there is still a considerable emission gap of 5 gigatonnes to be closed.<sup>5</sup> The prospects of reduction in emission of greenhouse gases appear to be bleak mainly because of the unbridled growth strategy of the present model of development.

In fact, the current state of environment is quite disturbing. It has been evident from the continuous rise in earth's mean surface temperature, which results in the melting of polar ice. The changes that are happening on the climatic front in recent years are at a faster pace compared to the earlier era. The average facade temperature of the globe has augmented more than 1 degree Fahrenheit since 1900 and the speed of warming has been almost three-fold, the century-

long average since 1970.<sup>6</sup> The main gases contributing to green house effect are carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O). The largest producers of these gases are the thermal power plants, transportation by road and air, heavy industries, all of which are indispensable in the present model of development. The depletion of the ozone layer is another pertinent environmental issue which has similar implications.

Both sentient and non-sentient beings are experiencing the ill-effects of global warming and ozone layer depletion. As a corollary to it, there is frequent melting of glaciers. The melting of ice at the Polar Regions has led to a rise in the mean sea level which will engulf low-lying countries. The effect of global warming on the animal kingdom is very evident. Some of the endangered animals which maintain the eco-balance have become extinct or are on the verge of extinction due to their inability to cope with the rapid changes that are taking place on the climatic front. The recent Year Book of UNEP states that according to the latest insights, climate change is leading to changes in the frequency, intensity, length, timing and spatial coverage of extreme weather events.<sup>7</sup> The fine equilibrium that existed in the seasonal cycle has changed dramatically. The shift in season cycle has become a breeding ground for new diseases which were unknown to humanity. The drastic changes on the climatic front in terms of untimely onset of rains, floods and other natural calamities have created a severe crisis in the agricultural sector. Now the suicide of agricultural farmers in the Indian subcontinent is not limited to a particular region or areas having less rainfall. The pathetic state of affairs in the agricultural sector is mainly due to the effects of climate change and the introduction of modern agricultural practices which depend on chemical fertilisers, genetically modified organisms and market forces. The UNEP report highlights the need for enhancing the soil carbon. "In the face of further land use change and land use intensification to meet global demands for food, water and energy, sustaining or even enhancing soil carbon stocks becomes a priority. During the past 25 years, one-quarter of the global land area has suffered a decline in productivity and in the ability to provide ecosystem services due to soil carbon losses. Because soil carbon is central to agricultural productivity, climate stabilization and other vital ecosystem services, creating policy incentives around the sustainable management of soil carbon could deliver numerous short- and long-term benefits."<sup>8</sup>

Another important issue which needs mention is the indiscriminate use of plastic which extended the human footprint even to the remotest parts of the ocean, which poses a potential threat

to eco system and human health. This issue was echoed in 2011 yearbook of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which said “The Ocean has become a global repository for much of the waste that we generate. Every year large amounts of plastic debris enter the marine environment... A number of scientists are concerned about releases of persistent, bio- accumulating and toxic compounds when plastic debris enters the food chain through ingestion by fish and other marine organisms.”<sup>9</sup>

It is obvious that the present pattern of development is predicated by high consumption of energy without which it can hardly sustain itself. The rapid depletion of major energy sources like coal, petrol, water etc. has prompted many countries to go for nuclear power. The use of nuclear energy and decommissioning has become major concerns after the Fukushima nuclear accident in March 2011. The Year Book of UNEP rightly observes “As the first generations of such reactors reach the end of their original design lives and some countries review their nuclear power programmes in the wake of the Fukushima accident, the number of reactors to be decommissioned in the next ten years is set to increase significantly. Each decommissioning presents particular technical challenges and risks to human health and the environment..... One lesson that begins to emerge is that nuclear power plants should be designed from the start for safe and efficient decommissioning.”<sup>10</sup> Thus it is clear that sustained availability of energy would become a ticklish issue which is bound to mar any prospect of smooth development in the long run.

### **Measures to tackle the issues in Development**

As early as 1970s, problems associated with the development pattern and its impact on environment came to the fore. The publication of the well known work “Limits to Growth” in 1972 commissioned by the Club of Rome explored how exponential growth interacts with finite resources of the earth. It argued that unchecked consumption and economic growth was leading the Earth towards a disaster.<sup>11</sup> On the initiative of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972 ,with the principal purpose “ to serve as a practical means to encourage, and to provide guidelines ... to protect and improve the human environment and to remedy and prevent its impairment.”<sup>12</sup> It brought environment to the centre stage of the global agenda and later led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In 1983, the UN General Assembly set up the World Commission on Environment and

Development. Gro Harlem Brundtland, the former Prime Minister of Norway, was invited to chair the commission. This commission is popularly known as the Brundtland Commission. Its aim was to link environmental issues to the findings of the 1980 Brandt report on North-South relations.<sup>13</sup> *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*, published in 1987, established the link between environment and the economy and coined a new term “sustainable development” as the way to ensure economic development that would not endanger the ability of future generations to enjoy the fruits of the earth.<sup>14</sup> Twenty years after the first global environment conference, the representatives from 178 nations, nongovernmental agencies (NGOs) and other interested parties (approximately 30,000 in total including members of the media), met in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3-14 June 1992 to discuss global environmental issues with implications for appropriate policies to be pursued by national governments.<sup>15</sup> The conference sought agreement among the nations on concrete measures to reconcile economic activities with protection of the planet to ensure a sustainable future for all people. This conference was a landmark in the history of environment and is popularly known as the Earth Summit. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC or FCCC) was opened for signature at this conference. The UNFCCC is an international environmental treaty with the goal of achieving “stabilization of greenhouse concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.” The 13th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the 3rd session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol<sup>16</sup> took place in Bali, Indonesia in December 2007. The Conference culminated in the adoption the Bali Road Map, which consists of a number of forward-looking decisions that represent the various tracks that are essential to a secure climate future. The Bali Road Map includes the Bali Action Plan, which launched a “new, comprehensive process to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention through long-term cooperative action, now, up to and beyond 2012.”<sup>17</sup>

Ten years after the first Earth Summit the World Summit on Sustainable Development, took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, to discuss the issue of sustainable development.<sup>18</sup> The United Nations Climate Change Conference, commonly known as the Copenhagen Summit, was held at Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2009. The Copenhagen Accord, though not legally binding, recognised climate change as one of the greatest challenges of the present times.<sup>19</sup>

The inconclusive Copenhagen Summit brought into sharp focus the deep divide between the countries of the North and the South regarding not only the factors behind climate change and who is responsible for it, but also as regards respective responsibilities for management and mitigation.<sup>20</sup>

The agreements, reached on December 11 in Cancun, Mexico, at the 2010 United Nations Climate Change Conference represent key steps forward in capturing plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to help developing nations protect themselves from climate impacts and build their own sustainable futures. The Cancun Agreements are a set of significant decisions by the international community to address the long-term challenge of climate change collectively and comprehensively over time and to take concrete action to speed up the global response<sup>21</sup>. In the second largest meeting of its kind, United Nations Climate Change Conference 2011, “Working Together-Saving Tomorrow Today” was held from 28 November - 9 December 2011, Durban, South Africa.<sup>22</sup> The main outcome of this Conference was a decision by the Parties to adopt a universal legal agreement on climate change as soon as possible and in any case not later than 2015.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), also known as Rio+20, or Earth Summit 2012 was held from 13 to 22 June 2012, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Rio+20 was a 20-year follow-up to the 1992 Earth Summit, where countries adopted Agenda 21 - a blueprint to rethink economic growth, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection. The outcome of the summit was similar to Copenhagen, a nonbinding document, “The Future We Want.” In it, the heads of 192 governments, who attended the conference, renewed their political commitment to sustainable development and declared their commitment to the promotion of sustainable future.<sup>23</sup>

The 18th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the 8th session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol was held from 26 November to 8 December 2012 in Doha, Qatar.<sup>24</sup> The most significant outcome from Doha was the adoption of the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol commencing from the start of 2013 till the end of 2020. However, the original Kyoto Protocol Parties, i.e., Russia, Japan and New Zealand decided not to join the Second Commitment period.<sup>25</sup> It is to be noted that the United States (which had signed the Kyoto Protocol way back in 1998 but the Senate had not ratified it), refused to become a party to Protocol from its inception till now. Canada announced withdrawal of its membership from the

Kyoto Protocol in 2011 and there is no possibility of its rejoining the second commitment period.

These conferences brought into limelight the challenges in the field of environment and the awareness about the concrete action needed to mitigate the problems on a global scale. However, it is crystal clear from the above discussion that on account of the vested interests of the developed countries even such awareness about the different dimensions of the problems associated with development and environment has failed to result in concrete action on a desired scale. But at least on level of ideas, all these measures did lead to some rethinking on the very notion of present model of economic development.

### **New Concepts of Development**

It was in the above context of glaring problems of mainstream development that new concepts and ideas began to emerge to redress the problems related to environment and development. Subsequently, development started being viewed in a holistic perspective. As early as 1972, the Fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, proposed that we should consider the 'Gross National Happiness' as the best index of development instead of relying on the usual Gross Domestic Product. He emphasised the need to take a holistic approach towards notions of progress and give equal importance to non-economic aspects of wellbeing of the people.<sup>26</sup> This new approach subsequently became a part of the popular discourse on viable model of development worth emulating by other nations. Subsequently, in the context of growing disparity and divide between the countries of North and South, sustainable development and the idea of inclusive growth became popular concepts particularly in the West. The Brundtland Commission's definition of Sustainable development contains within it two key concepts. i) the concept of 'needs', in particular, the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and ii) the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs. According to the Commission the major objective of development is satisfaction of human needs and aspirations.<sup>27</sup> Thus it reversed the earlier notion of economic growth based on GDP and per capita income.

This idea was further fine tuned by the enunciation of new notion of human development. The Human Development Index developed by Mahbub ul Haq with inputs from Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum is seen as a major advancement on the earlier narrow growth-centred notion of development. Mahabub ul Haq, the founder

*January-March 2013*

of the Human Development Report, explained the very purpose of development in the following words: "The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and sense of participation in community activities. The objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives"<sup>28</sup> Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen looks upon Human Development as "advancing the richness of human life, rather than the richness of the economy in which human beings live, which is only a part of it."<sup>29</sup> Martha Nussbaum laments that our dominant theories of development have given us policies that ignore our most basic human needs for dignity and self-respect.<sup>30</sup> The human development approach is considered as an effective means to improve the wellbeing of people. It is a breakthrough in the history of alternative development and it profoundly influenced the planners, policy makers and various stakeholders of development all over the globe, including the UN and its various collaborative agencies. It has been reflected in the various UN conferences on development and environment, including the Rio+20. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) has presented its "conceptual framework" for a Human Sustainability Index that would recognise rates of human development while also weighing up the cost of progress to future generations.<sup>31</sup>

An additional determinant of development is the role of the state. The earlier notion of a thin state propounded during the Thatcherite era, and later taken on board by agencies like the World Bank, has given way to greater recognition of the role of the state and its institutions. This has been partly due to the rise of institutional economics pioneered by Douglass North. In his essay, "The New Institutional Economics and Development", Douglass has beautifully summarised the essential characteristics of the new institutional economics and how it differs from neo-classical theory, and applies it to the problems of development.<sup>32</sup> There is also a stream that looks at a form of development that relies neither on the government nor on the market, but on the people and their wisdom. It was Ivan Illich, who severely criticised the institutions of contemporary Western civilization and the policies of economic development. His analysis became a guiding light for the later critics of colonialism and post-colonialism and a number of post-development theorists like Arturo

Escobar and Gustavo Esteva. Post development theory or anti-development theory is based on the premise that the whole concept and practice of so-called development is nothing but a reflection of Western-Northern hegemony over the rest of the world. The post-development theorists like Escobar and Esteva have challenged the very meaning of development. The post-development theorists argue that development was always unjust, never worked, and has now clearly failed. According to Wolfgang Sachs, a leading member of the post-development school, “the idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape” and “it is time to dismantle this mental structure.”<sup>33</sup>

From the above discussion, one could easily infer that some of the sensitive minds of the world have partially come to realise the significance of some of the seminal ideas propounded by Gandhi in his work *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* and other subsequent writings. However, it goes without saying that some of the new ideas of development as discussed above do not amount more than an attempt to sustain the western capitalist model which has created most of the problems afflicting the humankind today. Moreover, all these endeavours also appear as a ploy to hide the stark realities of North South divide which could be bridged only by a more radical vision of development which Gandhi proposed in his life time.

### **Gandhi’s indictment of Modern Civilization**

Before we discuss the Gandhi’s vision of development, it would be appropriate to give a cursory view of his critique of modern industrial civilization. It needs to be mentioned that he did not reject the western civilization per se, rather his grouse was only against western civilization as it was developed in the wake of three major European intellectual revolutions viz. Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment. He indicted modern civilization by saying that it had made material comforts and bodily welfare as prime values of human life. In the process it has neglected the higher spiritual goals of human existence as if human being is made only of the body and not of the soul. He looked upon human being as a fine combination of body, mind and soul working in unison. In his opinion every human being carries a speck of divinity in himself /herself. Thus modern civilization has totally overlooked the spiritual aspect of human existence. What is worse, it has even failed to provide material welfare to a large section of the people like working classes comprising men, women and children who are forced to work in totally inhuman and miserable conditions. Gandhi was prophetic in his analysis of western civilization and the institutions associated with it. He anticipated and

*January-March 2013*

apprehended the dangers of modern industrial civilization. He was so emphatic in the indictment of industrial civilization that he also set his moral gaze on its institutional framework as well as its major instruments like machinery. He castigated the entire system of political representation on the ground that it hardly reflects the aspirations and popular will of the people. It is in this context that he even went to the extent of describing the British parliament as 'sterile woman and prostitute'.<sup>34</sup> He went a step further in castigating machinery- the prime mover of modern industrial civilization which he compared as 'snake hole' and 'upas tree'. He underlined the fact that with the advent of industrial civilization, the mad rush for gaining control over nature began. It was from this vantage point that the deviation of human being from having friendly and harmonious relationship with nature began. Before the advent of industrial civilization all the development practices were in tune with nature. Gandhi was fully aware of the disastrous effects that large-scale industrialization would bring inevitably. To quote him, "God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the west. If an entire nation of 300 millions took to similar economic exploitation it would strip the world bare like locusts."<sup>35</sup> It is interesting to note that on the eve of India's independence, Gandhi, while responding to a question whether India should follow the British model of industrial development, categorically stated: "It took Britain half the resources of this planet to achieve its prosperity. How many planets will India require for development?"<sup>36</sup> This response of Gandhi continues to resonate in the hearts and minds of people who are trying to grapple with the problems of development as it underlines the deep eco-consciousness ingrained in his vision. No less was he harsh on the educational, legal and health care systems which had been built up to support and uphold the entire structure of modern civilization. In actual practice, all these have resulted in enslaving the people by killing their initiative in all these areas. He defined true civilization as "that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over the mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilization is good conduct."<sup>37</sup> Thus he not only rejected modern industrial civilization but also provided a new framework for 'true civilization' in his work *Hind Swaraj*.

### **Gandhi's vision of Development**

It is true that Gandhi did not work out a concrete model of alternative

development; rather he presented a vision of life which could provide a broad philosophy of development. His relational world view underlined the significance of interdependence and interconnectedness of entire cosmic life. His entire philosophy of life was based on the understanding that human being, though unique in its own way, should not look upon himself/herself as the sole custodian of earth and its resources. Gandhi viewed life as an opportunity for self-realisation. Since human beings are social and life has to be lived in society and not in seclusion, human being has to deal with innumerable problems which involve challenges and opportunities. To him the most important element in human person is spirit or soul. He looked upon human body as an instrument. He believed that giving primacy to body hampers the assertion and growth of spirit. One's perception of wants, access to resources, utilisation of resources and interaction with other beings and nature had therefore to be viewed and pursued keeping in mind the ultimate goal of life. We have to constantly introspect on the relation between our lives and nature, what we consume in terms of energy, food etc. and what we receive from nature. We have to find out whether we are making legitimate and proper use of it in relation to our objective and responsibility to society. What is our contribution towards the replenishment of what we are taking from the nature? Therefore, we have to effectively utilise our time to fulfill our objective without raising too much demand on the environment. Gandhi placed before humanity a lifestyle or art of living and demonstrated its practicability by living his own life quite in tune with nature. The application of Gandhian principles will allow human beings to satisfy their basic needs without harming interests of fellow beings. In its best form, it helps to lead a better life.

Gandhi's philosophy of life calls for an alternative development paradigm which is symbiotic with nature and eco-system. Here, an attempt has been made to outline salient principles of Gandhian model of development. It needs to be mentioned that Gandhian model of development deals with whole gamut of life in which the political, economic, social, spiritual could not be put in watertight compartments. But for the sake of clarity of analysis we look into the different components of his model of development. It necessarily involves an analysis of his economic, political and social ideas. Taking the first thing first let us start with examination of his economic ideas.

In respect of economic thinking, Gandhi differs from many mainstream economists who primarily concentrate on the material side of human life. Gandhi outlined his basic economic ideas as early as 1916 in his lecture viz. "Does Economic Progress clash with Real

Progress?", at Muir Central College Economics Society, Allahabad.<sup>38</sup> He made a clear distinction between 'economic progress' and 'moral progress' in this lecture and stated that, "by economic progress, we mean material advancement without limit. And by real progress we mean moral progress."<sup>39</sup> He asserted that though he was not well versed with modern economic thinking starting with Adam Smith and others, but one could reach a stage where 'still small voice' could become one's guide for one's thought and action without requiring any external proof or evidence. In other words, for Gandhi, the inner voice of a purified soul is as good as God's voice. But listening to one's inner voice would be possible only if one is able to identify oneself with the entire creation and adopt a life of *aparigraha*. (non-possession). He found the basic flaw in the modern economic thinking that it prompted the people particularly the elite to worship Mammon instead of God which becomes the main stumbling block of moral progress. He further added that the real index of a well ordered society is "not the number of millionaires it owns, but the absence of starvation among the masses."<sup>40</sup> Gandhi quoted the gospel of Mark in support of his contention where it said, "Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."<sup>41</sup> Thus it is clear that Gandhian economic ideas marked a definite departure from mainstream economic thinking.

If one scans the entire Gandhian economic thinking, one could easily see that building of a non-violent economy and its long term sustenance was his primary concern. To that end he developed novel ideas like voluntary reduction of wants with emphasis on fulfillment of basic needs of the people, production by masses instead of mass production, bread labour, *yajna*, trusteeship, *swadeshi*, and use of machinery with a human face.<sup>42</sup> It is clear that Gandhi presents a totally new vision of development which can replace the western model of development marked by its overemphasis on expansion of human wants with urbanisation and industrialisation as its major tools resulting in emergence of atomised and ego centric individuals devoid of all spiritual quests totally ignoring the community spirit. Such individuals are driven by only bodily comforts as the ultimate goal of human life. All these lead to mad rush for excessive consumerism resulting in overexploitation of finite resources of the earth. Today humankind is faced with a striking dissonance between insatiable human wants and finite resources. As against such a precarious scenario Gandhi reversed the entire process by presenting a viable, concrete development model. He tries to bring a true consonance

between the finite natural resources and human wants by making a clear distinction between human need and greed. It goes without saying that he never glorified poverty as such which results in all kinds of human misery and human degradation. In fact, he stood for total abolition of poverty by ensuring self generating and self sufficient economic order. It needs to be added that Gandhi by enunciating his seminal concept of 'oceanic circle' tried to reconcile individual freedom with community concerns from village level to the global level. Real strength of Gandhi lies in the fact he did not keep his scheme of things purely at the level of abstract ideas, rather he presented a practical and logical model by reversing the order of mass production by introducing the idea of production by masses. Such a decentralised economy marked by intensive use of labour, instead of replacing it machinery, could really tackle some of the problems afflicting the present system, like unemployment, automation, alienation and, large scale industrialisation. What is more, the local resources marked by *swadeshi* spirit would constitute the backbone of such a decentralised economy in which the village would form the basic unit. Absence of work ethics is one of the basic challenges under the present system as it is taken as a matter of drudgery and compulsion. Besides, all over the world people prefer mental work to menial work, thus creating unbridgeable gulf between elites and masses. Inspired by the *Bhagavat Gita's* concept of incessant work engaged even by God and service to the fellow beings in the *Sermon on the Mount*, Gandhi takes work ethics at a high philosophical and spiritual level. In such a scenario the differentiation between mental and menial work gets automatically obliterated. By undertaking scavenging work Gandhi wanted to establish the dignity of labour in a society like India which was historically marked by hierarchy. Not only that, going a step further, he made physical labour as a precondition for earning one's bread, and that is the real meaning of his concept of bread labour. Taking a further clue from the *Bhagavat Gita* he offered a new and innovative interpretation of the concept of *Yajna*. He made it clear that it is incumbent on every individual to contribute to the social good and take only that much of his share which he really needs. He went to the extent of saying that anyone who does not contribute his share to social good and yet takes more than his share is nothing less than a 'thief.' His concept of *Yajna* is a unique attempt for the continuous replenishment of resources endowed by the nature while giving an equitable share to every member of the society. In such a view of development the individual and social needs are wedded to each other. Management and ownership pattern of the institution of private property has been one of the most contentious issues in

modern times. There has been a long history of debate on this issue between the liberals and Marxists. While liberals underpinned the centrality of private management and ownership, the Marxists have stood for state ownership under the guise of social ownership. Gandhi was aware of flaws and fallacies of both these schools of thought as capitalism breeds selfishness inequality and excessive profiteering; Marxism leads to totalitarianism under their most adumbrated principle of dictatorship of the proletariat. Through his theory of trusteeship, Gandhi tries to find a way out from the infirmities of both the systems. Trusteeship offers a model of management and ownership of private property which curbs the excesses of both the system while retaining the individual initiative with promotion of social good. It is clear that economic development would not face the kind of problems which are afflicting the present model as discussed in the preceding pages. Besides it would give a new meaning and perspective to both the individual and the society.

Gandhian model of development also subsumes his concept of decentralised polity which is a necessary part of his holistic scheme. Both liberal and Marxist political systems suffer from two major banes. One, the system of political representation fails to reflect popular will of the people. Two, despite their claims to the contrary, these systems essentially become top - down, thus putting a question mark on their democratic credentials. In the process, the people at the grass root level hardly play any meaningful role in the decision- making process. Gandhi as a votary of common man was acutely conscious of these limitations. Hence, he strongly pleaded for a decentralised polity, which coupled with a decentralised economy, would really give reins of power to the people at the grass root level. In his design of popular polity direct democracy was functional only at the level of the lowest unit based on adult franchise and direct elections. However, election to the higher bodies would be of indirect nature in which the elected representatives of lower units would elect the higher ones. He was confident that such a people- based polity would ensure democracy with greater amount of accountability. Besides, his development model based on decentralised economy could be propped up and supported by such a people-based politics as even the planning process would be bottom-up instead of top-down. This would minimise the role of bureaucracy and ensure peoples planning and avoidance of leakage associated with development process.

Today most of the societies in the world are marked by social and religious divisiveness which goes a long way to hinder the entire process of development. This has led to the emergence of a new concept of multiculturalism as an antidote to social and religious

divisiveness and to ensure social, cultural and religious harmony.<sup>43</sup> However, such an approach is primarily based on some kind of feeling of tolerance rather than a firm faith in harmonious coexistence. It is becoming more and more obvious that Gandhian concept of *Sarva Dharma Samabhava* (equal respect for all religions) provides a better framework for harmonious living of different religious groups and communities. Widespread acceptance of such an approach would ensure that a lot of societal resources are diverted to provide a better way of life for the people. In brief, social harmony based on Gandhi's religious and cultural world view could ensure an inclusive development leading to an equitable and just society.

On the basis of the above analysis, one could safely conclude that the present model of economic model of development is going through a phase of deep crisis on the fronts of distributive justice, breaking down of the harmonious relationship between man and nature and violence touching every walk of social life. All attempts to get rid of the above problems which have primarily emerged from the system itself have also come to naught. Hence, the quest for a viable alternative model of development is going on in all earnestness. It has been the primary contention of this paper that Gandhian model of development could very well provide such an alternative as it ensures ecological balance, more sustainable mode of development, and a non-violent social order based on equity and justice. The enduring sustainability of Gandhian development model is ensured by aligning finite resources with limited human wants. Moreover, Gandhian thinking of development and the art of living based on simplicity and austerity would guarantee that every generation could be saving and replenishing societal resources in such a way that the future of posterity for all time to come would remain secure.

### **Acknowledgements**

This is a revised version of a paper presented in the Silver Jubilee Seminar on *Gandhi, Development and Sustainability* organized jointly by Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi and Gandhi Research Foundation, Jalgaon during 5-7 October, 2012 at Gopuri, Wardha. The author would like to thank all the participants for the useful comments. The author would also like acknowledge the debt to **Ram Chandra Pradhan**, Senior Faculty of the Institute of Gandhian Studies and **John S. Moolakkattu**, Editor, *Gandhi Marg*, for their guidance, invaluable suggestions and insights.

## Notes and References

1. Refer Harry S. Truman's Inaugural Address delivered on January 20, 1949. See <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=13282>>accessed on October 2,2012.

"Our aim should be to help the free peoples of the world, through their own efforts, to produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens.

We invite other countries to pool their technological resources in this undertaking. Their contributions will be warmly welcomed. This should be a cooperative enterprise in which all nations work together through the United Nations and its specialized agencies whenever practicable. It must be a worldwide effort for the achievement of peace, plenty, and freedom.

With the cooperation of business, private capital, agriculture, and labor in this country, this program can greatly increase the industrial activity in other nations and can raise substantially their standards of living.

Such new economic developments must be devised and controlled to the benefit of the peoples of the areas in which they are established. Guarantees to the investor must be balanced by guarantees in the interest of the people whose resources and whose labor go into these developments.

The old imperialism—exploitation for foreign profit—has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair-dealing.

All countries, including our own, will greatly benefit from a constructive program for the better use of the world's human and natural resources. Experience shows that our commerce with other countries expands as they progress industrially and economically. Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge.

Only by helping the least fortunate of its members to help themselves can the human family achieve the decent, satisfying life that is the right of all people.

Democracy alone can supply the vitalizing force to stir the peoples of the world into triumphant action, not only against their human oppressors, but also against their ancient enemies—hunger, misery, and despair.

On the basis of these four major courses of action we hope to help create the conditions that will lead eventually to personal freedom and happiness for all mankind.

If we are to be successful in carrying out these policies, it is clear that we must have continued prosperity in this country and we must keep ourselves strong.

Slowly but surely we are weaving a world fabric of international security and growing prosperity.”

2. Rostow’s model postulates that economic growth takes place in five basic stages viz. ( i) Traditional society; ( ii) Preconditions for take-off; ( iii)Take-off; (iv) Drive to maturity; and (v) Age of high mass consumption (W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).
3. *The Hindu* , March 20, 2012 See <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article3013870.ece> accessed on November 3,2012.
4. See Smitu Kothari and Wendy Harcourt, “Introduction: The violence of development” *Development* (2004) 47(1), 3–7. doi:10.1057/palgrave.development.1100024  
See <http://www.palgravejournals.com/development/journal/v47/n1/full/1100024a.html> accessed on November 3, 2012.
5. United Nations Environmental Programme, *UNEP Year Book 2011:Emerging Issues In our Global environment*. See <http://www.unep.org/yearbook/> accessed on September 10,2011.
6. See <<http://www.globalwarming.org.in/> >accessed on September 10,2011.
7. See<[http://www.unep.org/yearbook/2012/pdfs/UYB\\_2012\\_FULLREPORT.pdf](http://www.unep.org/yearbook/2012/pdfs/UYB_2012_FULLREPORT.pdf)> accessed on November10,2012.
8. *Ibid.*
9. United Nations Environmental Programme, *UNEP Year Book 2011:Emerging Issues In our Global environment*, Executive Summary, p.vii, See <<http://www.unep.org/yearbook/> >accessed on September 10,2011.
10. See<[http://www.unep.org/yearbook/2012/pdfs/UYB\\_2012\\_FULLREPORT.pdf](http://www.unep.org/yearbook/2012/pdfs/UYB_2012_FULLREPORT.pdf)> accessed on November10,2012.
11. Donella H. Meadows, Dennis I. Meadows, Jorgen Randers, William W. Behrens III, *The Limits to Growth*, (1972) See <<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~wggray/Teaching/His300/Illustrations/Limits-to-Growth.pdf> >accessed on November10, 2012.
12. See<<http://untreaty.un.org/cod/avl/ha/dunche/dunche.html>> accessed on November10, 2012.
13. See<<http://www.stwr.org/special-features/the-brandt-report.html>> accessed on November10, 2012.  
The Brandt Report is the report written by the Independent Commission, first chaired by Willy Brandt (the former German Chancellor) in 1980, to review international development issues. This report provided an understanding of drastic differences in the economic development for both the North and South hemispheres of the world.
14. Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future See <<http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm> >accessed on October2, 2012.
15. See<<http://www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html>> accessed on

*October 2, 2012.*

16. The Kyoto Protocol is a protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change aimed at combating global warming. " The Protocol was initially adopted on 11 December 1997 in Kyoto, Japan and came into force on 16 February 2005. For more details see <[http://unfccc.int/kyoto\\_protocol/items/2830.php](http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php)> accessed on September 10, 2011.
17. See <[http://unfccc.int/meetings/bali\\_dec\\_2007/meeting/6319.php](http://unfccc.int/meetings/bali_dec_2007/meeting/6319.php)> accessed on September 10,2011.
18. See< [http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/basic\\_info/basicinfo.html](http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/basic_info/basicinfo.html) > accessed on September 10, 2011.
19. See < [http://unfccc.int/meetings/copenhagen\\_dec\\_2009/meeting/6295.php](http://unfccc.int/meetings/copenhagen_dec_2009/meeting/6295.php)> accessed on September 10, 2011.
20. The conference included the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 5th Meeting of the Parties (COP/MOP 5) to the Kyoto Protocol. The Copenhagen Accord was drafted by the US, China, India, Brazil and South Africa on December 18, 2009. The document recognised that climate change as one of the greatest challenges of the present and action should be taken to keep any temperature increases to below 2°C. It was "taken note of", but not "adopted", in a debate of all the participating countries the next day, and it was not passed unanimously. The document is not legally binding and does not contain any legally binding commitments for reducing Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions.
21. See<<http://cancun.unfccc.int/> > accessed on September 10,2012.
22. See< <http://www.cop17-cmp7durban.com/>> accessed on September 10,2012.
23. See< <http://www.slideshare.net/uncsd2012/the-future-we-want-rio20-outcome-document>> accessed on December 11,2012
24. See< <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>> accessed on January 7,2013
25. See<[http://www.ci.undp.org/news.php?id\\_news=180](http://www.ci.undp.org/news.php?id_news=180)> accessed on January 7,2013.
26. The concept of GNH has often been explained by its four pillars: good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation. Lately the four pillars have been further classified into nine domains in order to create widespread understanding of GNH and to reflect the holistic range of GNH values. The nine domains are: psychological wellbeing, health, education, time use, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and living standards. The domain represents each of the components of wellbeing of the Bhutanese people, and the term wellbeing here refers to fulfilling conditions of a good life as per the values and principles laid down by the concept of Gross National Happiness.  
S e e < h t t p : / / w w w . u n c s d 2 0 1 2 . o r g /

index.php?page=view&type=99&nr=266&menu=20> accessed on January 7, 2013

27. *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future* See <<http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>> accessed on October 2, 2012.

"The satisfaction of human needs and aspirations in the major objective of development. The essential needs of vast numbers of people in developing countries for food, clothing, shelter, jobs - are not being met, and beyond their basic needs these people have legitimate aspirations for an improved quality of life. A world in which poverty and inequity are endemic will always be prone to ecological and other crises. Sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life.

Living standards that go beyond the basic minimum are sustainable only if consumption standards everywhere have regard for long-term sustainability. Yet many of us live beyond the world's ecological means, for instance in our patterns of energy use. Perceived needs are socially and culturally determined, and sustainable development requires the promotion of values that encourage consumption standards that are within the bounds of the ecological possible and to which all can reasonably aspire.

Meeting essential needs depends in part on achieving full growth potential, and sustainable development clearly requires economic growth in places where such needs are not being met. Elsewhere, it can be consistent with economic growth, provided the content of growth reflects the broad principles of sustainability and non-exploitation of others. But growth by itself is not enough. High levels of productive activity and widespread poverty can coexist, and can endanger the environment. Hence sustainable development requires that societies meet human needs both by increasing productive potential and by ensuring equitable opportunities for all."

28. See <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/> accessed on September 10, 2011.
29. Ibid.
30. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011)
31. Rio+20, United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, 20-22 June 2012 <http://www.uncsd2012.org/index.php?page=view&nr=102&type=1000&menu=126> accessed on September 10, 2012.
32. Refer Douglass North's essay *The New Institutional Economics and Development* See <[http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?rlz=1T4GTKR\\_enIN459IN459&q=cache:9c6YOAYKDwYJ:http://www.deu.edu.tr/userweb/sedef.akgungor/Current%2520topics%2520in%2520Turkish%2520Economy/](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?rlz=1T4GTKR_enIN459IN459&q=cache:9c6YOAYKDwYJ:http://www.deu.edu.tr/userweb/sedef.akgungor/Current%2520topics%2520in%2520Turkish%2520Economy/)>

north.pdf%2Binstitutional+economics+pioneered+by+Douglas+North.&hl=en&ct=clnk> accessed on September 10,2012.

“It is one thing to describe the characteristics of economic change; it is something else to prescribe the correct medicine to improve the performance of economies. We simply don’t know how to transform ailing economies into successful ones but some fundamental characteristics of institutions suggest some clues.

1. Institutions are made up of formal rules, informal norms and the enforcement characteristics of both and it is the admixture of rules, norms, and enforcement characteristics that determines economic performance. While the formal rules can be changed overnight, the informal norms change only gradually. Since it is the norms that provide the essential “legitimacy” to any set of formal rules, revolutionary change is never as revolutionary as its supporters desire and performance will be different than anticipated.

More than that societies that adopt the formal rules of another society (such as Latin American countries’ adoption of constitutions like that of the United States) will have very different performance characteristics than the original country because both the informal norms and the enforcement characteristics will be different. The implication is that transferring the formal political and economic rules of successful western market economies to third world and eastern European economies is not a sufficient condition for good economic performance. Privatization is not a panacea for solving poor economic performance.

2. It is politics that shape economic performance because they define and enforce the economic rules of the game. Therefore the heart of development policy must be the creation of politics that will create and enforce efficient property rights. Unfortunately, however, research in the new political economy (the new institutional economics applied to politics) has been largely focused on the United States and other developed countries. While we know a lot about the characteristics of the politics of third world countries we have very little theory about such politics. We know even less about the consequences of radically altering the institutional framework of central and eastern European societies. However, the characteristics of institutions described in the foregoing sections of this paper suggest some implications:
  - a. Political institutions will be stable only if they are supported by organizations with an interest in their perpetuation. Therefore an essential part of political/economic reform is the creation of such organizations.
  - b. It is essential to change both the institutions and the belief systems for successful reform since it is the mental models of

- the actors that will shape choices.
- c. Evolving norms of behavior that will support and legitimize new rules is a lengthy process and in the absence of such reinforcing norms politics will tend to be unstable.
  - d. While economic growth can occur in the short run with autocratic regimes, long run economic growth entails the development of the rule of law and the protection of civil and political freedoms.
  - e. Informal constraints—norms of behavior, conventions, and codes of conduct—area necessary (but not sufficient) condition for good economic performance. Societies with norms favorable to economic growth can sometimes prosper even with unstable or adverse political rules.”
33. See <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postdevelopment\\_theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postdevelopment_theory)> accessed on September 10,2012.
  34. M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1994).
  35. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG) (New Delhi : The Publications Division, Government of India, 1979) Vol. 38, p. 243.
  36. See <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/data/climatechange/planets/>> accessed on November10, 2012.
  37. M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule op.cit* .p.53.
  38. Anthony J. Parel(ed.) *Hind Swaraj and other writings* (New Delhi : Cambridge University Press, 2009 ), p.156.
  39. *Ibid*.p.157.
  40. *Ibid*. p.158.
  41. *Ibid*. p.159.
  42. For a detailed discussion see Siby K. Joseph “The Principles of Gandhian Economy :Integrating Spirituality and Ecology”, *Gandhi Marg*,Vol.28, No.3, October-December 2006, pp.309-320.
  43. See Siby K. Joseph “ Gandhi , Religion and Multiculturalism:An Appraisal”, *Gandhi Marg*, Vol. 33, No. 4, January-March 2012, pp. 409-425.

**SIBY K. JOSEPH** is Dean of Studies and Research, Institute of Gandhian Studies, Gopuri, Wardha, Maharashtra. He served as a visiting faculty of the Summer University programmes of University of Terre-du-ciel, Bruallies, France (2006). He is also a visiting faculty of the international course on Gandhian non-violence organised

*January-March 2013*

494 ● GANDHI MARG

by Peace Research Centre, Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad. He is closely connected with international Gandhian and peace organisations especially Gandhi International and the Communities of Ark founded by Lanza Del Vasto in France. He has published a number of articles in reputed journals and also edited books on Gandhian thought, Peace studies and Environment.

E-mail: siby kollappallil@yahoo.com