

THE BEACON

Reading Writing Illuminating

Noon at the break of darkness
(From a mis-reading of Arthur Koestler and Bob Dylan)

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The Sacred Ecology of Ahimsa

🕒 January 29, 2023 📁 Between the Lines 💬 0



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"Ahimsa and Truth are my two lungs. I cannot live without them." – Gandhi^[i]

"Never has humankind needed non-violence as now, nor ever been so unready for it." – Sudhir Chandra^[ii]

Introduction

We live in strange times. The certitudes of the past have vanished into the oblivion of history, as though all the

SOCIAL MEDIA



WHY THE BEACON?

URL: www.thebeacon.in

The Beacon is a web-based only feature magazine of writing and reading (long-form essays, fiction and poetry) that believes in confluences more than in consensus. The Beacon searches for the intersections at which political/economic analyses meet literature, the personal weaves into the social, the real is imagined and unity spells diversity. Confluences make conversations meaningful and possible; intersections are the locations for cultures—of diversity, differences, pluralism, hybridity.

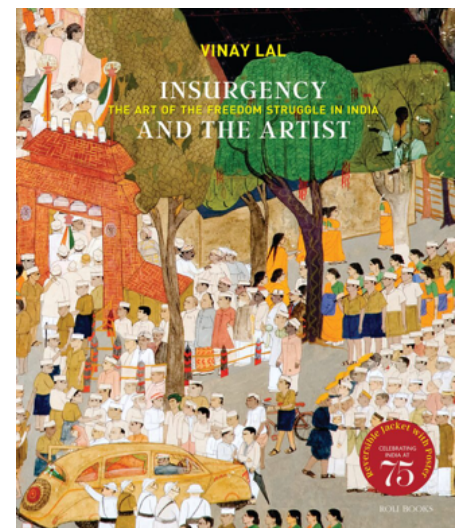
key lessons from it were already well-digested. On the other hand, the digital age has drawn metropolitan humanity into a virtual future, detaining us in a maze of endless corridors of seduction that serve to conceal the enormous problems that lie denied and buried in hidden depths of the present so that we indefinitely postpone solving them. We are expected to lust after everlasting prosperity and live in the persuasively fictitious interregnum between the vanished past and a supposedly inevitable future. Digital technology is robbing a large proportion of humanity of the natural experience of time. It is as though human beings could indefinitely exempt themselves from the *kaal-chakra*, the wheel of time, to sustain the spectacular illusions of an impossible present. A “Faustian restlessness” stalks metropolitan humanity, with profound, violent psychological, cultural and ecological consequences.^[iii]

One cause of this global consumer pandemic is located transparently in the artificial acceleration of history resulting from modern technology, so far inescapably dependent on the rapid, unsustainable expenditure of fossil fuels extracted mercilessly from the bowels of mother earth. The full range and extent of irreversible ecological damage being caused by a nearly universal “technochrony”, pushed by commercialised masculinism and aggressive states, is manifesting itself in the gathering pace of climate change, species extinction, vanishing biodiversity, and the almost universal poisoning of air, water and soil at alarming rates.^[iv] At the same time, these structural forces have built on traditional inequities to create a terribly divided and unequal world.

Unsparring critic of modern technology as he was, Gandhi would have been shocked by all this, but would not have been surprised in the least. The limited evidence of his day was enough to show him the possible contours of the future. With his inevitable staff in hand, he would have gathered his slender frame, and with a typically wry smile below those kind eyes, still walk towards – not away! – from us. What would he say to us in this bedevilled late hour? And what has he already said and lived that could guide us to effective action to address the multiple crises we face? These are the questions that prompt this essay.

The Beacon eschews the prioritisation of the real over the imagined, of the social over the personal, of political/economic analyses over literature, of matter over mind and of the material over the ethical. The Beacon will endeavour to become the site for a new language and poetry of resistance-to oppression, to banality and the ghettoization of the mind.

SUGGESTED READS/VIEWINGS



***Insurgency and the Artist: Art of the Freedom Struggle in India.* Vinay Lal. Roli Books December 2022. 260 pages**

The book explores not merely how Indian printmakers and artists responded to the freedom struggle but rather how the art they fashioned invoked their own conception of the nation, their sense of the past, and the

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The ecological alienation of metropolitan humanity

Life is given to humanity under certain conditions. Long, arduous, and diverse human experience teaches us (and all the knowledge systems confirm) that these conditions are ecologically very fragile, our physical existence delicately poised to thrive within a narrow range of temperature and atmospheric pressure, air, water, soil quality, and so on. If we then osmotically absorb from our modern social and cultural environment extremely powerful influences which lead us to dreams of power, and we develop material ambitions out of all proportion to our physical, existential limits, inviting in the bargain multiple forms of chemical contamination into our lives, eventually leading ourselves into a shared predicament of poor mental, physical, cultural and ecological health, who or what can we hold responsible?

This is a question that concerns Gandhi throughout his life and work. His answer is that we no longer know our place in the scheme of the cosmos. Modernity has enticed humanity to stray from the path of dharma (his word for authentic civilisation, no less than his term for true religion) by leading us into a life of excess, ruled by a destructive chaos of unregulated appetites. It should be surprising if such a way of life does *not* ultimately lead to the suicidal destruction of our natural surroundings, no less than of our own cultural, mental and physical health. To an irresponsible age of unleashed appetites, alienated from the 'wilderness' of nature as from its own intimate microbiomes (the rich 'wilderness' of microorganisms within our physical bodies), a 'cruel' ecology places unexpected limits both on the outside and on the inside, ultimately terminating the freedom of humanity – even if it leaves us nominally alive. The rapidly ascending asphyxiation of our metropolitan areas is adequate testimony to the precision of Gandhi's premonition. In keeping with the boasts of modern technocracy, the collective modern mind that tries to dispose of 'the two natures' (the wildernesses outside and within our physiology) is deeply alienated from both. Ecological estrangement has galloped. In an endless sequence of simultaneous happenings close on the heels of our indulgences,

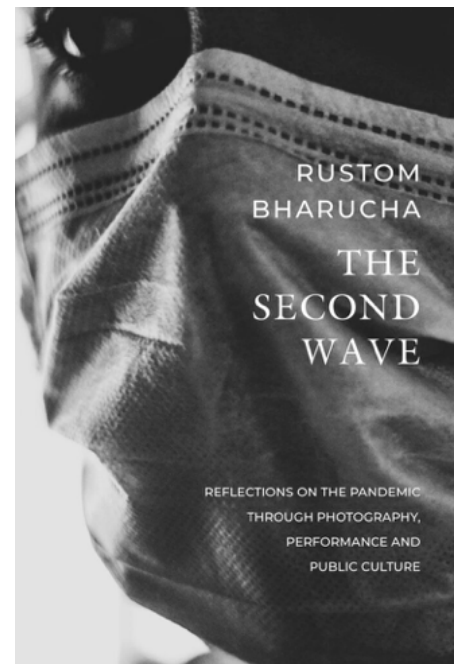
contours of the movement for India's emancipation from the yoke of colonial oppression. Recent scholarly work has been almost entirely riveted on nationalist prints, and much of it has focused on the idea of Bharat Mata, but this book seeks to furnish a more rounded account of the artwork—including etchings, paintings, woodblocks prints, and cartoons—contemporary to the freedom struggle and also highlights the work of neglected artists such as Babuji Shilpi, S.L. Parasher, Zainul Abedin, and M.V. Dhurandhar, among others. The author considers how the Indian past was rendered as one of martial resistance to 'foreign' rule, the manner in which artists worked with mythic material, and, of course, the treatment of the larger-than-life figures of Gandhi, Bhagat Singh, Subhas Bose, and other patriots in nationalist art.

our inner ecology is violated with every infringement that the outer ecology suffers.

The dying groans of rainforests that come under our powerful earth-movers have their quietly tragic resonance in the growing neurological and cardiovascular ailments suffered by those who have lived long on a diet of hamburgers industrially manufactured from cattle reared on ranches that displaced the destroyed, selfsame rainforests. What remains of ecological balance is thrown into the further disequilibrium of destabilising feedback loops. The real danger is that since such a predicament is a globally shared one, in which large and growing proportions of consumer humanity effectively collude in a familiar chorus of 'aspirational' prosperity at the ceaseless promptings of the hectic, global mass media, we may fail to perceive the peril in time to take decisive action at a collective level. We may get deafened by the loud echoes of our own screams of restless desire.

The era of "The Great Acceleration", as it has been called, has now brought us to the edge of an abyss of terrifying depths.^[v] In such a predicament, how may we interpret Gandhi's vision – in particular his idea and practice of satyagraha – to understand our inner mental ecology and the cognitive-moral roots of the ecological crisis of the earth? How best can we draw sustenance and inspiration from his experience and practice of his foremost spiritual value – ahimsa (non-violence) – to find the way out of the quicksands we are in? These are the two intertwined questions that concern us here. We might say that we are searching here for a yug-sankat-bodh, the wisdom needed to face an age of epochal crises. In this endeavour, Gandhi's vision of swaraj (self-rule)^[vi] – itself a product of times when the train of humanity had not fully entered the dark tunnel of unsustainability – is indispensable. Even when imperfect, this vision may help us retreat from the path we are on, where we are unable to dig our way through the mountain growing above and around us – even as the darkening interior is belied by the blaze of blinding halogens and neons. Most crucially, it may enable us to see fresh possibilities of the renewal of life when we glimpse the light again.

Gandhi lived in modern times.^[vii] He had a modern education,



The Second Wave.
Reflections on the Pandemic
Through Photography,
Performance and Popular
Culture. Rustom Bharucha.
 Seagull Books. January 2023.
 250 pages

Focusing on the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in India between April and December 2021, Rustom Bharucha reflects on four interconnected realities that haunted this ongoing crisis—death, grief, mourning, and extinction. How do we cope with multiple deaths and the dislocation of rituals when the act of mourning is either postponed or denied? What roles do political surveillance, censorship, the regulation of lockdowns, and the sheer indifference to the lives of people play in the containment of civil liberties? Through vivid examples of photography, theater, dance,

and in his early working years practised a modern profession. However, with the passage of time, and under the influence of Western critics of modernity like Thoreau, Ruskin and Tolstoy, not to forget the lessons of his own upbringing, tradition and experience, his outlook on life is anything but modern. Gandhi's vision of swaraj challenges the fundamentals of the modern zeitgeist in virtually every respect. As would befit a man of action, his key points of reference are experiences from his own personal and public life in the modern world. However, at every stage, he examines his life philosophically, in the context not only of a civilisation with an ancient past, but of the vast cosmos of which we are a tiny part, and of whose influence on us we are at best inadequately aware. He is ever mindful of the interconnectedness of phenomena at every level of existence. He rarely fails to grasp his own personal and public life in the context not only of a living ecology of nature and the human body, but also as part and parcel of a vast, living cosmology.

★★

The Three Ecologies of the Self: Gandhi's dissension from global modernity^[viii]

Throughout his life, Gandhi seeks a complete integration of the Self – inclusive of his personality, human culture, and the cosmos, corresponding to somatic, moral and spiritual ecologies. ^[ix] When young, his goal is to harmonise his mind with his heart and conscience, as comes through in various parts of his autobiography. When older, he seeks nothing less than to unite with the one he considers his maker. Throughout his life, he pays careful attention to his physical health to ensure that such profound goals can be realistically approached. Gandhi's 'Self' straddles at least three significant levels, each nesting in wider, deeper selves. In his self-perception, his corporeal-somatic (i.e., bodily) self rests in a deeper cognitive-moral one (subjectively inclusive of all humanity), which in turn takes its ultimate inspiration from a cosmic-spiritual self, rooted in what he thinks of as 'the Godhead'. Corresponding to these three levels of the self are three closely intertwined ecologies – somatic, moral, and spiritual – which constitute the substance of Gandhi's view of life. Despite inherent (often, creative) tensions, inevitable in the life of

visual arts, and the cultures of everyday life, this meditative essay illuminates both the horror of the pandemic as well as its unexpected intimacies and revelations of shared suffering. Against the destruction of nature and the disrespect for the nonhuman, The Second Wave offers lessons in resilience through its reflections on the ethos of waiting and the need to re-envision breath as a vital resource of self-renewal and resistance.

Also view:

THEATRE AND THE CORONAVIRUS – A SPEECH-ACT IN NINE EPISODES by Rustom Bharucha

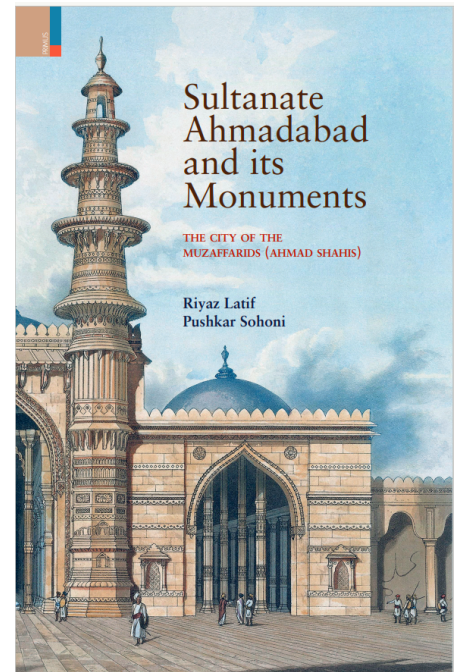
<https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/en/v/interweaving-performance-cultures/online-projects/index.html>

a karmayogi whose primary concern is action, it is a remarkably coherent philosophical vision that marks his distance from the world-view of mainstream modernity. It is along the dimensions of these three ecologies that Gandhi's life and thought can be understood as deeply critical of the modern zeitgeist.^[x]

Gandhi's somatic ecology: What the Self as body and the body as Self means

When it comes to the human body, the mainstream modernist worldview has long drawn upon an orthodox, materialist science, significantly influenced by Rene Descartes, which looks upon the body as a purely physical entity (utterly distinct from the mind). The body can thus be studied in an abstract way by largely isolating it from its multiple (inner and outer) ecological contexts, though it may allow exceptions when it comes to the study of areas like epidemiology which look at the environmental origins of certain diseases. Such a perspective has little place for any metaphysical significance of the human body, let alone leaving room for the possibility that metaphysical forces may, in turn, perhaps even exercise an influence on it. Could the human body mean something more (and sometimes even other) than merely being a very complex biological machine potentially fully tractable to modern science? This is not a question that modern science typically poses, even if philosophers, artists, or poets might. It is not even clear if, intrinsically, science as a culturally bound and particular kind of intellectual enterprise, is in a position to face such a challenge.

We are well aware of the many weaknesses, actual and alleged, in Gandhi's evolving stance on the issues of caste, race, gender, and adivasi/indigenous peoples. In this essay, however, we contend that despite possible shortcomings on this score (which are being discussed in many other forums), his life and message remains one of critical and unique importance to humanity's current crises. Additionally, like Vinay Lal, we see Gandhi's life and writings more as an "open-ended conversation" (with himself as much as with others), in which thoughts and positions are more "work in progress" than all neatly tied up.^[xi] The contradictions we may see in him or indeed in any other such person with significant historical influence, are also the basis of



Sultanate Ahmadabad and its Monuments: The City of the Muzaffarids (Ahmad Shahis). Riyaz Latif and Pushkar Sohoni. Primus Books. January 2023. 170 pages (Hardcover).

A group of monuments in Ahmadabad constructed under the patronage of the Muzaffarid (Ahmad Shahi) sultanate of Gujarat stand testimony today to the composite heritage of the city. Sultanate Ahmadabad and its Monuments serves as a succinct guide to these representative monuments constructed under a sovereignty that endured for almost two centuries until its annexation into the Mughal Empire under Akbar in 1573.

...Richly illustrated, it brings to light an architectural corpus which deserves a central space

fresh dialogues leading us to advance our own thoughts and actions.

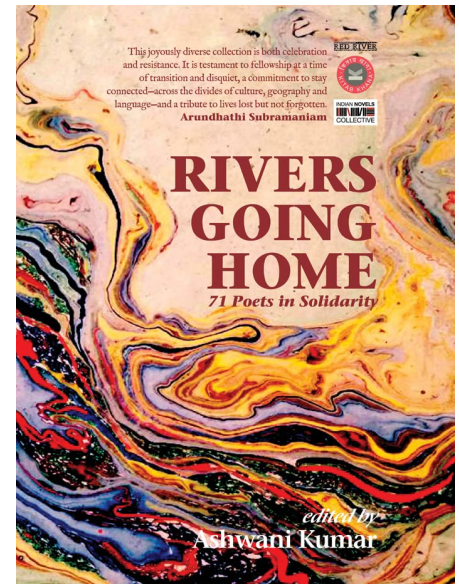
The body as a temple, a microcosm of the universe

In his quest for swaraj, Gandhi is, among several other things, deeply concerned with the question of what the body – in particular, the self as the body (*and* the body as the self) – means. In many of his talks and writings, Gandhi gives evidence of his nuanced, multi-layered idea of the self. The self, for Gandhi, extends from the individual mind-soul-body, manas-atma-pind, to the spiritual cosmos, Paramatman-Brahmand which are themselves both composed of the five elements. On the physical plane, Gandhi is deeply attentive to the workings of his own body. He takes scrupulous care of it by attending to the minutæ of his daily diet, physical work, and so on. However, he goes well beyond the dietetics of good health. He also views the body as something sacred, as a temple, an intimate opportunity for self-realisation. He remains its lifelong student, even having a cosmic reverence for it. In a booklet on therapeutic health he writes from prison in 1942, he says, with as much audacity as humility:

“The human body is the universe in miniature. That which cannot be found in the body is not found in the universe. Hence the philosopher’s formula, that the universe within reflects the universe without. It follows therefore that our knowledge of our body could be perfect if we would know the universe. But even the very best of doctors and hakims and vaidas have not been able to acquire it...Scientists have given (an) attractive description of the activities going on within and without the body, but no one can say what sets the wheel going. Who can explain the why and wherefore of death or foretell its time? In short, after infinite reading and writing, after infinite experience, man has come to know how little he knows.”^[xii]

Gandhi’s conception of man as a microcosm of the macrocosmic universe follows the ancient Indian tradition of looking at everything in terms of the panchmahabhoota (the five basic elements) – vayu (air), jal (water), prithvi (earth), tejas (fire/light), and akash (space). Just like the universe, Gandhi says, we are made up of these five living elements. It is the balance of these

as well as a composite scholarly assessment within the discourse surrounding the cultural expressions of Islamic architecture in the Indian subcontinent.



Rivers Going Home. 71 Poets in Solidarity Ashwani Kumar. Red River. December 2022. 270 pages

The poems in this anthology originated from ‘Poetry Live’ — a curated experience on social media platform, Instagram, where poetry readings were led by the Indian Novels Collective and Mumbai’s much-loved bookstore Kitab Khana. Poet and critic Arundhati Subramaniam, who inaugurated the series on 31 March 2020 with a reading of The Tent by Rumi, described the initiative as, “an act of faith in poetry in troubling times”. Given this background, it was natural for poets in the anthology to shine through this ‘immaculate

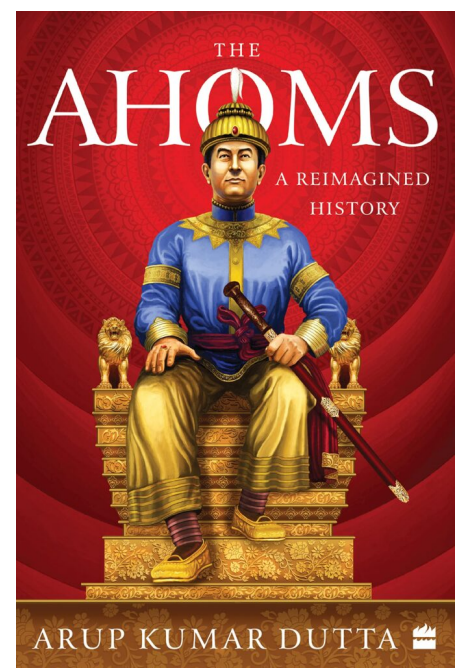
elements in our inner and outer ecology that shapes our health in multiple ways. Furthermore, the awakening that comes from realising one's oneness with the infinite has far-reaching, desirable social consequences. Gandhi's vision of sarvodaya arises precisely from such a realisation, wherein man discovers "that he is part of and one with all the life that surrounds him. This must mean service of mankind and through it finding God."^[xiii] While the modern idea of liberty involves the power to expand one's own choices, Gandhi's idea of freedom entails the expansion of choices for others. Freedom becomes one with duty. The self expands to rediscover itself with a much wider range of responsibilities than just those towards its own physical body and its necessary needs (and unnecessary desires). With characteristic economy of thought, Gandhi finds the foundation of his overarching ethics here, a moral paradox familiar to many a sage across time and culture: "He who will establish contact with the infinite possesses nothing and yet possesses everything. In the ultimate analysis, man owns that of which he can make legitimate use and which he can assimilate. If everybody followed this rule, there would be room enough for all and there would be neither want nor overcrowding."^[xiv] At one stroke, Gandhi has articulated an ethic which is simultaneously personal, social and ecological. By daring to undertake responsibility all the way up to the cosmic level, the self finds itself able to command the passions. It finds its freedom, its swaraj. The beauty of such an outlook is that Gandhi's idea of swaraj unifies the three ecologies – somatic, moral, and spiritual – in one vision. Gandhi sees swaraj as the naturally given condition of humanity. In this sense, swaraj is, by conception, "prakritik swaraj",^[xv] belonging to the natural state of affairs. This becomes clearer when one takes a closer look at the latter two ecologies and the selves to which they correspond.

For the time being, we may repeat, in passing, that Gandhi's idea (and experience) of the Self now well transcends that of the corporeal self, which we normally associate with just the physical human body – or more precisely, our own mental image of it. The horizon has expanded.

Liberated from such persuasive self-images, habitually experienced (not merely imagined), we are free to reach within,

*choreography' in verse —
miracles and mirages of poetry
waiting to happen, now and in
the future.*

*This joyously diverse collection is
both celebration and resistance.
It is testament to fellowship at a
time of transition and disquiet, a
commitment to stay connected—
across the divides of culture,
geography and language—and a
tribute to lives lost but not
forgotten. — Arundhati
Subramaniam*



***The Ahoms: A Reimagined History.* Arup Kumar Dutta.**
HarperCollins India

December 2022. 432 pages

*An epic retelling of the 600-year
rule of the Ahom dynasty.*

*In 1228 CE, a group of Shan or
Tai warriors, led by a brave
leader named Sukapha, left their
home in Myanmar and travelled
to Upper Assam. Here, they set*

into selves beyond those inspired by our customarily narrow Cartesian dualism – the doctrine attributed to Descartes, which upholds a sharp distinction between mind and body, and which has had a profound, far-reaching influence on medical science, as any on other modern science and indeed on the entire modern way of life. Many observers in the field of medicine now attribute to Cartesian dualism the roots of the crisis in modern medicine.^[xvi]

As Vinay Lal has rightly pointed out, “Gandhi’s entire life functioned much like an ecosystem...in which every minute act, emotion, or thought was not without its place.” Given the punctilious rigour with which Gandhi conducted himself in matters both personal and public, his “entire life...constitutes an ecological treatise.”^[xvii] For Gandhi, the self-realisation required for swaraj is facilitated through a process of self-overcoming and purification which involves the control of desires and passions and through the disciplines of fasting, silence, meditation, prayer and worshipful work as service to humanity and nature.

Social ecology: Compassion for ‘other’ selves^[xviii]

We may embark upon a journey towards authentic freedom. And this inevitably involves an abiding interest, in practice, in ‘other’ selves, no less than in the cosmic-spiritual one. Our social experience alone reveals that our corporeal selves are grounded in yet deeper social ones. In other words, social action is critical to this personal discovery. We learn not only more about ourselves in the actual experience of social relationships, involving the family and community, but we also learn that in some mysterious sense, a deeper layer of our own personal selves comes to life in social contexts. This is all-important to Gandhi, for whom the path of the karmayogi is the way to Truth.

Moral ecology: Satya and Ahimsa

“Ahimsa is my God, and Truth is my God.” When I look for Ahimsa, Truth says “Find it through me.” When I look for Truth, Ahimsa says, “Find it out through me.”^[xix]

For Gandhi, both ahimsa and truth stand well above him, as guideposts to moral integrity and action. As befits a karmayogi,

up the nucleus of what would become the powerful Ahom empire. Till it was annexed by the British in 1826, for nearly six centuries, Sukapha’s descendants reigned over a greater part of the Brahmaputra Valley.

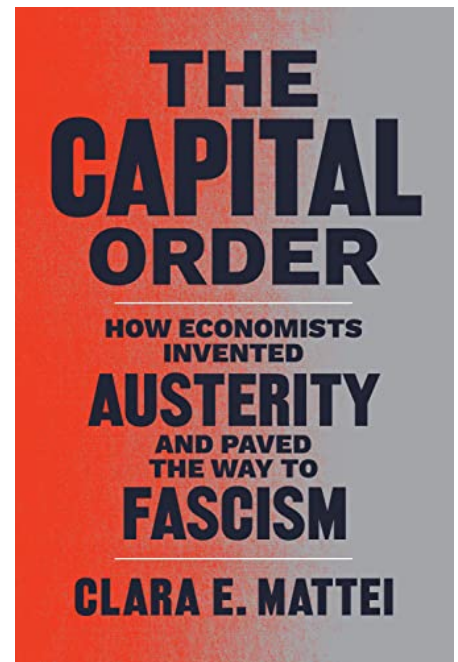
Few dynasties in the world have enjoyed such a long period of almost unbroken rule. It was primarily due to the Ahoms that the pre-colonial Assamese nation was born. Their reign witnessed the synthesis of disparate tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley and the evolution of a distinct Assamese language, culture and identity. The Ahom dynasty was one of the greatest political entities of medieval Asia, equal to, if not greater than, its better-known counterparts in other parts of the world.

The history of the Ahoms is replete with tales of war, bravery, brutality, love, loyalty, treachery and treason. This book seeks to imaginatively acquaint readers with the fascinating saga of the dynasty along with the major events during its rule.

non-violent action is Gandhi's path to truth. Truth, for Gandhi, is not a mere idea which he possesses. It overarches all humanity. It is not a plaything of the mind, as it is for many intellectuals. It is a profound discovery enabled by right action. It is both the mysterious metaphysical premise as well as the liberating harvest of human action. It is a moral experience that stands above him in a guiding, living sense. Often not in its possession, he ceaselessly and reverentially aspires to it. Throughout his years of public life, Gandhi believed in the dictum "Truth is God."^[xx] He feels impelled to act – from the innermost depths of his conscience – in order to feel and experience his own deepest self, which speaks through his conscience. For Gandhi, truth is something so immense that it harmonises being itself with consciousness, bringing him bliss in the bargain:

"The word Satya (Truth) is derived from Sat which means being. And nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why Satya or Truth is the most important name of God. In fact, it is more correct to say Truth is God than to say God is Truth . . . Where there is no Truth there can be no true knowledge. That is why the word Chit is associated with the name of God. And where there is true knowledge there is always bliss (Ananda). Sorrow has no place there. And even as Truth is eternal, so is the bliss derived from it. Hence we know God as Sat-Chit-Ananda..."^[xxi]

How exactly does this notion of Truth enable Gandhi to act in specific historical contexts? Does he pick revelation over reason? What role does his own intellect play in the process? The historian Dilip Simeon quotes an important passage from Gandhi, a verbal response the latter gives to the query "Where do you find the seat of authority?" Pointing at his breast, Gandhi says: "It lies here. I exercise my judgement about every scripture, including the Gita. I cannot let a scriptural text supersede my reason...But you must not misunderstand my position. I believe in Faith also, in things where Reason has no place e.g., the existence of God." Simeon concludes wisely that for Gandhi, "Satyagraha, or "holding fast to truth" is not a political doctrine but a philosophical premise for right action at the level both of the polity and in society at large."^[xxii] Gandhi constantly seeks to act *from* Truth.



***The Capital Order: How Economists Invented Austerity and Paved the Way to Fascism* Clara E. Mattei. University of Chicago Press. November 2022. 480 pages**

Political economist Clara E. Mattei explores the intellectual origins of austerity to uncover its originating motives: the protection of capital—and indeed capitalism—in times of social upheaval from below.

Mattei traces modern austerity to its origins in interwar Britain and Italy, revealing how the threat of working-class power in the years after World War I animated a set of top-down economic policies that elevated owners, smothered workers, and imposed a rigid economic hierarchy across their societies. Where these policies

In an illuminating essay, “Gandhi, the Philosopher”, **Akeel Bilgrami** draws a critical insight about Gandhi’s vision. He points out that unlike what it means for thinkers in the European Enlightenment tradition, “...truth for Gandhi is not a cognitive notion at all. It is an experiential notion. It is not propositions purporting to describe the world of which truth is predicated, it is only our own moral experience which is capable of being true. This was of the utmost importance for him. It is what in the end underlies his opposition to the Enlightenment...”^[xxiii]

If such a view of truth is not taken, and cognition is divorced from ethics, as has become routine in the wake of Enlightenment thought in the West and in the Westernising world, the consequences are extensively manifold and catastrophic. Bilgrami outlines them:

“Reality will then not be the reality of moral experience. It will become something alien to that experience, wholly external and objectified. It is no surprise then that we will look upon reality as something to be mastered and conquered, an attitude that leads directly to the technological frame of mind that governs modern societies, and which in turn takes us away from our communal localities where moral experience and our practical relations to the world flourish. It takes us towards increasingly abstract places and structures such as nations and eventually global economies. In such places and such forms of life, there is no scope for exemplary action to take hold...”^[xxiv]

The above consequences are not the only ones resulting from the divorce of cognition from ethics:

“...the intellectualisation of the notion of truth to include a cognitive value, will descend inevitably into an elevation of science into the paradigmatic intellectual pursuit of our culture, and thus our alienation from nature with the wish to conquer and

“succeeded,” relatively speaking, was in their enrichment of certain parties, including employers and foreign-trade interests, who accumulated power and capital at the expense of labor. Here, Mattei argues, is where the true value of austerity can be observed: its insulation of entrenched privilege and its elimination of all alternatives to capitalism.

Drawing on newly uncovered archival material from Britain and Italy, much of it translated for the first time, The Capital Order offers a damning and essential new account of the rise of austerity—and of modern economics—at the levers of contemporary political power.

Clara Mattei - ...



Clara Mattei – How Economists Invented Austerity and Paved the Way to Fascism

Also: What Happens When Economics Doesn’t Reflect the Real World?

Anwar Shaikh, Professor of Economics at the New School,

control it without forgiveness with the most destructive forms of extractive technologies. The modern secular habits of thinking on these themes simply do not share this pessimism. “[xxv]

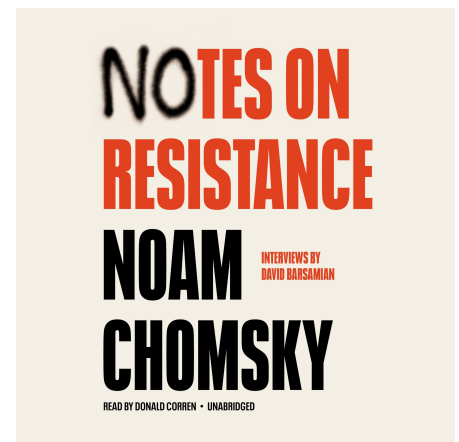
Gandhi had little faith in the modern notion of truth devoid of ethical content (rooted not just in humanity’s inner world), for it would inevitably culminate in unethical politics and, much worse, devastating consequences for nature and human culture. As Gandhi finds the courage to act according to his experience of Truth, he allows himself to become its vehicle. He acts on the calls of his conscience. His politics follows precisely from this (and not the other way around). Not surprisingly, given how widespread the separation of the cognitive from moral categories of perception has become, especially nowadays, this is often a cause of much perplexity to the rest of the world – as it was to Gandhi’s own political colleagues in the Congress Party.

In a similar vein to Bilgrami’s, in an old, pioneering essay on Gandhi’s critique of the modern West, **Ashis Nandy** writes that modern science rests on a “double-split”:

“It promises “true” knowledge and the control and predictability which goes with such knowledge, only when a person (1) isolates or splits off his cognition from his feelings and ethics and (2) when he partitions himself off from the subjects of his enquiry emotionally. The two splits together constitute the kernel of the modern scientific worldview; experimentation is only an epistemic attempt to work it out. Many elements of modern life – for instance, the emphasis on a negotiable, market-oriented concept of equality and the totally instrumental, non-sacramental concept of nature – can be said to be the indirect expression of this aspect of modern science and its attempt to become universal by being non-ethnic, amoral and dispassionate.” “[xxvi]

In avoiding such a fatal twin-split in consciousness, Gandhi’s

explores alternatives to economic orthodoxies, and the findings of his book *Capitalism: Competition, Conflict, Crises*.



Notes on Resistance. Noam Chomsky. David Barsamian (Contributor) paperback haymarket Books. 27 September 2022. 238 pages

Noam Chomsky dissects the multiple crises facing humankind and the planet and provides a road map for resistance. In this completely original set of interviews between the legendary duo of Noam Chomsky and David Barsamian, the two confront topics such as the pandemic, the wealth gap made worse because of the pandemic, climate destruction, the increasing power of the corporate owned media, systematic racism, Big Tech, and more.

Noam Chomsky is one of the most cited scholars in human history. He ranks right up there with Aristotle and Marx, and this

vision of satyagraha liberates us from the structurally encouraged cognitive-moral schizophrenia of modernity. His thinking aims to harmonise with his feelings, which in turn follow from the effect his circumstances have on his guiding conscience. An alert, unified cosmically aware movement connects Gandhi's circumstances to his conscience, and thence to his thoughts and deeds.

Spiritual Ecology – The journey from Mammon to God

To Gandhi, religion is not a matter of choice. It is at once a desirable and inevitable necessity. He laments the fact that religious faith has been dying in the rapidly secularising world that modernity has birthed.^[xxvii] He is especially troubled that the most religious of all cultures, India itself is abandoning authentic faith. In his poorly read *Hind Swaraj*, he writes:

"India is being ground down, not under the English heel, but under that of modern civilization. It is groaning under the monster's terrible weight. There is yet time to escape it, but every day makes it more and more difficult. Religion is dear to me and my first complaint is that India is becoming irreligious. Here I am not thinking of the Hindu or the Mahomedan or the Zoroastrian religion but of that religion which underlies all religions. We are turning away from God..."^[xxviii]

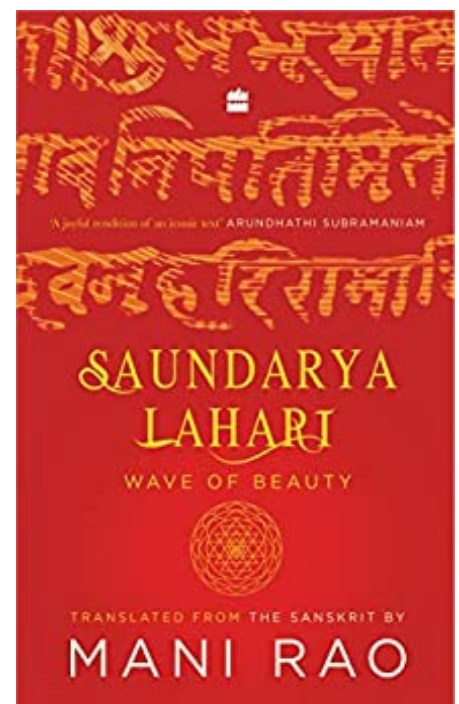
Gandhi proceeds to point out the all-important difference between "industrious" and "enterprising" Europeans, whose energies are directed towards "worldly pursuits", and the historical insistence of the world's religions "that we should remain passive about worldly pursuits and active about godly pursuits, that we should set a limit to our worldly ambition and that our religious ambition should be illimitable."^[xxix] For Gandhi, it is the metaphysical realm of religion which is infinite, not the secular projection of the infinite into the world of material interests through the psychological vehicle of (marketable) desire. Abundantly implicit in the latter enterprise – given a finite earth – is the fact that organised greed and gluttony will take root

book reaffirms his esteemed reputation.

Notes on Resistance will inspire all those struggling for human liberation.

[Read excerpt from Chapter 9 here:

<https://tomdispatch.com/optimism-of-the-will/>]



Saundarya Lahari: Wave of Beauty. Mani Rao (Translator). HarperCollins India September 2022. 240 pages

A popular Sanskrit hymn celebrating the power and beauty of Sakti, the primordial goddess. In one hundred verses, it underlines the centrality of the feminine principle in Indian thought.

in the human personality and the socio-economic structure, ultimately leading the world inevitably towards a planetary ecological catastrophe.

By “passive”, Gandhi by no means suggests that we become indolent. (On the contrary, he accuses modernity of spiritual sloth.) What he has in mind is more nearly the opposite. He is thinking of sarvodaya – active, devoted work, directed towards the community, inspired by divine faith, wherein each individual works to the benefit of all the others, himself/herself getting taken care of (by others) in the process. In order to ensure the first two promises of 1789, Gandhi wishes to bring back into practice the long-forgotten third leg of the cliched slogan of the French Revolution – ‘liberty, equality, fraternity.’

However, this cannot happen unless and until we realise what stands squarely in the way of the true realisation of such ideals: the pervasively divisive hegemony of money. In a forgotten passage in *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi writes that

“those who have amassed wealth out of factories are not likely to be better than other rich men. It would be folly to assume that an Indian Rockefeller would be better than the American Rockefeller. Impoverished India can become free, but it will be hard for any India made rich through immorality to regain its freedom. I fear we shall have to admit that moneyed men support British rule; their interest is bound up with its stability. Money renders a man helpless.”^[xxx]

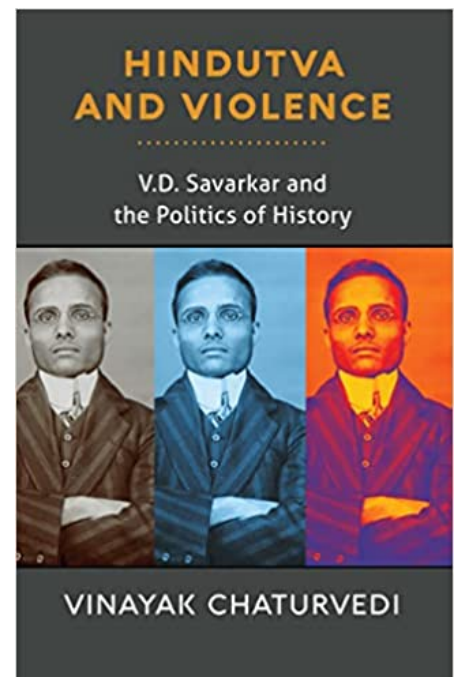
However, the reality of the 21st century is that God has long been superseded by Mammon, who is in command as far afield as smart screens have reached. Need we remind ourselves how far India and the world have moved from the wisdom that Gandhi reminds us of? If so, how do we find our way back to it? Gandhi has already pointed to the twin ideas of ahimsa and Truth. What he further wishes to say is that their practice is founded on spiritual faith.

Attributed to Adi Sankaracarya, Saundarya Lahari is a valuable source for understanding tantric ideas. Every verse is associated with yantras and encoded mantras for tantric rituals, and specific verses in the hymn are considered potent for acquiring good health, lovers, and even poetic skills.

Mani Rao's inspired, lyrical translation renders the esoteric immediate and the distant near.

“...These translations with their ease and lightness of touch will resonate with lovers of poetry as well as travellers on the path of the Divine Feminine.” –

Arundhati Subramaniam,
author of *When God Is a Traveller*



Hindutva and Violence: V.D. Savarkar and the Politics of History Vinayak Chaturvedi.

Ahimsa is beyond just 'non-killing' by individuals

At the very heart of Gandhi's spiritual ecology is the practice of ahimsa. For Gandhi, ahimsa is not a mere idea but a complex metaphysical *experience* with profound physical implications. It would be fair to say that Gandhi was so humbled by the grandeur of ahimsa as to see it as something much greater than himself. As a man of action, he plainly refused to theorise it when, towards the end of his life, he was asked to do so by a friend. "To write a treatise on the science of Ahimsa is beyond my powers," he wrote. "No man has ever been able to describe God fully. The same is true of Ahimsa."^[xxxi] Nonetheless, for our purposes of grasping the roots of the contemporary crisis of humanity from Gandhi's standpoint, we have to form some idea of what ahimsa means to him. To translate ahimsa as 'non-violence' is not wrong. But what exactly does 'non-violence' mean for Gandhi? For him, ahimsa exists in the human soul as a latent, slumbering faculty, a potential to be activated by a spiritual awakening. Gandhi's experience of ahimsa is grounded in his conscience (his "inner voice") and constitutes for him the sublime possibility of love. Love, for Gandhi, is "the active state of Ahimsa."^[xxxii] It is when we lose sight of the possibility of the specific form of love – compassion – which Gandhi speaks of, that violence begins to enter our thoughts, and eventually our actions.

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It is of the very essence for the realised human soul to love. Ahimsa is a means necessary to reach such a goal. A soul truly aware of itself cannot possibly harbour violence in its secret sheaths. "Ahimsa is of the very nature of the atman."^[xxxiii] Thus, Gandhi's commitment to ahimsa is not merely strategic or tactical, as is often believed. As Bhikhu Parekh writes, "Gandhi rejected violence on four grounds: the ontological, the epistemological, the moral and the practical. Being a manifestation of Brahman, every living being was divine. Taking life was therefore sacrilegious and a form of deicide."^[xxxiv] Ahimsa alone elevates the human spirit to its highest potential and raises us above those animals (including, not seldom, ourselves) which rely for their survival on brute force (or so we

Permanent Black First Edition. July 2022 480 pages.

Telling the story of the place of history in Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's political thought, the book examines Savarkar's central claim that "Hindutva is not a word but a history." For Savarkar, this history was not a total history, a complete history, or a narrative history. Its purpose was to trace key historical events to a powerful source – the font of motivation for "chief actors" of the past who had turned to violence in a permanent war for "Hindutva" as the founding principle of a Hindu nation. At the centre of Savarkar's writings are historical characters who not only participated in ethical warfare against invaders, imperialists, and conquerors in India, but also became Hindus in acts of violence. He argues that the discipline of history provides the only method for interpreting Hindutva. This book also shows how Savarkar developed his conceptualisation of history as a way into the meaning of Hindutva. Savarkar wrote extensively – from analyses of the nineteenth century to studies of antiquity – to draw up his histories of Hindus....By examining Savarkar's key writings on history, historical methodology, and

think, based on our limited understanding of what we think of as 'nature'). It only behooves a being with inborn subjectivity and consciousness to obey a "higher law." 'Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute,' says Gandhi. "The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law – to the strength of the spirit."^[xxxv]

Also Read: **On Reading Sudhir Chandra's 'That Unremembered Agony: Gandhi's First Birthday...'**

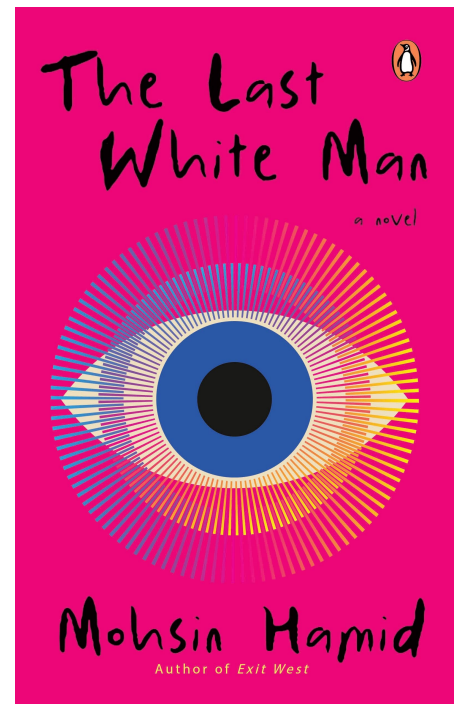
Gandhi never claims to be perfect in such matters, but merely a practical idealist, someone who applies all the spiritual and moral rigour imaginable to the heroic task of facing and conquering the common weaknesses of humanity towards his goal of self-overcoming, attaining his deepest self in the process. Yet, for him, ahimsa is universal. Its dictates apply to collectivities like nations perhaps even more than to individuals, and inevitably involves sacrifice:

"Non-violence...is of no assistance in the defence of ill-gotten gains and immoral acts. Individuals or nations who would practice non-violence must be prepared to sacrifice (nations to the last man) their all except honour. It is, therefore, inconsistent with the possession of other people's countries, i.e., modern imperialism, which is frankly based on force for its defence...It is a profound error to suppose that, whilst the law is good enough for individuals, it is not for masses of mankind."^[xxxvi]

Gandhi concludes: "The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well."^[xxxvii]

That there perhaps is a trans-natural spiritual standpoint from which the love that binds and holds all of creation together can be seen to overwhelm and overcome the episodic violence we observe is a possibility readily overlooked by humankind. In its haste to justify the violence that inheres in the prevailing structures of human society, the modern mind prefers to focus on the exceptions rather than on the norm, a crafty ruse Gandhi is ever aware of. In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi mocks at the political

historiography, Vinayak Chaturvedi provides an interpretation of the philosophical underpinnings of Hindutva. He demonstrates that all critiques of Hindutva require grappling with Savarkar's idea of history



The Last White Man. Mohsin Hamid. Penguin Random House India Pvt. Ltd. August 2022 192 pages (hardcover)

One morning, Anders wakes to find that his skin has turned dark, his reflection a stranger to him. At first he tells only Oona, an old friend, newly a lover. Soon, reports of similar occurrences surface across the land. Some see in the transformations the long-dreaded overturning of an established order, to be resisted to a bitter end. In many, like

common sense of modernity and explains with characteristic simplicity:

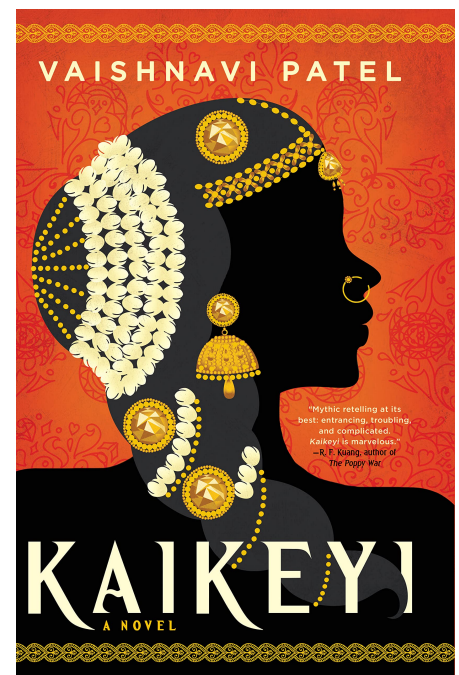
"History, as we know it, is a record of the wars of the world...and if this were all that had happened in the world, it would have ended long ago. If the story of the universe had commenced with wars, not a man would have been found alive today...the greatest and most unimpeachable evidence of the success of this force is to be found in the fact that, in spite of the wars of the world, it still lives on."^[xxxviii]

The reason why we find it so difficult to see the plain and simple truth of this standpoint is that our well-instructed minds are perhaps too conditioned by the historical record of each human herd. Its bias towards highlighting sensation, especially when it comes to wrongs done to our own people or country (and here we may think of the modern mass media, in conjunction with formal education) is the reason for our blindness to the obvious, larger ubiquity of what Gandhi calls "soul-force" and how readily it goes unnoticed by the world.^[xxxix] Gandhi would gleefully concur with the French historian Jules Michelet when he wrote, "History always tells us how we die. It never tells us how we live."^[xl] In his autobiography, Gandhi describes his experiences in Bihar, where he found himself soon after returning to India from South Africa, fighting for the rights of peasants. He says: "The world outside Champaran was not known to them. And yet they received me as though we had been age-long friends. It is no exaggeration, but the literal truth, to say that in this meeting with the peasants I was face to face with God, Ahimsa and Truth."^[xli]

Also Read: [Gandhi As Lantern in this Bleeding Darkness](#)

We also learn that ahimsa implies a lot more for Gandhi than the mere fact of not killing. It is not just about observable, outward performance in the physical realm. More importantly, it entails an inner cleansing of the heart. "The fact is that Ahimsa does not simply mean non-killing. Himsa means causing pain to or killing any life out of anger, or from a selfish purpose, or with the

Anders's father and Oona's mother, a sense of profound loss wars with profound love. As the bond between Anders and Oona deepens, change takes on a different shading: a chance to see one another, face to face, anew.



Kaikeyi. Vaisnavi Patel.
Thorndike Press/Large print edition. November 2022. 669 pages.

A stunning debut from a powerful new voice, Kaikeyi is the story of the infamous queen from the Indian epic the Ramayana. It is a tale of fate, family, courage, and heartbreak—of an extraordinary woman determined to leave her mark in a world where gods and men dictate the shape of things to come.

"I was born on the full moon under an auspicious constellation, the holiest of

intention of injuring it. Refraining from so doing is Ahimsa.”^[xlii] So the *intentions* behind our actions are as important as the consequences of our actions. Visible violence cannot be too far if our thoughts are violent. This may lead to surprising paradoxes for those who would judge certain deeds merely from their outer consequences in the visible world.

“After a calm and clear judgment to kill or cause pain to a living being with a view to its spiritual or physical benefit from a pure, selfless intent may be the purest form of Ahimsa. Each such case must be judged individually and on its own merits. The final test as to its violence or non-violence is after all the intent underlying the act.”^[xliii]

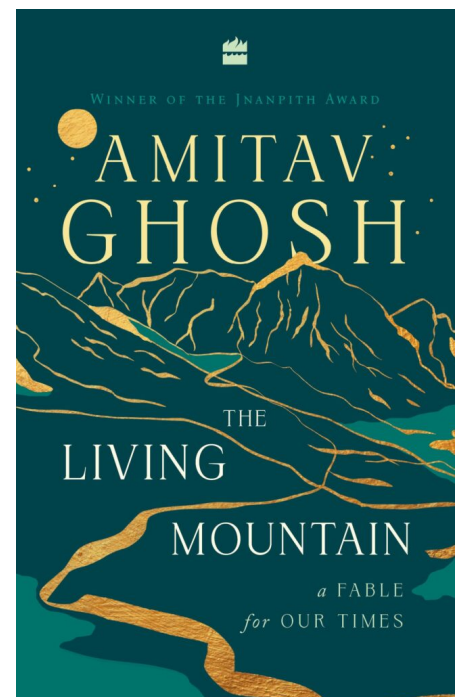
Gandhi would likely have looked at adivasi/indigenous peoples or fishing communities who hunt and fish for their survival in such a light, though from available writings it appears that he did not give much thought to this aspect, or may even have been a bit dismissive of the enormous importance of the world-views and wisdom of such peoples.

Most certainly Gandhi would have been aghast at the current atmosphere of communal hatred and violence, sometimes in the name of the holy cow. Numerous instances of his respecting the customs or culture of meat-eaters, even to the extent of serving meat in an otherwise strictly vegetarian Sewagram Ashram to some visitors, have been documented.^[xliv] Ahimsa calls for great humility, which can only come ultimately from a steadfast religious faith: “If one has...pride and egoism, there is no non-violence. Non-violence is impossible without humility. My own experience is that, whenever I have acted non-violently, I have been led to it and sustained in it by the higher promptings of an unseen power...I had faith in God’s protection...”^[xlv]

Modernity masculinizes aggressively and rejects faith

There is scarcely any need to remind ourselves that mainstream modernity, far from having religious faith, is often dogmatically atheistic in its outlook and practice. In being critical (very

positions—much good it did me.”
So begins Kaikeyi’s story...
 “A powerful, feminist retelling of the epic...Patel resets the balance of power, creating an unforgettable heroine who understands that it isn’t necessarily kings or gods who change history.” -The Washington Post



The Living Mountain. Amitav Ghosh. Fourth Estate India. May 2022. 48 pages

A cautionary tale of how we have systematically exploited nature, leading to an environmental collapse.

Recounted as a dream, this is a fable about Mahaparbat, the Living Mountain; the indigenous valley dwellers who live and prosper in its shelter; the assault on the mountain for commercial benefit by the Anthropoi,

justifiably so) of the dogmatism and conflictual nature of mainstream religion, it throws the ethical and spiritual baby out with the bathwater. Thus, it would be true to say that modernity does not encourage the humility that Gandhi speaks of. In the heavily masculinised world that we have now come to live in, humility is typically mistaken for weakness, a blunder of moral judgement that could be said to partially, if not fully, account for the Mahatma's assassination by Nathuram Godse. Almost universally, modernity promotes pride – often even when this comes at the expense of dignity. Since its triumphs rest on historical and ongoing wars and conquests, modernity retains, especially through the workings of a ruthlessly competitive economy, a structural violence in its everyday life. The rules of war speedily become the rules of the economy, as evidenced by a world so completely dominated today by globally agile corporate empires, warring ceaselessly for control of the world's labour, resources and markets. In the process, human cultures and the earth's ecologies must continually bear the collateral damage of the state of permanent and total war. Competition, the ruling norm of the economy, becomes as readily the dominant value in human society itself, converting it into a veritable battlefield – as evidenced abundantly today by the troll wars between the supporters of political rivals on social media – whose abuse continues to contribute liberally to human hatred.

[xlvii] An already militarised society thus readily turns into a veritable war zone through the means of rapidly advancing technology. It compounds matters that so much of the language of the internet – we may think of terms like 'loading', 'buffering', 'cache', and 'bullet points' to recall just a few – is itself militarised.

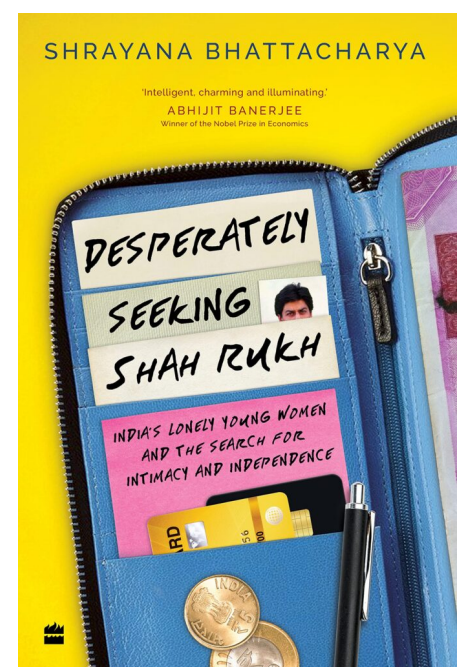
[xlviii]

All this, of course, builds on – or is sometimes fed by – traditional patriarchy and masculinism. Gandhi would have found all of this unbearably revolting. He would have invoked his dharma under such conditions.

Towards the end of his profound meditative work *Fear and Trembling*, the Danish religious thinker **Søren Kierkegaard** writes that "faith is the highest passion in a human being."^[xlviii] Setting aside many intrusive connotations of the word widely prevalent today, if we keep this particular understanding of faith in our

humans whose sole aim is to reap the bounty of nature; and the disaster that unfolds as a result.

The Living Mountain is especially relevant today when we have been battling a pandemic and are facing a climate catastrophe: both of which are products of our insufficient understanding of mankind's relationship with nature, and our sustained appropriation and abuse of natural resources. This is a book of our times, for our times, and it will resonate strongly with readers of all ages.



Desperately Seeking Shah Rukh: India's Lonely Young Women and the Search for Intimacy and Independence
Shrayana Bhattacharya
HarperCollins India.
November 2021 1464 pages
Shrayana Bhattacharya maps

hearts, we shall be able to understand Gandhi's vision of dharma. Far from such a faith being inconsistent with reason, it makes room for reason to work at its fullest moral height.

★★

Gandhi's everyday relevance today

The relevance of Gandhi's concepts and practice of swaraj, satyagraha, and ahimsa in a world increasingly torn apart by conflict, deprivation, violence and unsustainability should be obvious. But the relevance is not simply abstract or theoretical. Rather, one sees evidence of it in the struggles and initiatives of peoples and communities not only in India but around the world.

Knit together, Gandhi's message amounts to one of both resistance (speaking truth to power and reminding people of it) and construction (translating truth into practical action for transforming the experience of the human condition). He and the movements around him sought to practice both. On the one hand, they resisted colonial power and its abuses, resisting also the marginalisation of Dalits and others in traditional Indian society. On the other hand, they initiated programmes for removing deprivation and poverty, such as through production of indigenous cloth, improvements in agriculture, promotion of sanitation, enhancement of industrial workers' lives, and so on. This combination was crucial in Gandhi's eyes; as Hardiman notes in his seminal work on nonviolence, Gandhi saw swaraj as something to be built bottom-up, rather than in the top-down ways many politicians imagine it.^[xlix] Many of the movements in India and elsewhere, of sangharsh (resistance) and nirman (construction), take their inspiration directly or indirectly from Gandhi's message (as they also do from other inspiring figures in history, sometimes in a seamless way that should be humbling lessons for ideologues who create divisions between Gandhi, Marx, Ambedkar, and so on).

Let's take sangharsh. One of India's most iconic environmental and livelihoods movements, the Chipko Andolan in the Himalayas, which attempted to save forests from being axed for industry in the 1970s, had as some of its spearheads people who were steeped in Gandhi's ideas. In the decades since, several

the economic and personal trajectories—the jobs, desires, prayers, love affairs and rivalries—of a diverse group of women. Divided by class but united in fandom, they remain steadfast in their search for intimacy, independence and fun. Embracing Hindi film idol Shah Rukh Khan allows them a small respite from an oppressive culture, a fillip to their fantasies of a friendlier masculinity in Indian men. Most struggle to find the freedom-or income-to follow their favourite actor. Bobbing along in this stream of multiple lives for more than a decade—from Manju's boredom in 'rurban' Rampur and Gold's anger at having to compete with Western women for male attention in Delhi's nightclubs, to Zahira's break from domestic abuse in Ahmedabad—Bhattacharya gleans the details on what Indian women think about men, money, movies, beauty, helplessness, agency and love. A most unusual and compelling book on the female gaze, this is the story of how women have experienced post-liberalization India.

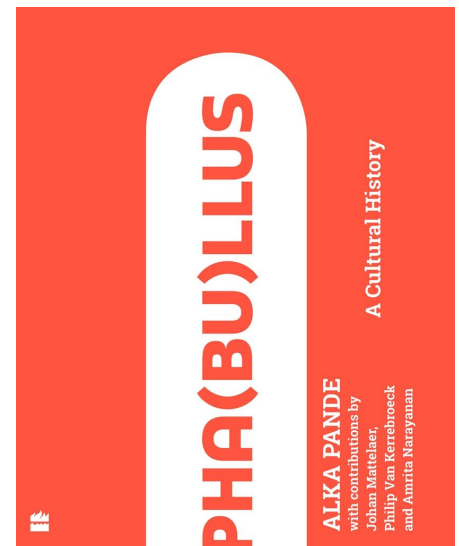
"Intelligent, charming and quirky...an illuminating portrait of the dire state of gender relations in contemporary India"
Abhijit Banerjee. Nobel Prize winner (Economics)

prominent resistance movements against dams (e.g. the Narmada Bachao Andolan), mining or other 'development' projects that have threatened to dispossess or displace adivasis, farmers, fishers, pastoralists, workers and others, have been explicitly non-violent in nature. A series of farmers' agitations in 2018-21 refused to adopt violent means, despite many provocations. Others have learnt from Gandhi's entreaty to focus one's struggles against the system rather than against individuals representing the system, by trying to work through winning hearts, including the hearts of the 'enemy'...famously portrayed by the popular Bollywood film *Munnabhai*. Cultural critic **D.R. Nagraj**, for instance, cites an action by the Karnataka Dalit Sangharsh Samiti (DSS), called "Drink Some Water from our Hands", in which Dalits would hold a pot of water, offering it to caste Hindus.^[i] Many movements have explicitly or implicitly invoked the idea of autonomy or self-determination in opposing the state's imposition of a particular developmental ideology. Outside India, perhaps the struggle most well-identified with ahimsa is that of Blacks in the USA, led by Martin Luther King Jr. A fascinating part of this story is the role of the spiritual leader Howard Thurman, who met and was influenced by Gandhi. In turn, Thurman had a major influence on King.^[ii] The impact of Gandhi's approach to ahimsa and civil disobedience, and his respect for nature, on leaders and thinkers like **Nelson Mandela**, **Steve Biko**, **Arne Naess**, and many others, is also well-known.

Also Read **Arne Naess & 'Deep Ecology': Gandhi's Profound Influence on its Evolution**

he same goes for nirman, or what Gandhi called "constructive work". In his time itself there were myriad examples of nirman, initiated by him and others following in his footsteps, including those inspired by the Gandhian economist **J.C. Kumarappa**.^[iii] Khadi spinning became literally and metaphorically an initiative for both generation of livelihoods (in its most mundane but nevertheless crucial sense) and as a symbol of self-reliance and autonomy of communities, particularly in combination with other activities such as cottage industries, crafts, enhancement of agriculture, encouragement of self-governance, etc. A very interesting experiment towards swaraj was initiated in the tiny

Desperately Seeking Shah Rukh: India's Lonely Young Women & the Search for Intimacy and Independence – Bing video



***Pha(bu)llus: A Cultural History.* Alka Pande Johan Mattelaer, et al.**
HarperCollins India June 2021 237 pages

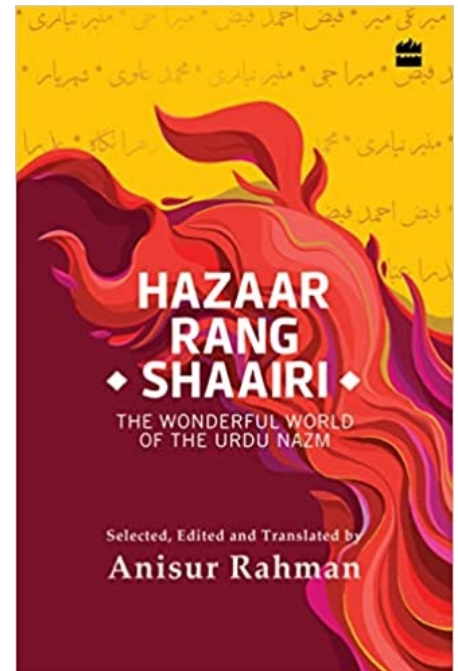
Phallic symbolism is one of the oldest and most prevalent motifs in religion, culture and art: the earliest known representations go back to prehistoric times. Starting off as a symbol of fertility, the phallus has gone through numerous interpretations in the way it is perceived, and its symbolic significance varies across cultures as well. In the west, the erotic symbolism of the phallus is often emphasized, whereas in India, the most widely seen representation of the phallus is religious, in the form of the

constituency of Aundh in Maharashtra in the late 1930s, where the ruler of the time agreed to hand over his powers to his 'subjects' and invited Gandhi to lay out a plan for gram swaraj. A constitution was framed, giving significant powers over various aspects of life to village panchayats. A series of interesting experiments followed for a few years; unfortunately, and ironically, when at Independence Aundh was integrated into the Indian Union, the process withered away.^[liii] Across India and the rest of the world today, there are incredible examples of constructive alternatives to the currently dominant system: sustainable and holistic agriculture, community-led water/energy/food sovereignty, solidarity and sharing economies, worker take-over of production facilities, resource/knowledge commons, local governance, community health and alternative learning, inter-community peace-building, reassertion of cultural diversity, gender and sexual pluralism, and much else.^[liv]

It would be misleading to claim that all of these take inspiration from Gandhi; most of them probably do not, at least not directly. But the ambience of Gandhian ideas and practices appears to have influenced very many of them. For instance, the many movements towards anna swaraj (food sovereignty), or the dozens of initiatives at reviving and sustaining handicrafts and small-scale, labour-intensive production as a counter-trend to the automation sweeping the economy, are in one way or the other infused with this ambience. **Elango R.**, a Dalit sarpanch of a village near Chennai, explicitly combines both Gandhian and Marxist principles in his attempt to transform his village, including by offering more dignity and livelihood security to Dalit families.^[lv] He has advocated a "network economy", in which clusters of twenty or so villages can be self-reliant for their basic needs – an idea somewhat differently put by another Gandhi-inspired social worker, Ela Bhatt, in her idea of "100-mile radius self-reliance".^[lvi]

In many of the alternative movements, we find inspiration for building on the legacy of Gandhi (and of many others, including Marx, Ambedkar, Tagore, Rosa Luxembourg and various spiritual luminaries, and equally importantly, the many indigenous adivasi, Dalit, peasant and other 'folk' revolutionaries through

lingam, associated with Shiva. Pha(bu)llus draws on the intricate network of ideas and beliefs regarding the phallus to present a fascinating look at the most obsessed-with body part in human history.



Hazaar Rang Shaairi : The Wonderful World of the Urdu Nazm. Anisur Rahman. HarperCollins India December 2022. 544 pages

Compiled comprehensively for the first time, this collection presents the best of Urdu nazms from the sixteenth century to present times. Selected, edited, and translated by Anisur Rahman, the one hundred and forty nazms in the book trace the evolution of the form right from its roots in the Deccan to various geographies across South Asia where it flourished and acquired its plurality. The dazzling English

history).

Of tremendous significance in the many resistance and alternative movements is their exploration of autonomy, self-reliance, people's governance of politics and the economy, freedom with responsibility for the freedom of others, and respect for the rest of nature.

While these movements do often call for policy interventions from a more accountable state, there is also in them an underlying antipathy to the overweening power of the centralised modern state, as there is in Gandhi's notion of swaraj.

★★

The vision of Hind Swaraj

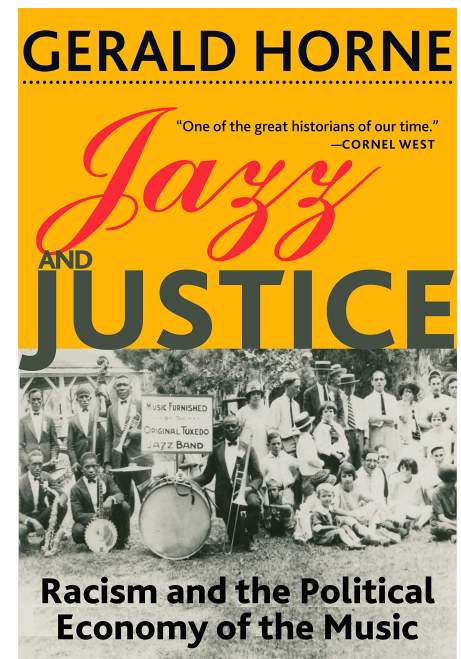
To Gandhi, modernity, both Eastern and Western, is a persistent violation of dharma. Thus, for him, it is a betrayal of civilisation. His is a moral rebellion against a cognitive modernity that has banished the sacred from the human as well as the rest of the natural realm. The results of such a way of life cannot be salutary. Thus, today, all around the world, nature has been reduced to natural resources, human beings to dissatisfied bosses, overworked workers, or restless consumers, and knowledge and wisdom to calculable bytes of saleable information.

Gandhi's Hind Swaraj is the yug-sankat-bodh of imperilled modernity. In closing, the following final observations may be made.

Our problems speeding far ahead of us

The great critic **Walter Benjamin** famously immortalised a painting by **Paul Klee** named *Angelus Novus* in memorable words. The painting "**shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His**

translations published along with their transliterated originals make for a pleasurable and illuminating reading



Jazz and Justice: Racism and the Political Economy of the Music. Gerald Horne.

Monthly Review Press. June 2019. 512 pages

A galvanizing history of how jazz and jazz musicians flourished despite rampant cultural exploitation

The music we call "jazz" arose in late nineteenth century North America—most likely in New Orleans—based on the musical traditions of Africans, newly freed from slavery. Grounded in the music known as the "blues," which expressed the pain, sufferings, and hopes of Black folk then pulverized by Jim Crow, this new music entered the world via the instruments that had

face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. ^[lvii]

Gandhi's legacy may be pictured as the *Angelus Novus* whose gaping eyes somewhat helplessly behold the rapidly mounting debris resulting from the long catastrophe over the five centuries that we call modernity (along with its structural concomitants or causes in capitalism and patriarchy). His wings are held by "the storm" of progress "blowing from paradise." Because of the force of the cyclone, even his back, like everyone else's, is turned towards the future. This is the predicament of modern humanity, the neglect of Gandhi's legacy being only one striking emblem of it. The digital age, especially since the rise to public hegemony of social media, has greatly accelerated the pace at which the debris of progress accumulates both in and around us. Just one instance of this is that the problems that beset us are racing far ahead of us. Very palpably, in our individual lives, each of us finds that the work to be done is miles ahead of oneself, no matter how hard we work. Another instance is the evidence in recent years of how social media has been used in more than one officially 'democratic' country to manipulate the final results of elections. Examples can be multiplied endlessly.

Gandhi farsighted in apprehending ecological disaster for the earth

Gandhi offers a *sankat-bodh*, a philosophical catechism to interpret the shared, perilous predicament of modern humanity, and his actions and thoughts attempt to bring the catastrophe to an end, opening the way towards an ecological way of life, which would take into account the hopes and needs of not only every child, woman and man, but of all living beings on earth. *Hind Swaraj*, despite its many imperfections, is Gandhi's prophetic

been abandoned by departing military bands after the Civil War. *Jazz and Justice* examines the economic, social, and political forces that shaped this music into a phenomenal US—and Black American—contribution to global arts and culture.

Horne assembles a galvanic story depicting what may have been the era's most virulent economic—and racist—exploitation, as jazz musicians battled organized crime, the Ku Klux Klan, and other variously malignant forces dominating the nightclub scene where jazz became known. Horne pays particular attention to women artists, such as pianist Mary Lou Williams and trombonist Melba Liston, and limns the contributions of musicians with Native American roots. This is the story of a beautiful lotus, growing from the filth of the crassest form of human immiseration.

1909 submission on the urgent matter at hand. It is much more than just a pamphlet in the cause of India's independence from two centuries of British colonial rule; it is a manifesto for civilisational recovery and renewal, applicable not just to India but to the whole of the modern world, especially the mighty West. Read in conjunction with **Rabindranath Tagore's** last testament, his 1941 discourse 'Crisis in Civilisation', *Hind Swaraj* offers a stirring critique of modern life and proposes a path beyond and around it.^[lviii]

Ethical living the solution to the ecological challenge

Were Gandhi alive today, the planetary ecological crisis would be to him a direct reflection of the crisis of modern culture, inseparable from it in origin, even if sometimes distant in consequence (which is not to suggest that pre-modern societies were all paragons of ecological sensitivity, but none imperilled the earth as a whole, as has current global modernity). At least two generations before the ecological crisis came to be acknowledged by mainstream opinion in the Western world, Gandhi pointed towards the self-destructive nature of modern civilisation. He found this civilisation to be intrinsically violent and "satanic", India increasingly under its grip.^[lix] To him, in its war-like nature, global modernity is structurally unethical. A human community that observed a peaceful, ethical way of life would not be confronted with such a fierce ecological challenge of the kind that the global world faces today. Focusing on ethical, cultural, and spiritual development, it would meet its material needs in a moderate, rational manner, not encouraging competition among its members to acquire ever more in a relentless battle over the spoils of war and unjust corporate economies. However, if aggressive greed overtakes humanity, the challenge of ecological survival is impossible to meet. War is ecologically very costly and, in a nuclear age, potentially ecocidal.

Recovery and renewal would be Gandhi's focus

It is unlikely that Gandhi would have spoken in terms of sustainability today. He would instead think in terms of recovery and renewal. He would attack the cognitive roots of today's problems.

Ecological sustainability is impossible in a society which is not continuously regenerative in its way of life. So, the first task would be to work towards the removal of the hegemony of economy and technology (and of their developmentalist mask) over human society in order to make the latter sustainable once more.

This is the task of cultural renewal and civilisational recovery that much of Gandhi's practical and mental life after the publication of *Hind Swaraj* was devoted to. He may have spoken today in transitional terms of 'sustainable shrinkage', referring to rationing, slowdowns and cutbacks in ecologically harmful economic activities (such as reducing urbanisation and mining, and ending militarisation).^[ix] But his focus would be on the sort of work – seva – necessary to resurrect the dignity of atrophying human communities. If this meant setting up an active (not passive) ashram, he would likely do that. This ashram would be the locus for the practice of the vratas (fasts), of sarvodaya, of satyagraha, of ahimsa.

Restoration of ecological health a collective process

Gandhi worked with an economy of principles. Most of his thought and practice are possible to derive from just two founding principles: **ahimsa and truth**. Given his diagnosis of modernity as a condition of perpetual war, conquest and the aggressive expansion of markets, ecological and cultural renewal, and the recovery of human civilisation, would only be possible by working towards bringing to a collective end the ancient habit of war and conquest (including those originating in pre-modern contexts). So, the cause of ecological renewal and human survival is actually linked to the cause of peace. War must end if life on earth is to remain possible in the future. It is a miracle that life on earth ever took root in the first place. Gandhi would counsel that the collective (and individual) process of restoring our originally generous earthly home to lasting ecological health would have salutary spiritual consequences for the inner life and well-being of humanity and would ultimately create a humane culture everyone has waited aeons for.

★★

Gandhi and COVID: A Postscript

An unprecedented global crisis has engulfed humanity since early 2020, well after this essay was first conceived. But even if we had envisioned it after the pandemic broke out, our broad direction would have remained the same, for what COVID has shown us, even more starkly than before, is the hollowness and dangerous delusions of Western modernity and its full-blown manifestation in globalised 'development', whether in India, China, Japan, or the West itself. The pandemic, like growing climate change, is yet another deadly symptom of the same pathology.

How might Gandhi have seen what is happening around us? The motivational underpinnings – *manovritti* – of the phenomena we are discussing, are violence, greed and untruth, especially the serious, widespread misunderstanding of the trinitarian relationship between humanity, nature and divinity.

Gandhi understood this and critiqued modernity and development as civilisational flaws, calling them, as we said earlier, "Satanic". He counterposed the prevailing vision with *sarvodaya* (uplift of all), *swaraj* (self-rule) and *satyagraha* (insistence on truth) as alternatives, with *satya* (truth) and *ahimsa* (non-violence) as their motivational grounds (*manovritti*). These have to be cultivated through *vratas* (vows) and *sadhana* (devotional discipline).

What might Gandhi's response to the pandemic look like? If he were alive, he would likely have toured the worst-hit areas of India during the peak phase – the choked hospitals of Delhi, the villages far from the 'centres of power' that were affected in the second wave of the pandemic, but where health facilities are even worse than in the urban centres and where the media is absent. Maybe he would have gone on a fast, repenting for the collective failure of a society so bent on the pursuit of monetary wealth, instant fame and power that it has not even built for its people the basic health infrastructure necessary to deal with such a crisis. Or perhaps he would have called for a *satyagraha*, appealing to the conscience of a government that is more

interested in image management than in faithfully facing the crisis.

The principles and values that Gandhi espoused and lived are as relevant during these times of the COVID pandemic as during any of the other crises humanity has faced in its long history. A society built on the principle of sarvodaya – universal well-being – would ensure that everyone has access to both the basics of good health (adequate, nutritious food, clean water and air, socio-cultural and psychological well-being, access to nature) and also to healthcare, when necessary. The devastating inequities of a system where one needs ‘connections’ to get a hospital bed or an oxygen cylinder violates not only sarvodaya, it endangers, in the final analysis, the physical survival and well-being of the well-off too. A deadly contagion like COVID makes this a no-brainer. Thousands of civil society initiatives, and the out-of-the-box efforts of government functionaries, especially frontline health workers like the brave ASHA staff who have worked in the most adverse of situations, testify to the continuing relevance of this principle, even as the governmental system shreds it to pieces.

Equally, the growing chorus of voices exposing the failures of state governance, calling for accountability, protesting the profit-seeking behaviour of pharmaceutical and vaccine-producing companies, are proof of the continuing relevance of satyagraha.

Even if the embedded media have willingly or otherwise capitulated to the government in office, some sections of the mainstream media, as well as a very large section of the alternative media, refuse to be silenced. Nor do people's movements and civil society organisations succumb – even at the risk of being harassed, imprisoned, shut down or even killed – for speaking truth to power. Freedom of speech, enshrined in India's Constitution, continues to be fought for in the streets (even if somewhat subdued during the lockdowns) or on various media. In mid-2020, over 2 million young people tweeted and messaged against the horrendous Environment Impact Assessment 2020 notification, which would have basically been a green rubber

stamp for all kinds of ecologically devastating projects in the country. For over a year from late 2020, tens of thousands of farmers camped around Delhi, protesting the three farm laws brought in during the pandemic by a government intent on selling out agriculture to global agribusiness. Their protest proved successful, forcing the government to eventually withdraw these laws. For the most part, ahimsa characterised these and other movements in this period (though, shamefully, 700 farmers indirectly laid down their lives for their struggle to succeed). And when some strayed from this path, the movement leaders were quick to denounce the use of violence (as for example, the incident on 26 January 2021 in which the Red Fort in Delhi was stormed and a physical clash between protesters and the police took place), or harassment and molestation of women (including an alleged rape) by some individual protestors, both witnessed during the farmers' agitation.

Swaraj at the local level could have mitigated the Covid catastrophe

Most important, though, COVID has demonstrated the utter failure of a model of 'democracy' which concentrates power in the hands of a wealthy few, is devoid of ethics, is at the mercy of a majoritarian nation-state hand-in-glove with powerful, often globally agile corporations, and expects the institutions of a centralised government to deliver health (and everything else). A Gandhian swaraj, had it been the cornerstone of the post-Independence rebuilding of India, would have emphasised autonomy, freedom, and self-determination for every individual and every community, ground-up, for all the essentials of life, including health and access to nature. Gandhi's insistence on taking care of his own body and health using principles of nature (though, of course, he also needed mainstream medical specialists once in a while), and on the need for collective systems of self-care, was part of swaraj. The catastrophe of early to mid-2021, with the number of people dying from COVID reaching nearly half a million by the summer, could have been either avoided altogether or would at least have been dealt with much better, had rural and urban communities been more in control of their own health and had access to local health facilities that integrated various systems of healing and

treatment.

COVID being more than a public health crisis, having created livelihood, economic and other scarcities and vulnerabilities, a focus on swaraj would have meant much greater ability on the part of the population to cope because most of the basic needs would have been met locally, instead of people being exposed to long and fragile supply-chains stretches across the globe. In 2020, several communities (around the world) that had built such systems of self-reliance showed much greater resilience than those largely dependent on the government or the global corporate market, as shown by the dozens of stories documented by the **Vikalp Sangam** process.^[ixi] This is the approach to self-reliance and liberation of communities that will make India truly free, eschewing the spurious approach that its current Prime Minister has been espousing, which is only a façade for further corporatisation and dependence on the state. Perhaps once again, after the Emergency imposed by Mrs Gandhi, the 2021 second COVID wave demonstrated what Gandhi clearly knew: the state does not represent the people. Gandhi never believed in a state, let alone a modern nation-state, with its predatory paraphernalia of superfluous wealth and weaponry. His vision of swaraj is anything but that of a state, as that word is commonly understood by the contemporary world. Gandhi had little faith in the industrial consumer democracies of our age. In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi described parliamentary democracy as an “emblem of slavery”.^[ixii]

Swaraj is the only way to achieve true freedom and all that human beings are capable of, to live in harmony with each other and the rest of nature. “Do not consider this Swaraj to be like a dream,” Gandhi wrote.^[ixiii] We would be wise to believe this, and practice it as best we can.

^[i] Cited in *Epigrams from Gandhiji* (Compiled by S. R. Tikekar), Navjivan Trust, Ahmedabad, 1971, p. 3.

[ii] Sudhir Chandra (ed), *Violence and Non-violence Across Time*, Routledge India, Delhi, 2018.

[iii] We borrow the apt phrase from the American environmental journalist writing about the sixth mass extinction, Elizabeth Kolbert, "Sleeping with the enemy", *The New Yorker*, August 15, 2011.

[iv] The term "technochrony" is from the philosopher-theologian Raimon Panikkar. It refers to the artificial acceleration of history that characterises our times. See Raimon Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being*, Orbis Books, New York, 2010, Introduction.

[v] J. R. McNeill and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2016.

[vi] 'Self-rule' is a very partial rendering of the term swaraj, but we shall examine its wider and deeper meaning later in the essay.

[vii] We use the term 'modern' to denote the age of industrial modernity, not in the sense of 'contemporary', for in this latter sense, all civilisations and cultures that are continuously adapting to modernity are considered by some people to be currently modern. This may include some indigenous communities too. The usage of loaded adjectives like 'modern' is never free of (sometimes necessary) controversy, for (as the theme of this essay itself should clarify) it is not even clear much of the time if the term 'modern' refers to something positive or negative! The contrast we wish to make in the context here is to note that

Gandhi lived in the industrial age, rather than ancient or pre-industrial times.

[viii] As implicit in the title of this essay, the term 'ecology' is being used throughout here in its widest possible sense. It refers not merely to its root 'oikos' (home), the natural context in which the human world dwells, in both its inner and outer aspects, but also to features of that context, such as balance, diversity and interdependence, dynamism and stability, tensions and harmonies. The term 'modernity' refers to a world-view and way of life emerging from the West in the last few centuries and does not necessarily include all that is 'modern', including modern elements that have helped in the struggle against traditional inequities.

[ix] In this essay, the word 'Self' is often used with a capital 'S' at the start. Whenever this is the case it underscores Gandhi's expansive idea of the Self as inclusive of the subject of the human body, of the culture of humanity, and of the natural world of the cosmos.

[x] Zeitgeist (from German) refers to 'the spirit of the times'.

[xi] See Vinay Lal, "The Gandhi everyone loves to hate", *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 4 2008, 55-64.

[xii] M. K. Gandhi, *Key to Health* (Trs. Sushila Nayar), Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1948, p. 5, available at https://10www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/key_to_health.pdf ; Henceforth, referred to as 'KH').

[xiii] Ibid. Chapter 13.

[xiv] Ibid. pp. 43-46.

[xv] Aseem Shrivastava, "Prakritik Swaraj", in Ashish Kothari, Ariel Salleh, Arturo Escobar, Federico Demaria and Alberto Acosta (eds), *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika and Authors Upfront, Delhi, 2019; see also Ashish Kothari, "Radical Ecological Democracy" in the same volume.

[xvi] See, for instance, Neeta Mehta, "Mind-body Dualism: A Critique from a Health Perspective", *Mens Sana Monogr.* 2011 Jan-Dec; 9(1): 202-209. Also see Matthew Gendle, "The Problem of Dualism in Modern Western Medicine", *Mens Sana Monogr.* 2016 Jan-Dec; 14(1): 141-151.

[xvii] See Vinay Lal, "Gandhi and the ecological vision of life", *Environmental Ethics* 22 (2):149-168 (2000). See also Joseph S. Alter, 2000, *Gandhi's Body: Sex, Diet, and the Politics of Nationalism*, Penn Press, Philadelphia.

[xviii] We denote 'Self' with a capital 'S' here, indicating the reference (as in advaitic philosophy) to the Godhead in the Universe. Without a capital 'S', 'self' refers to the limited, finite selves of human beings. It is the link between the 'self' and the 'Self' which is of as much interest to Gandhi as it is to the quest for Advaita.

[xix] M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, June 4, 1925.

[xx] M. K. Gandhi, *Truth is God* (compiled by R. K. Prabhu), Navjivan Trust, Ahmedabad, 1955 available at <https://www.mkgandhi.org/voiceoftruth/truthan>

dgod.htm

[xxi] M.K. Gandhi, *From Yeravada Mandir - Ashram Observances*; Jivanji Desai, Ahmedabad, 1935, pp. 1-2, available at www.mk gandhi.org/ebks/truth_is_god.pdf

[xxii] M. K. Gandhi, Discussion with Basil Mathews and others (November 24, 1936), in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 64, p. 71. The passage is quoted in Dilip Simeon, "Satyagraha - An answer to modern nihilism", available at <https://dilipsimeon.blogspot.com/2016/03/satyagraha-answer-to-modern-nihilism.html>.

[xxiii] Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi, the Philosopher", in *The Living Gandhi: Lessons for Our Times*, Edited by Tara Sethia and Anjana Narayan, Penguin, New Delhi, 2013.

[xxiv] Ibid. p. 97.

[xxv] Ibid. p. 100.

[xxvi] Ashis Nandy, "From Outside the Imperium: Gandhi's Cultural Critique of the West" in *Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 130-31.

[xxvii] We use the word 'secular' here in the sense of denying or rejecting the religious, not in the sense (present, for instance, in the Constitution of India) of respecting all faiths and non-religious ways of being and knowing.

[xxviii] M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj: A Critical Edition*, (Annotated, edited and translated by Suresh Sharma and Tridip Suhrud), Orient

Blackswan, Delhi, 2010, p. 37. Henceforth, *Hind Swaraj* is referred to and referenced as 'HS'.

[xxix] Ibid., p. 37.

[xxx] Ibid., p. 89.

[xxxi] M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, March 3, 1946

[xxxii] M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 25-8-20, p. 2.

[xxxiii] Quoted in Nicholas F. Gier, "Gandhi, the Buddha and Atman: A response to Ramashray Roy", in *Gandhi Marg* 21:4 (January-March, 2000), pp. 447-459.

[xxxiv] Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989, p 155.

[xxxv] M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 11-8-1920, p. 3.

[xxxvi] Ibid., p. 3.

[xxxvii] Ibid., p. 3.

[xxxviii] M. K. Gandhi, *HS*, pp. 72-73

[xxxix] M. K. Gandhi, *HS*, Ch. 17.

[xl] Quoted in Roland Barthes, *Michelet*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992, p. 104.

[xli] M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 4-11-1926, pp. 384-85.

[xlii] Ibid., pp. 384-85.

[xliii] M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 4-10-1928, p. 331.

[xliv] See Chandan Gowda, "Anecdotes from the Mahatma's life", *Bangalore Mirror*, 3 October 2017, available at <http://bangaloremirror.indiatimes.com/opinion/views/anecdotes-from-mahatmas-life/articleshow/60915239.cms>; see also Venu Madhav Govindu (2018), "Gandhi Would Have Resisted Today's Forceful Imposition of Vegetarianism", <https://thewire.in/food/mahatmagandhi-railway-board-hindu-right-vegetarianism>.

[xlv] M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 28-1-1939.

[xlvi] Competitive behaviour is often justified as being the 'natural' state of things because of the widespread misinterpretation of Darwin's 'survival of the fittest'. As the anarchist political thinker Peter Kropotkin and highly reputed molecular biologists like Lynn Margulis have shown, cooperation, symbiosis, and mutual or collective support are as, if not more, powerful forces in survival and evolution, as is competition. See, for instance, Lynn Margulis, *Acquiring Genomes: A Theory of the Origins of Species*, Basic Books, New York, 2002 and Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, Forgotten Books, Hong Kong, 1904 (Reprint).

[xlvii] On the 21st century being a period of permanent war, requiring systematic propaganda to ensure imperial interests are met, see Major Ralph Peters, "Constant Conflict", *Parameters*, Summer 1997.

[xlviii] Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*

(Trs. Alistair Hannay), Penguin Books, London, 1985, Epilogue.

[xlix] David Hardiman, *Nonviolent Struggle for India's Freedom -1905-1919*, Penguin/Viking, Delhi, 2018.

[1] D.R. Nagaraj, *The Flaming Feet: The Dalit Movement in India*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2010, pp. 10-11.

[li] John Blake, "He was MLK's mentor, and his meeting with Gandhi changed history. But Howard Thurman was largely unknown until now", CNN, 1-2-2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/02/01/us/howard-thurman-mlk-gandhi/index.html?no-st=1550470733>

[lii] Mark Lindley, *J.C. Kumarappa: Mahatma Gandhi's Economist*, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, 2007.

[liii] Apa Pant, *An Unusual Raja: Mahatma Gandhi and the Aundh Experiment*, Sangam Books, Hyderabad, 1989, ; see also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aundh_Experiment.

[liv] See, for instance, www.vikalpsangam.org for hundreds of examples from India; and <https://radicalecologicaldemocracy.org> for many from across the world; see also Ashish Kothari et al (eds), *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika and Authors Upfront, 2019, <https://radicalecologicaldemocracy.org/pluriverse>.

[lv] Adam Cajka, "Kuthambakkam: Re-embedding Economy in Society", in Singh, Neera, Kulkarni, Seema and Pathak Broome, Neema,

Ecologies of Hope and Transformation: Postdevelopment alternatives from India, Kalpavriksh and SOPPECOM, Pune, 2018; Aseem Shrivastava and Elango R. 2017.

"Regionalization and localization of economies", in Ashish Kothari and K.J. Joy, *Alternative Futures: India Unshackled*, Authors Upfront, Delhi.

[lvi] Ela Bhatt, *Anubandh: Building 100-Mile Communities*, Navjivan Trust, Ahmedabad, 2015.

[lvii] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", in *Illuminations*, Schocken Books, 1969. The reference is to Paul Klee's painting, *Angelus Novus*. The image is available at <https://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/CONCEPT2.html>.

[lviii] Rabindranath Tagore, *Crisis in Civilization*, Shantiniketan Press, Birbhum, 1941. Available at <https://indianculture.gov.in/ebooks/crisis-civilization>

[lix] M. K. Gandhi, *HS*, Ch. 6.

[lx] See Ernest Callenbach, "Sustainable Shrinkage: Envisioning a Smaller, Stronger Economy", *Solutions*, August 11, 2011.

[lxi] <https://vikalpsangam.org/extraordinary-work-of-ordinary-people-a-series/>; see also, for hundreds of stories of positive transformation, www.vikalpsangam.org

[lxii] M. K. Gandhi, *HS*, Ch. 6.

[lxiii] M. K. Gandhi, *HS*, p. 60.

Authors' Note

This essay was first conceived by us for publication in an edited volume that was meant to come out on the occasion of Gandhiji's 150th anniversary in 2019 at the initiative of Gandhian thinker and man of action Kishore Saint,. Due to reasons beyond our control, the book was never published. Subsequently, the final draft of the essay remained in our contemporary archives. Sadly, Kishore Ji passed away, poignantly, on the 75th anniversary of India's independence, August 15, 2022. His son Tarun Saint requested us to publish this essay after the death of his father. It is dedicated to the loving memory of Kishore Ji, who shall forever remain for so many of us who knew him well a shining beacon of light and inspiration in the enveloping darkness of the 21st century.

The Beacon would like to thank Tarun K. Saint, frequent contributor to the webzine, for bringing this essay to its notice on this occasion of the special issue on Gandhi and the ever-expanding spheres of his influence.

Kishore Saint (1932-2022) was born in Peshawar. Following Partition he migrated to Kenya where, after a spell of studies in the United Kingdom he worked as a teacher and teacher educator. He spent a few years in the USA

working in Friends World College, an experiment in World education. He returned to India in 1972 for good. As an activist he was involved with rural tribal communities in South Rajasthan on problems of environment protection and regeneration in relation to livelihood. His memoirs will be published in mid-2023.

Ashish Kothari Founder-member, Kalpavriksh; member, many people's movements. Taught, Indian Institute of Public Administration; coordinated India's National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan, served on boards of Greenpeace International & India, ICCA Consortium; judge on International Tribunal on Rights of Nature. Helps coordinate Vikalp Sangam (www.vikalpsangam.org), Global Tapestry of Alternatives (www.globaltapestryofalternatives.org), & Radical Ecological Democracy (www.radicalecologicaldemocracy.org). Co-author/co-editor, *Churning the Earth*, *Alternative Futures*, and *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*



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Making of Global India (Penguin Viking, New Delhi, 2012), and Prithvi Manthan (Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 2016). He is currently at work on a book which brings Rabindranath Tagore's spiritual and ecological vision into dialogue with the ecological challenges of 21st century modernity



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