Liberty and Individualism in Gandhian Perspective
Implications for Sustainability of Societies

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Most mainstream intellectuals, particularly economists, have almost dismissed Gandhiji.. Economists are important here because they influence the socio-political thinking the most. In traditional societies, economic system was subservient to the social system. In the modern societies the reverse appears to be true. Gandhian thought does not figure prominently in the development debate in the world in general and in the West in particular, because the Western thought has been polarised mainly into two ideologies. At one end, is conservatism, which ideologically places a strong emphasis on ‘the individual’. The facilitating agency is free. At the other end are the communism and socialism. Recent changes and developments have caused turbulence at both the ends. Neither systems is able to fully comprehend the changes and so, not able to cope with the problems of sustainability. In this contemporary context, the Gandhian Way holds a reasonable promise to ensure sustainability of the societies.[Text of the Gandhi Memorial Lecture delivered at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, Mauritius on October 2, 2006.]

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I
Introduction

It is a matter of immense pleasure for me to be on this soil and this Centre and speak to you all about a noble soul that walked on this earth until about 58 years ago. Mahatma Gandhi, as he came to be known to the world after noted Indian Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore gave him this name, experimented throughout his life in search of truth and made perhaps the most honest attempt on the earth in recent past to live his life according to what he realised as truth. Based on the percept and practice of truth, Gandhiji developed a set of values to regulate individual life which according to him, if one strictly followed, had potential to improve the quality of life substantially. Such an individual would be very strong and have potential to create a just, humane and sustainable society. However, as one looks at the history of the world in the 20th Century, one finds that along with the development and emergence of Gandhi’s persona with a global image, the major trends in the developed and developing societies hardly reflected Gandhiji’s philosophy and values. Of course, there have been some attempts – successful to an extent, but by and large the saga has been the same that had continued for centuries before, with an added dimension of substantial economic growth and profuse use of technology. Incidentally, these features in the societies are known as development.
We all are aware that when the First World War broke out in 1914, Gandhiji had already made a remarkable impact on the British Empire with his successful non-violent and peaceful struggle against racism in South Africa. He had demonstrated to the world that through a non-violent struggle that it was possible to persuade a very powerful State to recognise and restore basic human rights for dignified existence. And yet at the global level contentious issues of geo-politics for establishing and strengthening economic supremacy were getting settled through full scale wars among nations. Between 1915 and 1948, Gandhiji mobilised people in India for what has come to be known as the most massive and triumphant non-violent uprising for freedom in the known history of the world. Gandhiji created such an impact that Albert Einstein had observed that it would be difficult for the future generations to believe that one like Gandhiji had ever lived in flesh and blood. While Gandhiji was demonstrating to the world the power of mobilising people for a non-violent struggle for freedom from colonial rule, the free and growing nations continued to war again with one another for geo-political and economic supremacy. The First World War was not enough to settle the scores. America had already emerged as the most powerful nation in the world and was dictating the warring groups. The alignments among nations were taking place with a clear intention of waging another bloody world war. This was despite the fact that Gandhiji was making impressions among important citizens in America and Europe. The British had already come to know about this miraculous personality who had mesmerised masses in India and millions had raised their voice for independence without violent manifestation. Romma Rollan, a well-known French litterateur had corresponded with Gandhiji and had made Gandhiji known in France.

In an article ‘Gandhi in the Mind of America’, Lloyd Rudolph\(^1\) writes that Gandhiji was introduced to America by some prominent thinkers such as John Haynes Homes and Reinhold Niebuhr in the 1920s and 1930s and Martin Luther King in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1920s and 1930s, Gandhiji, as I have just mentioned, led non-violent struggle with the British. On how Holmes was introducing Gandhiji in the mind of America I quote Lloyd. “Holmes announced in April 1921 that he would deliver a sermon on ‘Who is the Greatest Man in the World?’ By his own introspective account, ‘I climbed tremulously into my pulpit on Sunday to answer my own question.’ The answer he gave was M.K. Gandhi. “In the light of what was known, and not known, at that time about Gandhi here in our Western world, the audacity of his declaration, Holmes tells us 32 years later in *My Gandhi*, seems now incredible”.\(^2\) Niebuhr started with doubts and questions on Gandhiji’s approach of non-violence. He wanted to meet him in London at the time of the Round Table Conference, but could not do so. He wrote about him first with a perverted view that the weak Indians and weak Negroes in America could think about Gandhiji’s way of non-violent resistance, but a strong resistance would involve...
coercion and if necessary violence. Subsequently he changed this view and endorsed Gandhiji’s perspective. Both Holmes and Niebuhr were powerful and influential thinkers of their times in America. Yet what we see is that in 1939 Europe again indulged in a world war and America openly supported it and entered into it towards the end of the Second world war. Thus, world politics was not even learning from Gandhiji’s approach to political problems, let alone practising it significantly to resolve inter-nation power conflicts. The worst ever manmade disaster in the history of mankind happened. Nuclear weapon technology was used and atom bombs were dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki killing and maiming millions. Despite great admiration that Gandhiji drew world over, his approach was ignored.

The second world war changed nations drastically. Liberal social democracies promised fast and sound economic growth. But it did not end the conflicts. The era of Cold War began. For next 40 years or so America and Europe practised capitalism in different variations giving some scope to the role of the State with socialistic flavours. Many developing countries followed the capitalistic development model. Former USSR, China and countries in Eastern Europe followed communism in various forms. Thus, the world witnessed the heights of capitalism, communism and socialism. All these systems have proved to be inadequate to create a humane and sustainable society. The emergence of new societies in recent past has caused alarm in the minds of very many scholars, scientists, leaders, social workers and others. A major issue that surfaces clearly from most of these concerns is about the economic, social and ecological sustainability of human societies in the long run. Of course, there is a battalion of hopeful people who almost completely rubbish most of these concerns and believe that human species has immense capacity to come out of intermittent crisis and survive, and survive well3. Allowing market mechanisms to operate freely would, according to this group of thinkers, yield best results in the human interest and help consolidate creation of sustainable societies. Socialists do not think so and Anthony Giddens,4 a renowned scholar and Director of London School of Economics and Political Science, has written a powerful commentary wherein he has exposed the limitations of the ‘Right’ and the ‘Left’ philosophies. He discusses a ‘Third Way’ as possible alternative and argues that some countries were already going in that direction. Interestingly, he too does not consider Gandhiji’s philosophy and approach to individual life as a possible solution to the world crisis.

It is important to understand that the worldview about a human being’s capacity to come out of any crisis caused by his own interaction with nature with free market mechanisms in place rests on the assumption of individual freedom. The unfettered freedom offered by the State and the Civil Society to an individual, constrained only by broad and general

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regulations curbing licentious indulgences harming others, unleashes such a powerful creativity that all adversities and problems of the material world have permanent potential for finding solutions. This could be called as extreme right wing percept. Gandhiji had sensed this mood right in the beginning of the 20th century and wrote strongly against it. He pointed out that unless the individuals disciplined themselves, market led just socio-economic order was always at risk. He had also strongly felt against the approach where the State completely controlled the economy and therefore the life of people. The risks involved in both these approaches are unfolding in the world today and serious doubts are being raised about the sustainability of both the Right Wing and the Left Wing philosophies. The social order that was supposed to discipline the individuals appears to have failed. The free individual in the Western society has shown clear tendencies to become licentious jeopardising the prospects of creating a just and humane social order. The threat of war has not vanished. Instead it has taken different form. Violence for political agenda within countries and among countries has killed more human beings in the post Second world war period than the human beings killed during the War. Some of the terrorists groups are so well-equipped with most modern techno marvel destructive weapons that some developing countries’ armed force artillery and weaponries appear toy collection. Whether there is a candid admission or not, most of the conflicts are for maintaining permanent control over natural and manmade resources to ensure prolonged economic prosperity reflected in very high energy use and consumption levels. Gandhi had expressed serious reservations about such a society and had thought that the economic system based on greed would ultimately adversely affect the social health of the society. Thus, even in Gandhi’s thoughts an individual is very important unit like under the libertarian scheme of thought. But Gandhi’s individual is highly disciplined by self regulation rather than facing regulation by the society. I propose to take a fresh look at Gandhi’s philosophy and explore whether it offers key to building socio-economic and ecologically sustainable societies. Today being the birthday of Gandhi, it is an appropriate day to undertake this intellectual journey. I have divided rest of the lectures in three sections. In section two I will present a review of how Gandhi shaped his personality in his early life that helped him turn form an ordinary Mohan into a highly self regulating citizen. In section three I will present Gandhi’s formulation about the rules or principles to be followed by every citizen so that she becomes a self regulating person. In this section I will also discuss Gandhi’s world view about a sane and civilised society that has potential to be more sustainable. In Section four IV I will briefly discuss the modern concept of liberty and individualism being practiced in the Western world and it will be seen that Gandhi’s model of self regulation has better chances of creating just, humane and sustainable societies.
II
Growing of Mohan into a Self Regulating Individual

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is a rare person in the recent history of humanity who though influenced by the morals of the Hindu philosophy became a believer only after closely examining its morals and principles. He became conscious of his religion when he reached Pretoria and met Dada Abdulla’s English Lawyer Mr. Baker, who also happened to be a staunch lay preacher. He is one of the rarest persons who experimented with self all through his life. No wonder he titled his autobiography as ‘The Story of My Experiments with Truth’. It is important for us to understand that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi transformed his persona from an ordinary Mohan to such a level of self regulation and discipline that he came to be known as Mahatma (the great soul). This transformation began from a very early age. Mohan’s resolve to not to be dishonest was firmed up in the first year of high school when he did not correct the spelling of the word ‘kettle’ despite being prompted by the teacher with the tip of his boot. First year high school is the time when a child is 12 or 13 years old, the beginning of teen. Some impressions become indelible and continue with us for life time. Young Mohan too experienced it. One such life time impression was created in his mind by reading a play Shravana Pitrabhakti Natak (Shravana’s devotion to father). Coincidentally, within few days of reading the play a travelling showman had in his bi-scope a picture of Shravana carrying his parents on pilgrimage with slings fitted to his shoulders. This left an indelible impression in the young mind of Mohan and he further resolved to serve parents. Second was the Play Harishchandra that he watched. He was so impressed that he would have watched it several times. Gandhiji writes, “It haunted me and I must have acted Harishchandra to myself times without number….. To follow the truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me.” Truth and honesty got engraved permanently on the young Mohan’s mind and changed his personality completely in years to come.

At the age of 15, Mohan stole a piece of gold cut out of his brother’s armlet to settle a debt that his brother had run into. This bothered Mohan very much and he resolved never to steal again. He also decided to confess. Written confession to his ailing father was another major instance where the boy resolved to be honest. It should be noted that writing a confession by Gandhiji involved three aspects in improving self. First was the acknowledgement of wrong doing. Second was repentance for the wrong act, and third was willingness to accept punishment for wrong doing. At the time of conflict these are the first steps towards reconciliation. Gandhiji not only learnt it at a young age but also practiced throughout his life. He not only thought that it was possible for others to do the same, he also expected that every individual should indeed do so. Honesty is cherished as
a value by all societies even today, but Gandhiji took this value beyond a personal characteristic to public arena when conflict situations arose. In 1922, when people indulged in violence in public, Gandhiji suspended the \textit{Satyagraha}- mass civil disobedience movement. It is recorded in Indian Freedom Struggle history as \textit{Chauri-Chaura} police killing by masses. This was public acknowledgement of wrong doing by people in this case. He was sorry for this and admitted it in public and as Redressal he withdrew the movement. He thought that his penance was not enough and people were not yet ready for a non-violent \textit{Satyagraha}.

At the age of 19, Mohandas left for England to become a barrister. This was not so common during the last quarter of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Indian society was very traditional then. The world view about England and English people led the traditional Indians to believe that visiting England for studies would have very corrupting influence on the visitors over and above the belief that it was sinful to cross the sea. The mothers of the young men were particularly worried about corrupting influence on food habit, alcohol drinking and having affairs with English women. Gandhiji’s mother Putlibai was no exception. She wanted assurance which the young Mohan gave, but that was not enough. A family advisor’s, who also was a Jain monk, advice was sought on this matter by the mother. He administered the oath and Mohan vowed that he would not touch wine, woman and meat. Most young persons of his times and age perhaps made these promises to their mothers only to break them. Most of them would also have had justification for doing so. Youth is rebellious. Some young men would have found the new world exciting and hence would have taken plunge into it. Right on the passage to London, an English passenger warned him that once the ship crossed Bay of Biscay it would be so cold that eating meat would become necessary. Later in the early days in London Dr. Mehta’s friend, who was teaching Gandhiji the English manners to prepare him to stay with an English family as a paying guest, got exasperated and said, “what is the value of a vow made before an illiterate mother, and in ignorance of conditions here? It is no vow at all. It would not be regarded as vow in law. It is pure superstitions to stick to such a promise. And I tell you this persistence will not help you to gain anything here.” Young Mohandas did not budge. Later when he moved to stay with an English family he had to starve at times but did not give up vegetarianism.

I need to stretch this point a little further because it is very important to understand the process through which the young man went through and became more and more resolute which made his personality a strong one and self regulatory. Young Mohan was hungry on the ship; he was hungry in England where he stayed as a paying guest. He writes about his predicaments in the following words, “I could not relish boiled vegetables cooked without salt and condiments……. I always starved at lunch and dinner…. I was a good
eater and had a capacious stomach; but I was ashamed to ask for more than two or three slices of bread, as it did not seem correct to do so.”

English manners prevented him picking up more food. At a young age of nineteen a normal healthy man has good appetite and to go hungry for days can be traumatic. Young Mohandas wondered the streets of London to find vegetarian restaurant and finally when he found one his joy was expressed thus, “During these wanderings I once hit on a vegetarian restaurant in Farringdon Street. The sight of it filled me with the same joy that a child feels on getting a thing after its own heart….. This was my first hearty meal since my arrival in England.”

The easiest way out for Mohandas was to break the vows he had made to his mother. But his resolve not to do so made him very strong and he acquired self-regulatory powers to a very significant level and it served him all though his life. *Mahatma* was already in the making in the young Mohandas.

We learn from the Gandhiji’s autobiography that he was a shy person. Again at a young age of nineteen to get attracted to women is only natural. A widow, to whom he became acquainted while he was looking for vegetarian food in a restaurant in Brighton that had a Menu card in French, invited him home and introduced a young lady with whom Mohandas felt comfortable. He became used to the Sunday lunch meetings and in fact, eagerly looked forward for them. Soon he realised that the widow was well-meaning lady and wanted a good young man such as Mohandas to marry this good young lady. Mohandas took sometime but sensed that his meetings with the lady were not so innocent. It occurred to him that he had not revealed to the women his marital status. He wrote a long letter again confessing lapse on his part in sharing the information about his marriage back home in India. He also expressed regret and asked for forgiveness. Young Mohandas could have dated the girl as we call it today and could have left it as an affair. It would have been considered normal for a young person of his age in England. Many Indian youth did indulge in this practice while in England. Once again Mohandas not only reminded himself of his vow and acknowledged his mistake, but also confessed it boldly without any fear. In his autobiography he wrote that he thus purged himself of the canker of untruth. Mohandas again was moving towards the *Mahatma*. We should recognise that more than being determined about values such as being truthful and honest under most trying circumstances, Gandhiji was at a very young age learning successfully to regulate his behaviour by imposing self-discipline. This practice hardly failed him during rest of his life.

I should now take you further in Gandhiji’s fascinating life journey. As a barrister he did not succeed in Mumbai and went back to Rajkot where his extended family lived. He earned out of writing petitions. Soon he was fed up. In the meanwhile his elder brother received an offer from a wealthy businessman from South Africa for a lawyer who could
act as a mediator between the White lawyer and the Hindi businessman who did not know English. Gandhiji, then around twenty three, jumped at this offer. But before we take the South Africa incidences that further built Gandhiji’s character, I would take another small, but important instance from which again Gandhiji learnt a lifetime lesson. While at Rajkot, Gandhiji’s brother requested him to meet the British Political Agent for Porbandar and put in good words for him. Gandhiji’s brother was facing an allegation of having misadvised the Rana of Porbandar before the latter ascended the throne. Gandhiji had met the Political Agent in England and had some acquaintance and his brother wanted to gain from this acquaintance. Gandhiji was reluctant, but upon being persuaded he went and met the Political Agent. He tried to renew the acquaintance and pleaded his brother’s case, but the Agent stopped him and asked him to leave. Gandhiji continued to plead and the Agent called the peon to show Gandhiji door. This was an insult and Gandhiji scribbled a chit seeking his apology and threatening to complain. He received an arrogant reply. Incidentally, Sir Phirozsha Mehta, a renowned barrister of Mumbai was in Rajkot and Gandhiji sought his advice for suing the Agent for defamation. Sir Mehta advised him to pocket the insult and proceed with his profession. Gandhiji resolved never to recommend anybody’s case in this fashion and never ever did that in his life. I am sure many of us go through this experience and yet we do not make resolves of the kind which Gandhiji had made and stick to it lifelong. This is yet another example of regulating self that young Mohandas had taught himself.

In South Africa he became acutely aware about the racial discrimination. His historic travel from Durban to Pretoria exposed him to this experience in a rather crude and shocking manner. I do not wish to recount the famous train travel and the insult heaped on him at Maritzburg. Let us only remember again that he was only a young man of twenty four. He could have pocketed the insult as almost all Indians in South Africa did in those days and get accustomed to the discriminated treatment. Or as an angry young man turned violent and hit back. He did neither. Instead, he resolved to fight back using non-violent means or passive resistance. I would simply quote from his autobiography the emotions he passed through during the incidences of discrimination. Upon being pushed out from the train he went to waiting room with his handbag in that cold winter night and shivered. His state of mind is reflected in the following passage:

I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India, or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults, and return to India after finishing the case? It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial – only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardship in the process. Redress for wrongs I should
seek only to the extent that would be necessary for the removal of the colour prejudice.\textsuperscript{11}

The experience of the night at Maritzburg station was unusual indeed. Rajmohan Gandhi in a chapter titled ‘Two Inner Voices’ in his book ‘The Good Boatman’ writes, “The transformation of the timid Mohan into a victor over an empire and the father of satyagraha is an oft-probed mystery generally resolved with a spotlight on the 1893 ejection at the Maritzburg railway station”.\textsuperscript{12} Rajmohan continues to argue that important writings by others and Gandhiji’s own expressions at places lends credence to this incidence. He quotes C.F. Andrews thus,

Gandhi, like Paul comes clearly under the category of the twice-born among men of religion. He experienced at a special moment in his life that tremendous convulsion of the human spirit which we call ‘conversion.’ ………AS he journeyed from Durban and reached Maritzburg this dreadful experience came to him in its cruel nakedness………..There all night long as he sat shivering with cold, after enduring this insult, he wrestled within himself whether to take the next steamer back to India, or to go through the bitter end, suffering what his own people had to suffer. Before the morning the light came to his soul. He determined by God’s grace to the play the man… This was the turning point form which his new life would begin.\textsuperscript{13}

Rajmohan notes that ten years before Gandhiji’s death an American Evangelist John R. Mott had asked Gandhiji to recall ‘the most creative experience of his life’, Gandhiji made reference to the Maritzburg incident and said: ‘My active non-violence began form that date’.\textsuperscript{14} The point Rajmohan wishes to make in this chapter is that Gandhiji’s strong inner voices about truth and feeling to fight for his nation was not the result of any inner revolution as it apparently shows up in the scanning of his life events by himself and by others, but it evolved and one has to look for it from the beginning. Rajmohan Gandhi is right to an extent in his argument as I have also tried to trace the formation of character of Mahatma in Mohan from early childhood onwards, but it is also true that there were certain high points of acute realisations as a consequence of the agony and test Gandhiji passed through. In fact, soon after the acute emotional trauma at the Maritzburg railway station on the dark night, the next stretch of travel further heightened the trauma.

His woes were not over with this first leg of train travel. ‘More Hardships’ waited in the Coach travel he was to undertake to reach Johannesburg. He had to take a Stage-Coach from Charlestown where the train from Durban took him. He was asked to sit on the side of the Coachbox and was not accommodated inside the Coach for which he had a ticket. After sometime the Coach leader (conductor was called as such) wanted to sit out and
smoke and hence he took a dirty sack and asked Gandhiji to sit on the floor at his feet. Gandhiji wanted to refuse. But before he could utter those sentences that he had constructed the coach leader attacked him. Let me read in Gandhiji’s own words:

The insult was more than I could bear……As I was struggling through these sentences, the man came down upon me and began heavily to box my ears. He seized me by the arm and tried to drag me down. I clung to the brass rails of the coachbox and was determined to keep my hold even at the risk of breaking my wrist bones.15

It is clear that young Gandhi stood his ground steadfastly and did not resort to violence himself. But he resisted and this passive resistance did move other passengers inside the coach who came to his rescue. His stay in Pretoria further exposed him to racial discrimination. In Pretoria coloured people had restrictions on using public footpaths after nine in the night. Night permits were issued to Negro servants. Gandhiji’s white friends did not like the idea of issuing such a permit to Gandhiji. Instead, a letter authorising him to be outdoors all the times was issued to him. However, once when he was walking through a street where the President of Pretoria lived, he was beaten up by a police petrol constable who guarded the President Street. A white friend happened to pass and intervened and upon proper identification the policeman apologised. The White friend wanted Gandhiji to sue and he promised to stand witness, but Gandhiji refused. He did not want to punish a single person for this societal problem. Even at that young age Gandhiji had already scaled good height and it is evident from his reflections that he recorded after this incident and I quote.

The incident deepened my feeling for the Indian settlers. I discussed with them the advisability of making a test case, if it were found necessary to do so, after having seen the British Agent in the matter of these regulations. I thus made an intimate study of the hard condition of the Indian settlers, not only by reading and hearing about it, but by personal experience. I saw that South Africa was no country for self-respecting Indian, and my mind became more and more occupied with the question as to how this state of things might be improved.16

As we can see by the age of 25, young Gandhiji had accepted and had become staunch practitioner of honesty, truth and non-violence. Even under most trying circumstances and tempting situations he resolutely steered clear of giving up truth and resorting to violence. Gandhiji firmly internalised the value of passive but firm resistance with self-suffering in the situations of injustice and exploitation rather than inflicting injury and violence to the perpetrator. It was this Gandhiji who went on to lead the South Africa
Satyagraha between 1896 and 1914 and after that became the most central figure in India’s fight for Independence.

III

_Ekadash Vrat: Eleven Principles towards Self-Disciplining and Self-Regulation_

In September 1930, Gandhiji was in Yervada Jail. He spent most of his time in spinning yarn, reading and reflecting on Bhagvat Geeta, reading newspapers and the letters he received in large numbers. Among the letters were ones that were written by the Sabarmati Ashram inmates. Some of them requested Gandhiji to write some inspiring letters that would enliven the inmates with new spirit and awakening. Gandhiji responded by writing weekly letters. He suggested that in the morning of every Tuesday a sermon may be read which he would write. The practice continued and Gandhiji wrote commentary on the principles that were to be followed by the Ashram inmates. He had written about ten principles but did not write anything on _Swadeshi_ because he had promised the British that he would not write anything critical of Raj when in Jail. But after he was released from the Jail he wrote on _Swadeshi_ and thus completed the _Ekadash Vrat_. I shall describe each principle briefly.

1. _Satya_ – Truth. The word _Satya_ is derived from the word _Sat_. It means being. Gandhiji interpreted this as nothing is there as being other than the truth. He said, “In fact it more correct to say that Truth is God, than to say that God is Truth”17. Gandhi insisted on truth because he strongly believed that without truth there was no true knowledge. At times truth is confused or narrowly understood as speaking truth. But for people in general and the Ashram inmates in particular, Gandhiji’s message was truth in thought, truth in action and truth in speech. The effort to seek truth has to be honest.

2. _Ahimsa_ – Non Violence. Gandhiji used Love and Non-violence interchangeably. How does one feel about others? We destroy our distracters. Should we physically do so? What about the enemy within? To live with enemies within and outside is _Ahimsa_. Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt non-violence. But it is not enough; it is only a part. Complete non-violence means ‘hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody.’ If the man is not able to follow this broader concept of non-violence, she can not be a truth seeker. Attainment of truth is impossible without following the path of _Ahimsa_. It is a strong moral force which gains strength only from seeking the truth and finding truth is by following non-violence. Thus _Ahimsa_ is means and Truth is end.
3. **Bramhcharya – Chastity.** The essence of *brahmcharya* as developed by Gandhiji in his own words is as follows. “Let us remember the root meaning of *brahmcharya* conduct adapted to the search of *brahma*, i.e. Truth. From this etymological meaning arises the special meaning, viz. control of all the senses. We must entirely forget the incomplete definition which restricts itself to the sexual aspect only.”

4. **Aswad – Control of the Palate.** Taste buds are difficult to control and regulate. Hence, Gandhiji thought that in religious traditions and practices too, controlling the palate is treated as separate observance and it is not insisted upon. This is perhaps because the greatest of ascetics in India might have found it difficult to control the palate. Gandhi developed it as a separate observance and insisted that control over palate helps in practicing *brahmcharya*. Nutrition, taste and quantity of food to be consumed have to be carefully balanced. In controlling palate taste has to be completely sacrificed. Nutritive food has to be consumed in limited quantities.

5. **Asteya – Non-Stealing.** For Gandhiji, it is more mental than physical. Of course, he has insisted that any type of stealing of physical good is failure in following the path of Truth. Further, acquiring or desiring to acquire something even in thought that does not belong to one is theft according to Gandhiji. Non-stealing physically and in thought is the real and complete practice of non-stealing.

6. **Aparigrha – Non-Possession or Poverty.** Possession implies provision for future. Gandhiji, like all other Saints and Sufis in Asia, has abhorred materialistic possession. Gandhiji says, ‘God never stores for morrow’. “The rich have superfluous store of things which they do not need, which are therefore neglected and wasted; while millions are starved to death for want of sustenance.” Gandhiji has quoted extensively from nature and its arrangements and argues that no other specie collects and stores possessions. Mainly it is human specie that owns and possesses. He argues that even brain and mind should be non-possessive, it should have only what is required for a healthy life and discard rest. Otherwise it is not possible to maintain humility. Finally, possession and richness comes in way of seeking truth. Truth seekers have always been voluntarily poor.

7. **Abhay – Fearlessness.** Freedom from death and delusions is fearlessness according to Gandhiji. A seeker of truth is bound to become fearless. Further, one who practices non-violence cannot do so with fear. Violence is the reaction to display ones own fear of inner and external enemies. If there is universal love towards one and all and the person is a seeker of truth by non-violent means, fear cannot come near the person. Gandhi quotes from *Upanishads* and argues that one should give up attachment for things, while we enjoy them. We must be interested in them, not as proprietors, but as
trustees. *Tena Tyaktena Bhunjithaha* – Enjoy the worldly riches by renouncing them is what Ishopanishad has said. Gandhiji endorsed it completely.

8. **Asprushyta Nivaran** – Removal of untouchability. As a seeker of truth Gandhi despite declaring himself as a *Sanatan Hindu*, a devout Hindu, he did not blindly accept all that is said in scriptures. He singled out untouchability and identified as shame of Hinduism as in practice. He declared untouchability as an Ashram observance. In fact, remotely it connects to *shadripu* (Six enemies of soul that I will discuss shortly). *Matsya* or hatred towards another being is rejected even in pursuit of salvation in staunch practice of Hinduism. Gandhiji had very strong feelings on this issue and he said, “By treating removal of untouchability as an Ashram observance, we assert our belief, that untouchability is not only a part and parcel of Hinduism, but a plague, which is the bounden duty of every Hindu to combat.”

9. **Jatmehnat** – Bread labour. Gandhiji acknowledges influence of two writings for evolving and firming up on this observance for Ashram inmates. Ruskin’s ‘Unto this Last’ was the first book which influenced his mind about bread labour and second was the writings of Tolstoy. The influence of Tolstoy’s writings was so deep that he named one of his Ashrams in South Africa as Tolstoy Farm. Gandhiji calls bread labour principle as divine law. One who does not do bodily labour has no right to eat or should not have right to eat. Gandhiji observed that there was worldwide conflict between capital and labour. Poor, therefore, envied rich. If every person rich or poor worked for their bread, the distinction of ranks would disappear. There would be rich people but they will hold the capital and use it as trustee in public interest.

10. **Sarvadharmsambhav** – Although Gandhiji declared himself a *Sanatan* Hindu, he became conscious of it only after learning about other religions more deeply while he was in South Africa. He could see problems in every religion and thus rejected blind faith. For him Truth is God and seeking truth is seeking divine. That is the Religion for Gandhi. In fact, he said that all religion ultimately led to the search for Truth. On why there were many religions his explanation is interesting and I would like to quote him from the lecture he sent to Ashram inmates from Yervada prison. He says,

    The question then arises: Why should there be so many different faiths? The soul is one, but the bodies which she animates are many. We cannot reduce the number of bodies; yet we recognise the unity of soul. Even as a tree has a single trunk, but many branches and leaves, so is there one true and perfect Religion, but it becomes many, as it passes through the human medium. The one Religion is beyond all speech. Imperfect men put it into such language as they command, and their words are interpreted by other men equally imperfect. Whose
interpretation is to be held the right one? Everybody is right from his own standpoint, but it is not impossible that everybody is wrong. Hence the necessity for tolerance, which does not mean indifference towards one's own faith, but a more intelligent and purer love for it.²¹

11. **Swadeshi** – It is love for neighbours and duty towards them to support them in production and consumption of goods and services. This is not charity but duty. In Swadeshi there is no room for selfishness. If at all it is there, it is of extreme type that is one which is not different from altruism. A votary of Swadeshi will carefully study his environment, and try to help his neighbours wherever possible, by giving preference to local manufacturers, even if they are of inferior grade or dearer in price than the things manufactured elsewhere. He will try to remedy their defects, but will not give them up in favour of outside products.

If we collapse the *Ekadash Vrat* into its basic core they can be incorporated in truth, non-violence and nationalism. Gandhiji wanted to contextualise the existence of human being in geo-political space. His idea of nationalism was not narrow, he did believe in one world for the humanity as a whole. It was his well-known saint follower Vinoba who introduced the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* – Universal Family. He gave the slogan of *Jai Jagat* – Hail Humankind. But in real world there were conflicts among human beings for control over geo-political spaces. It is in this context Gandhiji had understood and introduced *Swadeshi*. If the societies decentralised its production for customary consumption requirements, social and environmental externalities would be minimised. This in turn would improve the scope of sustainability of the society. Even in order to appreciate the concept of *Swadeshi* one has to go back to the core values of truth and non-violence.

It is interesting that Gandhi has held a position that he is not saying anything original. It has been there in the Indian culture for centuries. He has only reiterated it once again with practical relevance for the new times. If we examine the *Ekadash Vrat* in this light, we find that the *Vrat* Gandhiji wants every human being to observe originate from the Hindu religious classics. The purpose of the human body on this earth according to Hindu religion is to attain *Moksha* – Salvation. The pathway laid down involves conquering the enemies within which are six in number and hence they are called *shadaripu*. These six enemies are *kam* (desire), *krodh* (temper), *mada* (intoxication), *moha* (attachment), *lobha* (Greed) and *matsar* (envy).

*Kam* is Carnal desire. It is the driving force for procreation. But humanity has given a new identification to *kam*. Sexuality is not a matter of shame and repression. It is freely
accepted and demonstrated. Justification is given to indulgence in carnal pleasure without any objective of begetting child. Such indulgence is a sure hindrance in achieving the salvation of soul. Gandhiji has suggested Brahmacharya – celibacy or abstinence as vrat to regulate desire for kam. Gandhiji might have had spiritual context for his Vrat, but more than that he had practical and this worldly concern which according my understanding was paramount. Handling one’s sexuality in a rational way is utmost difficult task and it affects one’s behaviour and rationality in all other fields where sexuality is not required. If not tamed unbridled sexuality leads to pervert behaviour which disturbs the society at large. Gandhiji has been clear that his idea of brahmcharya is not restricted to abstinence from sex only; it is regulating the mind too. The mind has to be

Unregulated Kam is also at the root of the other five internal enemies. The desire leads to ownership and not trusteeship. What is mine cannot be of anybody else’s. If somebody wishes to take away justifiably or otherwise I become angry and it manifests in krodhanger. Saddam Hussain in Iraq saw scheming in U.S.’s order to check the nuclear armament with him, who again did not hold it for any peaceful purpose. He knew that U.S. came after oil reserve in Iraq. He himself was a perpetrator of his community. But his sense of ownership, his desire (kam) to rule his people led him to anger and hence war. Both, George Bush, President of U.S. and Saddam Hussain, the deposed President of Iraq, perceived that they own power. It has led to mada - intoxication of power. Both are greedy thus suffer from lobh and therefore, they have developed attachment moha. If both become seeker of truth in real sense, they will have to display universal love. Non-violence would be the major way to seek truth and hence peace. It is important to note here that unless both these leaders become seeker of truth at individual level, there ability to lead the path of truth for others would not be gained. Thus, in Gandhiji’s Ekadash Vrat, self improvement is primary task before any attempt is made to improve the society.

By now it should be clear to the audience that in Gandhian perspective individual’s behaviour is constrained by self regulation. The liberty is to be liberated in spiritual sense. Gandhiji considers it extremely important that individual regulates self not only to seek her own truth and salvation, but also thereby contribute to a health society which is by and large devoid of shadripu. It should be possible for audience to understand that in a way Gandhiji has been a votary of extreme individualism wherein a person seeks her own truth which in turn leads her to non-violent and be loyal to neighbour for materialist requirements. In the Western world where an individual, fiercely fighting for his freedom and wanting to feel liberated, faces a constraint imposed by the social order that she, in pursuing her freedom, cannot come in way of any other’s freedom. She can pursue anything as long as she does not impinge upon the freedom of others. Gandhian perspective, which has roots in the Indian culture, does not match with the Western
perspective. The individual has all the freedom to be liberated and in fact should aim at getting liberated, but mainly through disciplining oneself. Obviously, emergent socioeconomic model differs in both instances.

**Emergent Socioeconomic Model in Gandhian Perspective**

We can see that Gandhiji has set a tone for building his socioeconomic model that is mainly on moral and ethical grounds. He grew as a person with his experiments with truth. He tried the non-violent and passive resistance and succeeded fairly impressively in South Africa and by the time he reached age of 40, he was in a position to comment comprehensively on the tenets of the society he had evolved out of his percept and practice. He penned it in a small book form that was titled *Hind Swaraj* – literally meaning freedom of Hind. He was returning to South Africa from England where he had attended a number of gatherings of young Indians who had decided to fight for India’s freedom through violent resistance. He was replying to these forces and the book was written in one sitting in the ship in 1908. The most characteristic feature of this commentary is his total rejection of the Western civilisation. It is perhaps an exaggeration as later his maternal grandson Rajmohan Gandhi – a scholar in his own right, has noted in the following words.

I for one am unable to accept the sweeping statement: The tendency of the Indian Civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless; the former is based on a belief in God’ (Ch.13). The torch held by Hind Swaraj’s author does not throw an even light on the terrain under examination. Some portions remain in darkness while the shape of others is distorted or exaggerated. Yet no study of the historic encounter between the Indian and the Western civilizations can ignore Hind Swaraj; neither can any study of the working of Gandhi’s mind.22

*Hind Swaraj*, in which Gandhiji has mainly assessed the modernisation of England and Europe and has anticipated the ill effects of it on the Indian society if the latter tried following the former blindly. In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhiji explains the implications of the fall in the moral standards in society following material prosperity. England was the most prosperous nation in the world when the *Hind Swaraj* was penned. The First World War was still five years away. America was already emerging as a land of great wealth. Gandhiji’s reflections on modern civilisation were largely based on his observations on the conditions in England. In fact, chapter five in *Hind Swaraj* is titled as ‘condition of England’, where Gandhiji criticises the Parliament as an institution governing society. The central concern of Gandhiji was that the politicians in the British Parliament were merely given over to capturing and retaining political power and rule and they were, by
and large, not worried about the welfare of the people. He had also criticised the media for not being serious and sincere in assessing people and events and act as an objective guide to help in assessing their leaders. Towards the end of the chapter, he ascribes the state of affairs in England to the modern civilisation when he says, “it is not due to any peculiar fault of the English people, but the condition is due to modern civilisation. It is a civilisation only in name. Under it the nations of Europe are becoming degraded and ruined day by day.”

The next chapter in *Hind Swaraj* is on civilisation. Here Gandhi speaks of how people thought that living in better built houses, wearing on variety of clothing, wearing shoes was all part of the civilised society. Instead of spears, people carried revolvers containing five or more chambers. Ploughing land with steam engines and make wealth was hailed as a sign of civilisation. Flying from one place to another was considered the height of civilisation. He visualises the future in the following manner.

As men progress, they shall be able to travel in airships and reach any part of the world in a few hours. Men will not need the use of their hands and feet. They will press a button, and they will have their clothing by their side. Another button and they will have their newspaper. A third and a motorcar will be waiting for them. They will have variety of delicately dished up food….Formerly, when people wanted to fight one another, they measured between them their bodily strength; now it is possible to take away thousands of lives by one man working behind a gun from a hill. This is civilisation.

What Gandhiji saw in England during his stay made deep impressions and was reflected in the following way in the *Hind Swaraj*.

Civilisation (read modern civilisation) seeks to increase bodily comforts, and it fails miserably even in doing so. The Civilisation is irreligion, and it has taken such a hold on the people in England that those who are in it appear to be half mad. They lack real physical strength or courage. They keep up their energy by intoxication. They can hardly be happy in solitude. Women, who should be queens of households, wander in the streets, or they slave away in factories. For the sake of a pittance, half a million women in England alone are labouring under trying circumstances in factories or similar institutions.

In chapter 13 of *Hind Swaraj* Gandhiji comes out with his idea of reformed or Modern India. He begins by saying that India is accused of non-change and hence backward. In fact, the lack of quick change is India’s strength. The Indian society after long experience has decided to keep a certain form that it deems appropriate. It should not be dubbed as
backwardness. There are many calls for change, India has not responded to all of them; there lies its wisdom. Reform or modernisation is a behaviour where individual is motivated to perform duties better. That is living according to morals and ethics. The moral in performing duty lies in regulating our mind and senses and keeping them in discipline. That is to knowing oneself and that is real reform and modernisation.

Instability of mind is human nature. Mind keeps wandering. Body demands more as you give more to it. By taking more it is not satiated. Mind and body want more of more. Forefathers in Indian society realised this and wisdom dawned on to them. They thought deeply and realised that pleasure and pain are product of working of the mind. Poor are not unhappy because they are poor, they are unhappy because they see others rich. Rich are not happy too. Thus, happiness is important, not poverty or plenty. We continued our age old systems of cultivation practices, housing and other life styles not because we did not know how to invent and produce machines, but our forefathers realised that if run into that runnel, there is no going back or shifting possible. Bread labour is dignified way of living for ever. Thus, they resisted urbanisation. They knew there will be some who will get very rich in this process and they will cruelly exploit the poor. They realised that ethical people were better human beings, saints and rishis were qualitatively superior and hence they were ranked above the kings who wielded swords to control. There were lawyers and healers in the society but they were not God players, they were subservient to the society; they were dependent on people and not reverse. People had their own way of resolving legal problems. Customary laws ruled and communities acted with more responsibility.

Gandhiji, in nutshell, spelt out his socioeconomic model in the way I have described above. Was he unaware of the social ills of his times? Was he a blind follower of the traditional society from where he came? In the same chapter Gandhiji provides answers to these questions. According to him, the social ills reflected in child marriages, child widowhood, prostitution as religious traditions etc were to be abhorred and corrected. They were weaknesses of the system. It did not make the entire system bad and worth discarding. In short Gandhiji was of the opinion that there was no need to throw the baby with bathwater.

Let me reiterate that the Society which Gandhiji visualised stood firmly on the assumption about particular characteristic of the human being. The man there is not the ‘Economic Man’ who emerged from the Modern Western Civilisation. Gandhiji man is quintessentially a Moral and Ethical Man. Let us understand that Gandhiji was firm about his ‘Man’ because he was arguing a case for sustainable societies. Individualism out of freedom to act in any way definitely in Gandhiji’s thinking led to moral decay. A self
regulated individual according to Gandhiji, could contribute best to a sustainable society, because there would be least opportunity to govern. We should remind ourselves here that Gandhiji had always stood for ‘Minimum State.’ Minimum State is possible in his scheme only when individuals are liberated by high degree of self regulation and are thus disciplined. Was he contemplating about the moral decay of society out of his imagination? No. Here is some evidence.

Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj* in 1909 and then on December 22, 1916, he responded to Kapildev Malaviya’s invitation to speak to the members of the Myore Central College Economics Society, Allahabad, and he delivered a lecture that was titled "Does Economic Progress Clash with Real Progress"? By real progress he had meant the sustainable society that he had portrayed in *Hind Swaraj*. The tone he had set in it continued in his 1916 lecture. He hardly changed it later with regard to this matter. The central thesis to which he adhered throughout his life was the debate about the moral progress vis-à-vis material progress and it is clear from his 1916 lecture that he considered the former to be real progress. He said, "by economic progress, I mean material progress without limit and by real progress we mean moral progress, which again is the same thing as progress of the permanent element in us."26

According to him, the societies that prospered materially experienced a moral fall. Rome suffered a moral fall after it achieved material affluence. The *Yadavas* ruined themselves morally when they were rolling in riches. Gandhiji thought that an ordinary measure of morality is possessed by most including the very rich, but their material gains did not ensure moral richness. Sharing his longstanding observation of the society of the rich he said, “I observed almost invariably that the greater the possession of riches, the greater was their moral turpitude. Our rich men, to say the least, did not advance the moral struggle of passive resistance, as did the poor. The rich men’s sense of self-respect was not so much injured as that of the poorest. If I were not afraid of treading on dangerous ground, I would even come nearer home and show you that possession of riches has been a hindrance to real growth.”27 Gandhiji then says that Jesus Christ was the greatest economist of his time. Quoting the dialogue between the Christ, a citizen and other disciples described by St. Mark, Gandhiji emphasises in his lecture the virtue of spending wealth in the service of the poor and the have-nots. The point he keeps reiterating is against amassing wealth. Later, as we know, he formulated *aparigrha* (non-accumulation) as one of the *Vrat* – principles.

Gandhiji gave illustrations from the Bible may be because of the important presence of the English Professors and scholars in the gathering. He appeared aware of this because he makes this point. “I have not taken the trouble of copying similar passages from the
other non Hindu scriptures and I will not insult you by quoting in support of the law stated by Jesus passages from writings and sayings of our own sages, passages stronger even if possible than the Biblical extracts have drawn your attention to. Jesus, Mohamed, Buddha, Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Shankara, Dayanand, Ramakrishna were men who exercised an immense influence over and moulded the character of thousands of men ……And they were all men who deliberately embraced poverty as their lot.” 28

Gandhiji then talked about the craze for materialistic progress and argues that pursuing mere materialistic goals was a fall from idealism. He says that one cannot serve God and Mammon is an economic truth of the highest value. He recommends the building of a truly spiritual nation (not by boasting about the glorious past) and seeking the kingdom of God should be the basis for real economics. It can be clearly seen that his reservation was with regard to limitless material prosperity in the society.

Bodily comfort and the rush to acquire bodily comfort is what Gandhiji has criticised the most. In his December 1916 Lecture he introduced the concept of voluntary poverty. He then asked the Ashram inmates to practice it as one of the observance aparigraha or non possession. The saints and reformers he mentions were, during their times, living examples of beings who courted voluntary poverty in order to achieve high moral standards. It is clear from the Hind Swaraj and the Lecture that material prosperity does not ensure high moral standards instead, the dash towards material prosperity has brought the moral standards down and led to decay of human society. Through these thoughts Gandhiji laid the philosophical foundation of the economic order of society. According to him, limitless material progress could not be the goal of economic development in a society. Material progress was important only for very limited purposes of lifting people from abject poverty and destitution that lowered or destroyed human dignity. The production and distribution system that Gandhi conceived and tried to implement later in India along with the freedom struggle calling it the ‘Swadeshi’ movement was founded on the basic tenet of ultimate moral progress combined with dignified and healthy physical survival.

We can see that Gandhiji’s macro model of the society is thus consistent with the micro model he sets out for an individual. It is interesting to note that a set of self regulated individuals not only feel liberated, but also simultaneously help build a sustainable society that requires least governance and eminently takes care of the ecological question that is paramount in the minds of thinkers of the modern world.
IV
Modern Individual in Western World and Issues of Sustainability of Societies

In the beginning of my lecture I made a remark that Anthony Giddens does not mention Gandhiji while discussing complex problems and possible solutions for the modern society. For that matter, most mainstream intellectuals have almost dismissed Gandhiji, especially the economists. Economists are important because they influence the socio-political thinking the most. In the traditional societies, economic system was subservient to the social system. In the modern societies the reverse appears to be true. Gandhian thought does not figure prominently in the development debate in the world in general and in the West in particular, because the Western thought has been polarised mainly into two ideologies. At one end, it is conservatism, which ideologically places a strong emphasis on ‘the individual’. The agency to facilitate is free market which will get best out of individuals and hence best for the society. On the other end are the communism and socialism that place ‘a firm emphasis upon the role of the state in generating both solidarity and equality.’

Recent changes and developments have caused turbulence at both the ends. Neither of the systems is able to fully comprehend the changes and hence is not able to cope with the problem of sustainability. I shall share some of the main points that are discussed and then we will be able to see that Gandhian Way holds a reasonable promise to ensure sustainability of the societies.

The debacle of Marxian or socialist system has been very prominent. Marxian philosophy was based on the premise that communist system had the capacity to form a social system that would create more wealth and distribute it more equitably. In the post World War II, socialism bug bit most of the countries. In the West socialism was adapted into moderate, parliamentary socialism. Welfare State, although creation of both capitalist and communist thinkers, came to be owned ultimately by the socialists. Free market thinkers were relegated to background soon after Second world war and most economies accepted the welfare state. After 1970, both communist and socialist systems started to fail. According to Giddens, “Socialism also failed to grasp the significance of markets as informational devices, providing essential data for buyers and sellers. These inadequacies only became fully revealed with intensifying processes of globalisation and technological change from the early 1970s onwards.”

By this time another important problem had surfaced and it was the ecological concern. The communist and socialist systems did not address the ecological question at all.

Capitalistic societies with welfare state also witnessed problems. Market failure was accepted in case of public goods. Unemployment problem was to be solved with the
social security. It was expected that as the economies will expand and production would boom, the state will become more equipped to provide welfare. This did not happen. Welfare states were sensitive to the ecological concerns, but found it difficult to tackle them effectively. State’s presence became too prominent with weak delivery. Thus, the thesis of neoliberal was born. Let us now understand clearly that dominant role of the state is questioned under both the systems. The state, as it was under both the systems, has failed. Communism and socialism in its pristine form appear to have vanished for ever at least in the democratic societies. Capitalistic systems with welfare state are trying to cope with the new situation with two different theses. One that appears to be more popular is the neoliberal thesis. In this thesis government is minimal. The other thesis is where government is different. This is what Anthony Giddens calls the ‘Third Way’ and according to him it holds better promise. Let us first review the neoliberal thesis.

The neoliberal thesis has pathological aversion for the state. It also follows from the classical liberal thesis that considered superiority of market over all other agencies for economic transactions. Rational economic man is the kingpin in the system. Thus, much of the government’s role is assumed by the civil society. This means that there is some assumption about the individual and the civil society. Interestingly, individual freedom and liberty has its origin in rebellion against the Catholic Church. The values, that were put forward and accepted while the economic transformation of Europe began on the eve of industrialisation, were the Protestant values. Briefly expressed it was an honest man working hard to gain prosperity for the family in best possible way. Such honest and hardworking individuals trying to maximise their individual and family welfare would form a harmonious and prosperous society. And obviously free market was the best agency which will provide equal opportunity to all thus simultaneously determine individual and social welfare.

Neoliberal thesis also assumes similar civil society features under the changed circumstances in the present. Giddens has quoted David Green who has listed some features thus, “The virtue of civil society, if left to its own devices, are said to include ‘Good character, honesty, duty, self-sacrifice, honour, service, self-discipline, toleration, respect, justice, civility, fortitude, courage, integrity, diligence, patriotism, consideration for others, thrift and reverence.’ It is clear that it is the individual with such virtues would make the civil society whose features are listed. I am certain that Gandhiji would have been very happy to read the list because it includes more virtues than he had prescribed for the Ashram inmates under Ekadash Vrat – eleven principles.

But neoliberalism is in trouble. Giddens draws attention to the paradox that obtains in neoliberal thesis. Traditionally, market fundamentalism has been most favoured by the
conservatism. It always meant a cautious, pragmatic approach to social and economic change. The continuity of tradition is central to the idea of conservatism. Tradition contains accumulated wisdom of past and therefore supplies a guide to the future. Free market philosophy under the neoliberal thesis is pinning its hopes for the future on unending economic growth produced by the liberation of market forces. Devotion to free market on the one hand, and to the traditional family and nation on the other, is self – contradictory. Individualism and choice are supposed to stop abruptly at the boundaries of the family and national identity, where tradition must stand intact. Although it might appear a remote connection, but repeated failures at WTO negotiation meets is indicative of this conflict between unfettered freedom, market fundamentalism and conservatism. The dynamism of market forces undermines traditional structures of authority and fractures local communities. Neo liberalism creates new risks and uncertainties which it asks citizens simply to ignore. Staunch free-market advocate F.A. Hayek is more forthright in accepting it. In one his lectures in Adam Smith Institute he has argued that in a spontaneous order individual is free to take decision on the basis of information that market provides him and hence he alone should be responsible for the gain or loss out of an economic enterprise.

Thus, under the neoliberal thesis it is the individual who has undergone a metamorphosis. It is not the person necessarily with ‘Protestant Ethics’ and hence neoliberalism is in trouble. I must say that even the individual under the classical liberal was in trouble. The ‘rational economic man’ appearing in traditional economic theories has not always been so in practice. The basic value accepted is maximisation. Maximisation is a game of ‘no limit’. Hence, greed enters. It sacrifices rationality. Prof. Stanislav Menshikov, co-chairman of the Russian Economists Allied for Arms Reduction says, “All economies that are based on these principles (maximisation of utility and profits) tend to create and promote unequal conditions for the people.”33 The other argument of the market fundamentalist, according to Menshikov, is that it is the natural order of things because it proceeds from human nature in which greed and need to maximise material benefits prevail. If God has created human beings that way, how can one change? The evidence does not support this claim either. It appears that individual behaviour holds the key for the social order rather than the other way round.

Now let me examine whether ‘The Third Way’ really shows the way for sustainable societies and what kind of individual appears in that scheme and how liberated and individualistic she is. To begin with the ‘The Third Way’, or if I rechristen it as ‘neosocialism’, accepts the failure of old-style social democracy with Keynesian policies. The assumptions that old system made were: a traditional family form where husbands worked and wives looked after the children and other elders, a homogenous labour
market, mass production in basic sectors, an elitist and patronising state and largely domestic economies. These assumptions no longer hold true. How does the neosocialism respond? It responds in two ways. One, it argues for a compassion towards the weak. This has been there from the beginning and it arises out the reality that market is not indeed able to take care of those who do not fall in its sphere. Second, and as a consequence of first, one cannot argue for minimum government, but one will have to have government that works. As Giddens, chief promoter of the ‘Third Way’ argues, “The restructuring of the government should follow the ecological principle of ‘getting more from less’, understood not as downsizing, but as improving delivered value.”

The Third Way politics assumes that the basic changes are exogenous and they are: globalisation, transformation in personal life and our relationship with nature.

Examination of transformation in personal life would lead us to search the emerging individual and her values. New Individualism is being explained variously. There appears to be a rise in ‘me’ generation proceeding fast towards ‘me first’ generation. If personal liberty gains paramount importance then the problems between liberty and equality will have to be tackled de novo. ‘Me first’ society would harm the social solidarity which both the neoliberal and the neosocialist have to achieve. The causes attributed to this ‘me first’ individualism are different. Neoliberal blame it on the new permissiveness of the 1960s and neosocialists would blame it on the rise of the market fundamentalism. However, sufficient evidence is not available to substantiate any of the reason. The new individualism rejects traditions and traditional values. Family is not the unit, individual is the unit. This might not necessarily mean a total moral decay. New post modern values seem to be appearing in which individual is keen to see basic human rights, ecological values and sexual freedom established. It is worth recalling here that despite the concerns the ecological problem can be tackled neither in the market fundamental environment nor in the communist or social democratic welfare state environment.

In the overall assessment, the situation is complex indeed. The individualism with ‘me first’ characteristics and new moral concerns can turn in any way. Neither the neoliberal nor the ‘third way’ seems to be sure about the future direction. Both the systems fail to ask some fundamental questions that matter for the societies to be sustainable. The issue of sustainability is raised only in the context of environment and ecology and there too the debate does not help in taking a clear position on any side. Neither is doomsday just at the door nor is it so far that it is never going to happen. Julian Simon might have won the bet and got paid by Ehrlich in 1990, but ecological issues are far more complex than what economists are trying to grapple with. What is the way out? I have shown in sufficient details above that the perspective has to change and reach near the Gandhian perspective. Practice of Aswada – control over palate, Asteya- non-stealing, Aparigraha...
being trustee to wealth and accepting voluntary poverty, *Jatmehnat* – Bread labour and *Ahimsa* – non violence for living and in interacting with others at micro level would answer main problems relating to insatiable aggregate demand, monopolistic practices, abnormal profit appropriation and ecological disasters. Because as I have shown Gandhian model of individual behaviour has greatest potential to bring a socioeconomic order that has better potential for moving towards sustainable societies.

**Notes**

3. For those interested in reading on this view should refer to Julian Simon’s various works and prominent among them is Julian L. Simon and Herman Kahn: *The Resourceful* Earth. Oxford: Blackwell 1984
22. Rajmohan Gandhi in *op.cit.* P 139.
32. Anthony Giddens *op.cit.* P 12.

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34. Anthony Giddens *op.cit.* P 74.
35. “The economist Julian Simon struck a famous wager with environmentalist Paul Ehrlich in 1980. Simon bet that, for any set of natural resources Ehrlich might like to nominate, prices would be lower at a specified moment in the future. Ehrlich chose 1990, and selected copper, chrome, nickel and tungsten. By 1990 the prices of these materials were lower by from 24 percent to 78 percent than they had been ten years before. Ehrlich duly paid up”. Anthony Giddens. *Op.Cit.* P 55.