

Policy WATCH

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Governance and Development

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by Subhash Sharma

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by Shriman Narayan, 1946

People's Manifesto for a Just, Equitable, and Sustainable India

*by The Constituents of the Vikalp Sangam
Process, February 2019*



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RAJIV GANDHI
INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY STUDIES

I) Editorial

The Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies (RGICS) is the knowledge affiliate of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. RGICS carries out research and analysis as well as policy advocacy on contemporary challenges facing India. RGICS currently undertakes research studies on the following five themes of general public utility including:

- Constitutional Values and Democratic Institutions
- Growth with Employment
- Governance and Development
- Environment, Natural Resources and Sustainability
- India's Place in the World

The February 2024 issue of Policy Watch is on the theme - Governance Development. Coming so soon after 22nd January, 2024, when the Pran Pratishtha (consecration) of the newly constructed Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, we could not but take notice of this contemporary issue. Thus we begin with an article by Dr Subhash Sharma – Ram Rajya Vision: An Analytical Perspective.

Using slokas from the Valmiki Ramayana and dohas from the Tulsidas Ram Charit Manas, the article explains the vision of Ram Rajya in poignant detail. According to Valmiki, in Ram Rajya, all the people were endowed with excellent characteristics. All were engaged in virtue. Tulsi Das says: in Ram Rajya, no one suffers at physically, spiritually and bodily. Everyone lives in harmony with affection towards each other while performing their own duties as described in the scriptures.

For our times, we can take it as per the law and ethically. All the four limbs of the Dharma – Truth, Purity, Compassion & Charity are being fulfilled, and no one does a Paap or sin even in their dreams, hence earn the right to Moksha or liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

We then carry an article Ram's bell of justice by Devanura Mahadeva in which he explains what we can learn from tribal communities that have a consciousness which evaluates gods — worship them and question their divinity. Devanura Mahadeva is an intellectual and activist from Tamil Nadu.

This is followed by a small poem by the well-known Hindi Poet Kunwar Narayan, winner of the Jnanpith Award for 2005. In simple four lines, he lays bare the political agenda for which the Ayodhya event was used.

After this we have republished an article When Ravan Triumphs in Ayodhya by Sachin Rao, a Congress worker. He explains, January 22, 2024 was a sad day because along with the idol of the Maryada Purushottam in Ayodhya was also enshrined a new idea of India, where the majority can use any means to impose their desire upon the rest of us. The temple may have been dedicated to Ram, but it is Ravan who seems to have triumphed in Ayodhya.

Images Courtesy:

Google Images (free to use images)

freepik

Next we carry the Gandhian Constitution for Free India, drafted by Shriman Narayan Agarwal in 1946. In a sense, this was the most significant attempt to build in the concept of Ram Rajya, as envisaged by Gandhiji into the constitutional framework of free India. The Gandhian Constitution was a 60-page document divided into 22 chapters that included 'Basic Principles', 'Fundamental Rights and Duties', 'Provincial Government', 'Central Government', and the 'Judiciary'. It was mostly descriptive and explanatory, though some parts are written in a legalistic style in the form of draft clauses.

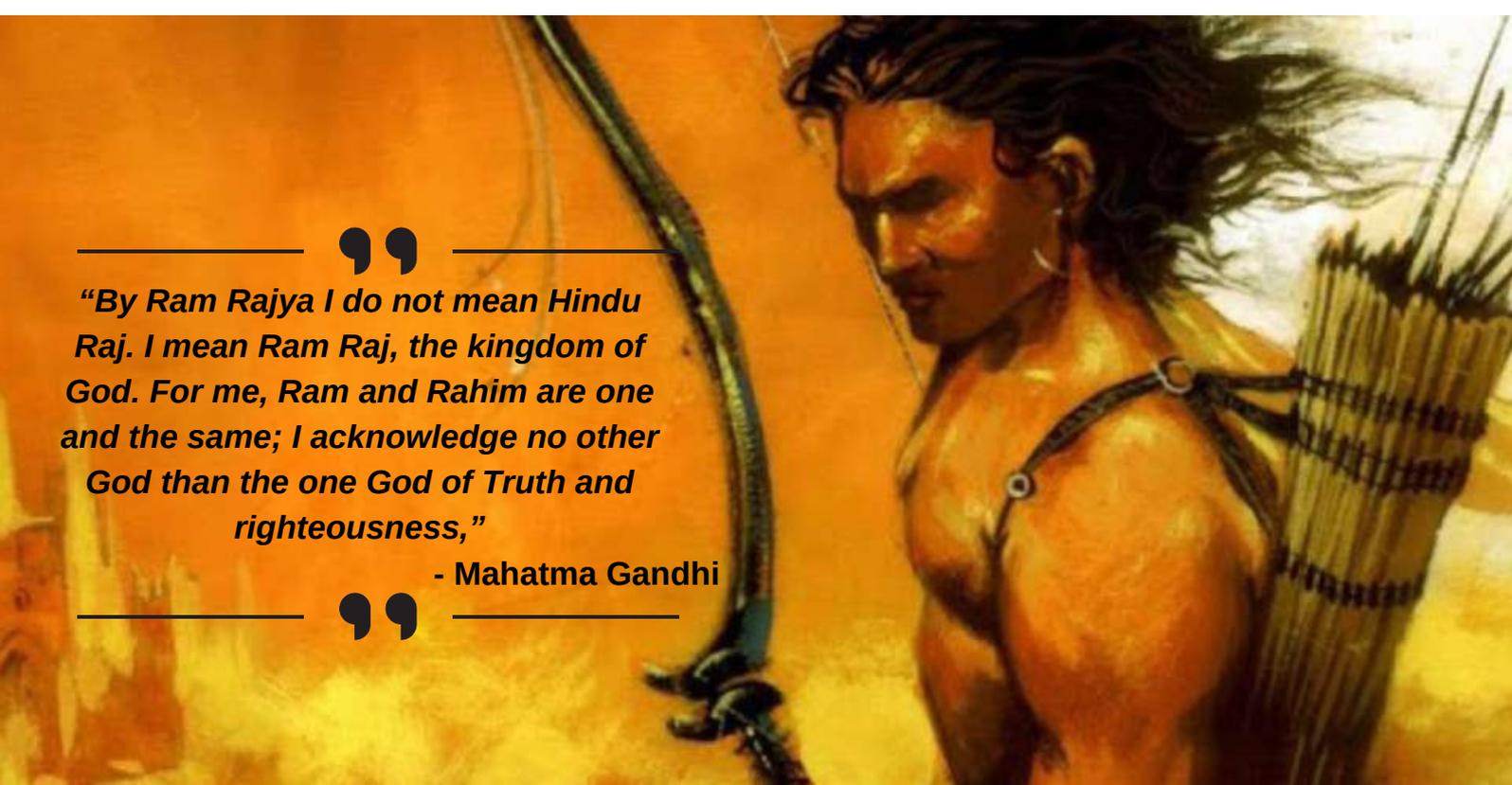
The document contained a number of noteworthy features. It strongly advocated for a decentralised political and administrative setup with village panchayats as the core units. These units aggregate to form upper levels of government. Village panchayats were given extensive powers that included judicial functions as well. Fundamental duties were conjoined with fundamental rights; the document explicitly states that rights are contingent on the performance of duties. Ironically, the Gandhian Constitution contained a provision for a 'right to bear arms'. Of course, in his foreword, Gandhiji wrote: "If I were to commit myself to every word appearing in these pages, I might as well write the thing myself." But he goes on to say later: "There is nothing in it which has jarred on me as inconsistent with what I would like to stand for."

As we know, this vision was never adopted, either in spirit or in operational detail, in the Constitution of India that was finally adopted on 26th Nov 1949. We leave it to the readers to judge what would be the difference in the governance and development trajectory of India had the Gandhian constitution draft been accepted wholly or in part.

Finally, we turn to the future. The search of Ram Rajya has not ended and there are many groups which are systematically working to envisage a desirable future for India. One such effort was that of Vikalp Sangam, a group of about 50 organisations. We carry their main document, produced in Feb 2019, just a month before the COVID pandemic. It is titled - People's Manifesto for a Just, Equitable, and Sustainable India.

We hope this issue is found useful and interesting by our readers.

**Vijay Mahajan, Director,
Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies (RGICS)**



“By Ram Rajya I do not mean Hindu Raj. I mean Ram Raj, the kingdom of God. For me, Ram and Rahim are one and the same; I acknowledge no other God than the one God of Truth and righteousness,”
- Mahatma Gandhi

2) Ram Rajya Vision: An Analytical Perspective

*Subhash Sharma*¹

Vision of Ram Rajya is an ancient vision, first articulated by Valmiki in his Sanskrit literature on Ramayana. During medieval times, Tulsidas in Ram Charit Manas presents this vision in and brings it to the popular level. During modern times, Mahatma Gandhi articulated it as a global vision for the human society.

According to Valmiki, in Ram Rajya, all the people were endowed with excellent characteristics. All were engaged in virtue. The trees there were bearing flowers and fruits regularly, without any injury by pests and insects.

The clouds were raining in time and the wind was delightful to the touch. Every creature felt pleased. Everyone was intent on virtue. Turning their eyes towards Rama alone, creatures did not kill one another. For detailed discussion see Appendix I.

Tulsi Das says in Ram Rajya, no one suffers at physically, spiritually and bodily. Everyone lives in harmony with affection towards each other while performing their own duties as described in the scriptures. For our times, we can take it as per the law and ethically.

All the four limbs of the Dharma – Truth, Purity, Compassion & Charity are being fulfilled, and no one does a Paap or sin even in their dreams. Everyone does the Bhakti of Ram and hence earn the right to Moksha or liberation from the cycle of birth and death.



[Source: Image](#)

Here Ram may not refer to the king of Ayodhya, and it may refer to the Nirguna Ram that Kabir talks about. For detailed discussion see Appendix II.

¹ Paper presented at the Third International Ramayana Conference on the theme, 'Mahatma Gandhi and Ramayana' organized by Shri Ram Charit Bhavan, Houston and Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad, held at Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad, Dec. 21-22, 2019. Electronic copy available at: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3537521>

Writing in 'Young India' (September 19, 1929), Gandhiji had said: "By Ram Raj, I mean Ram Raj, the kingdom of God... I acknowledge no other God than the one God of Truth and righteousness.

Whether Ram of my imagination ever lived on this earth, the ancient ideal of the Ramayana is undoubtedly one of true democracy in which the meanest citizen could be sure of swift justice without an elaborate and costly procedure."

In the Amrit Bazar Patrika of August 2, 1934, he said: "Ramayana of my dreams ensures equal rights to both prince and pauper." According to Gandhi, the ideal Ram Rajya may be politically described as "the land of dharma and a realm of peace, harmony and happiness for young and old, high and low, all creatures and the earth itself, in recognition of a shared universal consciousness.'

2.1 Linking Ram Rajya vision with contemporary worldviews

In contemporary context there are three worldviews as three visions of human society. Sharma (1996) presents them in terms of following three types:

- i.) Pure Materialist/ Economistic worldview
- ii.) Humanist- Materialist worldview
- iii.) Transcendentalist worldview

Economistic worldview: This worldview gives primacy to the Market and individual behaviour is driven by Profit, Competition and Self-interest (PCS). Its focus is on Prosperity, GDP and other economic parameters. It also represents a Transactional (T1) view of human society and human beings.

Humanist – Materialist worldview: This worldview gives primacy to Society and it is driven by Justice, Rights and Duties (JRD). Justice in human society results not merely by focussing on Rights but by focussing both on the Rights and Duties. It also represents a Transformational (T2) view of human society and human beings.



Transcendentalist worldview: This worldview gives primacy to Spirituality and HOPE – Higher Order Purpose of Existence. Its focus is on Self, particularly on Higher Self; According to this worldview human behaviour is driven by Love, Compassion and Devotion (LCD). Its ultimate aim is to create Peace in society. It also represents a Transcendental (T3) view of human society and human beings.

These three worldviews can also be reflected in terms of following three Isms (Idea, Spirit, Manifestation):

Economistic worldview: Capitalism rooted in T1

Humanist-Materialist worldview: Socialism rooted in T2

Transcendentalist worldview: Spiritualism rooted in T3

These three visions can be integrated through Ram Rajya Vision. This integrated framework is presented in Fig. 1.

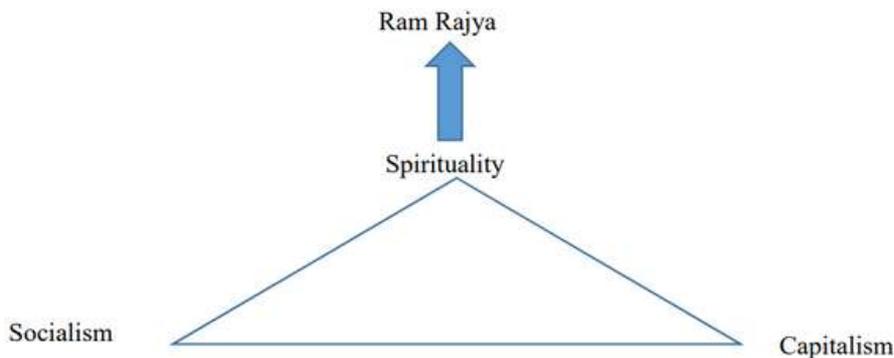


Fig.1: Ram Rajya Vision as Integral Vision

This integral vision can be represented by vision of Prosperity, Justice and Peace (PJP) as focus of Economistic vision is on Prosperity, focus of Humanist- materialist vision is on Justice and focus of Transcendentalist vision is on Peace. In Ram Rajya these three visions find an integration, hence Ram Rajya vision can be defined in terms of PJP (Prosperity, Justice and Peace).

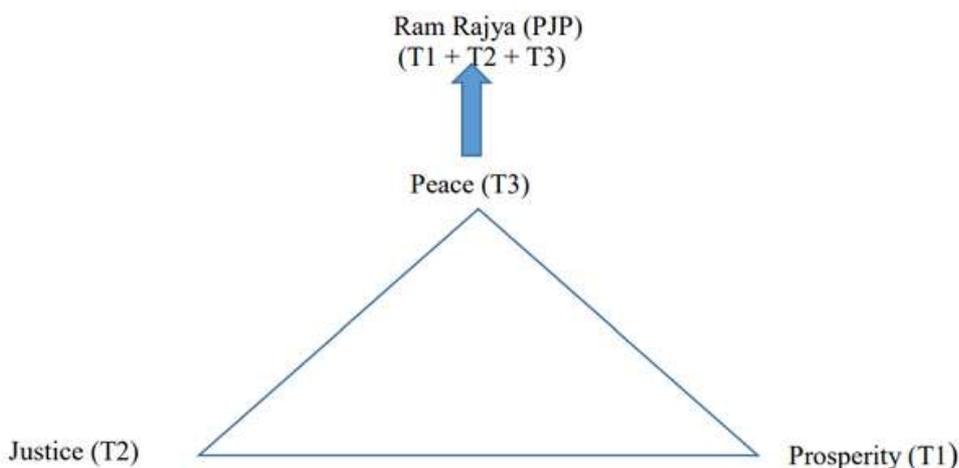


Fig. 2: A New Meaning of Ram Rajya

New meaning of Ram Rajya implies a society where there is Prosperity, Justice and Peace. This can be achieved by balancing three worldviews represented by PCS, JRD and LCD as Economistic worldview leads to Prosperity through PCS, Humanist-Materialist worldview leads to Justice through JRD and Transcendentalist worldview leads to Peace through LCD.

2.2 Ram Rajya as Sacro-Civic Society

In Ram Rajya Ram represents sacro dimension and Rajya represents civic dimension. Thus, Ram Rajya represents sacro-civic vision of human society. It is essentially Sattava-Rajas (S-R) combination in human actions and decision making. Ram Rajya represents S-R mindset/ ThoughtAction on the part of Leaders. Thus, it represents a Sattvik leadership model.



In corporate context Ram Rajya implies Spiritually driven Corporations, i.e. Corporations driven by Corporate HOPE: Higher Order Purpose of Existence and corporations driven by Divine-Democratic leadership. This implies increase in synergy and reduction in conflicts and interpersonal egos that result in neergy (negative energy). Thus Ram Rajya has implications for Corporations through focus on Prosperity (Profit), Justice (Equity) and Peace (Workplace harmony).

2.3 Ram Rajya and Divine- Democratic Leadership

Ram Rajya suggests the need for Divine-Democratic leadership in society, politics and corporations. To understand this concept we present a leadership grid presented in Fig. 3.

In this figure x axis represents authoritarian and democratic styles of leadership and y axis represents divine and democratic styles. Thus, we arrive at four styles of leadership represented by four quadrants; These styles are Divine-Democratic, Divine-Autocratic, Demonic-Autocratic and Demonic-Democratic. In this grid Ram Rajya is represented by Divine-Democratic quadrant.

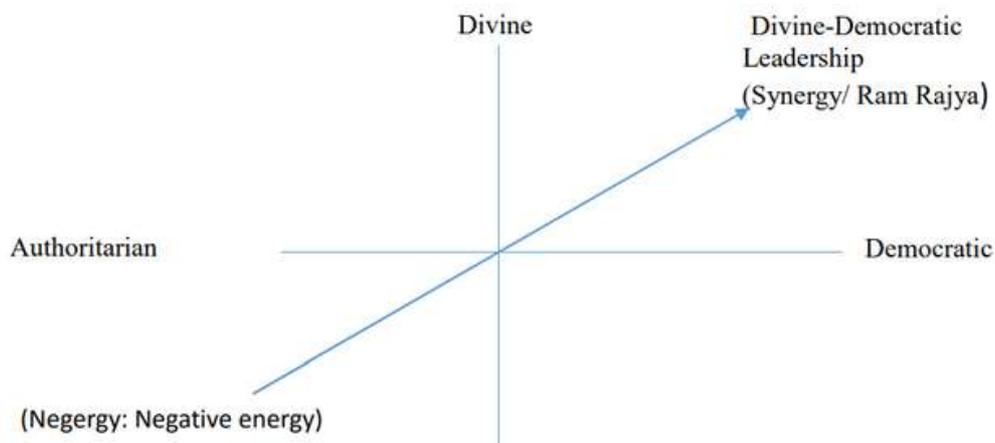


Fig. 3: Ram Rajya Leadership Grid

2.4 Essence of Ram Rajya Vision

Essence of Ram Rajya vision can be represented by following three principles articulated in Management in New Age: Western Windows Eastern Doors, Subhash Sharma, 1996, p. 209.

- I) Eco-sattvik view of life represented by HOPE (Higher Order Purpose of Existence)
- II) Sacro-civic view of society and organizations/ corporations and its governance. In organization context it is represented by the idea of subh-labh.
- III) Divine-Democratic/ Sattvik view of Leadership (Sattavik model of leadership)

When these three principles are implemented in corporations, society and politics we can actualized Ram Rajya.

2.5 Is there any example of Ram Rajya in modern context?

Orccha in Madhya Pradesh is a modern day example of 'Ramraja ki Sarkar'. It is managed under the ruler ship of Ram as King of the city. There is no crime and it is said that people don't lock their homes!

The question is: Can this be replicated in other cities? If a nation becomes a sacro-civic it becomes Ram Rajya nation.

2.6 Appendix I Valmiki's Vision of Ram Rajyam

Sage Valmiki in Yuddha Kanda of Ramayana says how the Rama Rajyam was:

न पर्यदेवन्विधवा न च व्यालकृतं भयम् ।
न व्याधिजं भयन् वापि रामे राज्यं प्रशासति ॥

While Rama was ruling the kingdom, there were no widows to lament, nor there was no danger from wild animals, nor any fear born of diseases.

सर्वे मुदितमेवासीत्सर्वो धर्मपरोऽभवत् ।
राममेवानुपश्यन्तो नाभ्यहिन्सन्परस्परम् ॥

Every creature felt pleased. Everyone was intent on virtue. Turning their eyes towards Rama alone, creatures did not kill one another.

आसन्वर्षसहस्राणि तथा पुत्रसहस्रिणः ।
निरामया विशोकाश्च रामे राज्यं प्रशासति ॥

While Rama was ruling the kingdom, people survived for thousands of years, with thousands of their progeny, all free of illness and grief.

रामो रामो राम इति प्रजानामभवन् कथाः ।
रामभूतं जगाभूद्रामे राज्यं प्रशासति ॥

While Rama ruled the kingdom, the talks of the people centered round Rama, Rama and Rama. The world became Rama's world.

नित्यपुष्पा नित्यफलास्तरवः स्कन्धविस्तृताः ।
कालवर्षी च पर्जन्यः सुखस्पर्शश्च मारुतः ॥

The trees there were bearing flowers and fruits regularly, without any injury by pests and insects. The clouds were raining in time and the wind was delightful to the touch.

सर्वे लक्षणसम्पन्नाः सर्वे धर्मपरायणाः ॥

All the people were endowed with excellent characteristics. All were engaged in virtue.



2.7 Appendix II Tulsidas vision of Ram Rajya



[Source: Image](#)

In the following Doha, Tulsidas gives the abstract of what Ram Rajya is:

बरनाश्रम निज निज धरम निरत बेद पथ लोग।
चलहिं सदा पावहिं सुखहिं नहिं भय सोक न रोग॥20॥

When everyone lives according to the Dharma of their Varna and Ashram Or when everyone does what they are supposed to do in their work and as per their stage in life as defined in the Vedas. When there is no fear, no sorrows, and no diseases – it is the essence of Ram Rajya.

How beautifully it sums up what we need to have a state that is perfect & to be honest how simple it sounds to achieve. Just do what you are supposed to do to the best of your abilities or as prescribed. Think of it, if we all did what we are supposed to do, 99% of the world problems would be gone in an instant.

People & their behavior

Tulsi Das says in Ram Rajya, no one suffers at physically, spiritually and bodily.

Everyone lives in harmony with affection towards each other while performing their own duties as described in the scriptures. For our times, we can take it as per the law and ethically.

All the four limbs of the Dharma – Truth, Purity, Compassion & Charity are being fulfilled, and no one does a Paap or sin even in their dreams.

Everyone does the Bhakti of Ram and hence earn the right to Moksha or liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Here Ram may not refer to the king of Ayodhya, and it may refer to the Nirguna Ram that Kabir talks about. No one dies young. Everyone has a beautiful body free of diseases. No one is poor, sad or pitiable. No one is a fool or without Shubh Lakshana or auspicious signs.

No one is vain. Everyone is pious and busy doing their Dharma. All men and women are smart and talented. All are knowledgeable and respect those who have knowledge. Everyone is thankful and no one engaged in the deceit of any kind.

Everyone is generous, helpful and respect the learned. All men marry only one woman and women are dedicated to their husbands in their body, mind, and spirit.

The Behavior of the Royal Family

Sri Ram himself performs a million Yagnas, gives Daan to the Brahmans. Sita, despite having skilled Sevaks at her disposal, takes care of her home by herself including the Seva of her mothers-in-law. All brothers stay attentive for anything that they may be required to do. Sri Ram teaches them different strategies for statecraft.

Changed Meanings

In Ram Rajya, Dand (a staff) can only be seen in the hands of Yogis, who use it to rest their hand on it while doing their Tapasya. Jati Bhed (difference in different Jatis or castes) can only be seen in the dictionary of dancers who use it to define the difference between different rhythms & notes. Jeeto (winning) only refers to the winning of hearts as there is no enemy left to be won.

Ecology in around Ayodhya

All the forests are full of flowers and fruits. Lion and elephants live together. All the birds and animals live harmoniously without the known animosity between them, with mutual affection. Birds chirp & different animals live happily without fear.

Mild, cool, fragrant wind blows and bees buzz as they collect honey from the flowers. Vines and trees give you honey, and cows give the milk as soon as you ask for it.

Fields are always full of crops. It looks like Satyuga in Treta Yuga. Satyuga preceded Treta Yuga of Ram, and it was a time when everything worked perfectly. Mountains and hills are mines of precious stones or Manis. All rivers are full of cool, clean and sweet power that is the source of happiness.

Oceans stay within their limits, and they leave their treasures on the shore for humans. All ponds are full of lotus blooms spreading joy in all 10 directions. Moon sends its cool rays to earth, the sun shines only as much as needed, clouds give as much water as asked.

Grandeur of Ayodhya

All the people of Ayodhya city are happy. All the mansions have walls full of precious stones. The city wall has colorful Kangooras or Balustrades. Ayodhya competes with Amaravati of Indra in its grandeur. The Kalash or pots on top of the buildings are competing with the shine of sun and moon.

Jharokhas or windows of the mansions are lit up with Deeps or Oil lamps that have precious stone on them. Thresholds are made of coral, walls of gemstones and golden walls are embedded with emeralds.

Courtyards are made of Sphatik or crystals. Every house has a Chitrashala or paintings on its walls, depicting the Charitra or character of Sri Ram. They are so beautiful that even Sanyasis get lost in them.

Everyone has a garden full of flowers and plants that have perpetual blossom as it blossoms in Basant Ritu or Spring season. You can hear the bumbling of bees as the gentle wind blows.

Even the kids have birds as pets that they play with as they fly. Peacocks, swans, cranes, pigeons park themselves on top of houses and dance when they see their own shadows.

Kids chat with the Parrots and Mainas and talk about Sri Ram. The city has beautiful gates, streets, crossroads, and markets. Markets are full of things at no price.

Cloth merchants, jewelers, traders sit in the market like Kuber – the god of wealth.

Saryu and its Banks

Saryu flows in the North with deep clean water. There are ghats along Saryu and there is not an iota of mud on its banks. At some distance horses and elephants drink its water. All along Saryu are temples surrounded by gardens. Some sanyasis live near the banks of Saryu, who have planted Tulsi all along the banks of the river. The city of Ayodhya looks beautiful even from a distance as it is full of forests, gardens, step wells & ponds. Later have lovely steps leading to the water. They are full of lotus and the birds invite there with their birdsongs. Following dohas capture the essence of Ram Rajya



Source: Image

Following dohas capture the essence of Ram Rajya

दैहिक दैविक भौतिक तापा। राम राज नहिं काहुहि ब्यापा
सब नर करहिं परस्पर प्रीती। चलहिं स्वधर्म निरत श्रुति नीती

भावार्थ:- 'रामराज्य' में किसी को दैहिक, दैविक और भौतिक तकलीफ नहीं थी। सब मनुष्य परस्पर प्रेम करते थे और वेदों में बताई हुई नीति (मर्यादा) में तत्पर रहकर अपने-अपने धर्म का पालन करते हैं।

चारिउ चरन धर्म जग माहीं। पूरि रहा सपनेहुँ अघ नाहीं
राम भगति रत नर अरु नारी। सकल परम गति के अधिकारी

भावार्थ:- धर्म अपने चारों चरणों (सत्य, शौच, दया और दान) से जगत् में परिपूर्ण हो रहा है, स्वप्न में भी कहीं पाप नहीं है। पुरुष और स्त्री सभी रामभक्ति के परायण हैं और सभी परम गति (मोक्ष) के अधिकारी हैं।

अल्पमृत्यु नहिं कवनिउ पीरा। सब सुंदर सब बिरुज सरीरा
नहिं दरिद्र कोउ दुखी न दीना। नहिं कोउ अबुध न लच्छन हीना

भावार्थ:- छोटी अवस्था में मृत्यु नहीं होती, न किसी को कोई पीड़ा होती है। सभी के शरीर सुंदर और निरोग हैं। न कोई दरिद्र है, न दुःखी है और न दीन ही है। न कोई मूर्ख है और न शुभ लक्षणों से हीन ही है।

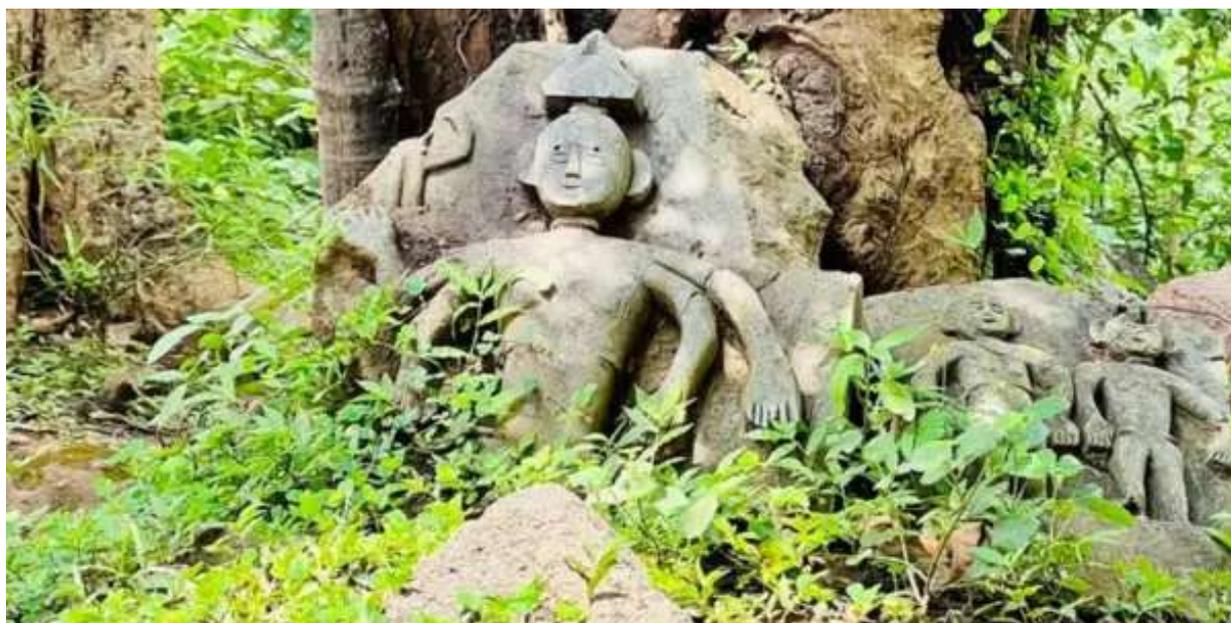
(Source: <https://www.anuradhagoyal.com/what-is-ram-rajya-ramcharitmanas-tulsidas/>)



3) Ram's bell of justice

*Devanura Mahadeva*²

'Evaluation of Gods and A Muslim Deity named Dr. Khan' is a small, heartwarming piece of writing by Panju Gangolli that has completely captured me. In hundreds of tribal communities across Bastar district in Chattisgarh, there is a religiosity that transcends the boundaries of caste and religion and a consciousness that evaluates Gods – a finding that has struck me like a revelation that can light up our world.



[Source: Image](#)

'Evaluation of Gods and A Muslim Deity named Dr. Khan' is a small, heartwarming piece of writing by Panju Gangolli that has completely captured me. In hundreds of tribal communities across Bastar district in Chattisgarh, there is a religiosity that transcends the boundaries of caste and religion and a consciousness that evaluates Gods – a finding that has struck me like a revelation that can light up our world.

The story goes like this: Bangaramdevi is a prominent God among the Bastar district's various tribal communities. Once a year, a festival named 'Bhado Jatra' is conducted here. On that day, tribal communities from over 240 villages carry their Gods along and place them under Bangaramdevi's feet. In the presence of Bangaramdevi, the priests examine these Gods.

Those Gods who did not address and solve the problems of their devotees over the previous year are stripped off of their divinity. Without divine power, they are mere figurines made of wood and stone which are then banished to the backyard of Bangaramdevi's temple and end up in a heap in some corner. Then they continue to shrivel up under the sun, bearing the brunt of rain and cold alike, and can often be found stuck in some bushes or leaning against the roots of an old tree.

There's another interesting thing to note here: on the top of Bastar's Keshkal hill, there's a small temple where a terracotta stage can be found. On this stage, a black wooden piece shaped like a Shivalinga has been installed. An earthen lamp is lit next to it.

The temple doors are opened during the 'Surdongar' fair and thousands of people from nearby tribes come to seek the darshana of God. There is also a belief that even other Gods visit this God. The name of this deity is Dr.Khan.

Around 200 years ago, when Bastar was afflicted with diseases like Cholera and Smallpox, a Muslim man named Dr. Khan arrived here and saved many people from the clutches of death. He stayed behind and continued to serve the people of the region. Following his death, the local tribes elevated him to the status of a God and started worshipping him. All this and more can be found here. In our own land.



[Source: Image](#)

But do we have the consciousness of evaluating our Gods? Let alone the Gods, we don't even evaluate our representatives whom we elected. So, how can we expect our problems to be addressed and solved? Tribal communities which are essentially our earthly ancestors do possess this consciousness of examining the Gods and discarding those they deem useless.

But, we who are the progeny of the same adivasis have turned ourselves into superstitious souls. Since the connection to our Adivasi roots has been severed, we as a populace are no longer vigilant and are unable to preserve the best practices of our ancestors that are still relevant.

We should wake up at least now and evaluate our present parliamentary representatives at the feet of the voters. If that were to ever happen, I believe we would have to throw out at least 90% of the MPs from the Parliament. We need to be alert: the 2024 Lok Sabha elections are just around the corner. We need to cultivate the consciousness of evaluation in the upcoming election.

The health of our democracy, the judiciary, and the sovereignty of our independent organisations, the weakening of the federal structure by the ruling centre, social justice, women's reservation, Swaminathan report, and education, health, unemployment – all these issues need to be evaluated.

We need to open our eyes to look inside the wealth of the capitalists close to the Prime Minister: the wealth which grew multifold even during the precarious period of Covid-19.

Our precious natural resources as well as the toll that is paid by the common people due to inflation and price rise are lining the pockets of these capitalists close to power. Only if this golmaal is stopped, can India be saved.

This is what we have to do next – when the parties and candidates contesting the upcoming election approach us for votes, we need to tell them this: 'We will evaluate your words as well as your actions. We won't tolerate your jumlas(lies) any more'. If we can give such a warning, the nation can move forward, however small those steps may be.

We need to free ourselves from the influence of fraudulent weapons like Sammohanastra (weapon of collective hypnosis), Dweshastra (weapon of hatred), Asahanastra (weapon of intolerance), Bhramastra (weapon of illusion) which are being used by the people in power to lull us into submission so that we are unperturbed by real issues. Only then can we evaluate our representatives properly.

First, we need to identify this veil of illusion. For example, the bugle of Hindutva is being blown systematically. Now, 'Hindutva' is triumphing over 'Hindu'. For example: we use the word 'I'. This is required for identification. But what is this 'I-ness'? This essentializing is an excess used only to dominate others. Similarly words like 'Hindu' and 'Hindusthani' are identifying words. But the Hindutva of the Chaturvarna system? It is a destructive, excess force, similar to the 'I-ness'. It takes us to a place where only 'I, my and mine' remains and nothing else.

But as our puranas, history and epics have shown, where this 'I-ness' crosses a limit, this hubris is consistently destroyed (garvabhanga). When Bhima became hubristic about his strength, he couldn't move Hanuma's tail. Whenever something crosses limits, it will be brought down eventually. This has always been part of India's collective consciousness.

Even the idea of 'Sanatana' is being spread now. Society is becoming rigid by polluting the waters of social harmony. No one is letting it settle. But what is Sanatana, anyway? These are the values which have travelled with us from ancient times to the present. It has both good and flawed values. While the communities of Basthar have relevant values such as the evaluation of Gods they may also have many flawed ones. In such circumstances, anyone saying 'accept my Sanatana Dharma' can only mean accept my flaws as well.

However, we need to inculcate humane and healthier values of Sanatana and relieve ourselves from its flawed ones. For example, compassion, patience, love, coexistence, equal justice, the adage 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you' and more light our paths even today. They are good Sanatana values. Along with them, Chaturvarna system, caste discrimination, intolerance, hatred too are Sanatana values which exist even today.

But, these are the evil values that only light the fire and lead to conflagration. Today, there is a struggle between these good and evil Sanatana values. Those who are busy in this struggle do not have the consciousness to evaluate our representatives. Despite all this, I believe India's collective consciousness possesses the essence to pull us back from the impending doom. What we need is the wisdom of farmers who weed their land for the health of their crops.

Right now, India is celebrating the inauguration of Ayodhya's Rama Mandira. Instead, India should have celebrated Rama's commitment to vachanapalane, honour the promises made. But, this vachanapalane not visible anywhere in Rama's land. In the hinterlands, a few Rama Mandiras have become gambling dens too. The politics rooted in gambling shouldn't have infected Rama Mandira.

It is said that "A Bell of Justice" was hung outside Rama's palace. One day, a horse is found ringing the bell and Rama delivers justice to this hungry horse. India too needs a fair person with eyes, ears, and heart to lead this land, and soon. Let a bell of justice be installed in Ayodhya where all struggling living beings can ring it. But, will the Delhi Darbar listen?



² Translation from the original Kannada: Amulya B

<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/rams-bell-of-justice-lessons-from-tribal-communities-how-to-hold-our-gods-to-account-9151872/>

4) हमारल दुर्भाग्य

कुंवर नारायण

इससे बड़ा क्या हो सकता है
हमारल दुर्भाग्य
एक विवादित स्थल में सिमट कर
रह गया तुम्हारा साम्राज्य

अयोध्या इस समय तुम्हारी अयोध्या नहीं
योद्धाओं की लंका है,
'मानस' तुम्हारा 'चरित' नहीं
चुनाव का डंका है !



('नयी कविता ' आंदोलन के सशक्त हस्ताक्षर और अज्ञेय द्वारा संपादित ' तीसरा सप्तक ' के प्रमुख कवियों में रहे कुंवर नारायण को साल 2005 के लिए भारत के साहित्य जगत के सर्वोच्च सम्मान ' ज्ञानपीठ पुरस्कार ' से सम्मानित किया गया था)



5) When Ravan Triumphs in Ayodhya

Sachin Rao³



[Source: Image](#)

January 22, 2024, was a historic day. It was a very sad day, but a historic day nonetheless.

It was a sad day because along with the idol of the Maryada Purushottam in Ayodhya was also enshrined a new idea of India. An idea that recognises only one native, authentic, and legitimate version of India and views every other culture, belief, religion, and morality as interlopers to be at best tolerated and at worse put in their placed.

As M. S. Golwalkar put it, "...in this country, Hindustan, the Hindu Race with its Hindu Religion, Hindu Culture and Hindu Language, (the natural family of Sanskrit and her off- springs) complete the Nation concept...in Hindustan exists and must needs exist the ancient Hindu nation and naught else but the Hindu Nation. All those not belonging to the national i.e. Hindu Race, Religion, Culture and Language, naturally fall out of the pale of real 'National' life." In this Idea of India, adherents of this one India have first and absolute right over her destiny.

The rest, in M. S. Golwalkar's chilling words, "... (minorities) in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment – not even citizen's rights".

In this idea of India, the majority may use any means they choose to impose their desire upon the rest of us. This bulldozing of multiplicities and the dominance of the majority is regarded not just as legitimate but indeed patriotic, which brings us to the greatest tragedy of all. It is an idea of India, that dwarfs the spiritual universe of its people. It produces petty bullies full of fear, hate, insecurity, and suspicion who find validation in kicking their fellow countrymen in the teeth. The products of this idea of India can be true to neither their religion nor their nation nor indeed to their own full potential as human beings. The temple may have been dedicated to Ram, but it is Ravan who seems to have triumphed in Ayodhya.

Jan 22 was also a historic day. It was historic because this idea of India was celebrated that day not by a marginal group of private individuals or organizations but by the Indian state, its elected leadership and nearly every institution and domain with social power. In fact, it is the few who refused to celebrate the day that found themselves at the margins. It is this collective celebration of the powerful that made the event a consecration of a new idea of India.

The elected government, the Prime Minister, the administrative machinery made the construction of the edifice their personal project. The judiciary legitimized the project with its judgement and most of the media dedicated itself to the breathless celebration and a bevy of celebrities lent their prestige and respectability to the event. Even the armed forces joined the party by showering the venue with flowers. But the ultimate consecration was in the popular imagination, visible in the form of florescent pinkish-orange flags that took over our public spaces. These were not the pennants of fervent devotees. They were instead the standards of conquerors showing the rest of us our place in the new dispensation.



[On the road to Ayodhya](#)

Those of us who disagree with this idea of India have responded to the events in Ayodhya in a variety of ways.

One approach has been to deny that the day was sad at all. It welcomes and celebrates the construction of the edifice in Ayodhya reserving its criticism only for the manner in which the ceremony was conducted. Rather than object to the fact that a riotous mob broke laws, violated human decency and mangled the national fabric to destroy a mosque and make way for the temple, it objects only to who was invited and who presided over the consecration. This is akin to criticizing the décor of a building constructed on stolen land. Would the project have been any more legitimate if it was conducted in strict accordance with scriptures without a BJP leader or flag in sight?

Another view denies that the day was historic at all. It sees the event at Ayodhya as just another in a string unconstitutional acts rather than as the consummation of a long project to establish a new order. It takes refuge in the existence of the Constitution without recognizing that the Constitution itself has been usurped and confined to the pages it is written on.

It holds hope in electoral arithmetic without recognising that a change in government does not necessarily imply a change in the order of things. It tiptoes around the venom that has seized our national consciousness and hopes that a variety of side narratives can somehow dilute the poison. But that is a denial of the challenge that stands before us today.

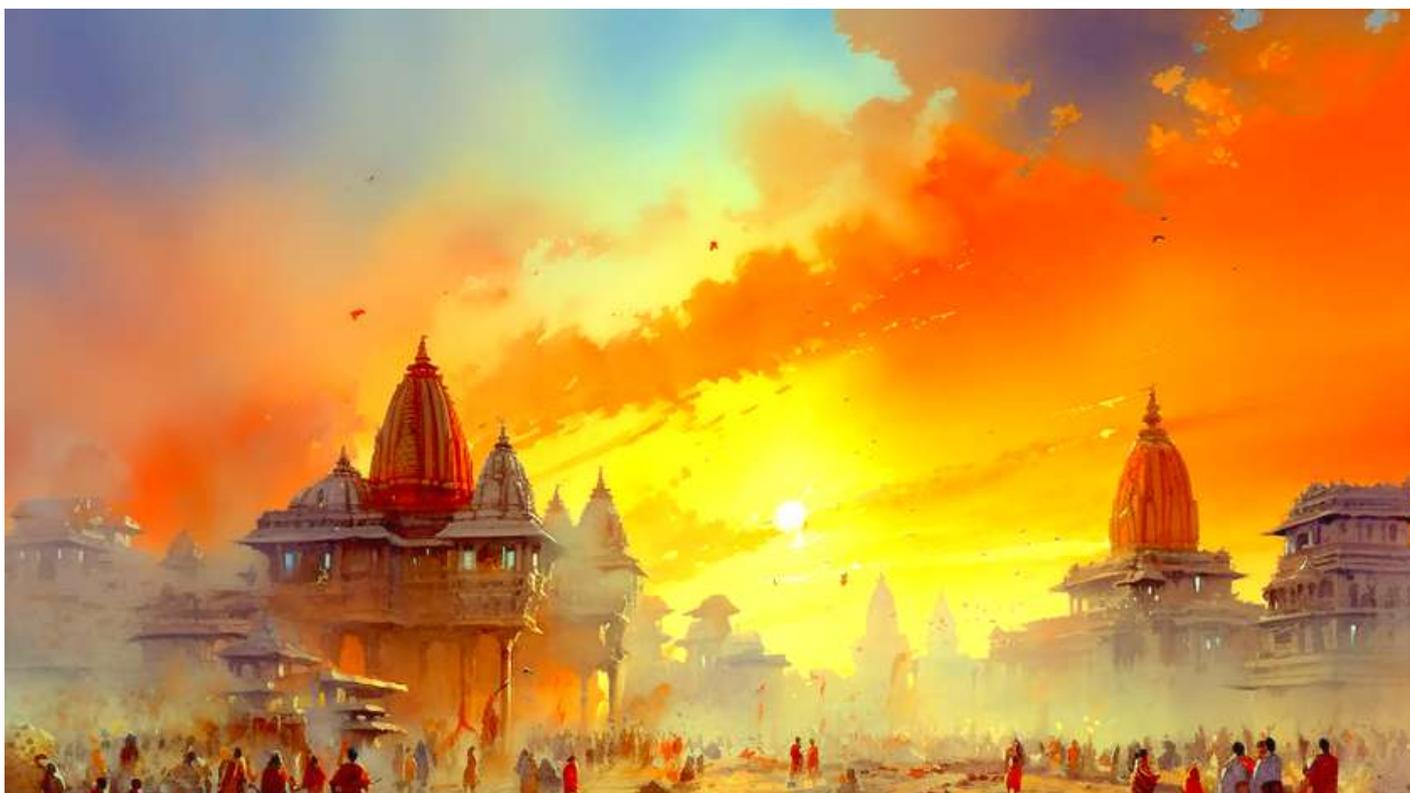
There is a compelling logic for these positions. They come from the desire to preserve an existence in the new political mainstream so that we may survive to fight another day. But they come at the price of accepting and unwillingly legitimizing the new order. A price that I find too much to pay.

I propose another position. It is to call out and stand firm against the madness that has seized the Nation. This position requires us to recognize the human, constitutional, and spiritual tragedy that is the event in Ayodhya.

It requires us to reject the idea that what happened at Ayodhya represents divinity, justice, or patriotism in any form whatsoever. It requires us to reject the cheap counterfeit being peddled in Ayodhya as being Hinduism or the worship of Ram. It requires us to reject the idea that vengeance perpetrated upon our countrymen of today for the sins, real and imagined, of their co-religionists of the past can in any way be called justice. It requires us to reject the idea that what is wrong by any standard of humanity becomes right because a compromised justice system and a bevy of celebrities say it to be so.

This position also requires us to acknowledge that Ayodhya is more than just another event but is in fact the harbinger of a new, sinister idea of our nationhood. It requires us to recognise that the struggle is for something much greater than the outcome of one election, it is a struggle for how India understands itself and its purpose. This is a task that will be long and very often lonely. But most of all it requires us to stand publicly and somewhat outnumbered but without despair, anger or fear for what we believe to be true.

We in this position could indeed find ourselves to be irrelevant to the 'mainstream' of the new order, but in the exile of this irrelevance lies the possibility, no matter how remote, of becoming relevant in a politics of our choosing than in playing the domesticated roles in a politics we do not believe in. We could also be accused of standing against the tide of history. But in that resistance lies the possibility, no matter how remote, of writing a history of our own. Jai Jagat.

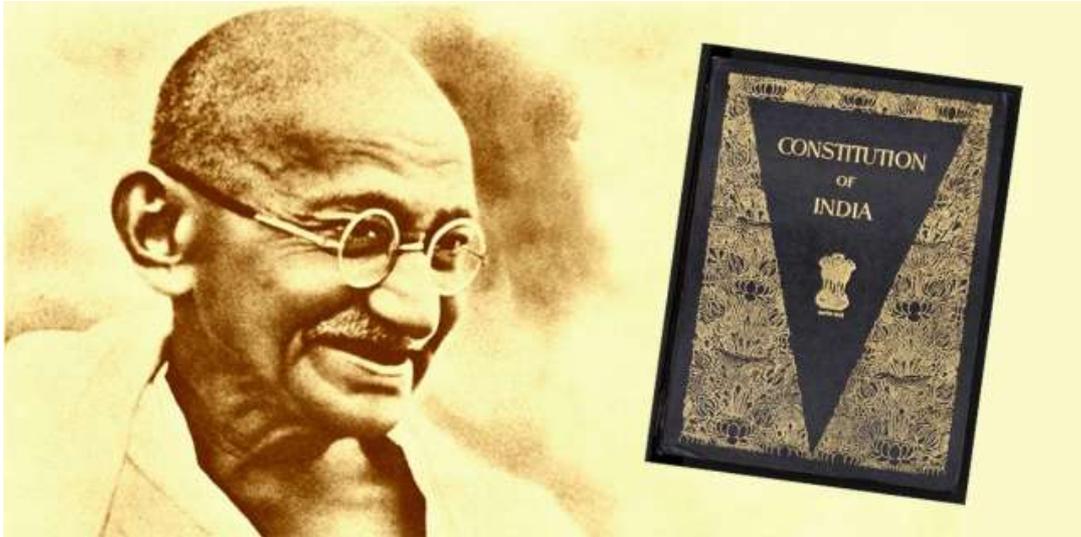


[Source: Image](#)

³ Sachin Rao is a Congress Worker.

6) Gandhian Constitution for Free India

Shriman Narayan, 1946



[Source: Image](#)

REMARKS

The *Gandhian Constitution of Free India* was published in 1946. Unlike what the title suggests, M.K. Gandhi did not write the document. Shriman Narayan Agarwal, a Gandhian economist, drafted it based on Gandhi's ideas. Gandhi wrote a foreword to the document in which he said that the constitution was “*based on his [Agarwal's] study of my writings*” and is not “*inconsistent with what I would like to stand for.*”

In his introductory remarks, Agarwal said that any constitution that is drawn up for India must ideally be based on an indigenous constitutional tradition – a tradition which he believed existed in ancient times. A study of India's ‘*past constitutional developments*’, Agarwal argued, reveals experimentation ‘*with monarchy, autocracy, democracy, republicanism and even anarchy*’. Agarwal felt it was inappropriate and even an ‘*insult*’ to ‘*merely manufacture for her [India] a mixture of Western constitutions*’.

The *Gandhian Constitution* was a 60-page document divided into 22 chapters that included ‘*Basic Principles*’, ‘*Fundamental Rights and Duties*’, ‘*Provincial Government*’, ‘*Central Government*’, and the ‘*Judiciary*’. It was mostly descriptive and explanatory, though some parts are written in a legalistic style in the form of draft clauses.

The *document* contained a number of noteworthy features. It strongly advocated for a decentralised political and administrative setup with village panchayats as the core units. These units aggregate to form upper levels of government.

Village panchayats were given extensive powers that included judicial functions as well. Fundamental duties were conjoined with fundamental rights; the document explicitly states that rights are contingent on the performance of duties. Ironically, the *Gandhian Constitution* contained a provision for a ‘*right to bear arms*’.

Niraja Jayal, in [Citizenship and its Discontents](#), views the *Gandhian Constitution* as one of the efforts of Indians to put forward ‘*alternative constitutional imaginings*’. It is not clear how the Gandhian Constitution was received when it was published and its impact on the intellectual ambience.

However, we do know that inside the Constituent Assembly, that began drafting the Indian Constitution towards the end of 1946, there was significant discussion around Gandhian ideas.

During the constitution-making process, there were members of the Assembly who pushed for Gandhian ideas to be incorporated into the Constitution of India – especially the system of Panchayati Raj. These proposals, however, were opposed by other members notably B.R. Ambedkar. Ultimately, the Constituent Assembly rejected the idea of Panchayati Raj based administration as it would lead to reworking the form and structure of the Draft Constitution. Nonetheless, a provision (Article 40) for Panchayati Raj was placed in the non-justiciable Directive principles of State Policy along with other Gandhian inspired provisions on alcohol prohibition (Article 47) and cottage industries (Article 43).

After the Constitution was enacted in 1950, the *Gandhian Constitution* was often cited in scholarly works that dealt with alternative conceptions of democracy, decentralisation and Gandhian thought. G.G. Mirchandani in [Subverting the Constitution](#) argues that around 1971 the *Gandhian Constitution* was revived by the [Servants of the People](#), a social service organisation founded by Lala Lajpat Rai in 1921, and influenced a document that the organisation produced titled '*Place of Duty in our lives and the constitution of India*'. Incidentally, the President of the organisation when this document was produced was Biswanath Das who had been a member of the Constituent Assembly.

6.1 Foreword by MK Gandhi

Perhaps the expression “Gandhian Constitution” is not a fitting title for Principal Agarwal’s pages. It may be acceptable as a convenient and compact title. The framework is really Principal Agarwal’s, based on his study of my writings. He has been interpreting them for a number of years. And as he is anxious not to misinterpret them in any way he would publish nothing without my seeing it. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is obvious.

The disadvantage lies in the reader mistaking the particular writing being my view in every detail. Let me then warn him against making any such mistake. If I were to commit myself to every word appearing in these pages, I might as well write the thing myself. Though I have endeavoured to read the constitution twice, with as much attention as I was able to bestow on it daring my other engagements, I could not undertake to check every thought and every word of it. Nor would my sense of propriety and individual freedom permit me to commit any such atrocity. All therefore I am able to say is that the brochure contains ample evidence of the care bestowed upon it by the author to make it as accurate as he could. There is nothing in it which has jarred on me as inconsistent with what I would like to stand for.



Source: [Image](#)

The author was good enough to make such alterations as I thought were necessary.

The word “constitution” must not mislead the reader into thinking that the author has made any profession to give him a complete constitution, He has made it perfectly clear in the beginning pages that he has only laid down broad lines to indicate what a constitution of my conception would be. I regard Principal Agarwal's to be a thoughtful contribution to the many attempts at presenting India with constitutions. The merit of his attempt consists in the fact that he has done what for want of time I have failed to do.

On the train to Calcutta,
M.K. Gandhi
30th November, 1945.

6.2 Part One - Chapter I - Introductory

The United Nations have, undoubtedly, won the ‘Total War’; they have brought Germany and Japan to their knees through ‘unconditional surrender’. But whether the Allies have won ‘Total Peace’ is still to be proved and demonstrated. The shameless burial of the Atlantic Charter even during the war, the setting up another League of Nations under a different ‘sign-board’, and the Potsdam Declaration before which Treaty of Versailles pales into insignificance, are not hopeful portents. As Wendell Willkie remarks, ‘nothing of importance can be won in peace, which has not already been won in war’. [1] The crucial test of the sincerity of the United Nations is India. “Britain,” observes Pearl Buck “is a democracy fighting for its Empire”. [2]

Nothing could be more complex than this phenomenon in human history, because democracy and imperialism are essentially incompatible. But Britain has been practicing such double faced morality all the time, and it is idle to expect that she would ‘Quit India’ with good grace. Be that as it may, I have no manner of doubt that India will win her political freedom before long, despite Britain's desire ‘to hold her own.’

In his ‘Shape of Things to Come,’ H.G. Wells visualises that the British grip on India will relax to nothing after ‘a brief convulsive phase of firmness’. I earnestly believe that this convulsive phase which has been so conspicuous during the last three years is now at the fag end and that the present gloom and darkness will soon yield to the glorious dawn of Independence. Without freedom to a big and ancient Asiatic country like India, world peace is a sheer impossibility. A Slave India will be an ever growing menace to international harmony and goodwill. The world therefore cannot afford to deny her ‘the freedom to be free’. [3]

The question naturally arises: ‘What kind of Constitution shall Free India have?’ Shall we imitate some of the western constitutions like those of Switzerland, the United States or Russia? Or shall we try to evolve a Swadeshi Constitution based on our national genius, culture and traditions? To my mind, this question is of supreme importance; it must be answered here and now instead of being postponed to a future date when political power actually devolves on us.

India is a very ancient land. A study of her past constitutional development would indicate that she had enjoyed almost all the possible varieties of political organisation many years before Christ. At a time when Europe and the New World had not even come within the pale of civilisation, India had experimented with monarchy, autocracy, democracy, republicanism and even anarchy.

In his ‘Hindu Polity’, K.P. Jayaswal tells us of the Bhaujya Swarajya, VairajyaRashtrika, Dvairajya and Arajaka constitutions in ancient India. Some of these types have, perhaps, not been tried in other countries at all. India, therefore, may be regarded as an ancient laboratory of constitutional development. To manufacture for her a mixture of Western Constitutions, which are yet in the melting pot, will be not only a great insult to India but will also betray gross ignorance of sociological science. For, constitutions are always in the nature of organic growth; it is most unscientific to foist on a country a system of administration foreign to its own genius.

Administrative systems cannot and should not be transplanted. In the words of Sir John Marriott, 'constitutions are not exportable commodities.'^[4] Each nation has its unique culture and civilisation which may be called its 'Soul'. This uniqueness must be evolved and preserved in all phases of national life. Virile and natural diversity is life; dull and imitative uniformity is death.

Let me not be misunderstood. I do not mean to suggest that we should be blind to the experiences of other nations and develop a kind of narrow nationalism. Far from it. But it is high time for us to realise that our sense of 'inferiority complex' must go, and instead of always looking to the West, we should cultivate the habit of looking within. We have aped the West for long; let us now be proud of our Indian culture and institutions in the right spirit.



[Source: Image](#)

I go a step further. The type of decentralised democracy that India had carefully evolved and maintained for centuries in the form of Village Republics was not a relic and survival of tribal communism; it was a product of mature thought and serious experimentation. The kind of local self-government that our country had developed in her numberless Village Communities stood the test of centuries of political storms and is still capable of being organised into an ideal form of democratic administration. I do not suggest that the old system of local administration should be re-introduced exactly in the ancient form. Several modifications will have to be incorporated to suit modern conditions of civic life.

Let us cast a glance at the history of constitution making in India during the twentieth century. I need not mention the constitutional reforms introduced by the British Government in 1909, 1919 and 1935. In spite of the definite opinion of British constitution makers that constitutions cannot be imported, these Reforms were unhesitatingly exported from England to India.

They bore no relation to the spirit of renaissance in this country. Mahatma Gandhi was the first leader who directed his attention towards the evolution of an indigenous culture and civilisation. His Hind Swaraj that was written in 1908 contained the basic ideals on which the future Constitution of India should be based.

We, then, come across the Congress-League Scheme of 1916. Although it incorporated no special principles and was in line with the British Parliamentary system, the Joint Scheme was an earnest attempt to frame a satisfactory Constitution acceptable to both the Hindus and the Muslims.

An 'Outline Scheme of Swaraj' was prepared by Deshbandhu C.R. Das and Dr. Bhagavandas after the Gaya Congress in 1922. But Dr. Annie Besant accomplished real pioneering work by placing before the country, in consultation with many prominent Indian leaders, 'The Commonwealth of India Bill' in 1924-25. Although Dr. Besant wanted India to remain within the British Empire as a Self-governing Dominion, she upheld the ideal of the ancient village panchayat system as the basis of our future Constitution.

Later, in 1928, was published the report of the All Parties Conference, popularly known as the Nehru Report.



[Source: Image](#)

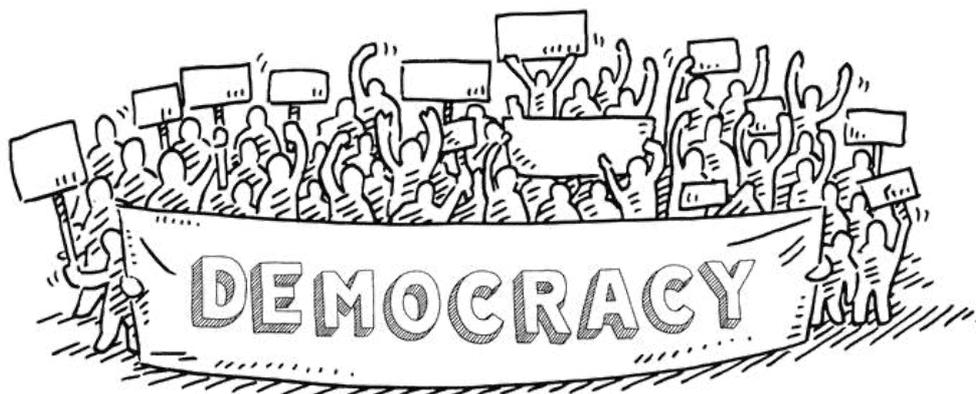
The new constitution of the Aundh State which was framed in 1939 under the guidance of Gandhiji was another landmark in the history of constitutional development. It established Panchayat Raj in the State on completely democratic lines.

The latest effort in constitution-making is the well-known report of the Conciliation Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru.

It is desirable, however, to frame a Constitution with the background of Indian traditions. Unfortunately, most of our leaders have not cared to study the ancient Indian institutions. Gandhiji along has been laying stress on this aspect of national reconstruction. I, therefore, consulted him regarding the advisability of drawing up a Swadeshi constitution for Swaraj. He fully appreciated the need for such a constitution and kindly agreed to give me the necessary guidance.

I decided to call the constitution the 'Gandhian Constitution' because Gandhiji more than anybody else, symbolises and upholds Indian culture and traditions. Moreover, I have discussed with him almost all the details of the Constitution and every attempt has been made to represent his views correctly. I cannot, however, hold Gandhiji responsible for every word or thought. The ultimate responsibility is entirely mine.

The brochure does not pretend to be an exhaustive Constitution which could be introduced in our country all at once. It only lays down the fundamental aims and ideals which ought to be incorporated in the future Constitution of Independent India. The idea of 'decentralized democracy,' I must emphasise, is not at all Utopian; it is essentially practical and feasible. After the general elections, the Constituent Assembly will be confronted with the difficult problem of drawing up a suitable constitution. If, at this juncture, this treatise succeeds in provoking thought among our leaders and people regarding the need for framing a Constitution based on indigenous traditions, my labour will have been amply rewarded.



6.3 Chapter II - Basic Principles

I have not the slightest intention of writing out an exhaustive thesis on the principles underlying an ideal political organization. It is, however, necessary to analyse a few principles on which a stable political structure ought to be built up. Without a brief elucidation of such fundamental ideas, the framing of any Constitution would be a futile and meaningless task.

The first point which needs to be clearly understood is that there is nothing like 'the best constitution' for all countries and for all times. Forms of government must be shaped according to past traditions and present circumstances. 'That constitution is best which at any given moment, in any particular country, most effectively contributes to the end for which all governments exist.'^[5]

Aristotle was, perhaps, the first thinker to emphasise this standpoint. The state existed to enable the individual to realise the highest life of which he is capable, and 'those may be expected to lead the best life who are governed in the best manner of which their circumstances admit.'^[6] We must, therefore, judge the state not by some standard of values peculiar to and distinctive of the state, but by 'the standard of the quality of the lives lived by its citizens'.^[7] While the ends of various types of states may be fundamentally identical, their forms are bound to be dissimilar in accordance with local environments.

The End of the State

But what is the End of the State? This question is, indeed, pivot on which political thought has been continuously revolving from ancient times to this day. To the Greeks, 'the State was the supreme fact of life, and the efforts and actions of individuals had to flow into it just as a river flows into the sea.'^[8] To the Athenians, citizenship was the highest glory.

For them, 'the theory of the city was at once ethics, sociology and economics, as well as politics.'^[9] The city was 'a life in common', and consequently the fundamental thought in all Greek political theory was 'the harmony of this common life'. Plato regarded the state as a macrocosm in which the individual could find his proper place and perform the duties for which he was best fitted. Aristotle believed that the purpose of the State was mainly ethical; it was 'a community of equals, aiming at the best life possible.'

The Romans did not speculate much on the end of the State; most of their energies were absorbed in the expansion of the Roman Empire. During the Middle Ages, the ecclesiastical writers generally regarded the State as an instrument in the hands of God for the defence of Christianity.



[Source: Image](#)

According to Hobbes, the purpose of the State was to maintain order and protect the right of property. To Locke, the end of Government was the preservation of 'lives, liberties and estates.' Rousseau regarded the state as a 'Social Contract' to fulfil the 'General Will.'

Hegel revived the Greek theory that the State was the greatest reality. "The existence of the State," wrote Hegel "is the movement of God in the world." "It is the absolute power on earth; it is its own end and object.' Bentham maintained that the State existed to secure 'the greatest good of the greatest number. To Herbert Spencer, the State was 'a joint-stock protection company for mutual assurance.' John Stuart Mill passionately advocated the liberty of the individual as the sacred duty of the State.

Marx expected the State to 'wither away' after establishing a 'classless society.' In our own times, Prof. Laski regards the State as a fellowship of men aiming at the enrichment of the common life.'[10] To Bernard Shaw, the aim of a State ought to be the greatest available welfare for the whole population and not for a class.' Wells pleads for establishment of a World State, in which the freedom, health and happiness of every individual are protected by a universal law based on a re-statement of the rights of man.'[11]

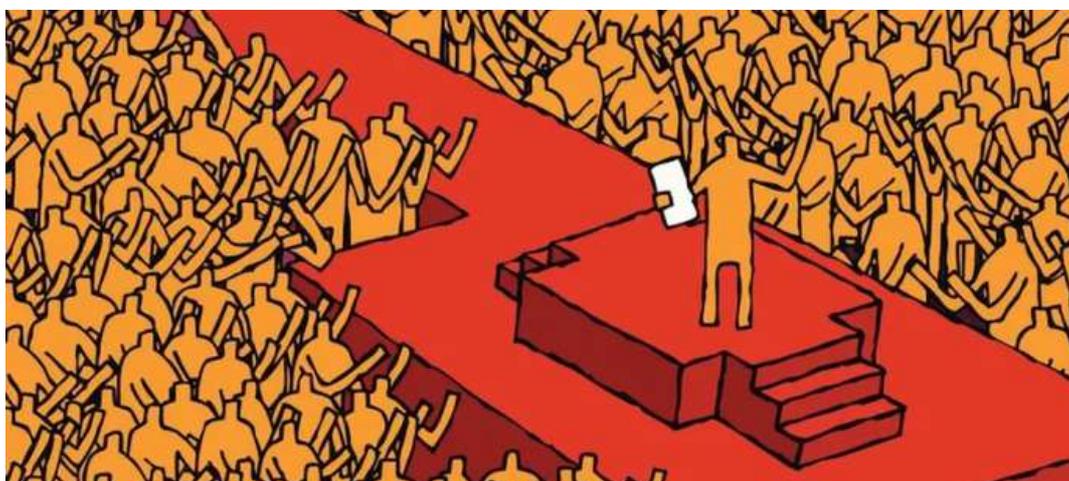
Indian political thought is contained mainly in the two epic Ramayana and Mahabharata, the Manusmriti, Kautilya's Artha-Sastra, and Shukracharya's Nitisara. The Ramayana describes the ideal kingdom of Rama in which people were happy, peaceful and prosperous.

In Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata, Bhishma enumerates the duties of a Kingdom, the chief end of the State being the 'protection' of the citizens so that they may lead a happy, righteous and harmonious life, following their respective Dharmas or duties. Kautilya also emphasises the basic principle that the happiness and welfare of the people are primary duties of the King or the State. 'In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness; in their welfare his welfare'. [12]

In Shukraniti, the King is primarily 'the protector and benefactor' of his subjects; he has to discipline the lives of the citizens in such a manner that each follows his own vocation according to his Dharma without encroaching upon the spheres of others.

State vs. Totalitarian Man

If we carefully study and analyse all these European and Indian political theories regarding the end and function of the State, we shall discern two distinct streams of thought. One set of thinkers attach importance to the State, and subordinate the freedom of the individual to the power of the State. They glorify and deify the State at the cost of the individual. To them the end of the State is the discipline of its citizens by making them mere cogs of a powerful political machine. This stream of thought leads to dictatorship, autocracy or totalitarianism.



[Source: Image](#)

The other set of political thinkers regard Man as 'the measure of all things'. To them, the freedom and development of the individual is of supreme moment. The function of the State, according to them, is to safeguard the rights of the individual. They respect Man as an end and not as a means.

Count Coudenhove Kalergi, in his 'Totalitarian State against Man' classifies these two schools of political thought as 'the Spartan ideal of totalitarian State' and 'the Athenian ideal of totalitarian Man'. In Sparta, Man lived for the sake of the state; in Athens, State lived for the sake of Man. These two political ideologies have also been described as Collectivism and Individualism. Truth lies in the happy fusion of these two streams.

The end or function of the State ought to be a harmonious adjustment of the interests of the individual and the State. To use a different phraseology, our aim should be poise between Liberty and Authority. The State should facilitate, promote and strengthen mutual accommodation of individual and group welfare.

The individual should perform his duty towards the State and the State should safeguard the rights of the individual and enable him to develop his personality to the fullest possible extent. Prof. Tawney expresses the same idea in terms of the 'Functional Society,' that is, a society in which rights are contingent on functions or social service. [13] In other words, individual rights and freedom ought to be relative and conditional; they cannot be supreme and absolute.

"Individual liberty," writes Mr. A.G. Gardiner, "would mean social anarchy". "In order that the liberties of all may be preserved, the liberties of everybody must be curtailed." In matters which are entirely personal and which do not touch anybody else's liberty, we are free to do as we like. Says Mr. Gardiner: "If I choose to go down the Strand in a dressing gown, with long hair and bare feet, who shall say me nay? You have liberty to laugh at me, but I have liberty to be indifferent to you. And if I have a fancy for dyeing my hair or waxing my moustache (which heaven forbid), or wearing a tall hat, a frock-coat and sandals, or going to bed late or getting up early, I shall follow my fancy and ask no man's permission." [14] But the moment we step out of the kingdom, our personal liberty of action becomes qualified by other people's liberty. There are a lot of people in the world, and we have to accommodate our liberty to their liberties.

The doctrine of laissez-faire or absolute individualism is now dead as Dodo. It can never hold the field again. The modern tendency, however, to sacrifice the personality of the individual at the altar of the State is most reprehensible. The formula laid down by Kant is, indeed, very true: "So act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end, and never merely as a means." It is for example, a sin against humanity to exploit and suppress the individual for militarist organization of the State. Such regimentation inevitably leads to dictatorships which, to adapt to a Shakespearian phrase, are twice cursed; they curse both the ruler and the ruled.

The all-powerful State reduces the individuals to mere ciphers. Moreover, such totalitarian states, whether Fascist or Socialist, are ultimately controlled by one or a few 'Supermen' who rule over the destinies of millions. But man, in order to survive must get rid of such Supermen, however noble and high-intentioned they may be. 'There is no hope for civilisation in Government by idolised single individuals'. [15] The spectacular rise and fall of Hitler and Mussolini are glowing proof of the futility of arrogant dictatorships. Whether Hitler is dead or still alive, the fact remains that he has been reduced to a myth and a fable.



[Source: Image](#)

Russian Democracy



[Source: Image](#)

Russia has evolved another type of government that is generally termed as 'the dictatorship of the proletariat.' The end of the Marxian State is a classless and democratic society. But such a society is sought to be achieved through the ruthless regimentation of the masses with the hope that ultimately the State would disappear. But as Prof. Aldous Huxley remarks, "such a highly centralised dictatorial State may be smashed by war or overturned by revolution from below; there is not the smallest reason to suppose that it will 'wither away'".[16] John Gunther fears: "Russia may become a dictatorship not of but over the proletariat".[17] Prof, Joad in his 'Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics,' observes:

"The study of history suggests that dictatorships from their very nature become, as they grow older, not less, but more extreme; not less but more sensitive to and impatient of criticism. Developments in the contemporary world support this view. Yet the theory of communism postulates precisely the reverse of what history teaches, and maintains that at a given moment a dictatorial government will be willing to reverse the engines, to relinquish power, and, having denied liberty, to concede it. Neither history nor psychology affords any warrant for this conclusion." Prof. Ginsberg, in his 'Psychology of Society,' points out how 'any centralised form of government is bound to be oligarchic in tendency.' Acharya Vinoba Bhave holds the same view because centralisation, whether capitalist or socialist, involves violence, suppression and militarism.[18]

Case for Democracy

The only alternatives, therefore, before the world is democracy. It stands, or, at any rate, ought to stand for the unfolding of human personality within a properly organised government. While it grants freedom to individuals, it constantly reminds them that along with the exercise of their legitimate rights they have also to discharge certain duties towards the State or Society. Lincoln defined Democracy as 'government of the people, by the people, for the people.' Although this Gettysburg motto has been reduced to a hackneyed phrase, it is much more significant than what we usually believe. As Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt points out, the basis of democracy is moral and religious; it implies brotherhood and deep regard for one another so that "our own success, to be real, must contribute to the success of others".[19]

Plato did not favour a Democratic Constitution because it tended to be controlled by a class of 'idle and dissolute men'. [20] That is why he preferred 'the enlightened despotism of the philosopher king' to democracy. Rousseau held that perfect democracy was not for Man. 'Were there a people of gods, their government would be democratic'. [21] De Tocqueville concluded that democracy led to a dead level of mediocrity.

Sir Henry Maine was afraid that popular government would 'inaugurate an era of stagnation.' Lacky regarded democracy as too meddlesome and antithetical to liberty. Bismarck scoffed at democracy as 'blubbing sentimentality.' The well-known French writer, Faquet, described democracy as 'the cult of incompetence.' To Nietzsche, democracy was 'a degenerating form of political organisation.' Voltaire was against democracy because he compared the people to oxen 'which need a yoke, a goad and hay'. In our own times, Bernard Shaw regards Lincoln's definition of democracy as 'romantic nonsense.' "The people", writes Shaw, "have obstructed government often enough; they have revolted; but they have never really governed." [22]

Yet the truth remains that democracy is the only type of government which can harmonise the interests of the individual and the State. Although, as I said in the beginning, it is not possible to lay down any one type of Constitution as 'the best' for all countries and for all times, it must be conceded that democracy alone provides the best milieu or environment for the promotion of 'good life.'

"The admission on equal terms of the largest possible number of members of a community to share in its government on equal terms best promotes the satisfaction of all the members as individuals, and also the welfare of the community as a whole," observes Lord Bryce. [23] Moreover, as Prof. Lennard remarks, "democracy is more than a form of government; it is a social ideal, and the difficulty of the ideal is commensurate with its nobility." [24]

Democracy is of immense value because it respects Man. "The magic of political democracy", says Mrs. Webb, "lies in its enlargement of human personality". [25] From the standpoint of national morality, points out John Stuart Mill, "the supreme merit of democracy lies in the fact that it promotes a better and higher form of national character than any other polity whatever". From the educational point of view, democracy is to be preferred because, as Prof. Burns declares, 'the best education is self-education'. Democracy taps the sources of political talent that lie beyond the purview of other systems of government.

It must be admitted, however, that democracy, like many other good things of life, covers a multitude of sins. It is, at present, plagued with numerous evils and shortcomings. Democracy is, veritably, on trial; it is at the cross-roads. Let us examine in greater details the implications of this crisis in democracy.

6.4 Chapter III Democracy at the Crossroads



[Source: Image](#)

The First World War was fought to make the world safe for Democracy and to end War for all time. But the Post-war World was sadly disillusioned. Instead of establishing peace, the Treaty of Versailles laid the foundation of a deadlier second war. Instead of establishing peace, the Treaty of Versailles laid the foundation of a deadlier second War.

Instead of making the world safe for Democracy, the Post-war World was faced with the problem of making the world safe from democracy. The violent attempts to usher in a democratic era gave birth to the totalitarian regimes in Europe. To fight these Dictatorships, the democratic governments, consciously or unconsciously, banished democracy from their own lands. In terms of the Atlantic Charter the second World War was fought 'to respect the rights of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live.'

But, thanks to the brutal frankness of the United Nations, the Charter was safely sunk in the Atlantic Ocean even during the course of the War so that there might be no cause for disillusionment later. A big 'V' for Victory was, therefore, the only real aim of the recent War.

The proceedings of the San Francisco Conference have also proved beyond any shadow of doubt that the sole ambition of the 'Big Three' is to be the 'top-dogs' for all time. Of course, they are ever ready to pay lip-services to freedom and democracy and humour and the 'under dogs' by drawing fine distinctions between 'self-government' and 'independence'.

It is true that the fascist governments of Italy, Germany and Japan have been brought to their knees. But the spirit of Fascism seems to be triumphant more than ever before. "Victory," remarks Prof. Laski, "is in itself an opportunity and not a fulfilment". "It gives democracy another chance; it is not in itself an assurance that the chance will be taken".[26]

"There are no democracies in the West," remarks Bernard Shaw, "They are only rank plutocracies, all of them now fascist to the finger-tips". These remarks apply almost with equal force to the present Labour Government in Britain because Imperialism and Democracy cannot go together. The only difference is that in place of Churchillian Fascism there will now be the 'Dictatorship of Labour'.

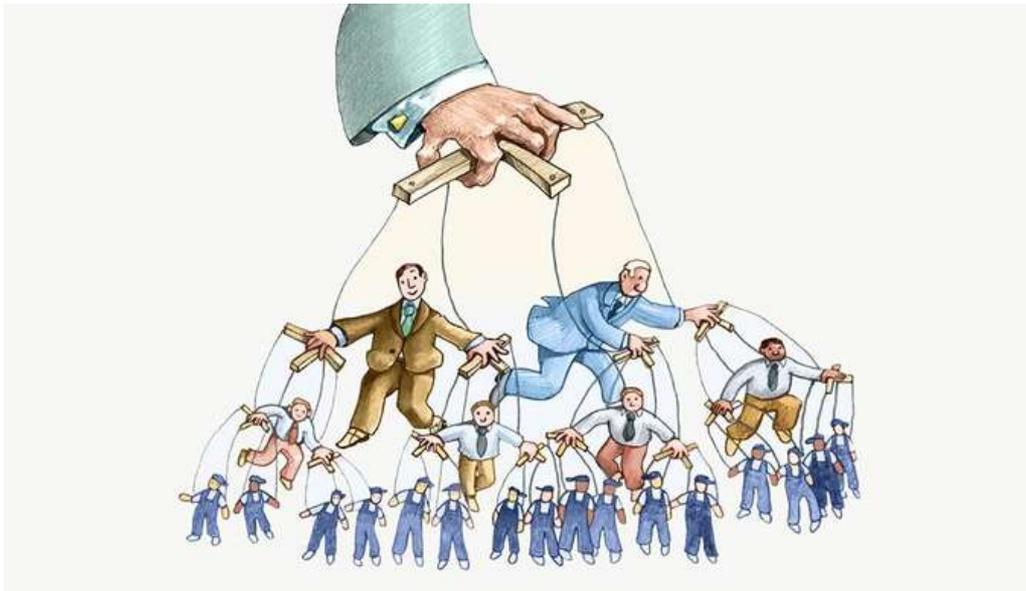
The United States, being younger and wiser, does not care for a 'Visible Empire'. But their Invisible Empire is sure to spread its tentacles and that too, in the name of the 'Four Freedoms.' The U.S.S.R. is the shrewdest of the lot and is out to stride the world like a Colossus for making it 'safe for Socialism'. Thus, the prospects of Democracy even after the Second War are very dark and bleak. And if the United Nations prefer to become Disunited Nations after a few years, the world will be really doomed to complete destruction. The 'Daily Herald', influential organ of Britain's ruling Labour Party has warned bluntly that "the world is heading with its eyes open, for another war." "At this rate," observes the paper, "we shall soon be mourning Hitler as the sole architect of Allied Unity".

Capitalist Democracy

The causes of crisis in Western Democracy are not far to seek. To use Prof Tawney's phrase, it is the present 'acquisitive society' which is the root cause of our economic and political malaise. Capitalism can afford to be liberal and suave and sweet so long as its pockets are not touched.

It offers social reforms and political freedom to the masses but upon the tacit understanding that the political power shall not be utilised to cut at the very root of the capitalist system. As soon as its very existence is jeopardised, Capitalism at once throws off the velvet glove that conceals the iron fist.

The privileged classes continue to pay the pipers so long as they agree to call their tunes. But they do not hesitate to employ the forces of leonine violence to preserve their past glory and present luxuries. For, what is Fascism after all?



[Source: Image](#)

Prof. Laski defines Fascism as 'the epitaph upon those forces of privilege which seek to imprison the future by defending an obsolete past with violence'. [27] In other words, fascism is Capitalist Democracy turned at bay. There is indeed an inherent contradiction between capitalism and democracy.

In a capitalist society the motive to production is profit for the owner of the instruments of production. In a democracy the citizen seeks, by the use of his political power, to use the authority of the State to increase the material well-being at his disposal.

The union of economic oligarchy and political democracy worked well enough so long as capitalism was in its phase of expansion. But the period of contraction set in after the last War. It resulted in widespread unemployment and gave rise to a curious phenomenon of 'poverty in the midst of Plenty.'

The masses tried to exercise their political power for the amelioration of their material well-being. This was a direct challenge to the economic privileges of the owning class. Hence it led to the birth of fascist dictatorships and totalitarianism. Even the so-called democracies of Britain and Union States are intrinsically fascist. The difference between Britain and Germany was only of degree and not of kind. Where the socialist danger was greater, as in Italy and Germany, Fascism was more aggressive and dictatorial.

In the 'Democracies,' Capitalism was not faced with any serious menace; hence it could afford to remain comparatively calm and tolerant. But real democracy is impossible in a society that remains divided, to use Plato's terminology, into the 'cities of the rich' and 'the cities of the poor'. "So long as the state expresses a society divided into economic classes, it is always the servant of that class which owns or dominates the ownership of the instruments of production" [28]. There can, thus, be no essential change in the character of the present society without a change in its economic postulates.

Otherwise, democracy becomes the handmaid of capitalism. The moneyed class, directly or indirectly, controls the legislatures, the press and publishing houses, educational institutions, and other instruments of propaganda. It exploits democracy to its own ends and ultimately reduces it to plutocracy.

As Lord Bryce observes, 'Democracy has no more persistent or insidious foe than money power.' The enemy is formidable because "he works secretly by persuasion or by deceit, rather than by force and so takes men unawares." [29] From the old days of 'pocket boroughs' to the modern times of 'lobbying' and 'nursing the constituencies,' the mischievous tale of 'capitalist democracy' remains very much the same.

Democracy vs. 'Mobocracy'



[Source: Image](#)

Apart from the unhealthy power of money in modern Democracies, the system of electioneering is very defective and undesirable. The existence of big constituencies makes direct and intimate contact between the voters and the candidates well-nigh impossible. This inevitably leads to 'electioneering campaigns,' the evils of which are only too well known to all of us.

Bernard Shaw in his inimitable style describes such election meetings as 'scandalous and disgusting spectacles at which sane and sober men yell senselessly until any dispassionate stranger looking at them would believe that he was in a lunatic asylum for exceptionally dreadful cases of mental derangement.'

"The older I grow," continues Shaw, "the more I feel such exhibitions to be, as part of the serious business of the government of a nation, entirely intolerable and disgraceful to human nature and civic decency." [30]

The unwieldy constituencies, thus, do not ensure the right choice of the representatives. In place of Democracy, remarks Gandhiji, we see 'Mobocracy.' Decent, capable and silent men, therefore, shun the din and dust of such elections and the unscrupulous and 'thick-skinned' candidates carry the day with their handy weapons of bribery and corruption. Prohibitive expenses entailed in the elections naturally drive democracy into the arms of the capitalists who ultimately rule the roost.

Moreover, the present system of elections in vast constituencies tends to grow too mechanical and hence dull. The voters do not have any direct knowledge of the candidates who are set up by rigid party organisations or 'caucuses.'

The elections have hardly any local interest because there is too much centralisation of legislation and administration. The apathy of the voters in all the democratic countries has, therefore, become proverbial. When an election takes place voters have to be virtually dragged to the 'booths.'

Even in a progressive country like the U.S.A., on an average, less than half the population qualified to vote exercises the privilege. In a system where only 'hands' are counted not 'heads', where votes are only reckoned not weighed, the intelligentsia cannot be expected to display much enthusiasm.

Political 'Caucuses'

The prevalence of well-organised political parties leaves scarcely any scope for independent thought and action. An individual may be the best-qualified candidate, but if he is not a favourite of the 'party bosses' he stands no chance at the elections. Even the party candidates require constant 'whipping' in the legislatures. I do not mean to suggest that the modern Party System does not have merits at all. It is quite useful in educating the electorate on specific issues of national importance. But it must be admitted that modern parties have grown too rigid and crystallised.

In the words of A.R. Lord, "the party system seems to be too mechanical a method of dividing opinion to represent the popular will with any approach to exactness."^[31] "Our present electoral methods" writes H.G. Wells, "is a mere caricature of representative government". "It has produced upon both sides of the Atlantic, big, stupid, and corrupt party machines."^[32] The process of discussions in the legislatures has become wholly unreal, the result of every important debate being almost a foregone conclusion dictated by the ruling party. The so-called representative parliaments are, therefore, fast falling into public contempt as mere 'talking shops.'

Centralisation

The dangers of foreign aggression in a war-obsessed world have resulted in concentration of political power. This excessive centralisation of parliamentary work has reduced democracy to a mirage and a costly show. There is over-congestion of business in legislatures. This congestion leads to inefficiency, undue delays and waste of time and energy. It also nullifies the very basic principle of democracy: "What touches all must be decided by all."

These, in short, are the drawbacks from which modern democracy suffers. Many other shortcomings could be easily enumerated. But it will not be germane to our main purpose. Let it suffice to say that Democracy is really at the Cross-roads. It must survive. But which way shall it go?

6.5 Chapter IV - The Gandhian Way

Various ways in which Democracy could possibly tide over the crisis has been suggested by modern thinkers. Ramsay Muir in his 'Is Democracy a Failure?' advocates the system of Proportional Representation with single transferable vote, because under this system it would be quite impossible for a small minority in the country to obtain a large majority, and the composition of Parliament would reflect the balance of opinion in the country. Proportional representation is also expected to deal a blow to the existence of the party caucuses because it would provide sufficient scope for the election of best talents in a country.

In addition, Muir suggests the 'Committee System' to relieve the heavy rush of work in the Parliament. While his suggestions are quite practical, they touch only the fringe of the problem. Proportional Representation is good, but by itself it is not enough. Nor will the Committee system solve the essential difficulties involved in administrative and legislative centralisation.

Lord Bryce pins hope for democracy on 'the moral and intellectual progress of mankind as a whole'. 'With intelligence, sympathy and the sense of duty, everything would go smoothly.'^[33] But such pious will not succeed in curing all that plague modern democracies. Some constructive and concrete measures will be required to cope with the complexity of the problem. Prof. Laski expects that the ending of the paradox of poverty in the midst of potential plenty by 'the socialisation of vested interests' would make for sound and stable democracy.

But is socialism enough? We have already seen how socialised democracy of the Soviet brand has resulted in totalitarianism and regimentation of the people. Sir Stafford Cripps stresses the necessity of 'devising forms of government which will weld into one composite whole the efficiency of totalitarian control and planning in the economic field with the cultural and political freedom that democracy alone can provide.'^[34]

But this is only a vague suggestion. Edward Benes, President of Czechoslovakia lays down a long list of qualifications for a successful democratic leader. 'He should combine in his personality in a very harmonious synthesis a high type of man of great intellectual culture and scientific erudition with keen intuition and instinct, of spirit, of rapid decision and quick action, and of physical and moral courage.[35] But where shall we find such capable leaders?

As usual, Bernard Shaw has an original suggestion to make. He is of the opinion that adult suffrage kills democracy dead. "I am student of that branch of biology called human nature," writes Shaw in a recent issue of 'Time and Tide.' " A world in which the voice of the people is the voice of God, and the political capacity and sagacity of everybody over the age of 21, infinite and infallible, is to me a fairyland which has never existed and is not postulated in any oracle of mine." Shaw, therefore, suggests that 'Councils of tested qualified persons, subject to the sternest possible public criticism and to periodical removal and replacement, is our safest aim.'[36]

According to him, business of the democrat is to find some test which will detect the born super-legislator and place him or her on a panel from which our legislators must be chosen. Shaw, thus, believes, in what may be called 'Totalitarian Democracy.' With due deference to the 'Super-playwright,' we may ask him: But who shall prescribe the tests for the Superman? Evidently, the super-legislators would discharge this function themselves by posing as 'Saviours' and 'Demigods'. In the last analysis, therefore, Shaw's 'totalitarian democracy' will be all totalitarianism and no democracy.

Which way, then shall democracy go? My answer is: 'It must go the Gandhian Way.' This implies two basic principles: non-violence and decentralisation. Let me explain these principles in some details.

Non-Violence



[Source: Image](#)

According to Mahatma Gandhi, democracy can only be saved through non-violence because 'democracy, so long as it is sustained by violence, cannot provide for or protect the weak'. "My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest. That can never happen through violence." [37] "Western democracy as it functions today," continues Gandhiji, "is diluted Nazism or Fascism". "At best it is merely a cloak to hide the Nazi or fascist tendencies of imperialism". Again: "democracy and violence can ill go together.

The states that are today nominally democratic have either to become frankly totalitarian, or, if they are to become democratic, they must become courageously non-violent". [38] Otherwise, constitutional democracy would remain a distant dream. The capitalist society is exploitation personified, and the essence of all kinds of exploitation is violence. In order to root out exploitation, therefore, a non-violent society or state has to be established. Such a society, of necessity, must be based on economic freedom and equality, because without economic equity there can exist no real political democracy.

How is this economic equality and freedom to be brought about? One way is Soviet communism which, in practice, means 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' or the violent and ruthless suppression of the 'rentier' class. Even the life of the proletariat is regulated rigidly to such an extent that freedom and democracy are, more or less, nullified. The remedy, in other words, becomes worse than the disease itself. As Boris Brutzukus observes, "the Leviathan of Hobbes which absorbs the individuality utterly is represented not by the former monarchist state of the West nor by the democratic state of today: it is represented by the Socialist State." [39]

Max Eastman, once an ardent admirer of Soviet Russia, also felt disillusioned later. "I now think that an armed seizure of power by a highly organized minority party, whether in the name of Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the Glory of Rome, the Supremacy of the Nordics, or any other slogan that may be invented, and no matter how ingeniously integrated with the masses of the population, will formally lead to a totalitarian state. [40] And totalitarian state is merely the modern name for tyranny with up-to-date techniques. Such tyranny, even in the name of the efficiency of the war-machine, inevitably throttles the free and natural development of human personality.

As John Stuart Mill observes, we should not forget that in the long run 'the worth of a state is the worth of the individuals composing it'. "A state which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be mere docile instruments in its hand even for beneficial purposes, will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished" [41]. "Hence the supreme need for evolving democracy on non-violent lines.

Decentralisation

What, then, is the technique of non-violent democracy? It is decentralisation. Violence logically leads to centralisation; the essence of non-violence is decentralisation. Gandhiji has always been advocating such decentralisation of economic and political power in the form of, more or less, self-sufficient and self-governing village communities.

He regards such communities as the models of non-violent organisation. Gandhiji, of course, does not mean that the ancient Indian village republics should be revived exactly in the old form; that is neither possible nor desirable. Necessary changes will have to be introduced in view of modern changed circumstances and needs.

Moreover, the old rural communities were not free from all shortcomings. It, must however, be conceded that these village communes contained within them the germs of an ideal economic and political organisation maximum in the form of decentralisation and local self-government.

Gandhiji, therefore, is of the definite opinion that the future Constitution of India should be based on the organization of well-knit and coordinated village communities with their positive and direct democracy, non-violent cottage economy and human contacts. "That state will be the best," declares Gandhiji, "which is governed the least." [42]

The imperative need for the devolution and decentralisation of political power is not a Gandhian 'fad'; it is being recognized by most of the progressive political thinkers of the West. Although pluralists, guild socialists, syndicalist, and anarchists differ in details, they are at one in pleading for devolution of democracy on functional basis. They are all against a highly centralised administration, both economic and political.

"If men's faith in social action is to be revived," observes Prof. Joad, "the State must be cut up and its functions distributed." "It must be made possible for the individual to belong to a variety of small bodies possessing executive powers, dealing both with production and with local administration. As a member of these, he can once again feel that he counts politically, that his will matters, and that his work is really done for society... It would seem, then, that the machinery of Government must be reduced in scale. It must be made manageable by being made local, so that, in seeing the concrete results of their political labours before them, people can be brought to realise that where self-government is a fact, society is malleable to their wills because society is they.[43]

"Democracy" writes prof. Cole, "is hostile to centralisation, for it is a spirit which wants freedom to manifest itself immediately and on the spot, wherever the need for the expression of a collective will arises." "To canalise it, so as to make it all flow into a single central channel, is to destroy its spontaneity, and to make it unreal.[44] In his 'Fabian Socialism', Prof. Cole further observes, "If we want to diffuse widely among ordinary men and women a capacity for collective activity and an understanding of public affairs we must set out to build our society upon little democracies of workers..."



[Source: Image](#)

According to Prof. Aldous Huxley, "the political road to a better society is the road of decentralisation and responsible self-government".[45]

Centralisation of power results in curtailment of individual liberties and a progressive regimentation of the people even in countries hitherto enjoying a democratic form of government. We are apt to forget that, after all, democracy is made for man and not man for democracy. Democracy is only a means to an end; it must therefore be adapted and adjusted to the social and psychological conveniences of human beings.

Modern Sociology upholds the principles that 'Man is happiest when living in small communities'. [46] If we neglect this 'human factor' and do not create small harmonious groups, points out Roy Glenday, all grandiose schemes for constructing a new world order are destined to founder. "Without group ties a man is like an oyster without its shell," observes Karl Mannheim. To use Prof. Ginsberg's phrase, it is 'the consciousness of kind' which brings together the individuals of a group into ties of fellowship. Such ties of sentiment and loyalty which are essential for the functioning of real democracy are missing in the modern types of centralised democratic governments.

That is why Prof. Adams, after analysing the drawbacks of modern representative States, wants us 'to go to the root of the trouble and pursue a bold policy of devolution, of decentralization.'^[47] Prof. Laski favours decentralisation because 'obedience is rarely creative in a highly centralised state; it becomes mechanical and inert.' "Centralisation makes for uniformity; it lacks the genius of time and place."^[48]

Lewis Mumford, the well-known sociologist, recommends the building up of 'small balanced communities in the open country.' Such small communities enjoying a very large measure of local self-government become the proper training grounds of true and vital democracy. They are an invaluable anti-dote against the bureaucratic spirit and facilitate an informed discussion and appropriate solution of local problems.

"It was in small communities," declares Lord Bryce, "that Democracy first arose: it was from them that the theories of its first literary prophets and apostles were derived: it is in them that the way in which the real will of the people tells upon the working of government can be studied, because most of the questions that come before the people are within their own knowledge."^[49] Elucidating the advantages of local self-government in villages and communes, Dr Beni Prasad states:

"The perfect unit of self-government is a familiar environment in which, as Aristotle would say, people can know one another's character. In villages, townships or communes, autonomy reproduces the advantages of direct democracy, rousing civic patriotism, lifting the individual beyond himself, encouraging habits of cooperation, training the judgment and imparting administrative experience to millions who cannot hope to enter representative assemblies or services at a distance.

Local self-government in towns or districts lightens the burden of central legislatures and administrations. In the big states of the modern world, it has the sovereign merit of preventing the individual from being submerged in huge electorates. These tend to inspire a sort of awe, a sense of individual impotence like that which people feel when they contemplate the majestic and eternal forces of the inanimate world. The resulting fatalism of the multitude is best corrected by local self-government."^[50]

Greek City States

In Europe, the City State of Ancient Greece enjoyed direct local autonomy. The supreme political power was vested in the whole body of citizens. "That body," writes Lord Bryce, "was at once a Parliament and a Government, an Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary in one." As there were day-to-day intimate social contacts between the citizens, there was no need for any organized political parties. Nor were there any whirl-wind election campaigns because the small size of the Greek Republics made it easy to bring within the hearing of one voice a majority of all who were entitled to vote in the Popular Assembly and enabled everybody to form his opinion on the personal qualities of those who aspired to leadership or to office.

The city states were, of necessity, small because corporate life was possible only in such states. Plato's ideal of the best state was that which approaches most nearly to the condition of the individual: if a part of the body suffers the whole body feels the hurt and sympathizes all together with the part affected. This ideal was possible of realisation only if the State was a small harmonious group. For the Greeks, the City was a 'life in common'; its Constitution, as Aristotle said, was a 'mode of life' rather than a legal structure.

I do not suggest that the Greek City States were perfect; they had their own short-comings and blemishes. Who can defend their system of slavery, for example? But, we must admit that, because of their harmonious and peaceful common life, they and especially Athens, developed into the dynamic nurseries of European thought and culture. As Prof. Delisle Burns points out, Athenian life and liberty were productive.

"Indeed, the history of Athens is more concerned with artists, poets, philosophers than has been the history of any other city. No other people have ever produced in so short a time such great achievements in architecture, sculpture, drama and philosophy."^[51]

Indian Rural Republics

Local self-government was practised in many small village communities in different countries in Europe before the Industrial Revolution. A good account of their co-operative life is given by Prince Kropotkin in his "Mutual Aid". China and Japan have also been one of the oldest homes of such decentralised rural organisations. We can, however, be legitimately proud of the fact that this institution of local self-government was 'developed earliest and preserved longest in India among all the countries of the earth.' [52]

The village communes existed in our country from times immemorial. King Prithu, it is believed, first introduced the system while colonising the Duab between the Ganges and the Jamuna. In the Manu Smriti and the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata, there are many references to the existence of 'gram-sanghas'. A description of these rural communities is also found in the Artha-shastra of Kautilya, who lived in 400 BC. In the Valmiki Ramayana we read about the Janapada, which was, perhaps, a kind of federation of numerous village republics.



[Source: Image](#)

It is certain that the system was widely in existence in this country at the time of Greek invasion. Megasthenes has left vivid impressions of the 'Pentads', as he called these Panchayats. Chinese travellers, Hieun Tsang and Fa Hien, tell us how India at the time of their visits was very prosperous and the people were 'flourishing and happy beyond compare.' An account of the village commonwealths during the seventh century is found in Shukracharya's Niti-Sara.

In fact, the village in India has been looked upon as the basic unit of administration as early as the earliest Vedic age. Gramini or the leader of the village is mentioned in the Rigveda (X. 62.II; 107.5). Reference to the gram Sabha or the local village assemblies are found in the Jatakas as well.

Shreni was the well-known term for merchant guilds. "The village continued to be regarded as a corporate political unit throughout the post Vedic period. Thus in the Vishnu and Manu Smritis, the village is reckoned as the smallest political unit in the state fabric." [53]

The Dharma Sutras and Dharama Shastras contain frequent references to Gana and Puga, both of which terms seem to have denoted the village or town corporations. Archaeological evidence in the form of numerous ancient Inscriptions also confirms the testimony of literature regarding the prevalence of these local self-governing institutions.

The Indian Rural Republics continues to flourish during the Hindu, Muslim and Peshwa governments till the advent of the East India Company. They survived the wreck of dynasties and downfall of Empires. "The independent development of local government provided like the shell of the tortoise, a haven of peace where the national culture could draw in for its own safety when political storms burst over the land.[54] The Kings received only State Revenues from the Village Commonwealths and generally did not interfere with their local government.

As Sir Charles Trevellyn remarks, "one foreign conqueror after another has swept over India, but the Village Municipalities have stuck to the soil like their own Kusha grass." "India has undergone more religious and political revolutions than any other country in the world," observes Sir George Birdwood. "But the Village Communities remain in full municipal vigour all over the peninsula.

Scythian, Greek, Saracen, Afghan, Mongol, and Maratha have come down from its mountains, and Portuguese, Dutch, English, French and Dane up out of its seas, and sets up their successive dominations in the land; but the religious trade-union villages have remained a little affected by their coming and going as a rock by the rising and falling of the tide." [55] In his famous minute of 1830, Sir Charles Metcalfe, the then acting governor-general of India wrote:

"The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything they can want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution...but the village community remains the same. . . This union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself, has, I conceive, contributed more than any other cause to the preservation of the peoples of India, through all the revolutions and changes which they have suffered. It is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence. I wish, therefore, that the village constitutions may never be disturbed and I dread everything that has a tendency to break them up." [56]

But Fate willed it otherwise. The inordinate and unscrupulous greed of the East India Company caused gradual disintegration of these gram Panchayats. The deliberate introduction of Ryotwari system as against the village tenure system dealt a deathblow to the corporate life of the village republics. The centralisation of all executive and judicial powers in the hands of the British bureaucrats also deprived the village functionaries of their age-long powers and influence.

In his "Village Communities: in the East and the West", Sir Henry Maine observes that the 'Indian Village Community was a living and not dead institution.' Baden Powell has given us an exhaustive account of these village settlements in "the Indian village community". Prof. Altekar's "History of Village Communities in Western India" is a valuable record of the working of the rural commonwealths in our country. But by far the best treatment of the subject is to be found in Dr. Radhakumud Mookerji's "Local Government in Ancient India" and Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee's "Democracies of the East".

It would, however, be foreign to the purpose of this book to go into the details of the organisation of the Indian village republics. Suffice it to say that one of the saddest results of British rule in this country is the effacement of this system of village self-government. Britain has tried to set up a Local Self-government on her own lines, an exotic, instead of one on Indian lines. That is why it has been a tragic failure. As Dr Annie Besant observed, "The officials keep the old names, but the old Panchayat [57] was elected by the householders of the village and was responsible to them. Now the officers are responsible to government officials and their interest lies in pleasing them, not in satisfying the electors, as of old." [58]

Though without drawbacks, the Indian village Republics were remarkable experiments in genuine democracy and local self-government. The modern development of centralised control without sufficient local and corporate life has everywhere made politics barren and mechanical. There is also an endless conflict between the interest of the individual and the group or the state.

But the Indian rural Panchayats very successfully integrated these conflicting interests and made socio-political life human and productive. As Acharya Vinoba Bhave puts it, each individual in these Gram Sabhas was his own king; yet he was bound in indissoluble ties to his fellow-citizens.[59] While there was full scope for the development of his personality, every citizen was a responsible and useful member of the small state.

The decentralisation of political power as manifested in the village communities was, of course, very much different from the western type of devolution or decentralisation. Indian decentralisation was both functional as well as territorial, with the result that there was harmony of social interests and spontaneity of political life.

The Indian Rural Communes were free from most of the evils that infect modern democratic governments. Since 'money economy' was hardly existent, the scope for bribery and corruption was next to nothing. Absence of organised and aggressive capitalism saved democracy from being 'pocketed'. In the small constituencies, elections were mostly unanimous and instinctive; those village elders who commanded universal respect were chosen by the village as a matter of course without wasting a single pie on 'electioneering'.

Due to widest decentralisation and local government there was scarcely any chance of congestion of work in the rural assemblies. Indian democracy, thus, was direct, virile, positive, productive and non-violent, as against modern democracy which is mostly indirect, dull, negative, unproductive and violent. It is desirable, therefore, to resuscitate indigenous institutions and make them the basis of the future Constitution for Swaraj.



[Source: Image](#)

“It will furnish the basis of a new type of polity which in its coordination of diverse local and functional groups will be more satisfying in the State constructions of the future than the centralised structures of the Roman-Teutonic mould or the later parliamentary pattern. And, indeed, the constructions based on the communal and synthetic instinct of the East Asian culture will furnish rich and valuable data for utilisation in this era of new social and political experiments, if only the present intellectual and moral rally of the Asiatics will continue.

Humanity all over the world is imprisoned in the bleak institutional orderliness of a mechanical and exploitative type of State. And nothing is more needed today than a new principle of social constitution which will once again orient man and his allegiances in natural and elastic groups for a freer expression of his gifts and instincts.”[60]

Economics of Decentralisation

Apart from the immense potentialities of Village Communism, the organisation of decentralised rural commonwealths is highly conducive to equitable economic distribution. The present capitalist society, in which the means of production are controlled mainly by the bourgeois class, has failed to establish enduring peace and real prosperity in the world. Socialism, on the other hand, has mercilessly rooted out the rentier class altogether. While it has raised the standard of living of the masses by capturing the instruments of production, Soviet communism is, by no means, an unmixed blessing. Its huge and powerful machinery of planning has reduced individuals to, more, or less, non-entities and automatons.

Moreover, Russia has also begun to spread its 'wings' over the neighbouring countries. However high her intentions may be, we cannot afford to view USSR's role in international politics with equanimity. We cannot favour any type of imperialism, whether capitalist or socialist. Large scale and centralised socialism tends to grow aggressive and 'imperialist'; it cannot, therefore, herald a new world order in which peace, welfare and freedom are guaranteed to all countries, big or small

What, then, is the solution? Decentralised cottage industrialism shows the way. The Indian village communes had evolved a well-balanced economic system by eschewing the two extremes of laissez faire and totalitarian control. After serious experimentation they had discovered a golden and happy mean between capitalism and socialism. They had developed an ideal form of cooperative agriculture and industry, in which there was scarcely any scope for exploitation of the poor by the rich.

As Gandhiji puts it, production was almost simultaneous with consumption and distribution. Commodities manufactured in cottages and domestic factories were for immediate use and not for distant markets. Such small scale and localised production on a self-sufficiency basis automatically eliminated capitalist exploitation. It virtually established economic equality without either ruthlessly curtailing individual liberty or allowing a few individuals to boss over others.

Needless to mention that, according to Gandhian ideals, the decentralised cottage industries should be organised on a cooperative and not capitalistic basis. If a few capitalists are allowed to control the domestic factories as in Japan, the cottage workers will continue to be exploited as mere labourers. /japan#/

The ancient village communities had their own defects. The rigid caste system, for example, which created irrational distinctions in society, was highly deplorable. There were a few moneyed Seths even in those days. The communities lacked proper co-ordination in political and economic affairs. Their general standard of living might not have been sufficiently high to be attractive to us today. Nevertheless, these rural republics were the product of mature Indian thought and incorporated principles of economic organisation which, if properly woven together, can still present to the war—torn world a happy prescription for the numerous ills that harass us day and night.

Economics of Decentralisation would also spare us from the evils of excessive mechanisation. "Owing to the extensive use of machinery and division of labour," declares Karl Marx, "the work of the proletariats has lost all individual character, and consequently all charm for the work man." "He becomes an appendage of the machine. . . ."[61]In the modern manufacturing process the worker is transformed into "a cripple and a monster."

On the other hand, "the independent peasant or handicraftsman develops knowledge, insight and will." [62] Although Karl Marx recognised the disadvantages of mechanised large scale production, he hoped that they would be eliminated in a Socialist State.

But 'rationalised' mechanisation, whether in a capitalist or socialist society, is sure to exercise its unhealthy influence on the physical, intellectual and moral well-being of the workers. "The elimination of exploitation by the abolition of private ownership of production and distribution," writes Prof. Borsodi, "does not reach the root of the trouble." "The factories' ineradicable attributes will still remain to plague mankind." [63]

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Gandhiji, therefore, is against modern industrialisation. It is very wrong to think, however, that he is hostile to all types of machinery. What he objects to is the “indiscriminate multiplication of machinery.” Observes Gandhiji: “Mechanisation is good when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India.”[64]

Today, machinery has reduced workers to ciphers; they have lost their individuality in huge factories with giant machines working noisily day and night. But small and efficient machines which could be beneficial to the millions of peasants and artisans by lightening their labour will be certainly welcomed by Gandhiji.



[Source: Image](#)

Even from the standpoint of employment, cottage industrialisation is of prime importance. “Full Employment” is the latest slogan of Economic Planning in the West. But can employment be assured to all the citizens under mechanised large-scale production? When highly industrialised countries like the United Kingdom and the U. S. A. have not yet been able to provide employment to millions of their people, can we in India with a population of 400 million legitimately expect to meet the problem of unemployment by multiplying mills and factories?

At present all the heavy and large scale industries in our country absorb only about two million workers. If, according to the Bombay Planners, the heavy industries are encouraged and expanded, say, five times, they shall be able to employ about 10 million people.

But what about the rest? The Indian farmer himself is only partially employed; he is badly in need of supplementary industries to add to his meagre income. Cottage industrialisation on a mass scale is, therefore, the right solution. Instead of “mass production,” there should be organised production by the masses in the numberless village communities. A few heavy or ‘key’ industries will, of course, be necessary for modern economic planning. But Gandhiji is of the definite opinion that such key industries should be State-owned and State-managed.

Let us not fear that the cottage industries in our rural republics will be ‘uneconomical.’ Henry Ford, who is one of the most eminent industrialists that the modern world has produced, declares that ‘as a general rule, a large plant is not economical.’[65] There is therefore, no point in centralising manufacturing process.

“A product,” states Henry Ford, “that is used all over the country ought to be made all over the country in order both to save transportation and to distribute buying power more evenly.” Ford’s eventual ideal is “complete decentralisation in which plants will be small and so situated that the workers will be both farmers and industrialists.” “That would make not only for a more general independence on the part of the individual but also would make for cheaper goods and cheaper food.”[66]

Lewis Mumford is also of the view that 'small 'units capable of diversified production and quick adaptation, are more economic than large units.'[67]

The capitalistic society, with its large-scale and centralised production has so often hurled the world into bloody and devastating wars. Should all this tragic loss of life and money not be included in the costs of large scale production? This practical consideration renders mechanised production very costly and uneconomical, indeed.

The Economics of Decentralisation has been discussed more exhaustively in my "Gandhian Plan." It would be irrelevant to go into all the details in this brochure.

Philosophy of Decentralisation

It must be clearly understood that Gandhiji does not advocate decentralisation only because of its economic and political advantages. To Gandhiji decentralisation envisions and upholds the cultural or spiritual ideal of "simple living and high thinking." "The mind is a restless bird," says Gandhiji. "The more it gets, the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied....The more we indulge our passions, the more unbridled they become. Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgences. They saw that happiness was largely a mental condition. They saw that our real happiness and health consisted in a proper use of our hands and feet."[68] Gandhiji, thus, regards simplicity as a cultural and moral necessity. The celebrated scientist Prof. Einstein holds the same view:

"Possession, outward success, publicity, luxury—to me these have always been contemptible. I believe that a simple and unassuming manner of life is best for everyone, best for both the body and the mind."[69]

But simplicity does not mean voluntary poverty and 'loin-cloth' existence for all time. Gandhiji's standard of necessities and minimum comforts is quite high. But luxuries have no place in his "good life." He does not hanker after raising merely the 'standard of living'; he wants to raise the 'standard of life.

Allied to the ideal of simplicity is the consideration of 'human values' as against the 'metallic values' of life. To Gandhiji, 'man is the supreme consideration,' or as Protogoras put it, 'the measure of all things.' In place of 'Money Economy' he advocates 'Life Economy.' It is this emphasis on the human side of social and economic reconstruction which forms the ideological background of the Khadi and Village Industries movement. "Khadi spirit means fellow feeling with every human being on earth."[70] The ancient Indian village communes, with their co-operative spirit, embodied the same morality. To the modern 'economic man' there is no God other than Gold. But Gandhiji would not like us to gain the whole world at the cost of our Souls.

Sanctity of physical labour is another fundamental conception in the Gandhian philosophy of decentralisation. "It is a tragedy of the first magnitude that millions have ceased to use their hands as hands."[71] "We are destroying the matchless living machines, i.e., our own bodies, by leaving them to rust and trying to substitute life less machinery for them."[72] From Gandhiji's view—point, Labour is Life ; it is a blessing and not a curse.

A little reflection would indicate that these ideals of Simplicity, Human Values and Sanctity of Labour are, in the last analysis, founded on non-violence which is the bed-rock of Gandhian thought. "As I was picturing life based on non-violence," observes Gandhiji, "I saw that it must be reduced to the simplest terms consistent with high thinking."

"Society based on non-violence can only consist of groups settled in villages in which voluntary co-operation is the condition of dignified and peaceful existence. . . .The nearest approach to civilisation based upon non-violence is the erstwhile village republic of India. I admit that it was crude. I know that there was in it no non-violence of my definition and conception. But the germ 'was there.'[73]Gandhiji, consequently, passionately pleads for a civilisation founded on 'Villagism.' "Rural Economy as I have conceived it eschews exploitation altogether, and exploitation is the essence of violence."[74]

According to Mahatma Gandhi, non-violence is 'the greatest force in the world.' It is the supreme law of life. "All society is held together by non-violence even as the earth is held in her position by gravitation." [75]

Or, as T. H. Green would put it, 'Will, not force, is the basis of the State.' [76] The utter futility of violence has been conclusively demonstrated by the two World Wars, and as President Truman recently declared, Civilization cannot survive another War. The phenomenal development of science has clinched the issue. The choice before the modern world is not between violence and non-violence, but between violence and science.

We cannot afford to have both science and violence. The Atom Bomb is a glowing proof of this contention; it is the logical conclusion of science wedded to violence. It is further rumoured that America has invented another Bomb before which the present Atom Bomb would appear to be a mere fire-work. In the name of civilization and humanity, therefore, there is no other choice before us but the complete renunciation of the creed of violence. Instead of attempting to annihilate the world with an atom bomb we have to learn to perceive the whole Universe in the tiniest atom. Without such a vision, the world is sure to perish.



[Source: Image](#)

The Sociological Aspect

Decentralised Village Communism should be promoted from the sociological standpoint as well. 'Open-air rural life' in place of modern congested cities will improve national health and hygiene. The hectic and noisy urban life slowly though surely tells upon our nerves and causes very great strain both to the body and the mind. Rural communes with their peaceful life of health-giving labour in the fields, cottage factories and workshops, would impart joy and vigour to society which is fast growing dull and mechanical.

Besides the considerations of national health, 'back to village movement' is essential even for the biological survival of human beings. There has been for the past few decades a steady decrease in the populations of several industrialised countries of the West.

Malthus was haunted by the spectre of over-population, but modern biologists are worried over the prospects of decreasing population and deterioration in the quality of the human species. That the fecundity of the urban population is much less than that of the rural areas is a well-established principle of Sociology.

As Prof. Lancelot Hogben points out, the lower fertility is due to urban congestion, alternative distractions which compete with the satisfaction of the claims of parenthood, and the impact of a new pattern of social relations on the stability of the family group. Excessive mechanisation tends to mechanise life itself.

"In the city," comments Prof. Hogben, "reproduction is an unwarranted intrusion of hospital practice on the orderly routine of a mechanized existence." "The machine, which neither creates nor begets, sets the fashion of human relationships." [77] On the contrary, in rural surroundings where children grow up in contact with the recurrence of parenthood in animals and plants, the processes by which life renews itself are accepted as natural events. City life is not the special characteristic of the capitalist society. A socialist state will also be confronted with the task of planning for 'human survival.'

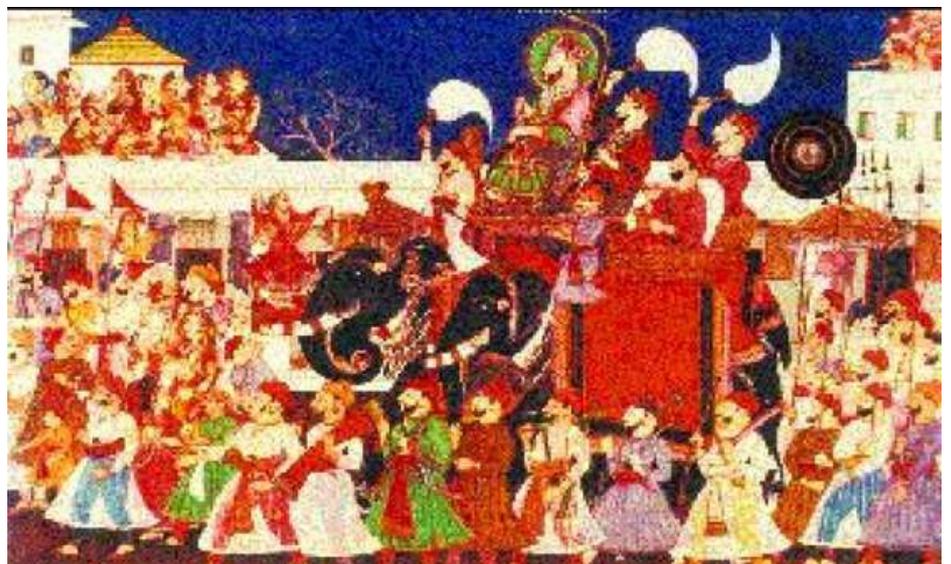
Village Communism would also make for social harmony and social security. The village communities in the past regarded themselves as big joint-families; the misfortunes of an individual were the misfortunes of the whole village. If a person suffered from theft the rest of the community ultimately made up the loss. If a villager's cottage was accidentally burned down, members of the village would contribute the building materials and build up the cottage once again.

If the head of a family suddenly died, the orphans were looked after and supported by the whole community. Marriages or deaths in one family were deemed to be the common concerns of the village. Division of labour and professions in the community provided automatic insurance against unemployment. It is true that petty jealousies, rivalries, and feuds were not altogether absent. But that only indicates that the harmony of the village communities was not the peace of the grave-yard.

Joy in Life

Restoration of village life would mean renewed gaiety, enjoyment and recreation to the masses. In his "Corporate Life in Ancient India," Dr. Majumdar describes the amusements in Indian villages from the remotest antiquity. In the Vedic period there were club-houses which were later known as 'goshtis' After day's hard work people used to meet in the evening and amuse themselves with music, dancing, storytelling and discussion of local news.

As early as the Maurya period, village concerts used to be arranged on occasions of holidays and festivals. Here too, as in other aspects of village life, the villagers were actuated by a spirit of brotherhood and co-operation. Not to co-operate in such public festivities was regarded as a sin against the community. These ancient traditions continue to this day in our villages. Fairs were and still are very common in rural areas. With their folk-dances, folk-theatres, wrestling matches, and bhajan-kirtans, the villagers make their lives a real joy.



[Source: Image](#)

As against these simple joys of life with the background of hard and honest physical labour, we have in crowded cities the mechanised and lifeless entertainments like the gramophone, cinema and radio. Punctuating his movements with the speed of the machines, the modern man is forced to bind down his life to a drab routine.

He loses that vital 'human touch' which makes life worth living. Lured by leisure, he is again compelled to seek diversion in mechanical entertainments. His heart grows mechanical; his thoughts get stereotyped. He desperately tries to drink to the dregs the joys of life, but ends by drinking death.

Art and Beauty

Modern town-dwellers feel proud of their Art and Beauty. But their artificial life and 'flower-pot' civilisation is capable of producing only crystallized and standardised art which lacks essential vitality and depth. In the Court of the Dollar King even art and beauty are interpreted and valued in terms of Gold; 'the Crown of Wild Olive' affords no attraction. From the standpoint of simple and natural beauty the soaring skyscrapers which are the glories of modern cities are nothing better than congested pigeonholes. The villagers pass their life in open and healthy cottages—I am not talking of the dark and dilapidated hovels in our country which are only the relics of past glory; they live in the very lap of Nature.

The village artisans join work with a great ethical principle—the service of the society; they find joy in their work. "As a result they create good and beautiful things; they sing at their labour." [78] Their ladies also sing sweet songs early in the morning while grinding corn for the day; they often dance with joy with their bright metal pots delicately poised on their heads, while on their way to the village well. The simple elegance of their wall paintings, the robustness and virility of their poems and folk-songs, the direct realism of their dances and dramatics, and the variegated beauty of their handicrafts have a uniqueness which we sadly miss in the so-called civilised art and literature.

In an ancient country like India art and culture spread from the forests, cottages and villages to towns. The fountain-springs of deep thought and emotion were found in the hearts of the Rishis who lived a quiet and peaceful life in rural surroundings. Monumental poetical works like the Ramayana and the Mahabharat were not composed by University professors and 'learned poets'; the immortal fresco paintings of Ajanta were not the creations of the Directors of Art Galleries. In their genuine joy of creation, the saint-painters did not even care to leave any traces of their names for posterity. They did not discuss the fine theories of 'Art for Art's sake' or 'Art for life's sake'; to them life itself was the greatest art.

National Defence

Decentralisation and ruralisation are imperative for successful defence against foreign aggression; they alone can defy modern warfare. The centralised industries provide an easy target for air-bombing so that a few bombs can successfully dislocate the whole national economy. Thus, from the strategic point of view a country with its large-scale industries concentrated in a few big towns becomes highly vulnerable. The remarkable organisation of the Industrial Co-operatives in China is, perhaps, the chief factor which enabled the Chinese to withstand Japanese aggression for so many years.



[Source: Image](#)

The Indusco movement, made almost all the Chinese villages self-sufficient in regard to the necessities of life by spreading a network of cottage industries in the remotest corners. "In a world subject to periodical outbreaks of intense and prolonged war, so far as possible the production of essential requirements like food-stuffs and clothing must be available locally, and dependence on distant markets might be fatal in times of serious stress. When decentralisation of production is becoming a dire military necessity it would be sheer madness to neglect the admirable system of decentralised production already existing in this country." [79]

International Harmony

Various schemes have been suggested for the maintenance of world peace and international harmony. The Covenant of the League of Nations aimed at the settlement of international disputes by conciliation and arbitration. But the whole edifice crumbled down in face of the fury of Fascism. The San Francisco Conference has now drawn up another Charter for world peace. But its essence is the domination of the 'Big Three' over the rest of the world. The U. S. A., Soviet Russia and Britain would naturally be the 'bosses' of the proposed International Police Force. And what will such a Force do if the Allies fall out among themselves?



[Source: Image](#)

Many eminent thinkers have underlined the necessity of a World State for abolishing international anarchy. Ely Culbertson has recently appealed to the United Nations. "to establish without undue delay a workable international organisation (the World Federation) separate from the governments of sovereign states, based on a higher law to which all states are equally subject, and supported by a separate World Police so that all may be protected in collective defence and each may be protected even against all." [80]

Sir William Beveridge in "The Price for Peace" pleads for the establishment of a "Super-national authority' backed by the Force of the 'Big Three.' Sumner Welles is anxious that there should be a World Organisation on a regional basis. [81] All these schemes postulate collective security and disarmament. But they do not tackle the problem at the right end.

It needs hardly any argument to state that the basic cause of all wars is economic exploitation and inordinate greed for capturing world markets. After the recent War, the Allies are now hastily planning to increase their exports in order to maintain a high standard of living at home. This imperialist race for markets is sure to engender mutual jealousies and conflict, ultimately leading to another World War, the calamitous consequences of which we shudder even to visualise.

In order to banish war, therefore, Capitalism and its corollary Imperialism, have to be abolished. "Peace between states," writes Prof. Laski, "depends upon peace within states." [82] And peace within states is impossible without an equitable system of distribution. Such a system can flourish only under decentralised industrialism on co-operative foundations. Cottage economy would deal a decisive blow to greedy Imperialism and, thus, spell international harmony. What we need is, therefore, economic disarmament and not mere military disarmament. "The more local and regional loyalties flourish within the great States, the less danger is there that aggressive Nationalism will be able to tear the world to pieces." [83]

Physician, Heal Thyself !

It is a tragic irony of fate that decentralisation has been prescribed by the United Nations for vanquished Germany. At the Potsdam Conference the 'Big Three' decided that "local self-government shall be restored throughout Germany on democratic principles," and that "emphasis shall be given to the development of agriculture and peaceful domestic industries." Whatever others might think, I sincerely believe that such decentralised economic and political administration in Hitler's Land would bring peace and lasting prosperity.

It is significant that "peaceful domestic industries" should be introduced in a country which carried violence to its logical conclusion. The tragedy, however, is that decentralisation in Germany has not sprung from within; it has been forcibly imposed from without. Nevertheless, the Victors need not indulge in frenzied jubilations. Let me cry out to the Allies, "Physician, heal thyself !" If the United Nations also introduce within themselves the new Order that they have complacently prescribed for Germany, abiding world peace is assured because the very urge for aggression would wither away. Otherwise, the world shall once more rush headlong into unprecedented disaster.

Our critics may turn round and ask: "Why do you prescribe for India a system which has been imposed on Germany to keep her under eternal bondage?" My immediate answer is: "If Free India introduces such a system out of her own free will, she would not only be peaceful within but also diffuse peace without. Like Germany she will not be an insulted and crushed nation always aspiring stealthily to gather her violent strength once more for world domination. India would stand like a shining Lighthouse always guiding other nations amid the darkness of exploitation and imperialism. She would neither exploit other nations nor allow any country to exploit her.

Is it Medievalism?

The most hackneyed criticism levelled against Gandhism is that it puts the hands of the clock back and takes us to the medieval times. But such attacks on Gandhiji's ideas are founded on gross misapprehensions. Gandhiji does not wish that Village Communities should be isolated units entirely cut off from the rest of the country and the world. This is neither possible nor desirable.



[Source: Image](#)

Gandhiji wants that the village republics should be basic units of Swaraj Government enjoying maximum autonomy in social, economic and political affairs. The villages should be properly co-ordinated to the Taluka, the District, the Province and the All-India Centre through the Taluka and District Panchayats, Provincial Assemblies and the Federal Parliament.

It is wrong to suppose that the Village Communities were isolated entities even in ancient and medieval India. We learn from the Manusmriti, the Mahabharata, Kautilya's Arthashastra and other Sanskrit books that there were officers at the head of one village, ten villages, twenty villages, one hundred villages, one thousand villages, each officer supervising those below him. It is true that each village enjoyed a very large measure of local self-government consistent with national safety and efficiency. But the rural republics gradually passed into larger political organisations on a federal basis rising layer upon layer from the lower rural stratifications on the broad basis of popular self-government.

Dr. Radhakumud Mookerji mentions how these different administrative units, one above the other, were known as Sabha, Mahasabha, and Nattar. The best account of this type of hierarchy is obtained from the administrative organisation of the great Chola Empire under Rajaraja as reflected in the numerous Inscriptions associated with that King.

The smallest unit, the base of the administrative system, was the village (uru) or town (nagara). The next higher unit was called Nadu or Kurram. The next position in hierarchy belonged to Kottam, or Visaya. Above this came the Mandala or Rashtra, the Province of the Empire.

K. P. Jayaswal in "Hindu Polity" also tells us about the constitution of the Janapada or the Realm Assembly representing numerous regional councils of the country. All these facts clearly indicate that the Indian village system was not a relic of tribalism but a co-ordinated administrative organisation on federal principles.

In modern times, this co-ordination will naturally have to be much more systematic and organised. But the fundamental idea of decentralisation and devolution of power which has stood the test of centuries ought to be the corner-stone of our future Constitution. Such an organisation instead of being medieval, would be the model for an ideal state.

"Going back to villages," observes Dr. Radhakrishnan "is not to become primitive." "It is the only way to keep up a mode of existence that is instinctive to India, that supplied her once with a purpose, a faith and a meaning. It is the only way to keep our species civilised. India of the peasant and rustic life, of village communities, of forest hermitage and spiritual retreats has taught the world many great lessons but has wronged no man, has injured no land and sought no domination over others." [84]

If a canting critic persists in calling the Gandhian ideology as medieval, I would frankly remark that such medievalism is a thousand times better than our Modernism which has brought in its train exploitation, colonisation, imperialism and soul-killing wars. If progress signifies all that the modern material civilisation stands for, woe be to such progress!

Internationalism vs. Universalism

We glibly talk of Internationalism and scoff at Gandhiji's 'Villagism.' But have we ever cared to understand that Gandhiji goes much farther than Internationalism? He wants not only Internationalism but also Universalism.

He appeals to us to feel one not only with our fellow human beings in the village, province, country and the world, but also to tune ourselves with the Infinite Universe. But for practising and realising this ideal of Universalism it is not at all necessary for us to fly ceaselessly to the ends of heaven and earth; we can feel one with the Universe while living quietly in our small cottages.

Internationalism and Universalism are states of mind and not creations of time and distance. One can follow Villagism and Universalism simultaneously. According to Gandhiji the basis of our material existence should be the village, while the Universe ought to be our cultural or spiritual abode. This is the essence of his doctrine of Swadeshi.

Gandhiji wants to serve humanity and the Universe, but through his immediate neighbours and the country. "My patriotism," says Gandhiji, "is both exclusive and inclusive." "It is exclusive in the sense that in all humility I confine my attention to the land of my birth. But it is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a competitive or antagonistic nature. I want to identify myself with everything that lives." [85]

A New Civilization

The fact of the matter is that the Gandhian Way is not a medieval mode of life but a new civilization. Various panaceas have been advanced for curing the ills of modern civilization. But all of them are fundamentally similar in their emphasis on coercion and violence. "Although the partisans who are now fighting for the mastery of the modern world wear shirts of different colours," writes Walter Lippmann, "their weapons are drawn from the same armoury, their doctrines are variations of the same theme, and they go forth to battle singing the same tune with slightly different words." "Their weapons are the coercive direction of the life and labour of mankind. Their doctrine is that disorder and misery can be overcome only by more and more compulsory organisation. Their promise is that through the power of the State men can be made happy." [86]

This stress on state coercion is the dogma of the day; it is a strong tide and anybody who is not an authoritarian and collectivist is a "mossback, a reactionary, at best an amiable eccentric swimming hopelessly against the tide." It is Mahatma Gandhi alone who has been consistently and persistently preaching non-violence and decentralisation for the last few decades. His vision is Oriental in its simplicity, vitality and realism.

Observes Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee: "The Eastern vision of our political future is not a dictatorship of the intellectuals, a bourgeois oligarchy, or a proletariat autocracy, jealous of its class privileges and superimposed upon passive and inarticulate millions, but of peasant democracy rising layer after layer from the old and essential local and functional groupings, growing from district to provincial dimensions and federated into a national assembly—a democracy which will revive the vitality of the village shrine and sacred tree under which it had its seat of old, and yet breathing a new and fresher spirit of active citizenship and sociality." [87]

In the course of a recent statement, Gandhiji himself explained his conception of the new civilization, or as he calls it, the Ram Rajya:

"It can be religiously translated as Kingdom of God on earth. Politically translated, it is perfect democracy in which, inequalities based on possession and non-possession, colour, race or creed or sex vanish. In it land and state belong to the people, Justice is prompt, perfect and cheap and, therefore, there is freedom of worship, and of speech and the Press—all this because of the reign of the self-imposed law of moral restraint. Such a state must be based on truth and non-violence and must consist of prosperous, happy and self-contained villages and village communities." [88]

To my mind the Gandhian idea of constitutional government is not a Utopia but a practical and lasting solution of internal economic conflicts as well as international wars. Those who deride such ideas as chimerical and visionary should vividly recollect the indescribable horrors of Total War. If we are really eager that such total wars should not recur in future under any circumstances, we must be prepared to overhaul our economic and political organisations from top to bottom. The so-called progressive plans and schemes would land us nowhere. As Sir William Beveridge remarks, the choice is no longer between Utopia and the world with which we are familiar. "The choice is between Utopia and Hell." [89] Shall we choose Hell or the "Gandhian Utopia"? The choice has to be made without any further delay, with faith and determination. Otherwise it may be too late to stem the gushing tide of world-wide annihilation.

6.6 Part Two - Chapter V - Fundamental Rights and Duties



[Source: Image](#)

In the First Part of this brochure I have tried to enunciate the basic principles that must underline the Constitution for Swaraj. In the Second Part, I shall deal with the main features which ought to characterise different aspects of the Constitution. There is no attempt at presenting a detailed draft of the actual Constitution, Article by Article. That technical work is to be reserved for the constitutional experts. I shall be satisfied if the general features outlined in this brochure are incorporated in the future constitution. It may be made clear at the very out-set that this scheme is meant for Independent India without any connection with the British Empire.

Let us begin with the Fundamental Rights. A clear enumeration of civic rights in the Indian Constitution is of paramount importance especially in view of the communal problems that face the country.- These rights which provide for the fullest protection of all minorities should form an integral part of the Constitution:

Rights

1. All citizens shall be equal before the Law, irrespective of caste, colour, creed, sex, religion or material wealth.
2. No citizen shall suffer from any disability on account of his or her religion, caste or creed in regard to public employment, public honour, trade and commerce.
3. Subject to the principles of non-violence and public morality, every citizen shall enjoy freedom of person freedom of speech; freedom of assembly, combination and discussion.
4. Every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right to follow personal and social customs, subject to public order and morality.
5. All citizens shall be free to preserve and develop their script, language and culture.
6. All citizens shall have an equal right to the use of wells, tanks, roads, schools and places of public resort, maintained out of State or local funds, or dedicated by private persons for the use of the general public.
7. Every citizen shall be entitled to free Basic education, otherwise known as 'Nai Talim.'

8. Every citizen shall have the right to obtain legal and police protection from violence, compulsion or intimidation in regard to his or her person and personal property.
9. Every citizen shall have the right to obtain a minimum living wage through honest work or employment.
10. Every citizen shall have the right to rest, by not being compelled to work for more than eight hours a day.
11. Every citizen shall have the right to medical freedom. (Existing rules and regulations regarding compulsory vaccination or inoculation shall be suitably amended).
12. Every citizen shall have the right to take part in Public Administration through his or her vote on the basis of adult franchise.
13. Every citizen shall have the right to keep and bear arms in accordance with rules and regulations made in this behalf.

Duties

But all these rights shall be contingent on the performance of the following fundamental duties:

1. All citizens shall be faithful to the State especially in times of national emergencies and foreign aggression.
2. Every citizen shall promote public welfare by contributing to State funds in cash, kind or labour as required by law.
3. Every citizen shall avoid, check and if necessary, resist exploitation of man by man.

6.7 Chapter VI - Village as Basic Unit

As has been indicated earlier, Gandhiji desires that self-sufficient and self-governing villages should be the basic units of public administration in Free India. Such a scheme would be in conformity with the time-honoured traditions of the country. In case of small and neighbouring villages, a group of villages may constitute the basic unit of administration.



[Source: Image](#)

The Panchayat

Every Village shall elect by the vote of all its adults a Panchayat of, ordinarily, five persons. In the case of bigger villages, the number may vary from seven to eleven. The Panchayat shall elect unanimously its President or Sarpanch. If this unanimity is not possible, all the adults of the village shall elect the President directly out of the members of the Panchayat.

The term of the Panchayat shall ordinarily be three years. There will be nothing to prevent the same member or members of the Panchayat from being re-elected for the 1 second or third term, but not more. If, however, a certain member of the Panchayat loses the confidence of the village before the expiry of his usual term, he shall be recalled by a majority-vote of seventy-five per cent.

The Village Panchayat shall have the sole authority to appoint, suspend or dismiss the village servants like the choukidar, patwari and police officials.

The decisions of the Panchayat shall be, as far as possible, unanimous specially in cases that affect the rights of minorities.



[Source: Image](#)

Its Functions

Since the villages shall enjoy maximum local autonomy, the functions of the Village Panchayats shall be very wide and comprehensive covering almost all aspects of social, economic and political life of the village community. They shall be:

1. Education—

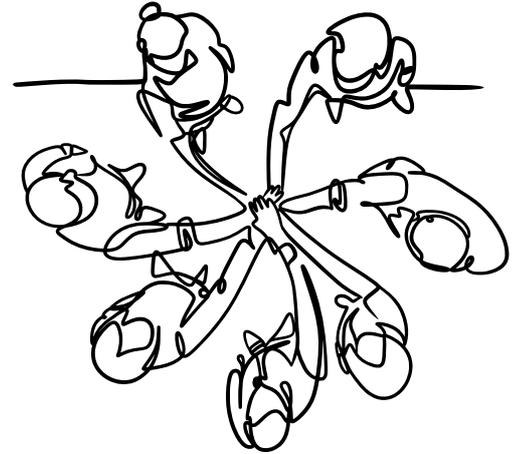
(a) to run a Primary or Lower Basic School through the medium of a productive craft, thus combining cultural and technical education.

(b) to maintain a Library and a Reading Room. Books in the library should be educative, having a direct bearing on the social, economic and political activities of the village.

(c) to run a Night School for adults.

2. Recreation—

- (a) to provide for Akhada, Gymnasium and playgrounds. Swadeshi games and sports shall be encouraged.
- (b) to arrange Art and Craft Exhibitions from time to time.
- (c) to celebrate collectively the important festivals of all communities.
- (d) to organise seasonal fairs.
- (e) to conduct bhajan and kirtan mandals.
- (f) to encourage folk-songs, folk—dance and folk theatre.



3. Protection-

- (a) to maintain Village Guardians for general protection of the village against thieves, dacoits and Wild animals.
- (b) to impart regular training to all citizens in the, technique of Satyagraha or non-violent resistance and defence.

4. Agriculture—

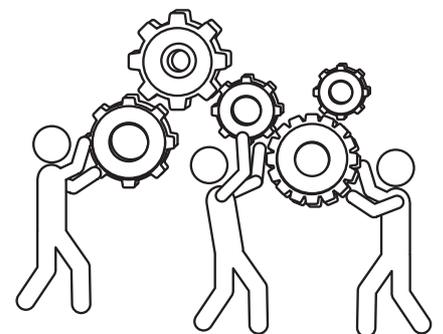
- (a) to assess the rent of each agricultural plot in the village.
- (b) to collect rent from the land-holders.
- (c) to encourage and organise consolidation of holdings and co-operative farming.
- (d) to make proper arrangements for irrigation.
- (e) to provide for good seeds and efficient implements through co-operative shops.
- (f) to see that, as far as possible, all the necessary food-grains are produced in the village itself. The present system of commercial crops shall be discouraged.
- (g) to review, scrutinise and, if necessary, scale down the debts and regulate their rates of interest. Where possible, to organise co-operative credit banks.



- (h) to check soil erosion and reclaim waste land through joint effort.

5. Industries—

- (a) to organise the production of Khadi for village consumption.
- (b) to organise other village industries on co-operative lines.
- (c) to run a co-operative dairy. The cow shall be encouraged in place of the buffalo.
- (d) to run a village tannery using the hides of dead animals.

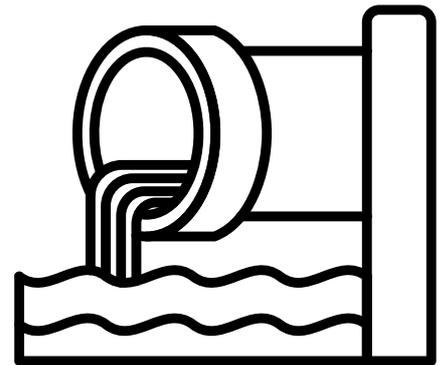


6. Trade and Commerce—

- (a) to organise co—operative marketing of agricultural and industrial products.
- (b) to organise co—operative consumers' societies.
- (c) to export only the surplus commodities and import only those necessities which cannot be produced in the village.
- (d) to maintain co—operative godowns.
- (e) to provide cheap credit facilities to village artisans for necessary purposes.

7. Sanitation & Medical Relief—

- (a) to maintain good sanitation in the village through proper drainage system.
- (b) to prevent public nuisances and check the spread of epidemics.
- (c) to make adequate arrangements for healthy drinking water.
- (d) to maintain a village hospital and maternity—home, providing free medical treatment. Indigenous systems of medicine, naturopathy and bio—chemistry shall be encouraged.



8. Justice—

- (a) to provide cheap and speedy justice to villagers. The Panchayats shall have wide legal powers, both criminal and civil.
- (b) to make arrangements for free legal aid and information.

9. Finance and Taxation—

TAX

- (a) to levy and collect village taxes for special purposes. Payments in kind and collective manual labour for village projects shall be encouraged.
- (b) to collect private donations on social and religious occasions.
- (c) to see that proper accounts of income and expenditure are maintained. These shall be open to public inspection and audit.

I have tried to make the list of functions fairly exhaustive in order to give to the reader an idea of the large measure of local autonomy that our villages shall enjoy under 'the Gandhian Constitution.'

6.8 Chapter VII - Taluka and District Panchayats

To co-ordinate the social, economic and political activities of villages there shall be Taluka (Tahsil) and District Panchayats. The functions of these higher bodies shall be advisory and not mandatory; they shall guide, advice and supervise, and not command the lower Panchayat.



[Source: Image](#)

Taluka Panchayat

Duly elected Presidents of a certain number of villages shall constitute the Taluka Panchayat. The number of members of the Panchayat will naturally depend on the number of villages grouped into a Taluka. Ordinarily, there shall be about 20 villages in a Taluka with an approximate total population of say, 20,000. Needless to mention that the sizes of the existing talukas will have to be reduced considerably in order to make their executive, legislative and judicial work manageable and efficient.

The term of Taluka Panchayat, like the Village Panchayats, shall be three years.

The functions: of the Taluka Panchayat shall be :

- (a) to guide, supervise and co-ordinate the activities of village panchayats, and audit their accounts.
- (b) to arrange for secondary or upper basic education.
- (c) to maintain bigger hospitals and maternity homes for specialised treatment.
- (d) to maintain special Reserve of Guardians for assisting villages in emergencies.
- (e) to run Taluka Co-operative Banks and Marketing Societies.
- (f) to keep the inter—village roads in good repair.
- (g) to maintain model farms for increasing agricultural efficiency.
- (h) to organise inter—village sports and tournaments.

District Panchayat

All the Presidents of the Taluka Panchayats shall constitute the District Panchayat. Ordinarily, a district shall not contain more than a dozen talukas of the size indicated above. The term of the District Panchayat shall be three years.

Its functions shall be:

- (a) to guide, supervise and co—ordinate the activities of Taluka Panchayats, and audit their accounts.
- (b) to make arrangements for Collegiate or Post-Basic education.
- (c) to maintain well—equipped hospitals for special diseases.
- (d) to maintain a Reserve of District Guardians for emergencies. “
- (e) to run District Cooperative Banks and Marketing Societies.
- (f) to make adequate arrangements for irrigation.
- (g) to organise inter-taluka sports and tournaments. In the case of smaller Provinces, District Panchayats may be dispensed with; the Taluka Panchayats will have direct connections with the Provincial Government.

Municipal Councils

In towns, there shall be Ward Panchayats and Municipal Councils which will have extensive executive and legislative powers. Their functions will be, more or less, on the lines of the District Panchayats; they shall co-ordinate the activities of the Ward Panchayats.

The Municipal Councils shall own and manage all public means of transport, electric power-houses and water supply arrangements.



[Source: Image](#)

6.9 Chapter VIII The Provincial Government

The District Panchayats and Municipal Councils shall send their Presidents to the Provincial Panchayat, the strength of which will naturally vary from province to province. In the case of smaller provinces, one more representative besides the President of the District Panchayat and Municipal Council may be sent to the Provincial Panchayat.

The term of the Provincial Panchayat shall be three years. It shall usually meet twice a year.



[Source: Image](#)

Functions

The functions of the Provincial Panchayat shall be:

- (a) to guide, supervise and co—ordinate the activities of the District Panchayats and audit their accounts.
- (b) to maintain special Reserve of Guardians for emergencies.
- (c) to arrange for University education, specially higher technical training and research work.
- (d) to organise well-co-ordinated transport and communications within the Province. The means of transport shall be owned and managed by the Provincial Panchayat.
- (e) to provide for adequate irrigational facilities.
- (f) to organise famine relief in times of emergencies.
- (g) to run a Provincial Co-operative Bank for providing cheap credit facilities to District Panchayats.
- (h) to develop the natural resources of the Province and, where necessary, to manage the 'key' industries.

Boundaries

The boundaries of the provinces shall be fixed mainly according to linguistic territories. It goes without saying that the existing provincial boundaries are due to historical causes and have no scientific considerations behind them. Most of them are composed of incongruous and heterogeneous elements.

The formation of provinces, therefore, will have to be revised, on linguistic basis. This is essential because if all the legislative, executive, judicial and educational work has to be conducted in the provincial languages, the presence of more than one language in the province would create a crop of difficulties. Moreover, it is only in the fitness of things that the medium of instruction up to the highest stage should be the mother—tongue of students. Bilingual or multi—lingual provinces render the introduction of mother—tongue medium well—nigh impossible. From this standpoint, greatest rearrangement would be necessary in the Provinces of Bombay, Madras and the Central Provinces.

The names of the Provinces in the future Constitution shall be:

Sr.No.	Provinces	Language
1	Ajmer-Merwara	Hindustani
2	Andhra	Telugu
3	Assam	Assamese
4	Bihar	Hindustani
5	Bengal	Bengali
6	Bombay(city)	Marathi and Gujarati
7	Delhi	Hindustani
8	Gujarat	Gujarati
9	Karnatak	Kannad
10	Kerala	Malayalam
11	Mahakoshal	Hindustani
12	Maharashtra	Marathi
13	Nagpur (including Berar)	Marathi
14	N. W. F. Province	Pashtu
15	Punjab	Punjabi
16	Sind	Sindhi
17	Tamil Nad	Tamil
18	United Provinces	Hindustani
19	Utkal	Oriya

The above distribution of Provinces is on the lines of the existing Congress Provinces with the only difference that Nagpur and Vidharbha have been grouped together for obvious reasons. Although the names of Congress Provinces have been retained, the provincial boundaries in the future Constitution shall not exactly correspond to the present Congress territories.

For example, if a few States, if not all, join the All-India Federation, the linguistic boundaries will have to be redrawn in consultation with the States. The United Provinces, as constituted today, may be conveniently divided into two separate provinces, the Eastern and the Western. However, all these details will have to be entrusted to a Special Commission appointed by the Indian Constituent Assembly. Where necessary, the wishes of the people of particular areas shall be ascertained by means of a plebiscite on the basis of adult suffrage:

Administration

The Provincial Panchayat shall be the Legislature of the Province. It shall, of course, be unicameral, and will possess full powers within its territories to enact laws in regard to its constitutional functions specified earlier.

The Panchayat shall elect its President who shall be the, Head of the Province.

The proceedings of the Provincial Panchayat shall in variably be conducted in the language of the territorial unit.

There shall be a complete separation of functions between the Legislature and the Executive. The Provincial Panchayat shall appoint Ministers or Commissars in charge of different Departments. These Ministers, though fully responsible to the Panchayat, shall not be appointed from amongst the members of the Provincial Panchayat.

“Where the Chief Executive and the Chief Legislative are practically identical, and the members of the former are substantially or heavily salaried. as in England the responsibility ceases, manoeuvres and intrigues of party politics become rampant, and legislation cannot be disinterested.”[90] The work of the members of the Panchayats shall be honorary in the right sense of the term.

The term of the Ministers shall be three years. Ordinarily they shall not be changed by the new Panchayat except on grounds of inefficiency and corruption.

Ministers shall not be appointed on party or communal considerations , they shall represent the best talent of the Province Their number shall be determined in accordance with the size of the Province , it shall not be less than five and more than nine.

6.10 Chapter IX - The Central Government

All the Presidents of the Provincial Panchayats shall constitute the All-India Panchayat. In the case of bigger provinces, one more representative besides the President from amongst the members of the Provincial Panchayat may be sent to the All-India Panchayat.



[Source: Image](#)

The All—India Panchayat shall be the only Central Legislature; it shall be uni-cameral because the system of having two Chambers is unnecessarily complicated and expensive. In one of his speeches at the Round Table Conference, Gandhiji observed:

“I am certainly not enamoured or I do not swear by two Legislatures. I have no fear of a popular legislature running away with itself and hastily passing some laws of which afterwards it will have to repent. I would not like to give a bad name to it and then hang the popular legislature. I think that a popular legislature can take care of itself, and since we are dealing with the poorest country in the world, the less expenses we have to bear the better it is for us.”

If the Indian States join the All-India Federation, they shall also have the equal right to send their representatives to the All—India Panchayat. These representatives shall be the Presidents of the States People’s Assemblies they will not be the ‘puppet’ nominees of the Princes.

The term of the All-India Panchayat shall be three years.

Functions

The functions of the All-India Panchayat shall be very limited in accordance with the basic principle of maximum local and provincial autonomy. Its functions shall be:

- (a) to defend the country against foreign aggression.
- (b) to maintain a National Force of Guardians for internal law and order in times of emergencies.
- (c) to co-ordinate the provincial plans of economic development.
- (d) to run the ‘key’ industries of All-India importance.
- (e) to manage the All-India departments of transport and communications.
- (f) to regulate Currency, Customs and International Trade.
- (g) to maintain a few educational institutions of All India importance for technical and scientific research, and to advise the Provinces regarding uniformity of educational standards.
- (h) to shape the foreign policy of the nation.

The residual powers shall vest in the federating units and not the Centre.

Administration

The All—India Panchayat shall be the chief legislative, it shall enact laws in regard to the functions assigned to it. The President of the All-India Panchayat shall be the Head of the State.

The Federal Panchayat shall appoint Ministers or Commissars for various departments. These Ministers shall not be the members of the All—India Panchayat. There will, thus, be a separation of legislative and executive functions.

The Central Executive or the Council of Ministers shall be fully responsible to the Central Legislature or Panchayat. The term of the Ministers shall be three years. But they shall ordinarily not be removed by the new All-India Panchayat except on grounds of inefficiency and corruption. If any minister is found guilty of serious misconduct, he shall be dismissed forthwith, before the expiry of his normal term of office.

The Ministers will represent the best talent of the country irrespective of party or communal considerations. Nor will there be any regular and rigid political parties in view of a very large measure of local self— government. While every attempt shall be made to give a fair representation to all communities, specially minorities, in the Central Executive, the vicious principle of communal proportions shall find no place in the future Constitution of Free India. In fact, when India has arrived at the fully developed non-violent stage, there will be no minority having a feeling of separateness or inferiority.

The Federating Units

The All-India Panchayat shall be a voluntary federation of the Provinces and States, with the largest measure of local autonomy for the federating units. Since India is essentially one and indivisible from the geographical and cultural standpoints, it is expected that all the Provinces and Indian States would gladly join such a Federation to promote national welfare. Every effort should also be made to create the necessary atmosphere for close collaboration and development of common national life.



[Source: Image](#)

Nevertheless, no territorial unit could be compelled to join the All-India Federation against the declared and established will of the adults of that territory. Reference to secession has been purposely avoided, though it is implicit in voluntary accession. It may be relevant to mention here that even in Soviet Russia, the right of secession is confined only to the eleven "Union Republics"; it is not granted to the numerous other units like the 'Autonomous Republics'.

Moreover, the right of secession even in the case of Union republics is nominal because it is now well-known that activities for bringing about secession are deemed by Soviet Courts as highly treasonable and counter-revolutionary.

In a non-violent State the question of compulsion backed by material force, does not arise. If a federating unit is free to join or not to join the Federation, the right of secession cannot be legitimately withheld. But the general atmosphere of tolerance, good-will and cooperation under 'the Gandhian Constitution' should render any demand for secession an impossible proposition.

Language

The work of the All-India Panchayat shall be conducted in Hindustani, in both Nagri and Urdu scripts.

6.11 Chapter X - The Judiciary



[Source: Image](#)

The Judicial system introduced by the British Government in India has worked havoc in the socio-economic life of the country. The Panchayats used to decide civil and criminal cases speedily and on the spot. False witness and perjury before the Panchayat were regarded as the greatest sins. Justice was cheap and fair. Modern courts, on the contrary, are very expensive; even very ordinary cases are disposed of only after months, if not years. The complicated judicial procedure promotes endless dishonest and falsehood.

Hosts of lawyers with their network of touts in villages have bled the rural folk white by draining away crores of rupees every year through degrading and useless litigation. Perjury and false witness are now current coins; truth and honesty are at a discount.

Thus, the British judicial system, instead of improving public morality has been directly instrumental in degenerating it beyond measure. The sooner, therefore, we bid good bye to the system, the better for us and the nation. Even a highly reactionary Governor like Sir Maurice Hallett recently observed:

“I often think that the policy of the Government of India took a wrong turn when it insisted on centralizing its administration. The old system whereby the village was, more or less, responsible for its own organisation was lost sight of and I think India has suffered accordingly.

The Government in its desire for regimented systems on stereotyped lines has set up institutions such as magisterial courts on Western lines and has forgotten that much of this work could have been better and more aptly conducted within the village itself. I would like to see in every village or a group of small villages, a Panchayat set up with powers to settle all minor disputes, whether they be of criminal, civil or revenue nature.”[91]

Village Panchayat

The Gram Panchayats shall be entrusted with the dispensing of Justice; no separate judicial panchayats are necessary. The poor peasant needs not go out of his village, spend hard-earned money and waste weeks and months in towns on litigation. He can get all the necessary witnesses in the village and fight out his own case without being exploited by lawyers.

When intricate points of Law arise, a Sub-Judge from the Taluka or District could come down to the village and assist the Panchayat in deciding difficult cases. The Sub-Judge shall also act as a guide, friend and philosopher to the ignorant villagers by acquainting them with the Laws of the State. Such a judicial system will not only be simple, prompt and cheap but also ‘just’ because the details of civil and criminal cases will be, more or less, open secrets if the village and there shall be hardly any scope for fraud and legal juggleries.

District Court

Since the Village Panchayats shall enjoy extensive civil and criminal powers in judicial matters, it will be unnecessary to have Taluka Courts. In special cases, appeals from the villages could directly be made to the, District Courts. Disputes in towns shall also originate in these District Courts. The Judges will be completely independent of the district executive officers; they shall be appointed by the District Panchayats, and shall be irremovable during terms of office and good behaviour.

High Courts

In very exceptional cases, appeals from District Courts shall be allowed before High Courts. The Judges of the High Courts will be appointed by the Provincial Panchayat; they shall be completely independent of the Executive, holding office for life and during good behaviour.

The Supreme Court

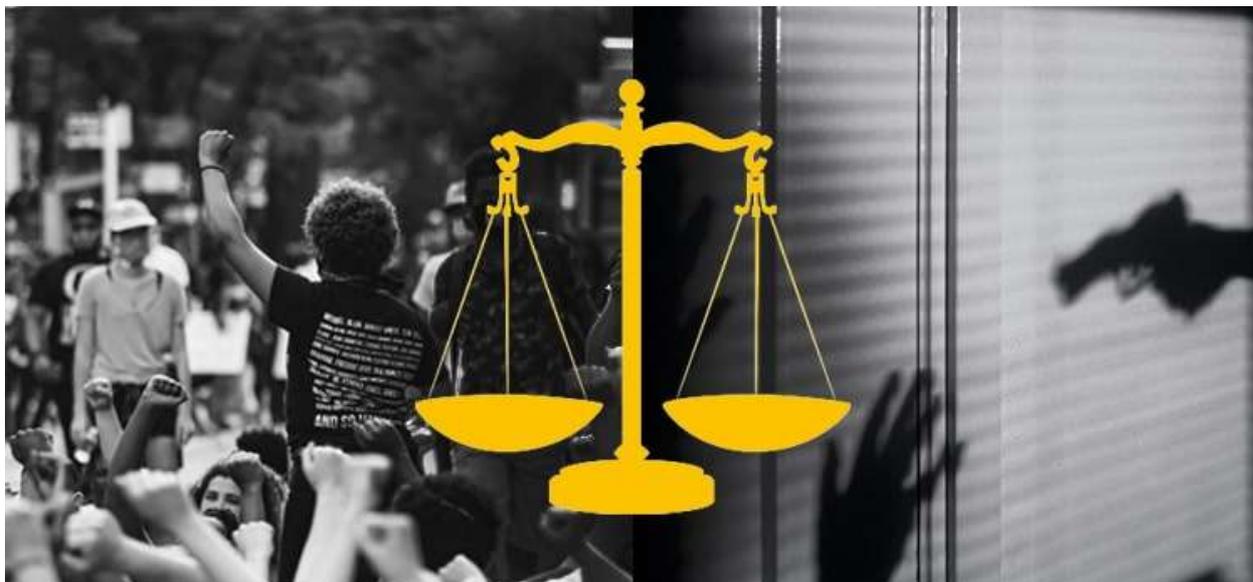
The Supreme Court of India will be the highest judicial authority in the country. Its functions shall be:

- (a) to hear appeals from the High Courts.
- (b) to decide original cases arising out of disputes between the federating units regarding constitutional matters.
- (c) to religiously safeguard the interests of Minorities by enforcing strict observance of the Fundamental Rights as specified in the Constitution.

The Judges shall be appointed by the All India Panchayat. They shall be men of the highest merit and character absolutely free from communalism or party politics, holding office for life and during good behaviour.

Revision Of Law

The existing Civil and Criminal Law is foreign to the Indian soil; it is too complex and cumbersome. It will, therefore, have to be thoroughly revised under the new Constitution. A Special Committee of experts may be appointed for the purpose by the Indian Constituent Assembly.



[Source: Image](#)

6.12 Chapter XI - System Of Elections

It will be evident from the foregoing chapters that the system of elections advocated in this Constitution is direct for the village panchayats and indirect for the taluka, district, province and the All-India Centre. This system will combine the chief advantages of both direct and indirect elections. The election will be direct in the village-which would enjoy maximum local autonomy.



Source: Image

Since the functions of the higher bodies will be mainly advisory and co-ordinative, indirect election would be the most suitable method. It will avoid colossal waste of national energy, time and money involved in direct elections especially in a vast country like India. The unhealthy growth of political parties and communal feelings will also be automatically checked to a great extent.

Since indirect election will be confined to a few responsible individuals, there will be hardly any room for bribery and corruption. Besides, the representatives of the upper bodies will not be in a position to 'forget' their constituencies because they would owe their delegation to the lower panchayats. According to the proposed Constitution, the President of the lower panchayat shall be the ex-officio member of the next higher panchayat.

Thus, even the President of the All-India Panchayat shall be the president of his own village panchayat as well; he shall, at the same time, be a member or president of the taluka, district and provincial panchayats. He will, therefore, be fully conversant with and alive to the difficulties and requirements of the masses; he cannot be a mere 'arm—chair' politician.

If any member of the highest body does not discharge his civic duties towards the people satisfactorily, he would stand no chance at the next elections; he might even be 'recalled' by his own village panchayat, thus, compelling him to resign his membership of all the other higher bodies. Since the village constituencies will be small and there will be direct and intimate knowledge of the candidates seeking election, the scope for electioneering frauds would be eliminated root and branch.

Franchise

The question of franchise and electoral qualifications will arise only in the case of elections for the village panchayats. In the villages, elections will be on the basis of adult franchise irrespective of any distinctions relating to caste, creed, sex, religion, socioeconomic position or education. Even literacy shall not be a compulsory qualification for a voter. Observes Gandhiji:

"I cannot possibly bear the idea that a man who has got wealth should have the vote, but the man who has got character but no wealth or literacy should have no vote, or that a man who works honestly by the sweat of his brow day in and day out should not have the vote for the crime of being a poor man. . . .I am not enamoured of the doctrine of literacy, that voter must at least have knowledge of the three R's. I want for my people a knowledge of the three R's, but I know also that if I have to wait until they have got a knowledge of the three R's before they can be qualified for' voting, I shall have to wait until the Greek Kalends, and I am not prepared to wait all that time."[92]

Special Qualifications

Although no rigid rules could be framed for the members and office-bearers of the Panchayats, the following special merits shall weigh with the voters while casting votes in favour of different candidates:

In this context, any kind of canvassing in elections should be regarded as a disqualification. Membership of the Panchayat should be looked upon as a grave responsibility and not as a matter of mere honour and selfish gains.

Joint Electorates

Since the Fundamental Rights guaranteed in the Constitution are very comprehensive, the need for separate or communal electorates should disappear. In fact the system of separate electorates which was introduced in this country at the instance of British bureaucrats has been one of the fundamental causes of communal bitterness and discord. This point has been dealt with more thoroughly in the chapter on 'The Problem of Minorities.' Suffice it to mention here that joint electorates shall be the basis of representation in the constitution for Free India.

Election By Lot

A very interesting system of elections in ancient times is revealed by two famous inscriptions at Uttaramallur:

"The village with its twelve streets was divided for purposes of the selection into thirty wards or electoral units. There was a meeting of each ward at which the residents were to assemble, and each of them was required to write down on a ticket the name of the person he voted for after consideration of his eligibility for membership of the committee as defined by the regulations framed by the assembly. The tickets were then to be arranged in separate packets corresponding to the thirty wards. Each packet bore the name of the ward it represented on its 'covering ticket.' The packets were put into a pot. Then the pot was placed before 'a full meeting of the great assembly' including the young and old (members), as also all the temple priests who happened to be in the village on the day "without any exception whatever" in the inner hall where the great assembly meets.

Inscription of Parantaka Chola referring to the regulation of contacting Local election in the village



Source: Image

'In the midst of the temple priests, one of them who happens to be the eldest shall stand and lift that pot looking upwards so as to be seen by all people.' 'One of the young boys who did not know what was inside was then called to pick out one of the packets. The tickets in this packet were then 'transferred to another empty pot and shaken,' i.e., shuffled thoroughly. The boy then drew one ticket out of the pot and made it over to the arbitrator (madhyastha).

'While taking charge of the ticket thus given to him, the arbitrator shall receive it on the palm of his hand with the five fingers open. He shall read out the name on the ticket thus received. The ticket read out by him shall also be read out by all the priests present in the inner hall. The name thus read out shall be put down and accepted. Thirty names were thus to be chosen, representing each of the wards.'[93]

Although this system of election by lot may not be regarded as truly democratic, it did make for purity and goodwill in the social life of the villages. Bitterness and bad blood engendered in modern elections were conspicuous by their absence. The ancient system could be reintroduced in certain cases, with necessary modifications.

For example, if a panel of names is first decided by open votes or by ballot, one of the names out of the panel could be elected merely by lot, because all the candidates in the panel would possess almost equally good qualifications. Such a system of 'panels and lots' will be both democratic and harmonious. It is desirable; therefore, that ways should be explored to introduce this electoral method in as many fields of administration as possible.

6.13 Chapter XII - The Indian States

The existing Indian States are one of the greatest obstacles in the path of Indian freedom. They are double-edged weapons in the hands of the British Government. Schemes for All-India Constitutional Reforms are torpedoed on the ground that the Indian States are sovereign bodies with Treaty rights; they are free to join or not to join the Indian Federation. And the grant of full responsible government within the States is hampered systematically on the pretext that the Princes are responsible to the Paramount Power without whose sanction nothing of real importance could be carried out in the States.

Thus, while the Princes have been reduced to 'glorified vassals' of the Crown, they are always trotted out before Nationalist India as 'big problems' in framing the future Constitution. As a matter of fact, their treaties are not worth the paper on which they are preserved.

"They are so many grants made principally or wholly for the consolidation of Paramountcy. Lawyers will no doubt be found who would argue that Treaties are solemn pledges which can be enforced by the Princes. How can a dwarf enforce rights against a giant?"[94]

The boundaries of the States are also irrational; they have no linguistic, cultural or economic basis. From several standpoints, India is essentially one unit. It will, therefore, be advisable to draw altogether new boundaries of the federating units after merging the territories of the Indian States with the Provinces.

If the British forego the so-called treaties or transfer them to the Government of Free India, well and good. If the Princes renounce the treaties, make common cause with the people, better still. But if neither of these events take place, we should realise that the British Government mean no real business in terms of India. Sir George Schuster writes:

"A federal constitution holds out at once the hope of liberalising and modernising the administration of the States and of ensuring a greater stability in the political structure of the whole country. Moreover, so closely knit are now the economic and social life of the two divisions of India, and so intermixed with British India is state territory, that the setting up of a popular government at the centre in which the States did not participate must lead at the least to friction and difficulty....Lastly, in the interests of the Princes themselves, it may be urged that they would be well advised to put the foundations of their States on to a broader and less challengeable basis."[95]

Honestly interpreted, the quotation is an invitation to the Princes to read the signs of the times and make common cause with the people of India in the place of being their dictators under the shadow of the British bayonet. While the people are under the sweet sway of non-violence, the Princes need have no fear from the people. They must rely upon their righteousness to secure them full justice. But they must not expect the present autocracy to last. In Gandhiji's words, it is 'double slavery.'



[Source: Image](#)

6.14 Chapter XIII - National Defence

Gandhiji's strong and definite views on non-violence are well known; he believes that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence. He would like Free India not to maintain any armed defence against foreign aggression. Gandhiji wants India to develop disciplined non-violent power to face invasions bravely and successfully. At a time when Britain was helplessly waiting to be swallowed up by Hitler, Gandhiji raised his lonely but powerful voice against the futility of violent victory and courageously advised the Britons to resist Germany without arms:

"I would like you to lay down the arms you have as being useless for saving you or humanity. You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want of the countries you call your possessions. Let them take possession of your beautiful island, with your many beautiful buildings. You will give all these, but neither your souls, nor your minds." [96]

This classic and memorable appeal to "Every Briton" at a time when Britain was passing through the most critical phase of national history could not have been addressed, perhaps, by any other person in the world except Mahatma Gandhi. He gave vent to his deep and earnest feelings even at the risk of ridicule.

But the utter hollowness of armed victories has been amply demonstrated by the two global holocausts of "blood, toil and tears." "I know nothing more terrible than a victory except defeat," remarked the Duke of Wellington who earned the unique honour of crushing Napoleon. The world cannot afford to forget these highly significant and prophetic words of the Iron Duke.

Even the Atlantic Charter, which, unfortunately is now dead as the door-nail, had to take cognisance of the truth that "all the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons, must come to the abandonment of the use of force."

The dazzling development of science culminating in the mysterious Atom Bomb would now compel us to discard the weapons of violence and cultivate 'the non-violence of the brave.' Virile and dauntless non-violence would successfully defy the arrogant fury of even a fiercer weapon than the Atom Bomb, for a non-violent warrior knows no defeat. A truly non-violent nation would rather smilingly die to a man than meekly submit and owe allegiance to the insolent invader.

But Gandhiji is not a visionary; he is a supreme realist and a 'practical idealist.' He is fully alive to the limitations of his own country. Although he will be genuinely happy if free India could agree to maintain, only a Non-violent Army, he does concede that the ideal would be difficult of immediate realisation. "I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she would in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour." [97] Gandhiji observes:

"Alas! In my Swaraj of today there is a room for soldiers. . . . Under Swaraj, you and I shall have a disciplined, intelligent, educated police force that would keep order within and fight raiders from without, if by that time, I or someone else does not Show a better way of dealing with either." [98]

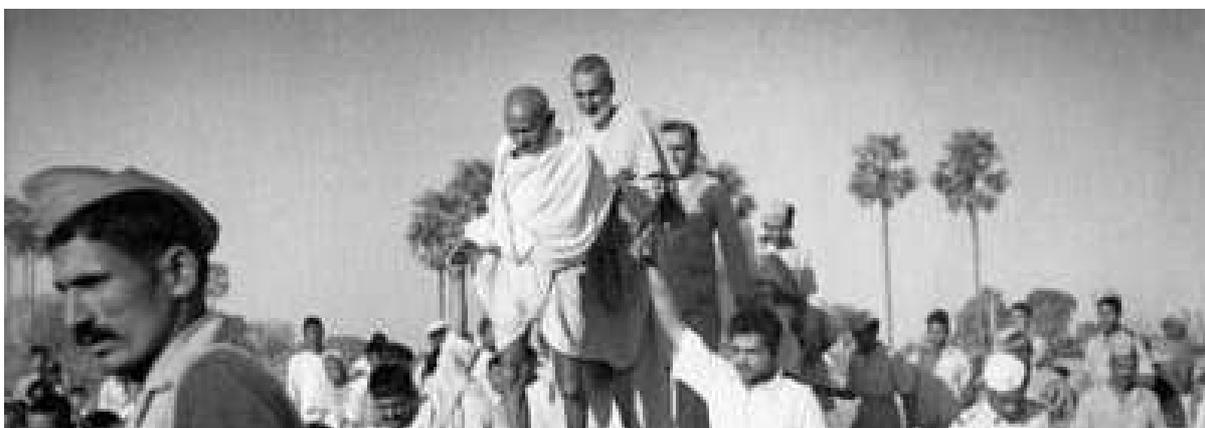
Gandhiji conceives of Indian Defence mainly as a National Police Organisation which will be of a wholly different pattern from the present-day Army and Police:

"Its ranks will be composed of believers in non-violence. They will be servants and not masters of the people. . . . The Police Force will have some kinds of arms, but they will be rarely used, if at all. In fact, the policemen will be reformers." [99]

The All-India Panchayat shall have full control over the National Police or Guardians. It shall appoint a Commander-in-Chief who shall also be the Minister in charge of Defence. The National Force of Guardians shall be composed of only Indians, although technical advice of foreign experts may be obtained from time to time.

Before closing this chapter, it will be worth our while to discuss a few points in regard to the relative importance of Defence in the future Constitution. Although, in a war-obsessed world, the problem of Defence is of supreme moment, Free India of Gandhiji's conception need not very much worry about foreign aggression for the following reasons: India is geographically and strategically so situated that she cannot be attacked by any one foreign power without inviting a World War.

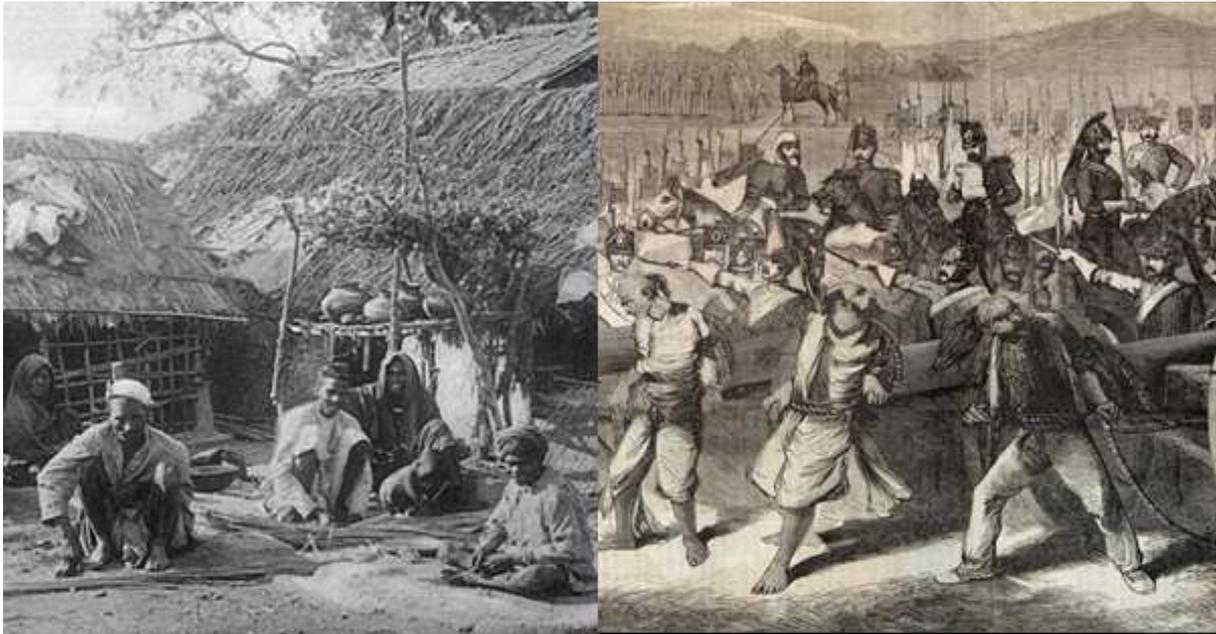
Moreover, if India, under the inspiring guidance of Gandhiji, is able to attain political independence through non-violence, she will surely release tremendous forces of amity and good-will among the warring nations of the world. As Gandhiji expresses the hope, her Independence and freedom would spell non-aggression and international harmony.



[Source: Image](#)

6.15 Chapter XIV - The Problem Of Minorities

The Problem of Minorities is not a special feature of Indian politics; it is a universal problem. Almost every State in the world is composed of, more or less, heterogeneous elements, and the rights of minorities have been duly safeguarded in each country in conformity with international conventions. But the British Government, faithful to their age-long imperialist policy of 'divide and rule' have been painting the Indian communal problem in lurid colours, giving to the world an impression that the Hindus and the Muslims are always at each other's throats and that if the British withdraw from India, a Civil War would immediately follow. Fortunately for them, the British Government have found a very handy weapon in Mr. Jinnah who, consciously or unconsciously, plays into their hands exactly according to Plan.



[Source: Image](#)

An intelligent study of the history of communal tangle in India would at once show that the British have been systematically injecting the virus of communalism in the Indian body politic. Till the close of the nineteenth century the Government was quite suspicious of the Muslims from whom they had wrested political power in this country.

But in the beginning of the twentieth century, they realised the 'menace' of Hindu-Muslim Unity to their Empire. Seeds of communal discord, therefore, were sown by the alien rulers according to a definite and well-thought out scheme.

First October, 1906, was a fateful day in the history of our nation when a Muslim Deputation led by H. H. the Aga Khan presented at Simla an Address to Lord Minto, the then Viceroy of India. The deputation requested the Viceroy to recognise them as 'a distinct community' in local, provincial and central elections.

The Muslim Deputation was described and condemned as a "command performance" by the late Maulana Mohammed Ali. It is now a matter of documentary proof that the deputation was inspired by certain British officials; it was, perhaps, drafted by Mr. Archbold who was the Principal of Aligarh College at that time. "I am entirely in accord with you," observed Lord Minto in his reply to the deputation and, thus, introduced separate electorates in this hapless land. Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, who favoured joint electorates with reservation of seats, wrote to Lord Minto:

"I won't follow you again into our Mohammedan dispute. Only I respectfully remind you once more that it was your early speech about their extra claims that first started the Muslim hare." [100]

Ramsay MacDonald, in his "Awakening of India" has also recorded his definite opinion that the British officials were responsible for the introduction of communal electorates in India. A lurid light is thrown on this episode, which was thus engineered to forge an obstacle to the growth of India's national unity, by the following passage cited by Lady Minto in her Diary from a letter received by her from a high official:

"I must send your Excellency a line to say that a very big thing has happened today, a work of statesmanship that will affect India and Indian History for many a long year. It is nothing less than the pulling back of 62 millions of people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition." [101]

This allegation has also been admitted in a Government Document, the Report of the Indian Central Committee of the Statutory Simon Commission, in which it is stated that "there was no spontaneous demand by the Muslims at that time for separate electorates, but it was only put forward by them at the instigation of an official whose name is well-known." (p. 117)

The Lucknow Pact of 1916 was a serious and successful attempt to bridge the gulf between the Hindu and Muslim communities. But the Government soon sabotaged the rapprochement once again by resorting to the favourite device of offering more to the Muslims than what they got under the Pact. In spite of strong disapprobation of communal electorates, the Montford Reforms of 1919 gave the vicious system a new lease of life which, unfortunately, continues to this day. The latest demand for Pakistan is the natural and logical conclusion of the policy of separate electorates and communal reservation of seats in the legislatures with ever-growing weightage for the Muslims. The father of Pakistan is, therefore, not Iqbal or Rehmat Ali [102] or Jinnah, but Lord Minto.



[Source: Image](#)

It is not essential to X-ray the bogey of Pakistan in these pages. There is enough literature on the subject for the inquisitive reader. [103] Let it suffice to mention that the slogan of Pakistan is thoroughly unpractical, irrational and undesirable. The idea that the Hindus and the Muslims are separate nations cannot stand scrutiny:

"Partition means a patent untruth. My whole soul rebels against the idea that Hinduism and Islam represent two antagonistic cultures and doctrines. . . I must rebel against the idea that millions of Indians who were Hindus the other day changed their nationality on adopting Islam as their religion." [104]

Moreover, Pakistan does not solve the Problem of Minorities; it seeks to make it even worse. Millions of Hindus and Muslims in Pakistan and Hindustan respectively would still clamour for the protection of their rights. Vivisection of India will weaken national defence, involve economic and financial waste, and reduce India to a minor power in international politics. "A United States of India," writes Prof. Coupland, "might reasonably expect to take ranks in years to come among the great political units of the world." [105] But in a disrupted India, we could never achieve our natural destiny.

In fact, a non-violent State of Gandhiji's conception will not be confronted with the problem of minorities at all because the essence of non-violence is tolerance and respect for one another's rights. There will be absolutely no cause for fear, distrust, and insecurity. The demand for Pakistan or Partition will be uncalled for and out of place.

As a man of non-violence, Gandhiji cannot think of forcibly resisting the proposed partition if the Muslims of India really insist upon it. "But I can never be a willing party to the vivisection of India. I would employ every non-violent means to prevent it. For it means the undoing of centuries of work done by numberless Hindus and Muslims to live together as one nation." [106]

Division of India into two or more separate states will mean virtual national suicide. While conceding the right of partition or secession, Gandhiji's non-violence would, therefore, actuate him to resist the national vivisection with all his moral and spiritual might and, if necessary, even perish in the attempt.

Fortunately for us, good-will is not lacking even today among the Muslim masses. But the British Government is bent on exploiting our differences by adding fuel to the fire. If the foreign rulers sincerely desire to transfer complete political power, the communal problem could be satisfactorily resolved overnight. I have a fear that, in spite of their professions to the contrary, the Britishers would ultimately hurl at us another Award which will be, more or less, Pakistan.

The British Government must be told plainly that their policy of 'divide et impera' must now be abandoned. It was the British Government which introduced 'separate electorates'; the engines must now be reversed by the same Government in the name of justice and fairplay. Let the Britishers not imagine that they are the only experts in the art of diplomacy. If India were to rule over Britain even for a single year, the three territorial units of England, Scotland and Wales could be proved to be separate nations vociferously demanding and even fighting for Partition.

In conformity with International Conventions, the problem of minorities could be solved in India by emphasising the following points in the future Constitution:

Details relating to Minority rights and representation could be worked out by a Committee of the Constituent Assembly. If necessary, the final decision may be left to a Board of International Arbitration of which Britain or any of the Dominions shall not be a member.

As I pointed out earlier, however perfect a written Constitution for a country may be, however thoroughly it may guarantee rights, it would fail to provide lasting harmony if the necessary good-will is wanting. But the leaders and spokesmen of Communities can do much to stimulate it:

"By their own words and deeds, by timely advocacy of fundamental rights in temperate speech and orderly behaviour, by firmness or forbearance when occasion demands it, by opportune insistence upon the justice and wisdom of their cause, by every encouragement in their power to organisations and activities of a common character, and by stern repression of all that spells division or disruption, the problem of, minorities can be settled, at least as it manifests in India today, for all time, in all parts, and on all points." [107]

The fundamental problem that stares both the Hindu and the Muslim masses of our country is acute poverty. The communal problem fades into nothingness in face of this common economic distress. With the advent of Swaraj, the State will have to concentrate on the question of raising the standard of living of the masses. The problem of minorities would then disappear like the morning mists. Observes Gandhiji:

"The solution of the Communal tangle can be the Crown of the Swaraj constitution, not its foundation if only because our differences have hardened—if they have not arisen—by, reason of the foreign domination. I have not a shadow of doubt that the iceberg of communal differences will melt under the warmth of the sun of freedom." [108]

6.16 Chapter XV- Foreign Policy

Thanks to the broad vision of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, India has already developed a definite and comprehensive foreign policy of her own in the domain of International Politics.



[Source: Image](#)

The Indian National Congress was, perhaps, the first political party in the world which raised its unequivocal voice against the British policy of appeasement of the Fascist powers culminating in the disgraceful Munich Pact. The Congress protested against Japanese aggression in China, sided wholeheartedly with the Spanish Government in its heroic fight against foreign invasion and domestic rebellion.

During the recent World War, the Congress was prepared to throw its whole weight on the side of the United Nations provided complete independence was granted to India immediately. The strong protest of Indian leaders against the wanton use of Indian troops for the suppression of Indonesian nationalism has defined our country's attitude towards her neighbours. None the less, it will be desirable to lay down a clear cut Foreign Policy in the future Constitution. The following shall be the main points:

6.17 Chapter XVI - Finance and Taxation

The existing system of Public Finance and Taxation is highly inequitable and irrational. It will, therefore, have to be radically recast and overhauled. The following are a few important points which ought to be incorporated in the future Constitution of India:

6.18 Chapter XVII - National Property

Under the Swaraj Constitution, private property as such will not be necessarily abolished; its sphere shall be restricted and curtailed in order to eschew the patent evils of the present Acquisitive Society. The following types of wealth which are now owned by private capitalists shall become National Property:

6.19 Chapter XVIII- Education

The present system of education in India has failed to meet the vital needs of national life; it is hopelessly out of touch with social and economic realities and envisions no creative and inspiring ideal. Far-reaching reforms, therefore, will have to be introduced under the Swaraj Constitution. The following are a few 'key points':

(a) Basic education shall be free and compulsory. It shall be imparted to all the boys and girls up to the age of 14, through a productive craft like spinning, weaving and agriculture. Such education would serve a treble purpose in a poor country like India:

- (i) It would impart sound knowledge to students.
- (ii) It would meet most or part of the cost of education.
- (iii) It would make students generally fit for a vocation in life.

(b) There shall be absolutely no corporal punishment in educational institutions.

(c) The Medium of Instruction at all stages of education shall be the Mother-tongue. The imposition of the English medium of instruction has, indeed, been one of the major educational tragedies in this country. "It has sapped the energy of the nation; it has shortened the lives of the pupils. It has estranged them from the masses; it has made education unnecessarily expensive. If this process is still persisted in, it bids fair to rob the nation of its soul." [109]

(d) The Village Panchayats shall try to liquidate illiteracy as early as possible. Adult education, however, shall not be confined to the knowledge of the three R's. The adults shall be imparted general education in health, hygiene, sanitation, agricultural efficiency, co-operative effort and civic rights. Here too the basis will be a craft.

(e) University education shall be confined mostly to higher technical training and research.

(f) It shall be incumbent on a Graduate to render free social service for one year before receiving his or her degree.

6.20 Chapter XIX - Crime and Punishment

In the past, crime was treated either with violent punishment or with overflowing sentimentality. Penology has now undergone a vital change in the progressive countries of the world. Crime has ceased to be regarded as a biological phenomenon; it is now recognised as a social product.

Criminals are to be treated as persons and crimes as clinical problems to be diagnosed as in the case of other physical and mental diseases. Gandhiji would, therefore, hate crime but not the criminal. A careful analysis of crimes would indicate that the chief underlying causes are poverty, unemployment, inadequate education and broken homes. [110] In order to reduce crime, the social environment and circumstances have to be radically improved.

Prevention is always better than cure. It is to be expected that fundamental changes in the social and economic conditions contemplated in the 'Gandhian Constitution' will go a long way in effectively preventing crime in the country.

It is; however, idle to suppose that all kinds of crime would automatically cease under Swaraj. Free India will also have to tackle crime, award punishments and maintain prisons. But the nature of prisons shall be, wholly different from the existing patterns, which instead of reforming the convicted prisoners harden them into incorrigible criminals. Under the new Constitution, prisons shall be in the nature of well-organised Reformatories. In this connection it will be interesting and instructive to know a few details of the Bolshevo Reformatory Colony in the U. S. S. R.:

"The GPU itself maintains at Bolshevo, in the Moscow oblast, a remarkable reformatory settlement, which seems to go further, alike in promise and achievement, towards an ideal treatment of offenders against society than anything else in the world. This is an extensive establishment accommodating nearly a thousand inmates. It is situated on the pleasant country estate of an expropriated millionaire industrialist, where it combines manufacturing production with agriculture. It has no walls or locked gates interfering with the inmates' freedom to leave.

Those who are specially selected as likely to be reformed out of the mass of persons who have been at least twice convicted by the ordinary tribunals of the several constituent republics of petty larceny, or burglary or robbery with violence are simply set to work at piece work wages, to be spent freely at the various departments of the prison shop, allowed to smoke and to talk, to enjoy music the theatres, and to spend their leisure, within reasonable limits, as they choose.

They are, in fact, shown that a life of regulated industry and recreation, with the utmost practical freedom, is more pleasant than a life of crime and beggary. After a certain period they may invite their wives to reside with them, and each family is set up on its own homestead. Many refuse to leave on the expiration of their sentences, some find wives there; and the colony steadily grows a self-supporting mixed population, now nearly 3,000 of convicts and freemen. Nor does Bolshevo stand alone. There are in the U. S. S. R., ten other reformatory colonies on the same plan.”[111]

In Free India, there shall be no capital punishment even for the most serious crimes.

The State shall maintain Clinics for delinquent children in order to prevent crime at the very source. Criminal Law shall be rendered as short and simple as possible. Complexity of Laws tends to promote crimes and criminal mentality.

6.21 Chapter XX - Public Services



[Source: Image](#)

(a) Free India shall have the full option to continue or to discontinue the services of the present officials in the Provincial or All-India services.

(b) In the case of those public servants whose services are terminated, Free India may pay reasonable pensions or maintenance allowances.

(c) In the case of those public servants who are retained by Independent India, their previous years of active service shall be duly counted for purposes of retirement and pensions.

(d) New public officials for villages, talukas and districts shall be directly appointed by the Village, Taluka and District Panchayats respectively, in accordance with definite rules and regulations.

(e) Recruitment to Provincial and All-India Services shall be made by Public Service Commissions appointed by the Provincial Panchayats and the All-India Panchayat respectively. Members of the Public Service Commissions shall be men of outstanding ability and sterling character.

(f) Public Service Commissions shall frame detailed rules relating to appointment, promotion, discipline, retirement, and superannuation of public servants.

(g) Recruitment to Public Services shall be made solely on grounds of qualifications, efficiency, character and spirit of national service. While special care will be taken to render full justice to all minorities and backward classes, the principle of communal representation in services shall not vitiate the Constitution of Free India. Members of the Public Service Commissions shall observe strict communal neutrality almost religiously.

(h) In order to maintain a high standard of public morality, no indulgence will be shown to public servants charged with bribery, corruption, nepotism and communal favouritism.

(i) Special Training Institutes shall be conducted for the efficient training of public servants in office organisation, administrative work and codes of public conduct.

(j) While selecting candidates for public services, preference will be given to those young men who actively participated in the struggle for Indian Independence.

6.22 Chapter XXI - Miscellaneous

Flag

The official Flag of Free India shall be the 'Tri-colour' Flag with the emblem of the Spinning Wheel in the centre.

Nomenclature

Nomenclature in the Constitution for Free India shall be suitably coined in Hindustani by a Special Committee appointed by the Constituent Assembly.

Amendment of Constitution

The All-India Panchayat shall have the power to repeal or alter any of the provisions of the Constitution. The Bill embodying such repeal or alteration shall be passed by the All-India Panchayat and all the Provincial Panchayats with seventy-five per cent majority in each case. If the amendment of the Constitution is in relation to a single Province, the Bill shall be referred only to that Provincial Panchayat.

Provided that alteration shall be made in the Fundamental Rights of the Constitution only after obtaining the written sanction of the Supreme Court of India.

6.23 Chapter XXII - Concluding Observations

To the casual reader, the Gandhian Constitution as outlined in the preceding chapters may not appear to be very much different from the existing top—heavy administration in India. The hierarchy of the village, taluka, district, provincial and All—India Panchayats, is undoubtedly, there still. But the careful reader would discern a marked change in the whole tone and spirit of the Constitution drawn up in this brochure.

The administrative system envisaged in this Constitution is that of a pyramid whose broad base is composed of numberless village communities of the country. The higher panchayats shall tender sound advice, give expert guidance and information, supervise and co-ordinate the activities of the village panchayats with a view to increasing the efficiency of administration and public service. But, in the non-violent State of Gandhiji's conception, it will be the basic units that would dictate to the Centre and not vice versa. In fact, the whole system will be turned upside down; the Village shall become the real and moving unit of the administration.

It may be argued that the Indian villages are, at present, in a bad way. There are petty jealousies, quarrels, party feelings and rivalries among the villagers who are still illiterate and devoid of keen civic sense. It will, therefore, be risky to repose too much confidence and trust in the Village Panchayats. But such arguments betray gross ignorance of the fundamental principle of human psychology: 'Trust begets trust.'

The Britishers have been telling us all the time that we are unfit for Swaraj. But we at once retort: "Good government is no substitute for self-government." What does it matter if we commit mistakes and even blunders? We learn through our mistakes? We need not, therefore, hesitate to devolve a large measure of political power on the Village Communities.

The process of devolution and decentralisation maybe gradual and by graded instalments. But the ultimate objective must be clear-cut, definite and unmistakable. I have no manner of doubt that under the Gandhian Constitution our villages will rise to their full stature and become once again the bright models of genuine and lasting democracy.



[Source: Image](#)

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7) People's Manifesto for a Just, Equitable, and Sustainable India

*The Constituents of the Vikalp Sangam Process, February 2019*⁴



[Source: Image](#)

7.1 The Commitments We Make and Seek

We commit, and ask all political parties, people's movements, civil society organisations, and other relevant groups and collectives to commit to an India that is just, equitable, and sustainable for today's and coming generations, where:

- the well-being and health of all is ensured by providing opportunities to engage in materially, culturally, ethically and spiritually fulfilling lives and livelihoods;
- everyone has meaningful avenues of directly participating in decision-making through direct forms of democracy;
- there is no discrimination based on gender, caste, class, ethnicity, religion, 'race', ability, sexual orientation, and other such features;
- the diversity and pluralism of cultures and knowledges and faiths are respected and enabled to co-exist harmoniously; and
- there is respect for the rest of nature and the ecological conditions on which all life depends. The above commitment (and related steps, which we spell out below) is urgently required in the context of the multiple crises we face today. There is growing tide of social conflicts and tension, intolerance, inequality, ill-health, erosion of cultural (including language) diversity, loss of traditional knowledge and skills, and massive ecological devastation. This is caused currently by dominant models of economic development and encouraged by authoritarian, religiously divisive tendencies in the state, all of these building on traditional inequalities and discrimination of various kinds including gender and caste and beginning to reverse the gains attained by these sections in the last few decades of democratic processes.

⁴ For more information, please see <http://www.vikalpsangam.org/about/> The organisations in the Vikalp Sangam are listed at the end of this document.

To deal with these multiple crises that India faces, such a commitment, which is in essence also a renewed commitment to the values of the Constitution of India and to a meaningful democratic and dignified society, should become the central objective of all public planning. It requires urgent short-term and long-term steps in every sector or area of society.

Broadly, we are seeking the following actions at policy and programmatic level, summarised in Part 1, and detailed out in Part 2, with a special section relating to Youth in Part 3.

7.2 Part 1: Summary of Actions

1. Steps to re-establish India's global role as a champion of human rights, peace and demilitarisation, and ecological wisdom, including through the revitalisation of the United Nations and support to people's democratic access to global decision-making, and advocacy to make trade and other economic agreements subservient to human rights and environment ones.

Talisman for every public action: does it enhance global peace and justice?

2. Highest priority in all plans, budgets, policies and programmes to the most vulnerable sections of society, including those discriminated against on the basis of caste, gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, faith/religion, 'race', ability/ disability, literacy, location, and other such features.

Talisman for every public action: does it benefit the vulnerable, does it reduce discrimination?

3. Strong measures to tackle the gross economic inequalities facing Indian society, including caps on salary levels, high taxation on income, wealth and inheritance, basic minimum income and employment guarantee for the vulnerable, and pension for all workers in the primary sector.

Talisman for every public action: does it reduce inequality, does it empower those who are currently deprived?

4. Widespread programmes for re-establishing harmony amongst people of different faiths, ethnicities, languages, and so on, starting from school level upwards, and prompt action against those spreading misinformation, hatred, and enmity amongst various communities.

Talisman for every public action: does it increase harmony, does it reduce social conflict and tension?



5. Further democratisation of decision-making, empowering gram sabhas and urban area or mohalla sabhas with financial and legal powers apart from those already provided for in the Constitution and relevant laws, ensuring processes of prior informed consent of such bodies for activities in their territories, and initiating decision-making forums at landscape levels such as river basins and sub-basins.

Talisman for every public action: does it increase meaningful participation of people, especially of the currently marginalised?

6. A comprehensive policy and law on accountability and transparency of all institutions of the state, and of political parties; and repeal of laws/provisions that enable the state to stifle democratic dissent or provide draconian powers to police and armed forces.

Talisman for every public action: is it fully transparent to the public, does it enhance accountability?

7. A massive programme on livelihoods that combine traditional and modern skills and knowledge, with highest priority in all plans and budgets to the two biggest livelihood sectors of agriculture (including farming, pastoralism, fisheries, and forestry) and crafts/small manufacturing; this should include reserving all products and services that can be made or generated through small-scale and medium-scale for community-based, decentralised production, through measures such as the facilitation of democratically run producer collectives (cooperatives, companies, unions, etc).

Talisman for every public action: does it enhance and secure livelihoods of the vulnerable and marginalised, does it accord respect to all sources of livelihood that are dignified?

8. A national land/water use plan and policy, with steps for conservation of the most important ecosystems and ecological functions on which all our lives depend, and of the wildlife and biodiversity they contain; and initiate a country-wide programme of land/soil and water regeneration oriented at creating sustainable natural resource assets for local economies; all this through legal measures that empower and recognise rights of local communities akin to what is provided for in the Forest Rights Act, and Constitutional recognition of the rights of nature.

Talisman for every public action: does it protect natural ecosystems and ecological functions?



9. A comprehensive policy and legal regime to ensure that economic planning respects ecological limits at all levels, local to national, including through independently conducted, participatory, comprehensive environmental impact assessments of projects, programmes, schemes and sectors; and that all chemicals and substances harmful to human or ecosystem/animal health are replaced by ecologically sensitive substances.

Talisman for every public action: does it sustain the natural environment and retain ecological health vital for people and wildlife?

10. Programmes to bring back into prioritised public support all basic needs, including health, sanitation, housing, learning and education, water, food and energy, providing significantly higher budgetary allocations for these than currently given; actions to convert all food production into agroecological and safe processes with maximum support to small farmers, pastoralists and fishers and their full rights over land, seeds, and water; actions to produce most energy through decentralised renewable sources by 2030 while also undertaking measures to contain demand to what is essential and within ecological limits; and urgent actions to regenerate and conserve water sources which give priority to water use for essential life functions.

Talisman for every public action: does it enhance, secure, and make accessible/affordable basic needs of everyone, and in particular of those currently deprived of these, in ways that are ecologically sustainable?

11. Steps to make urban and rural settlements dignified, livable, and sustainable, as self-reliant for basic needs as possible, and with full rights of access to land, housing, and other amenities for the vulnerable sections of society, and highest priority to public and non-motorable means of mobility/ transportation.

Talisman for every public action: is it leading to more livable and sustainable conditions of living for everyone, especially those currently deprived?

12. Initiatives to transform all learning and education towards methods that are activity-based, enjoyable, culturally and ecologically rooted, enabling learners to imbibe the ethics of justice and responsibility, driven by self-learning processes, and able to instil respect for cultural diversity and ecological sustainability, including through relevant amendments of Right to Education Act, and community-based processes for both children and adults; dedicate at least 4% of national and state budgets to this sector.

Talisman for every public action: is it leading to all-round learning opportunities for everyone, especially those currently deprived?



13. A comprehensive policy and programmes on innovation, technology and knowledge, that encourages and supports public and informal processes of innovation, recognises the creativity of 'ordinary' people, maximises the availability of knowledge and information in the public and commons domain including through independent media, and puts all technological developments up for public review to gauge how responsible they are to the goals of justice, accessibility, and sustainability.

Talisman for every public action: does it further democratise and make publicly accessible knowledge and technology?

14. A comprehensive policy and relevant programmes to make conditions for healthy living and health services accessible to all, especially to vulnerable sections, including through the integrated use of multiple health systems, linkages with other determinants of health (food, social and physical environment, education, etc.), community governance and monitoring; dedicate at least 10% of national and state budgets to this sector to ensure that the public sector reaches all.

Talisman for every public action: is it enabling conditions of health for all, especially for those currently deprived of healthy conditions and health services?

15. Initiatives to encourage the democratic flourishing of the arts (visual and performing), removing the caste, class and gender discriminations that are embedded in some of them, making them accessible to all, and converting public institutions promoting them into independent bodies.

Talisman for every public action: does it support the arts to flourish in ways accessible to all?

16. In all the above, give special attention to the empowerment and facilitation of India's youth and women, and the enabling of their own voices in determining the present and the future. (Please see Part 3 on Youth).

Talisman for every public action: does it empower the youth towards greater justice and self-determination?





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